

socialist standard

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Left Behind

How the poor die in the
capital's richest borough

PLUS

Election Autopsy

Terror Attacks

The War in Yemen



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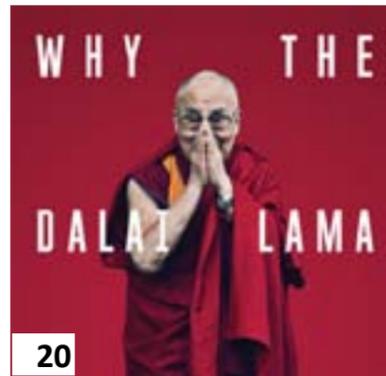
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Introducing the Socialist Party

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



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

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us. The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

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Editorial

Burning Injustice

SO MANY things about the Grenfell Tower fire continue to stink, even weeks after the disaster. The flames were not even out, nor the bodies counted, before the recriminations and finger-pointing began.

Not surprisingly the building owners, Kensington and Chelsea Council, quickly came under savage criticism for spending £8.6m on a recent refurbishment aimed at creating new rentable space and prettifying the exterior with new cladding, but not bothering to install sprinklers or ensure that the cladding material was fire-proof.

Why, people wanted to know, was there only one fire exit in a building of 120 flats, an exit frequently blocked by rubbish including old mattresses which the council did not remove? And why, when the fire broke out, was there such chaos on the ground with nobody from the council on the scene to establish any kind of central meeting and information point for survivors and anxious relatives?

Perhaps it was to deflect some of this blame that the council leader

shamelessly implied to the press that sprinklers had not been installed because residents did not want the inconvenience. Though disaster frequently brings out the best in 'ordinary' people who fall over themselves in a rush to help, as we also saw after the Manchester and London attacks, the same cannot be said for elected officials. While Jeremy Corbyn lost no time in racing to the scene, and even the Queen turned up, the hopelessly aloof Theresa May bungled yet another press opportunity by ignoring the victims and speaking only to firefighters, sparking a huge march in Whitehall demanding her resignation.

It would be a truism to point out that capitalism doesn't care about the poor. It comes as no surprise to learn that tower blocks for rich people have multiple exit points, sprinkler systems and efficient fire-proofing. A similar fire that swept through Dubai's plush Torch Tower in 2015 yielded no casualties at all. The fact that residents' frequent warnings about the building's safety were ignored by a council presiding over one of the richest

boroughs in one of the world's richest cities is also par for the course. What we ought to learn from this, if we don't already know it, is that capitalism's elected officials and bureaucrats are not smarter, better or faster than the rest of us but are, on the whole, greedy careerists and bone-idle time-servers with their eyes on the perks and not on their responsibilities. When it really counts, it is the so-called 'ordinary' people who, time and time again, show initiative, common-sense, cooperation and indeed heroism, while the elected officials stand around with their thumbs up their backsides waiting for someone to tell them what to do. If socialism relied on people like that, we would give up the revolutionary project right now. Instead, it is the 'ordinary' people – the vast majority of the world's population – who show in times of crisis that they have got what it takes. They are, in short, 'ordinary' enough to change the world.

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Farron, Fossils and Fire Ice

ONE CLAIM that raised eyebrows during the recent general election was Tim Farron's assertion that the UK could be completely self-sufficient in renewable energy, this despite the Lib Dems' own manifesto pledge of reaching just 60 percent renewable by 2030 (bbc.co.uk/news/election-2017-40120184). Team Tim promptly issued a qualifying statement (aka rebuttal) describing his claim as 'visionary as opposed to completely literal'.

Yet Farron has not completely fallen out of his chimney. The UK recently passed an important milestone with its first coal-free day since the 1880s (bbc.co.uk/news/uk-39675418) and just last month the National Grid tweeted news of a further milestone, that on one particularly sunny and windy day in June just over half of UK energy was supplied by renewables for the first time (bbc.co.uk/news/business-40198567).

Things have changed in the past ten years or so, with renewables becoming steadily cheaper and more efficient, while international consensus on climate change, as well as the economic recession, have exerted a downward pressure on fossil usage. From a thirty-year flatline, renewable production has turned sharply upwards since 2010, crossing the spasmodic free-fall of coal in 2015 to reach 26 percent of the grid, more than any other source except gas (see Graph 3, visual.ons.gov.uk/uk-perspectives-2016-energy-and-emissions-in-the-uk). However, just as Germany plugs the dropouts in its renewable supply by strip-mining and burning brown coal, the UK props itself up by importing a third of its energy in the form of natural gas, mostly from Norway.

Meanwhile, the much-vaunted new nuclear renaissance has largely failed to materialise, with old power stations being kept running beyond their use-by dates and virtually all new building projects cancelled or mothballed, not just in the UK but across the world (*New Scientist*, 17 May). Blame the recession, and the Fukushima effect.

But it's not all green sunlit pastures for the renewable industry. Capitalist money-chasing gets in the way and renewable investment tends to founder whenever oil and gas prices plummet, as has been the case in the last few years thanks to OPEC price wars and the fracking bonanza. And renewable energy has built-in problems, notably its poor conversion ratio. UK renewable production for 2015 including wind, wave & tidal, biomass and other gas sources, hydro and solar, amounted to the

equivalent of just over 7 million tonnes of oil. However conversion losses amounted to a further 6 million tonnes, giving overall a roughly 45 percent conversion loss. Why so much? Because power is rarely used where it is produced, and wastage through pipe bleed multiplies with distance. Meanwhile wind and solar, being sporadic, need buffering to smooth out the bumps, but large-scale efficient batteries do not yet exist, so power is steadily lost in storage. There are various systems which store power by converting it to something else and then reconvert it for later use, but power is lost in these bi-directional conversions. Meanwhile a plan to sell renewable power abroad when in surplus and buy it back when in deficit – known as an interconnector deal – may offset some storage losses while incurring greater transport loss, as well as being prey to the vagaries of the market and, of course, the weather. Just because the wind stops blowing in the UK doesn't mean it will obligingly start blowing in France.



Socialists have said this so often it's hardly worth repeating, but socialism would start addressing energy by looking at ways of not wasting it in the first place. For instance, instead of building extra capacity, it would be more sensible to insulate and double-glaze houses, a task at present left to cash-strapped householders. But the biggest consumer of energy in the UK is not the domestic sector, or even industry, as you might think, but transport, and much of this energy is coughed out of exhaust pipes while miserable commuters sit in twice-daily traffic jams and motorway tailbacks, forced by capitalist economics to chase jobs in other cities. In socialism, where people would only work on a voluntary basis and mostly close to home, there would be no need for regular long-distance commuting. Put freight back on rails too, and the roads may become almost empty, thus reducing energy consumption, not to mention improving air quality.

However, socialists also take a pragmatic view of energy as with other technologies.

It makes no sense to come out today against a technology you might need tomorrow. If, for example, socialism were obliged to rely on frack gas deposits, then of course it would use them. A similar rationale applies to nuclear power, GM crops and others which today inspire protest among those who seem keener to oppose than propose.

One technology, though, might give us pause. If you haven't heard of methane hydrates yet, you're going to soon, and probably from the publicity of a colossal 'anti-hydrate' movement which is no doubt gestating even now. If you think fracking is bad, you're about to be horrified.

Methane hydrates, or 'fire ice', are burnable deposits of frozen methane which lie under the world's oceans, most of them close to continental shelves, and between them may offer more energy than all the world's coal, oil and gas combined, or up to 800 years' worth at current gas usage rates. Discovered in the 1960s, fire ice has largely been overlooked because of the difficulties of mining and extracting it, and because fracking is easier for now. However things have changed, and China recently announced a breakthrough in extraction technology which could lead to a new energy gold rush (phys.org, 19 May). So what's not to love? Well, it's methane for a start, like frack gas, and when you burn it, it releases carbon the same way. But it's concentrated, so a cubic metre of fire ice translates to 160m³ of airborne methane gas. There are two problems with this. One is that methane, while being relatively short-lived and in short supply compared to carbon in the atmosphere, is around 86 times more potent for global warming (scientificamerican.com/article/how-bad-of-a-greenhouse-gas-is-methane/). The other problem is that ocean floor drilling is still at the very edge of what mining companies can do, and a submarine blowout at depth would be like Deepwater Horizon all over again, except spewing millions of tonnes of the worst possible climate gas into the atmosphere. 'If all the methane gets out', said an International Energy Agency spokesman in 2014, 'we're looking at a Mad Max movie' (bbc.co.uk/news/business-27021610). Added to this, the proximity to continental shelves is predicted by some to cause large-scale underwater landslides which may trigger coastal tsunamis. So, not an energy technology likely to be warmly received in many quarters, especially considering capitalism's ability to promise the moon on a stick and then balls it up and stick us with the consequences.

PJS

Road-map to socialism

'Win the battle of democracy'
'Do away with private property'
'Abolish the wages system altogether'
Achieve abundance for all and inscribe on the banners:
From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs!

Capture parliaments by electing majority socialist MPs (actually Socialist delegates) mandated to pronounce: Annulment of all property and territorial rights whereby all that is on and in the Earth becomes the common heritage of the whole humanity.

Socialists are not against persons, but against capitalism.

Socialism has never been tried anywhere - ever.

When it is, it will have to be established worldwide.

World socialism can be established only in a peaceful and democratic way, by means of collective understanding and organisation of the working class. However, if any minority group obstructs the introduction of socialism, socialists will be entitled to use force to counter it. But force does not necessarily mean violence. Working class force, or power, is born out of the union of knowledge based on the materialist conception of history and the independent organisation of the working class. It is numbers, understanding and solidarity that constitute its real force. The

working class is the majority – 95 percent of the population. It is only the working class who perform all work in capitalism. Therefore its power is not violent.

Winning elections does not weaken the argument for using this power, applying force, in the event of obstruction; rather it strengthens it. On the other hand, applying force against an elected government, without taking the first step of declaring the legal defeat of capitalism through its own constitution, is not only futile, but also undermines the fact that it is the class-conscious working class that is the majority.

To win the battle of democracy, after understanding what we are going to do and where the danger lies, has a double advantage: (a) we can show that there is a majority for socialism by sending a majority of delegates (not merely representatives) to the parliament, and (b) in case there be any attempt from any corner to block this mandate, the socialist majority has the legitimacy to use other means. This tactic of social change via democratic means is free from violence and certain.

Arriving at the majority and, with it, instead of reforming capitalism and running its administration socialists will get set about its abolition; they will not accept any administrative posts of capitalist society before arriving at the position of its abolition. The task of socialist delegates is not to help run the capitalist governing process, but to incapacitate the process itself, to facilitate the abolition of capitalism by the immense majority of socialists. Because, socialists neither support nor oppose the reforms of capitalism. Their only and immediate aim is to establish socialism.

Without informed majority participation

to reach a democratic decision in the interest of all the concept of votes and democracy is meaningless. We need participatory democracy.

Socialists do not place any trust in political leaders, since the existence of leaders means the existence of followers and both remaining drowned in political ignorance. Leader/follower relation is anti-democratic. Organisation and leadership are not the same thing; there can be organization without leadership. Leadership is not necessary when an organisation is democratic. The immense majority of people can create socialism consciously in their own interest and with their own initiative.

A socialist party does not require a leader, socialists are all equals.

The World Socialist Party has organization, but no leadership. This organization is carrying on political class struggle as a vigilant guard of one most appropriate and pertinent explanation first put forward by the Socialist Party of Great Britain in 1904.

In Marxian terms 'socialism' and 'communism' are synonymous. Marx and Engels used the two terms interchangeably to mean the same thing – post-revolutionary participatory democratic socialist administration of things – affairs of life – in lieu of the capitalist administration of men. In Marx's view the principle of communism or socialism is: From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs.

See: The World Socialist Party (India) INTRODUCTION at: <http://www.worldsocialistpartyindia.org/introduction.doc>

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Russia 1917: as we saw it

The Socialist Standard described the Council of Soldiers' and Workers' Deputies as a 'broken reed' for supporting the continuance of the war.

THAT WE have due justification for refusing to slap the Russian on the back, with expressions of sickly sentiment, congratulating him upon having achieved his emancipation (*sic* !) is clearly shown by the fact that the Council of Soldiers' and Workers' Deputies despatched a congratulatory message to the Leeds conference in which an invitation to Stockholm was embodied.

Despite the dearth of news from Petrograd and other centres we are in a position to know that the Russian capitalist class still hold the field, both economically and politically. If it were not so, then M. Kerensky, clearly an agent of the Russian ruling class, would have been removed long ago. Indeed, his election could never have been even mooted by the victorious proletariat.

Signs are not wanting that the workers out there are already losing strength, as the following words issued in manifesto form by the Council of Soldiers' and Workers' Deputies to the Commander of German troops on the Russian front in reply to the pourparlers with a view to concluding peace, bear witness:

"He has forgotten that Russia knows that the overthrow of her Allies would mean the overthrow of Russia and the end of her political liberty." *Daily Chronicle* 10.6.1917.

Such words are hardly indicative of class-consciousness and form strong contrast to the much-lauded "no annexation, no indemnity" pronouncement.

When, too, it is pointed out that just prior to the issuing of this statement a meeting of the self-same deputies had stood up and vociferously cheered M. Kerensky, the new figurehead of Russian oppression, it will become increasingly apparent that in giving trust to such a body the Russian worker is relying upon the proverbial broken reed.

Small wonder, then, that the labour hacks in this country are so anxious to assist in their usual slimy, game of confusing working-class minds and conflicting vital issues.

If proof should be wanted of Kerensky's little game — and, needless to say, he has been pointed to as a genuine Socialist by the prostitute Press — it is contained in the following extract from an Order of the Day issued by the wily Minister of War to the Russian troops:

"Remember that whoever looks behind, stops, or draws back will lose everything. Do not forget that if you defend not the honour, liberty, and dignity of the country your names will be cursed. The will of the people must rid the country and the world of violators and usurpers. Such is the high deed to which I call you." — *Daily News* 28.5.17.

It would appear as though Kerensky's mortal fear lest the wretched soldiers look back is prompted by a dread that his own game might be discovered. The chances are, too, that if he, the Russian soldier, stands to lose *everything*, he will also be losing his chance of a German bullet. Certain it is that enough evidence has been forthcoming to conclusively prove the reluctance of a very large proportion of the Russian Army to continue the senseless slaughter which has transformed the European plains into vast graveyards.

(*Socialist Standard*, July 1917: www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/socialist-standard/1910s/1917/no-155-july-1917/russia-and-ourselves)

limits of reformism.

A Corbyn government would have come up against these forces too and failed, not because the money wouldn't have been there, but because it can't be used to improve people's life at the expense of profitable investment. Profits are the forbidden fruit on the Money Tree — one reason why it makes more sense to work to end the whole capitalist system rather than try to make it work in a way it just cannot.

In one sense it's capitalism that is a Magic Money Tree — for the capitalists. They invest money in production — buy premises, machinery, materials, hire workers — and sell what is produced, and end up with more money than they started with. Magic. But, like all magic, it's an illusion. What happens away from appearances is that the workers they employ to do the work produce goods of a greater value than what they are paid as wages. It is this surplus value that is the source of profits and, further down the line, of the interest of bankers, the ground rents of landlords, and what governments spend. To stop this workers need to take an axe to the root rather than merely trying to get back some of the fruit.

as an economic system. It is driven by investment for profit. If the prospects for this are good, then there's expansion and a boom. If they are not, then there's an economic downturn; which happens quite normally from time to time as part of the way capitalism works, when a boom leads to overproduction in a key industry whose fall in investment then has a knock-on effect on other sectors.

This can also happen through government intervention. If the policy a government pursues threatens profits or makes conditions for profit-making worse, this will have an economic effect — investment and so production and employment will stall. Capital will go on strike.

Left-wing governments that have set out to increase popular consumption have experienced this many times and have attributed it to a 'bankers' ramp', a 'wall of money', or 'gnomes of Zurich'. But there is nothing they were able to do about it and in the end they had to capitulate to the economic forces of capitalism and give priority to profits and profit-making. Two examples within living memory would be the Wilson government of 1964 and Mitterrand in France in 1981. Both demonstrated the



The Magic Money Tree

IN THE leaders' debate on BBC1 on 31 May, the Tory substitute, Amber Rudd, kept on accusing the Labour Party of relying on a 'Magic Money Tree' to conjure up the money to finance their election promises. She was repeating a Tory mantra designed to get people to believe that Labour's attractive reforms were impossible as there was no money there to pay for them.

In fact, there is plenty of money there, in the form of accumulated profits which, in theory, a government could tax or borrow. It's just that the Tories are against this as they want to protect profits (or want to spend it on vital things for capitalism like weapons of war). But, more importantly, to overdo this would disrupt the workings of the capitalist economic system.

Capitalism is a system of production for sale on a market with a view to profit. Profits are what makes it go round



Theresa: Strong and Stable

WE WERE told that Theresa May decided, flushed with optimism, to hold a general election on June 8 when she was hiking with her husband through Dolgellau, a small market town lying at the base of the Cader Idris range in Snowdonia. Dolgellau was once a woollen town but it was taken over by the automatic looms. Now it relies on tourists, who walk and climb or stay at the hotels there. When May was a small toddler a group of Socialist Party members climbed to the summit of Cader Idris, where one of them who was pregnant stood deeply awestruck by the view. That evening in the hotel there was a lot to be discussed — such as capitalism's abuse of the world's beauties, like the political conceits of the system's rulers to the misery of its people. For May it is rather different now from her relaxed stroll through Dolgellau.

Speaking Out

One who would have been particularly interested in that discussion was Ed Balls, whose book — *Speaking Out* — has recently been published. This is an account of his political experiences including a previous election when, according to Balls in an advisory mood: 'What we badly need in Britain is a return to the sort of leadership exemplified by Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister and Gordon Brown as a Chancellor...' without speculating on how this proposed combustible partnership might have operated. *Speaking Out* is about Balls' time as an Oxford undergraduate, then as an economist at Harvard followed by the Financial Times and a place at the Treasury until with the election of the Labour Government under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown a succession of ministerial posts preceded the defeat of that government and had him emerging as shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer.

PMQs

That was when he achieved a kind of notoriety appearing on the TV screens exchanging insults and indecipherable hand gestures with David Cameron during Prime Ministers Questions — which entailed the exposure of Cameron to lasting scorn among the fans by mistaking West Ham for Aston Villa. Those broadcast clashes earned Balls a reputation as a left-winger inspired by a passion to help establish a more equal society. Except that he denied this with his very own words: 'But being Labour doesn't mean that I can't also believe in a market economy which creates wealth and good jobs... you

couldn't build a stronger economy on a fairer society through opposing business; it had to be a partnership between the dynamism of business and the helping hand of government. And my arrival from the Financial Times, the pink-papered global business newspaper, to work for Labour in 1994 was one symbol of that change they were pursuing'.

Osborne

This was a preamble to Balls' next, heavily publicised, ambitiously gratifying, personal appearance on TV when as the news came in late on polling day he picked over the tastier morsels with George Osborne. It was not comforting for Theresa May — but then how was Osborne to react when one of her first responses to becoming party leader was ruthlessly to eject him from



his job as Chancellor of the Exchequer — even if he could then take his revenge as editor of the *Evening Standard*? And in any case May herself had never hesitated to make enemies. Apart from her infamously informing the Tories that they were better known as The Nasty Party there was the matter of her costly tastes in clothes, like a 'Deliciously Soft Escada Cashmere Coat' priced at £1950 and her revealing underwear such as headlined by the *Express* as 'The Day Theresa May's Boob-Busting Bra Sparked Twitter Meltdown'.

Paisley

Walking that day with her husband through Dolgellau Theresa May could feel easy about fixing the date of the election. She had cleared a number of rivals out of the Party, leaving her supreme to assure the voters that she along would ensure Strong Stable Government. She would see off Jean-Claude Juncker along with those other tiresome European mediocrities. The Tories were a long way ahead with every opinion poll, leaving Jeremy Corbyn behind in what seemed a swamp of

defeat. But as the campaign got under way another, profoundly unsettling, picture emerged. And when it came to that fateful day Jeremy Corbyn was returned in his constituency with 73 per cent of the vote and the Labour Party gained 10 seats. After all those confident boasts May's party did not have enough MPs to set up a government. There was plenty of advice and predictions. In the end she turned up with yet another surprise by announcing that, along with her guilt and despair about the outcome of her campaign she would ensure that at least she could be at the head of a government, even if it entailed being in alliance with the Democratic Unionists — Ian Paisley's original sprouting in Northern Ireland.

Crackpots

The DUP was formed in 1971 and has survived during various disciplines of militarism known as The Troubles. It is now the largest party in the Northern Ireland Assembly and its ten seats at Westminster make it the fifth largest in the Commons. But as it was typically known as 'a coalition of crackpots' it seemed unlikely that May would aggravate the chaos in her party by trying to survive as a government with their support. But that is what emerged from the chaos, with May as the titular leader of a minority government intended to operate on only 'matters of mutual concern', which left her enemies to speculate hopefully on exactly how it could fail. There is no lack of evidence that this will happen, if only in the recorded attitudes of the DUP leaders. One is of the Caleb Foundation opinion that the origins of the Earth — by god over six days — should be taught in schools. The party is hostile to LGBT groups and opposed to same sex marriage: 'Peter will not marry Paul'. Northern Ireland is the only place in the UK where it is illegal to have an abortion, with a prison term of life for cases of drug-induced abortion. In December 2015 Arlene Foster became the party leader but in January 2017 she had to step down from the post of First Minister after presiding over a disastrous Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme costing the Budget some £400 million and ensuring that Theresa May's effort to survive through an alliance with the DUP would look very unlikely. Which should divert us no more than on that long gone day on the Welsh mountain.

IVAN



CORBYN:

What He Did Achieve and What He Could Not Have

Jeremy Corbyn has shown one thing – that contesting an election on a manifesto promising to tax corporations and the rich to pay for improvements in health, housing and education for ‘the many’ is not the vote-loser most pundits assumed. Most, including many Labour MPs themselves, thought that contesting an election with such a programme would be suicidal. In the event, it was one of a number of factors that enabled the Labour Party to increase the number of its MPs by 30 and its share of the popular vote to 40 percent. They didn’t win of course but they were originally supposed to have been annihilated.

The election was still one to decide which group of politicians should run the political side of UK plc, but this time it wasn’t, as in recent previous elections, just a contest between two groups both pleading that their team would be the better managers of capitalism as it is. This time it was between one group still offering this (the Tories) and another saying that they would make some changes to capitalism (Labour).

That an increased number of people voted against things as they are is at least better than voting, unenthusiastically or cynically, as if having to choose between two brands of more

or less identical soap powders. If people weren’t dissatisfied with the status quo and didn’t hope for something better then the prospects for socialism would be hopeless.

However

There is a difference between being able to win votes on a comparatively left-wing programme for reforming capitalism and being able to implement it. If the Labour Party under Corbyn had done even better and actually won the election, past experience of left-wing governments has shown that it would fail to make capitalism work ‘for the many not the few’.

This is not because its ministers would prove to be incompetent or sell-outs but because capitalism is a social system based, precisely, on the exclusion of the many from the ownership and control of the means of wealth production. These belong to the few, who employ the many to operate them. Under capitalism as an economic system wealth is produced for sale on a market with a view to profit, the source of this being the unpaid labour of the many appropriated by the few.

Promising to make the economic system work for the many not the few assumes the continuing existence of ‘the few’. So, the Labour Party was saying in effect that under a Corbyn

Labour government the few would remain in their privileged place but some of their money would be taken from them and used to benefit the many. The trouble here is that the source of the income of the few is profits, and the pursuit of profits is what drives the capitalist economic system. Threaten profits and the economic system stalls. A left-wing government which taxed profits merely to improve the lives of the many would come up against the basic economic law of capitalism of ‘no profit, no production.’

Been there before

The historically-confirmed scenario for a left-wing government is: it is elected and begins to implement its programme; an economic crisis breaks out; the government reacts by backtracking on its reforms and accepting, reluctantly or not, that profits have to come first, and implements this. They lose popularity and at the next election are either voted out or re-elected on a quite different programme (not of radical reforms but merely that they won’t be as bad as the other lot).

This is why we could not be enthusiastic about Corbyn. However well-meaning he might be in some ways (and, despite the smear campaign against him, he did come across as more well-meaning than most politicians), his programme was undeliverable. Capitalism simply cannot be made to work otherwise than as a system where profits have to come before people. That’s the way it works and the way it has to work.

Illusion

This means that politics and general elections are in fact based on an illusion – that who controls the government can control the way the economy works, whereas in fact it is the other way round; governments have to accommodate their policies to the way capitalism works. So, in the end, it doesn’t matter which group of politicians is elected to form the government. Whoever they are, whatever they have promised, they will have to govern on capitalism’s terms.

Put another way, if people vote to improve their lot under capitalism this will be frustrated by the

operation of the economic forces of capitalism. Capitalism is not a system that can accommodate the democratic will of the people, as expressed in an election, to improve their conditions. The voters might propose, but capitalism disposes. This is the basis of the saying that changing governments changes nothing.

The aspiration to improve things is all to the good but it can’t be realised within the framework of capitalism. What is required to realise the hope of those who voted for Corbyn is not to tax the few for the benefit of the many. It is to abolish the division of society into the many and the few by converting the means of wealth production from ownership by and for the few into the common property of all for the benefit of all. That would provide the framework within which to re-orient production from profit-making to directly satisfying people’s needs. Not the reformist ‘People before profits’, but the revolutionary ‘People not profits’.

ADAM BUICK





It would be unfeeling not to be saddened and outraged by the Manchester and London terror attacks, or to have no sympathy for those who knew the victims. But what are we to make of the reaction to it?

The traditional laying of flowers and paying of respect to the dead is one thing, and you would expect an expression of solidarity, but holding hands and singing does nothing of itself to dig down toward the causes of terrorism and the solutions to it. How can people find out the motivations and machinations behind war and terrorism? How can the public find out the truth about who is supporting, arming and supplying Islamic State, when there is little or no transparency between government and the public, and when the mainstream media hardly bothers to address these issues?

Trade Wars

'We stand together' said the Prime Minister; but if the public knew what she knows then they would likely refuse to stand with her. Not that we see the political parties standing together. After the expression of condolences, and the platitudes, they immediately break into open argument, live, and in public. What we see is division and factionalism. The establishment, either wilfully or through ignorance, would never go so far as to admit that the protection of trade and profit is what really drives war and military intervention in the Middle East. We socialists believe that capitalism is the root cause of war, terrorism, poverty, and all of the major social ills that plague mankind. That is why we want to get rid of it.

Radicalisation

It is clear that governments are attempting to deal with the terror situation by only addressing the symptoms. Radicalisation is not a cause of terrorism, but both a symptom of it, and a method to inflict it. The insistence of focusing on de-radicalisation programmes won't do much to help. Behind those that the government mistakenly describes as having 'become radicalised', are whole nations of people that have become 'radicalised' as they've watched their families being blown to smithereens and their countries destroyed by air strikes. People became 'radicalised' as soon as the first bombs fell on Iraq, on Afghanistan, on Syria. Of course, it isn't just as simple as that. The conflicts in the Middle East have a long and complex history, but there is a kind of group denial by Western

governments that the terror attacks here are in any way a result of Western foreign policy in the Middle East. When the Leader of the Opposition suggests that British foreign policy may be playing a role in causing terrorism here in Britain, he (and anyone else who states a similar view), is slated by the government and the mainstream media. The Home Secretary's reaction to this suggestion was to state categorically that there was no connection between British foreign policy and the Manchester bombing. And over at the BBC, the typical reaction from news correspondents to this kind of suggestion was, 'cannot compute'. Perhaps the government's view is that that the existence of Islamic State is simply down to the Devil himself; and that they just happen to be particularly successful at persuading vulnerable people. Their line on this is, "Nothing to do with us, nothing to see here".

Fake views, fake news

To kill the debate says everything about the government's position, and given that the sale of arms has long been an important part of British foreign policy, they certainly wouldn't compromise the relationship with, say, the Saudi Royal Family, by asking awkward questions about the alleged support and encouragement of terrorism by the Saudi

government. These allegations are skirted around by the mainstream media; and if there is evidence out there which would prove the allegations, then the Establishment will put up fierce opposition to those attempting to uncover it. But it is acceptable for western governments and mainstream media to turn allegation into fact, as with 'Russian hacking', but, of course, this cannot apply when it comes to their friends in the Middle East. The double standard sticks out like a sore thumb.

'The Dove'

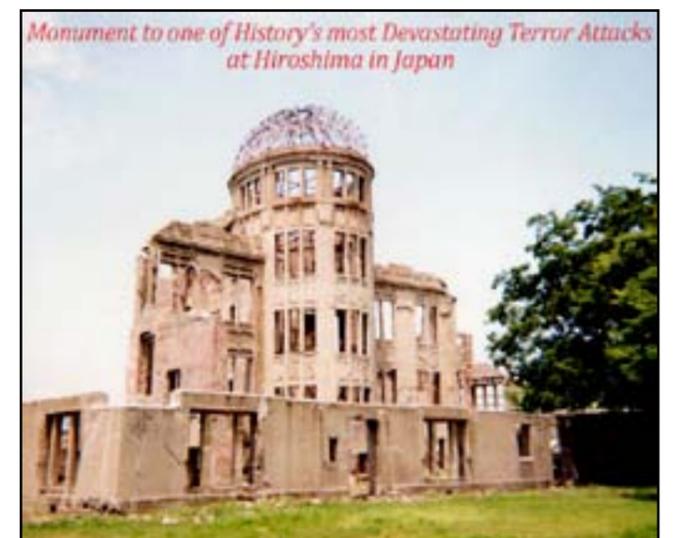
All wars are commercial wars. There is no humanitarian war, but governments do their best to persuade the public that we are fighting them, and for our own good. The record-breaking, corruption ridden Al-Yamamah (Arabic: *the Dove*) arms deal of 1985 between the UK and Saudi Arabia still has elements in it that are yet to be completed. The latest tragi-comedy is that the 'deal-maker-in-chief', President Trump, wants to bring peace to the Middle East by signing a new record-breaking, \$350bn-over-10 years arms deal with the Saudis. Is it true that UK-made cluster bombs are currently being used by the Saudi-led coalition in the conflict in Yemen? Or are they just relics of old conflicts, as the Saudi government claims? We will probably never find out. The less that people know, the less chance of them questioning the present situation; and so it is

that the reaction to the terrorist attacks here will probably remain the same, and the cycle will continue.

The truth is in there

The lack of transparency in government inevitably results in the degradation of democracy, and it is more than a little sickening to see the 'leaders of the free world' stand up after terrorist atrocities and state that we stand together to protect democracy, or freedom of speech, or western values, or anything else that they can co-opt and misappropriate in order to serve the purposes of capitalism and the capitalist class. This isn't just social observation or commentary. War, poverty, misery, terrorism – as socialists we find it impossible to imagine that these would exist in a socialist society. We cannot state that there would never be conflicts, but these are most likely to be local, and easily and peaceably resolved.

If, by some fantastic occurrence, a truth-serum was to become mixed into the water at the next G7 summit, then the revelations thereof from these renowned leaders of the free world might bring their democracy crashing down around them.
NM



The civil war in Yemen: Britain supports our bastards

The poorest country in the Middle East, Yemen (part of which was the former British colony of Aden) has endured years of instability and poor governance. After the 2011 revolution toppled President Ali Abdullah Saleh who had been in power for more than 30 years, a new president, Hadi, was sworn in with international backing – but he was never able to fully establish authority. Yemen descended into civil war in September 2014 when the Houthis, a Shi'ite sect, seized power. A coalition assembled by Saudi Arabia launched an air campaign in March 2015, to restore the exiled government of Hadi. The Saudi-led bombardments have resulted in massive loss of life, and damage to infrastructure and millions have been driven from their homes. 10,000 people have been killed, many more thousands injured. In addition, many more are indirect victims of the conflict, including those who suffer from chronic diseases, including high blood pressure and diabetes, and are unable to get treatment. Fewer than half of Yemen's health facilities are operational as aid agencies struggle to access war-torn regions with lifesaving medicine, and around 1,000 children die every week from preventable diseases like diarrhoea and respiratory infections.



The Houthis are endeavouring to take complete control in what is what Boris Johnson has confirmed is a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran. In his words: 'There are politicians who are twisting and abusing religion and different strains of the same religion in order to further their own political objectives... That's why you've got the Saudis, Iran, everybody, moving in, and puppeteering and playing proxy wars' (Guardian, 8 December).

Saudi Arabia and its regional partners have used the spectre of Iran to justify an extensive bombing campaign over the country. Despite the extent of suffering, the war in Yemen receives less media attention than conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Many people in the UK are still unaware of the extent of the bloody civil war there and the wide-scale bombing by Saudi Arabia.

Arms sales

Back in early 2016, it was revealed that British military personnel were embedded in the command and control centre for the Saudis. Naturally, this carried the standard disclaimer

that the UK's guidance was to assist the Saudi regime to comply with international humanitarian law. Advice that, if it was given, has been ignored in view of the regime's bombing of civilians and hospitals, dropping internationally-outlawed cluster bombs (made in Great Britain). Cluster bombs release dozens of small 'bomblets', which often lie unexploded and can cause horrific injuries long after the initial attack. When 'our' allies commit war crimes, a convenient blind eye is turned to it by the government which remains complicitly silent. Parliament's International Development Committee has said the evidence is 'overwhelming' that the Saudi-led coalition fighting the Houthi rebels violates humanitarian law. 'We are shocked that the UK government can continue to claim that there have been no breaches of humanitarian law by the coalition, and continue sales of arms to Saudi Arabia. We are convinced that there is more than a clear risk that weapons sold to Saudi Arabia might be used in the commission of serious violations of international humanitarian law. The evidence that we have heard is overwhelming that the Saudi-led coalition has committed violations of international law, using equipment supplied by the UK.'

There is a reluctance by the UK or its media to condemn the military intervention of the despotic Wahhabi

dictatorship. Imagine a boat full of innocent refugees, men, women, and children, being machine-gunned by a helicopter gunship, leaving dozens dead and many more wounded. Wouldn't that make the headlines in the media and lead to very vocal condemnation by the government? Not in the UK. Could the reason be that the perpetrators of the crime happened to be one of Britain's biggest weapons customers.

Theresa May continues a policy of bending over backward (or is it forwards?) to cosy up to the corrupt Saudi sheiks in order to sell weapons. 'Riyadh is a key trading partner,' says George Joffé, a research fellow and professor of Politics and International Studies at the University of Cambridge. 'The main answer as to why the United Kingdom supports the coalition is as simple as it is shameful: contracts.'

Since the bombing began in March 2015, Britain has licensed sales of arms to the regime that are worth billions. Raytheon's factories in Essex and Scotland produce the Paveway IV guided bomb which, according to its manufacturer, has proved itself 'time and again, as the weapon of choice by the end users'. One enthusiastic end

user is Saudi Arabia, bombing hospitals, schools, markets, grain warehouses, ports and a refugee camp to turn Yemen into a living nightmare.

Britain doesn't just sell arms to those dictatorships – it sells its diplomatic silence as well. While Saudi Arabia pulls the trigger, it is Britain and the US which ever-faithfully reloads and replaces its weapons. Calls to suspend arms sales to Saudi Arabia over war crimes have been ignored. The UK has given political cover to the Saudi regime by preventing various resolutions and investigations from happening. Under UK arms export law, it is illegal to sell arms or munitions to a state that is at 'clear risk' of committing serious violations of international humanitarian law. To date, the United Nations has recorded coalition attacks that have violated international law, many of them including shelling civilian installations such as hospitals, schools, mosques or markets. However, the British government is firmly opposed to an arms embargo against its ally, claiming there is no conclusive proof of human rights violations. It also blocked a proposal by the Netherlands that the UN Human Rights Council set up an independent inquiry into war crimes in Yemen.

Oxfam has said the UK has violated the International Arms Trade Treaty, which regulates the transfer of conventional arms to ensure there are no violations of international humanitarian law. Governments who sign the arms treaty are obliged to review their weapon sales and ensure that they are not being used for human rights violations. Oxfam accused British politicians of being in 'denial' over the selling of arms to Saudi Arabia for use in the war in Yemen. Penny Lawrence, Oxfam UK deputy chief executive, told a conference. 'It has misled its own parliament about its oversight of arms sales and its international credibility is in jeopardy as it commits to action on paper but does the opposite in reality.' Addressing MPs in the House of Commons, Minister for the Middle East, Tobias Ellwood, dismissed evidence from a UN report that the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen had targeted innocent civilians as predominantly based on hearsay and may have been falsified by Houthi rebels. UN Security Council resolution 2216 reads as if Saudi Arabia is an impartial arbitrator rather than a party to the conflict with no mention of the Saudi-led intervention. There was similarly no call for a humanitarian pause in the fighting or safe corridor for aid.

Civilians pay the price

After two years of civil war, the country is on the brink of famine, of Yemen's 25.6 million people, almost 19 million are in urgent need of assistance. Almost seven million are severely food insecure, meaning they need food aid immediately. UNICEF has calculated that a child is dying every 10 minutes from a preventable illness. Two million children are acutely malnourished. Less than half Yemen's hospitals are functioning at all, and those that are face daily shortages of staff, medicines, and electricity. Humanitarian groups struggle to deliver aid to large parts of the country. Not only are people starving. Those who try to alleviate the situation are prevented from doing so. 'Clearly, Yemen is one of the hardest places in the world today to work – massive security concerns, escalation in the fighting and the violence across the country.' WFP's Deputy Regional Director Matthew Hollingworth said several medical facilities have been damaged or destroyed. While arms sales to the warring factions are thriving, the key port of Hudaydah, which aid agencies describe as 'a lifeline' for Yemen, is now virtually closed, due to a naval blockade by coalition forces and the destruction of its cranes in air strikes is proving devastating for the civilian population in a country that depends heavily on imports of foodstuffs. Imports are

essential as only 4 percent of the country's land is arable and only a fraction of that is currently used for food production. This Saudi economic strangulation is preventing the import of food and medicine and the targeting of vital infrastructures such as roads and bridges has contributed to the dire situation Yemenis are now facing. 'If restrictions on the commercial imports of food and fuel continue, then it will kill more children than bullets and bombs...' said UNICEF's spokesman, Christophe Boulierac.

The Western states are showing that they value the profits of their weapons industries over the lives of Yemenis, otherwise they would immediately stop providing the bombs, the bombers, the armoured cars and tanks, the Apache attack helicopters, the missiles, the howitzers, the training, the refuelling, and all other military support to the Saudi coalition. The reality is that the Saudi Air Force, roughly half UK-supplied and half US-supplied jets, could barely function without the ongoing assistance from Washington and London. Without a ceasefire between Houthi factions and the Saudi Arabia-led coalition, and the opening of sea-ports and airports so vital supplies can enter the country to allow for the rebuilding infrastructure, the crisis is unlikely to let up, and it will be civilians who pay the price.

Saudi Arabia does not operate on its own but receives logistical support from Britain and the US. European manufacturers also contribute to the armaments orgy. The media looked the other way when Saudi Arabia blackmailed the United Nations by threatening to pull funding if the country was not dropped from the secretary-general's 'list of shame' of states that kill children. A UN report had revealed that the Saudi-led coalition is responsible for over 60 percent of the children killed in the conflict. Yet the country was able to use its position on the UN Human Rights Council (how they got there when there's no pretence in Saudi Arabia is a mystery) to thwart an investigation into violations committed in Yemen. David Wearing, a researcher on UK-Saudi-Gulf relations with the Campaign Against the Arms Trade report, said: 'Successive governments of all political colours have prioritised arms sales over human rights. The toxic UK-Saudi alliance has boosted the Saudi regime and lined the pockets of arms companies, but has had devastating consequences for the people of Saudi Arabia and Yemen. For the sake of those people, the UK government must finally stop arming and empowering the brutal Saudi monarchy.'

Britain supplies the Saudi dictatorship with weapons and it provides the diplomatic smokescreen to protect the mediaeval Saudi regime's war-crimes. The current Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon shamelessly backs arms manufacturer BAE to sell more weapons to the Saudi Arabian government. 'Are we supporting them? Absolutely.' A past foreign secretary Philip Hammond pledged to 'support the Saudis in every practical way short of engaging in combat.' Nor should we forget that about 100 Labour MPs failed to support a motion moved by shadow foreign secretary Emily Thornberry to withdraw support for the Saudi regime. Thornberry was subjected to interruptions from Labour MPs. Labour MP John Woodcock, for instance, who claimed that British support is 'precisely focused on training Saudis' to improve their targeting, so as to 'create fewer civilian casualties', was parroting the official government line. The idea that the Saudi regime's 'widespread and systematic' attacks as stated by the UN on civilian targets are just a series of well-meaning errors is one that lacks credibility. And if decades of training provided by Britain to the Saudi pilots hasn't prevented these supposed errors by now, it seems rather unlikely that it will in the future.

ALJO

Ups and Downs in China

We look at the rise of China as an economic and political power

In April the first rail freight service from Britain to China left a terminal in Essex for a 7,500-mile journey to eastern China. Thirty containers with goods such as whisky, soft drinks and pharmaceuticals travelled via the Channel Tunnel and seven countries (including Russia and Kazakhstan). The train took over two weeks to reach its destination, but this route is cheaper than air transport and faster than sea. Three months before, the first freight train had travelled from China to the UK. This illustrates the fact that China is now a central part of the global trade system, as both importer and exporter.

Developments over the last forty years have resulted in China being the world's second most economically powerful country, after the US. Over a hundred Chinese companies are now on the Fortune 500 Global List, with only the US having more. State-owned enterprises gradually became less dependent on the government, but even private companies still rely greatly on government permissions and licences. Investment from overseas companies, mainly via joint ventures, resulted in industrial expansion. Labour costs have been very low, leading to big profits, but are now increasing.

The change from state capitalism to a mixed state and private system may have been started by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, but the idea of China being part of the global economy did not originate with Deng. As Mao Zedong is reported to have told a US diplomat in 1945:

'China needs to build up light industries to supply her own market and raise the living standards of her own people. Eventually she can supply these goods to other countries in the Far East. To help pay for this foreign trade and investment, she has raw materials and agricultural products. America is not only the most suitable country to assist this economic development of China: she is also the only country fully able to participate.'

GDP has grown at around seven percent a year in the last few years, and exports have been consistently larger than imports (by \$380bn in 2014, for instance, and \$600bn in 2015). Manufacturing has been the core of the expansion, though now the service sector outranks industry and construction. Electronics, machinery and clothing are the largest export sectors, with many global companies having their smartphones and laptops manufactured in China, often in sweatshops and factories with appalling working conditions, leading to much resistance by workers.

In the first three months of this year, GDP growth continued at an annual rate of just under seven percent, but there are signs of a slowdown since then. China's foreign exchange reserves, though still enormous, have been falling steadily. There have been claims by some economists that

China is on the verge of a crash comparable to the subprime crisis in the US in 2008, but such predictions are hardly reliable. In May China's credit rating was cut by one agency.

One result of these changes has been a massive movement of people from the countryside to cities, not as a part of government policy but as a consequence of people seeing urban life as a way to escape from rural poverty and isolation. It is claimed that over the last 35 years, 500 million people have moved from the countryside to cities, including ten million moving to Shanghai alone. This inevitably puts enormous pressure on services such as housing and education, with many children of these migrants not being able to attend school. One response of China's rulers has been to create urban mega-regions, which cover massive areas and have populations of perhaps 100 million. One example is Jing-Jin-Ji, to include much of the cities of Beijing and Tianjin and the province of Hebei. These mega-regions need a great deal of investment in housing, transport and other kinds of infrastructure, and there are concerns that they will lead to 'endless cities', as already found in countries such as Brazil and Japan.

It is generally accepted that there have been big decreases in poverty over this period. On World Bank figures, in 1990 650 million people in China were living on less than \$1.90 a day, but by 2013 this figure was down to around 26 million. But it is by no means clear how reliable such figures are, and even most of those living above this poverty line are pretty badly off. Moreover, inequality is not just a matter of rural-urban contrasts, as a 2014 survey suggested that one percent of the population possessed one-third of the wealth. There are more dollar billionaires in China than in the US, though even the richest (Wang Jianlin, with \$32bn) is not among the world's twenty wealthiest people.

And there are big plans in China for further economic expansion, with claims to sovereignty over raw materials in exclusive economic zones in the South China Sea, and the proposed Belt and Road Initiative (see the *Socialist Standard*, June 2015). Even though the economic problems mentioned earlier cast doubt on whether Chinese banks can finance all this by themselves, a big summit was held in Beijing in May to push the proposal. British capitalists have their eyes on China for increased trade, especially post-Brexit, and Philip Hammond said in a speech there that 'Britain, lying at the western end of the Belt and Road, is a natural partner in this endeavour'. If – a big 'if' – Britain signed a free-trade deal with China, it might help to mitigate any adverse effects on trade and profits of leaving the EU. Representatives of the EU have, however, been less keen on the Belt and Road, supposedly because

of the lack of commitment to environmental sustainability, but perhaps more because of concern about economic competition. Vladimir Putin spoke at the same summit, referring to a Greater Eurasia and declaring that this would be 'a truly civilisation-wide project looking toward the future'. More rhetoric than anything else, of course, but the 'New Silk Road' may well be viewed as a framework for a forthcoming challenge to US global hegemony, with Putin not wanting Russia to lose out to China.

China's rise has frightened the American ruling class in various ways. Under Obama it was decided that the majority of US naval forces would be transferred to the Pacific, and there are now over four hundred military bases, stretching from Australia, the Marshall Islands and the Philippines to South Korea and Japan, stocked with missiles, warships and nuclear weapons. No doubt these have many possible uses as a way of maintaining US dominance, but one potential employment is for what John Pilger (*New Internationalist*, December 2016) has described as 'the coming war on China'. While campaigning to be

president, Donald Trump described China as an enemy of the US, but the language became friendlier after he took office. In May a trade agreement was signed under which China will allow imports of US beef, while the US will allow the import of cooked poultry from China. Hardly a major change, but possibly an indication of future developments.

If China overtakes the US economically in the next decade or two, as some have claimed is likely, then US hegemony will have lasted a little over a century.

PAUL BENNETT



After the Show has Passed

MODERN POLITICS is a grotesque circus. An openly evil, insane, pantomime defender of the privilege and power of the one percent is placed opposite a reasonable, fairer-minded option. Today, all those with the basic common sense to put the needs of the majority first, have been enthused by the promises of Corbyn and Labour, swept up in a wave of optimism.

We would not want to pour cold water on that hope and desire for positive change, we feel it too. But there is one nagging problem. Albert Einstein sensibly defined insanity as repeating the same actions but expecting a different outcome. Not to act on what history teaches us would be criminal irresponsibility in the current global crisis. The fact is, the current world system of capitalism is the root cause of every social problem, from poverty in all its forms, to climate change, to impending nuclear war. And a vote for Labour is as much a vote for this social system as a vote for the Tories or Greens or UKIP or SNP or Liberals etc.

Corbyn has made it explicitly clear that he believes that capitalism can be modified but not ended. He and May are absolutely in agreement about one key belief – which they are both wrong about: that there will always be this system of wage slavery, of employment/exploitation, of profits and power for a tiny minority, because that's what we have now, and profound change must be kept off the agenda permanently as 'unrealistic'.

This same facade of picking the more 'decent' candidate rather than the absurd ogre has succeeded in keeping real change off the agenda in every election for over a hundred years. It was the received and accepted agenda with Trump and Clinton, with Blair, Thatcher, and especially with the Labour landslide victory of 1945. But if these well-meaning reform campaigns to soften capitalism rather than get rid of it had been even remotely successful, then we wouldn't be back here yet again today, faced with all of the problems which incoming governments similar to

or more radical than Corbyn swore they would solve.

Without exception, within months of getting in, such governments have been forced to abandon and reverse their promised policies, because unless we end the capitalist system entirely, its uncontrollable market forces continue ultimately to direct policy rather than vice versa. This may be an unpalatable fact, it will certainly be scoffed at by many, and we may be accused of pessimism or worse. But this is realistic, it is the inexorable lesson of history. A vote for any of these parties, however nice and well-meaning their profile, is actually giving your political consent to a global social system which is the most exploitative and murderous in history, and may destroy us all.

The tiny minority with vast wealth and power delight in this bullying pressure, this gross assumption that our democratic responsibility simply consists of selecting who should supervise our exploitation, whilst real change is derided by all sides as 'unrealistic'. Real change would mean all productive resources being held in common, with the production of wealth socially organised, directly for meeting all human needs rather than to be sold in a market for profit; the beginning of real, total social and economic democracy.

CLIFFORD SLAPPER



[Back to Basic](#)

IN A speech at Harvard University, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg called for everyone to be paid a basic income by the state, whether working or not (i paper, 27 May). This was one of the Green Party's promises in the recent general election. The 'Parti Socialiste' candidate in the French presidential elections, Benoît Hamon, favoured it too. As has Italian Autonomist Toni Negri.

Its various advocates offer different reasons. Zuckerberg wants to give people some free time to think up new ideas. The Green Party wants a pilot scheme to see if it would be cheaper than current income support. Hamon saw it as an answer to the fall in paying demand caused by the growing unemployment which he anticipates robotisation will bring. Negri sees it as a demand around which all critics and victims of capitalism – the employed, the unemployed, women – can unite in a way they cannot around sectional trade union demands for higher wages.

All of them envisage it being introduced within the context of the capitalist

economic system of production for sale on a market with a view to profit. And that's the rub. It is all very well proposing reforms to capitalism involving the government spending more but, since governments produce nothing, where is the money to come from? In theory the government could simply print it but that would lead to Zimbabwe or Venezuela-style inflation. It would have to come from taxes, but even taxes on wages are ultimately passed on to employers. So the money would have to come out of their profits. But profits are what makes the capitalist economic system go round. Less profits means less investment. There are limits to how much a government can increase taxes without provoking an economic slowdown or downturn.

As if to answer Zuckerberg, the OECD, an intergovernmental organisation of the richest capitalist countries, published at the same time a study of the effect of introducing a basic income in four countries (Britain, France, Italy and Finland) on the assumption that taxes are not increased and that the amount of cash payments currently going to all those below retirement age were evenly divided among them.

The OECD concluded that the basic income that everyone would receive would be well below the poverty line (as the minimum to which governments at the moment guarantee to make up the

income of the poor) in each of the four countries. It added: 'Any basic income at "a socially and politically meaningful levels" would require additional spending on benefits and therefore higher taxes to finance this.' (Times, 29 May).

If everyone below retirement age was paid only a basic income equal to their country's poverty line, the OECD found that in Italy and Finland the government would actually pay less in total on payments to those under retirement age than it now does; which means that some of them would receive a drastic cut in their payments, in particular those who have taken early retirement. So much, then, for Negri's suggestion that UBI is a demand for UBI that could unite all victims of capitalism.

The OECD report neglected one other drawback – that a basic income paid to those in work would amount to a wage subsidy for their employers. Wages tend to gravitate around a level that is enough to enable the workers to buy the things they need to maintain their particular working skills. If the government provided them with some of the money in the form of a basic income then the employers would no longer have to; wages would tend to sink by an amount equal to the basic income.

So, all in all, not even a desirable, let alone a practicable, reform.



Maid In America

LENGTHY, WEIGHTY, glossy dramas have become a speciality of US television producers in recent years. The more interesting examples have had some political slant: The Americans follows the increasingly complicated lives of Soviet agents undercover in 80s Washington DC, while House Of Cards depicts the power games and machinations in Congress.

The premise behind The Handmaid's Tale (Channel 4) is less familiar, but its themes have wider relevance to society today. The series is an adaptation of the 1985 novel by Margaret Atwood, who is one of the show's producers and makes a blink-and-you'll-miss-it cameo appearance. Leisurely dramatised over ten episodes (with a second series already commissioned), the series has more time to explore its setting than previous stage and screen versions and, arguably, the novel itself.

The story is set in near-future America, renamed the Republic of Gilead when a fundamentalist Christian movement took power following a terrorist attack on the government. Gilead is ruled as a theocracy-cum-military dictatorship, with tropes familiar from other dystopias: stormtroopers, unpersons, secret police (the 'Eyes'), a strict caste system, surveillance and an underground resistance network. Gilead's economy isn't explored in detail; tokens are needed to purchase particular commodities, which could imply some form of state capitalism. Pollution has caused many people to be infertile, so women able to have babies have become a valuable commodity. These 'Handmaids' have been appropriated to bear children on behalf of the ruling elite, and are forced to be live-in sex slaves. The drama follows the repressed, trapped life of one such Handmaid, named Offred (literally 'of Fred', the Commander who owns her). Other women work as housekeepers or instructors for the Handmaids, and all are forbidden to read, write, own property or go outside unaccompanied. The system is enforced not only by cattle prods and rifles, but also by indoctrination using the language of the Old Testament. When

writing the book, Atwood was careful to keep Gilead plausible: 'One of my rules was that I would not put any events into the book that had not already happened in what James Joyce called the 'nightmare' of history, nor any technology not already available. No imaginary gizmos, no imaginary laws, no imaginary atrocities' (New York Times, 10 March).

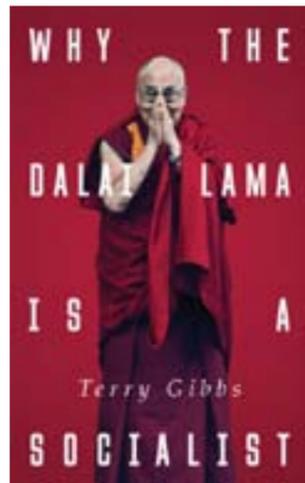
It would be tempting to draw parallels between Gilead and Trump's America, although work had begun on televising The Handmaid's Tale months before he became president. The producers have wanted the series to draw attention to longer-term threats to women's rights; since 2011, a resurgence of conservative lawmakers in America have passed hundreds of restrictions on abortion and access to birth control. America's shift to the right with Trump's ascendancy has made the story more politically charged. Lead actor and co-producer Elisabeth Moss is concerned that people could sleepwalk into an even harsher society: 'People have to stay awake. And after you wake up, you should get out of bed and start doing things. There is no time later. My worst fear is that people become complacent, and apathetic, again' (Guardian Guide, 10 June). So, The Handmaid's Tale can be interpreted as a warning against complacency. Offred often recalls her comparatively free life before Gilead was established, raising the question of how society could shift so quickly. Atwood suggests that people would be more likely to drift into accepting oppression if it was couched in pre-existing structures. When writing The Handmaid's Tale, she imagined such a foundation could be 'the heavy-handed theocracy of 17th Century Puritan New England, with its marked bias against women, which would need only the opportunity of a period of social chaos to reassert itself' (Guardian Review, 21 January 2012).

Atwood had studied Puritanism at Harvard University, which itself would become one of the novel's settings. She wrote the book during the mid-80s'

resurgence of the right wing in America, which encompassed conservative religious preachers as well as government. 'One third of all federal budget cuts under Reagan's presidency came from programmes that served mainly women' (Just A Backlash: Margaret Atwood, Feminism and The Handmaid's Tale, Shirley Neuman). Atwood also drew inspiration for Gilead from her stays in Iran (then going through its Islamist 'Cultural Revolution' and at war with Iraq) and countries behind the Iron Curtain. In Ceausescu's Romania, for example, contraception and abortion were severely restricted and pregnant women were policed closely, with the aim of increasing the birth rate.

The impact of authority on women is the central theme of The Handmaid's Tale. Moss said 'for me, feminism is equal rights for men and women ... I play a breeder, a host, a woman for whom all of her rights, and all of her family and friends, have been taken away. She has nothing. So, yes, it is a feminist story' (Guardian Guide, 10 June). Atwood has said that the book is 'a study of power, and how it operates and how it deforms or shapes the people who are living within that kind of regime' (New York Times, 17 February 1986). In the story, those who are oppressed also reinforce the oppression of other people around them, such as when a group of Handmaids publicly blame a rape victim for being assaulted. Atwood said that since she first wrote this scene, it has taken on new relevance in our 'age of social media, which enables group swarmings' (New York Times, 10 March). The most effective dystopias reveal different facets as their real-life context changes. All speculative fiction is really about the past – and present – rather than the future. The Handmaid's Tale reminds us of the dangers of accepting authority, and its new adaptation is as timely now as it was when it was first written.

MIKE FOSTER



Not Half
Terry Gibbs: *Why the Dalai Lama is a Socialist: Buddhism and the Compassionate Society*. Zed Books £12.99.

He isn't, of course, but that does not mean this book is without value. The eye-catching title aside, there is relatively little here about the Dalai Lama, and the book is really about how some forms of buddhism (which is often described as a philosophy rather than a religion) make similar-seeming claims to Marxism.

The Dalai Lama has in fact described himself as 'half-Marxist, half-Buddhist', but all the 'Marxist' part of this seems to mean is being concerned with equality and the condition of the majority. Some buddhist views, it is claimed, deal with topics such as alienation and ideology that are important topics within Marxism too. Buddhism argues that people experience themselves as alienated and see nature and other people as things to be manipulated. Alienation, Gibbs suggests, is an inevitable result of living in a class society and, among other things, it motivates people's consumption habits, such as always wanting the best and latest version of some gadget. Workers are deluded, in buddhist terms, and have a false consciousness in Marxist terms (though Gibbs seems unaware that Marx never used the term 'false consciousness'). But it is not clear that the buddhist perspective adds anything, or that Marxism and buddhism are really that similar, other than superficially.

There is a brief acknowledgement that buddhist movements have contributed to suffering, but no reference to, for instance, the slaughter of muslim Rohingyas in Burma. A useful discussion deals with coltan, a mineral found in smartphones, which is produced in appalling conditions in Central Africa.

As for the kind of society that should replace capitalism, Gibbs is not at all clear, though a reference to 'socialist Cuba' is hardly reassuring. She also advocates a sustainable social system: 'Such a global society would be marked by democratic

processes that affirm mutuality, horizontality and respect as well as recognize our interdependence as the various cultures, races, religions, species and ecosystems sharing this planet.' A guiding principle of this system would be 'big C compassion', which seems to mean being engaged with other humans, non-human animals and the rest of nature; perhaps this is what is described as a 'sense of universal responsibility'.

As this last point suggests, this book is all a bit vague, and it is clear that buddhism involves a number of different versions, many of them extremely mystical. Moreover, there is more to creating a truly democratic and sustainable society than showing compassion, whether with a big or little 'c'.
PB

Popularising Marx
The People's Marx. Abridged Popular Edition of the Three Volumes of Capital.
By Julian Borchardt. Print-on-demand edition, Relnk Books, India, 2017.

Marx was the first to analyse scientifically the operation of capitalism as an economic system or 'the capitalist mode of production' as he called it. He analysed it as being a system of the production and accumulation of capital as a sum of money invested in the production of commodities (items of wealth produced for sale, as opposed to for direct use) by workers selling their labour power; the price they got for this (their wages) did represent the value of what they were selling but was less than the value of what they produced; the difference was 'surplus value' which was the source of the new capital accumulated by being invested in production.

Marx planned to write six volumes on this but only got round to writing the first. After his death Engels worked Marx's manuscripts into two further volumes. The other planned volumes, on world trade and on wage-labour, were never even written.

The three volumes amount to over 2000 pages in both the Moscow Foreign Languages Publishing House and the Penguin editions. Only a minority of socialists will have read all three. Not that you need to read them all, of course, to be a socialist, but it helps to have some idea of how Marx analysed the operation of capitalism since it is basic to the socialist case that in can never work in the interest of the producers as it is based on their exploitation. So there has always been a place for works popularising Marxian economics. Julian Borchardt's People's Marx has been one. Written in German in

1919 it was translated and published in English in 1921. Borchardt was one of the minority of German Social Democrats who had opposed the war. He had collaborated in translating Volumes II and III of Capital into French. Relnk Books have now made his selection of Marx's writings available as a print-on-demand book.

Marx himself felt that the best way to introduce the concepts he would be using to analyse capitalism was to begin by analysing its basic unit, the 'commodity' as an item of wealth produced with a view to be exchanged with some other item of items of wealth produced for the same purpose. The opening chapters of Volume I of Capital do not in fact analyse the 'capitalist mode of production' but a model of an economy where commodities are produced by independent artisans owning their own instruments of production, for direct exchange with other commodities, i.e. by barter. Marx later introduces money (as a commodity that can be exchanged with all other commodities) but even this is still not capitalism. It is only when he drops the assumption that the commodity-producers are independent artisans and has the commodities produced by landless, propertyless people working for a wage for a capitalist who has invested money-capital in commodity-production that he comes to capitalism. So, it is only from the fourth chapter that he begins to analyse the capitalist mode of production.

Marx evidently thought that this step-by-step, assumption-by-assumption approach was the best way to introduce concepts such as 'abstract labour', 'value', 'exchange value', 'socially necessary labour' that he was going to use in his actual analysis of capitalism. Some of his popularizers have taken the view that it is better to begin with capitalism as wage workers experience it. Borchardt was among these. He opens with a passage from Volume III about profit and the various theories as to its origin where Marx concludes that it originates not in circulation as it appears to but in production.

To attempt to summarise the three volumes of Capital in less than 300 pages is a bold venture but Borchardt does introduce readers, in Marx's own words, not just to capitalism's origin and development and its effect on the working class (Volume I) but also on how it works in practice (Volume II and III).

The original edition attributes quite a number of passages from Volume I to Volume II. As this is a facsimile edition unfortunately this is repeated.

ALB

The Peace Museum, Bradford

There are plenty of museums that cover wars, the armed forces and military history, but rather few that deal with peace and peace movements. The only accredited one in Britain is Bradford Peace Museum, founded in 1994, which has connections with the International Network of Museums for Peace (museumsforpeace.org) and the Division of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford. In 1997 the local council declared Bradford a 'City of Peace', though it is hard to see what that achieves.

It's not a large museum, but there is plenty of interesting material, covering the period from World War One down to the present day. There are original documents, banners, posters and other objects relating to the two world wars, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, in the main, as well as material on migrants to Bradford, including recent refugees and asylum seekers. Aldermaston Marches and activities at Greenham Common illustrate some of the efforts of peace movements. In the last two years of World War One there was an active, if nowadays little-remembered, anti-war movement among women in Bradford.

A copy of the 1919 Versailles Peace Treaty is accompanied by a quote from Ferdinand Foch, who was Supreme Allied Commander during the war: 'This is not peace, it's an armistice for twenty years.' He meant that Germany had not been



punished sufficiently, but even talk of an armistice was a bit optimistic, considering all the fighting that took place between the two world wars.

There is a mention of a claim made (it is not said by who) in 2003, that there were two superpowers, the USA and worldwide public opinion, which is just wishful thinking. A quote is shown from Norman Angell (who wrote a best-selling book The Great Illusion in 1910, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1934 and was for a short period a Bradford MP): 'The obstacles to peace are in the minds and hearts of



men.' Unfortunately this naive remark underlines the fact that the museum exhibits do not include any attempt to explain why wars break out, or references to the role of capitalism.

PB

The Environment



Summer School 2017
21st – 23rd July
Fircroft College,
Birmingham

These days, concerns about the environment tend to get pushed into the background by issues like Brexit, Trump's presidency and ongoing austerity measures. But climate change, pollution and extinctions don't go away just because the headlines are filled with other events. 2016 was the warmest year on record, with implications for sea levels and habitats; more and more waste is produced for future generations to deal with, and many hundreds of species continue to become extinct every year. Legislation places some restrictions on the use of dangerous materials, hunting and waste disposal, for example. However, legislators can only work within a system which is structured to safeguard the interests of the wealthy elite, rather than everyone. And of course laws don't always prevent environmentally-damaging methods from being used if they save or make money. Capitalism turns the natural world into a resource to be exploited for a profit. The Socialist Party argues that the environment can only be managed responsibly if society as

Glenn Morris: **Destroying the Hand that Feeds Us-Why Capitalism Cannot Solve Our Environmental Problems**

A talk on the case for a new society which works alongside nature instead of destroying it

Janet Surman: **World Military versus The Global Environment**

War is one of the most profitable arms of capitalism. We investigate the negative impacts of militarism on the global environment

Paddy Shannon: **The Vegans Are Coming!**

Attitudes to meat production and consumption are changing. This session explores the various arguments with a view to clarifying what our position as socialists ought to be.

Carla Dee: **One World, Our World - A Quiz**

What do you know about climate change, the natural world and urban environments? Test your knowledge here.

Brian Gardner: **Socialism saves the World! How quickly could Socialised Production Resolve Climate change?**

How will economic decisions be made in the absence of the market and will production for use save the planet in time?

The event will also include a bookstall, an exhibition about the SPGB's approach to environmental issues over the decades and an exclusive publication.

a whole is managed co-operatively and in everyone's interests. If our industries and services were owned and run in common, then we would be able to produce what we need and want in the most reasonable, sustainable way. Our weekend of talks and discussions looks at the current state of the environment, and its prospects for the future we make for it. Full residential cost (including accommodation and meals Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) is £100. The

concessionary rate is £50. Day visitors are welcome, but please book in advance. To book a place, send a cheque (payable to the Socialist Party of Great Britain) to Summer School, Sutton Farm, Aldborough, Boroughbridge, York, YO51 9ER, or book online at spgb.net/summerschool2017 or through the QR code. E-mail enquiries to spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk

50 Years Ago



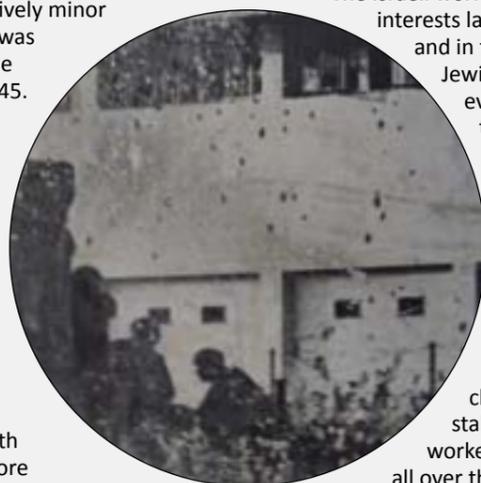
Middle East War – the Aftermath

The Middle East War must be seen in perspective. Firstly, it is only the latest in a long line of comparatively minor wars since the world was carved up anew by the victorious Allies in 1945.

It has been a common feature of most of the so-called settlements which followed the Second World War, that they succeeded only in making new trouble spots, new tensions, new provocations. The creation of Israel is no exception to this.

A war in the Middle East is more, of course, than a number of minor powers in conflict. Always behind the scenes the big power blocs are operating, supporting one side or the other with arms and military advice, with aid and loans, as part of a larger and more menacing clash of interests. Thus the Egyptian army in the latest war was equipped largely with Russian weapons, the Israeli with British and French.

The reasons for this interest by the world powers in the Middle East is clear. The area is vital to them, for its oilfields and its strategic position astride the trade routes to Australia



and the Far East. The complexities of the mass feudal sheikdoms which rule over a large part of the area, complicated by the building of modern capitalism in Israel and Egypt, have made the task of keeping a diplomatic balance there a very delicate one.

(....)

The Israeli working class were convinced that their interests lay in taking up arms against the Arabs, and in this they were supported by countless Jewish workers abroad. Some of them went even further, attaching great importance to the capture of the ancient shrines and religious symbols of Jerusalem. Here is evidence that the Israeli working class have all the delusions which are so necessary to the continuance of capitalism.

Experience, and a knowledge of capitalism, should have taught them differently. The wars of capitalism are fought to settle the disputes of its ruling classes; no working class interests are at stake in them. The problems of the Israeli workers are the same as those of workers all over the world, and they will not be solved in a war. Their interests are the same as those of the workers of Egypt, and of every other capitalist country—to unite for the overthrow of capitalism and the triumph of Socialism.

(from Editorial on the ‘Six-Day War’, Socialist Standard, July 1967)

These are the cornerstones of ‘real’ socialism. Obviously, that doesn’t describe the pseudo-socialism of Corbyn, Sanders, Chavez, et al. Or the disingenuous activities of the hotchpotch of Trotskyist/Leninist groups who also masquerade as socialists. If you want to escape from dead-end politics then you will need to think outside of the miasma of capitalist thought and consider what the World Socialist Movement proposes.

You will have to overcome a psychological barrier. A barrier constructed over many decades that has taught you that any change from the market system is not possible. Well, it is. Ours is a battle of Ideas. Once our ideas take root they will become unstoppable. All it takes is that the campaign for ‘real’ socialism generates enough momentum for us to begin to organise for the change that will become inevitable once a majority of people demand it.

So what is the World Socialist Movement? It is the umbrella organisation of a number of Socialist Parties throughout the world dedicated to establishing ‘real’ socialism. The Socialist Party of Great Britain [SPGB] is one of those parties. The SPGB held its inaugural meeting in June 1904. Uniquely, the founding members drew up a historical

document that formed the basis of our movement—then and now. ‘The Declaration of Principles’ unequivocally describes what we stand for. We have no leaders—only sheep need leaders. All decisions are arrived at democratically by the whole membership. Transparency is inbuilt.

It’s not just socialists that are repulsed by the hypocrisy, lies and self-seeking of capitalism’s elite. Poverty, hunger, wars and environmental destruction are intrinsic to the market system. As is the extreme wealth of the few at the expense of the many. Reforms, charity, and appeals to the gods have not, and cannot change its fundamental base. Sticking plasters don’t work. Only major surgery will. The World Socialist Movement exists to complete one task. And that is to abolish capitalism through democratic means.

Human beings are unique. We can imagine something and make it a reality. Socialism proposes a world for all and not just for the few. Where the present, and future generations, can live in peaceful, mutual cooperation. But, we need help to achieve it.



Don't read this unless you believe that our world is in need of urgent change

Imagine this:

- A world without buying and selling.
- A world without classes.
- A world without borders.
- A world without money.
- A world where ‘real’ democracy and mutual cooperation can flourish and grow.

Meetings

JULY 2017

CARDIFF
Saturday 1st July, 10am - 12 noon
Street Stall
Queen Street (Newport Road end), Cardiff, CF10 2BJ

CANTERBURY
Saturday 15th July, 12 noon
Street Stall
The Parade pedestrian precinct. Phone 07971 715569 for more information.

LONDON
Holloway, North London
Saturday 8th July, 12 noon - 5pm
Mayton Street Festival
Old Fire Station
84 Mayton Street, N7 6QT

Chiswick
Tuesday 18th July, 8pm
Basic Income for All : An unrealistic reform
Speaker: Adam Buick
Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, W4 4JN

Kentish Town
Thursday 20th July, 8pm
“The Russian Revolution” a discussion facilitated by Bill Martin
Venue: Torriano Meeting House, 99 Torriano Avenue, NW5 2RX

BIRMINGHAM
Friday 21st July, 6pm - Sunday 23rd July, 2pm
Summer School
The Environment
Venue: Fircroft College, Birmingham

AUGUST 2017

CARDIFF
Saturday, 5th August, 10am - 12 noon
Street Stall
Queen Street (Newport Road end), Cardiff, CF10 2BJ

CANTERBURY
Saturday, 19th August, 12 noon
Street Stall
The Parade pedestrian precinct, CT1 2JL from 12 noon

Bank Holiday Monday 28th August, 10am - 5pm
Kent Miners’ Festival - Socialist Party Stall & Display
Betteshanger Community Park, Circular Road, Betteshanger, Nr Deal, CT14 0LT
Transport provided from Deal town centre - Phone 07971 715569 or visit www/kentminersfestival.org.uk

Carshalton Environment Fair - Socialist Party stall, 10.30am - 5pm
Carshalton Park, Ruskin Road, Carshalton, SM5 3DD.

EC Meeting

Saturday 5th August 2017, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN.
Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee.

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

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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.

The Mosquito Knows

'Ambrosia: This Startup Will Give You Blood Transfusions From Young People to Reverse the Aging Process. It Only Costs \$8,000' [£6275] (newsweek.com, 9 June). Only rich over 35s seeking the elixir of youth need apply. But such developments come as no surprise to socialists who have long understood capitalism's voracious nature and how it seeks ever new ways to drain what it can out of the working class. Marx noted in Capital volume 1, chapter 10, section 1: 'Capital is dead labour which, vampire like, lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks'. Production for profit rather than need has resulted in the untimely deaths of millions through war and want, but for the system to continue it must avoid eradicating its source of unpaid surplus value. Indeed, the introduction of welfare payments and improvements in healthcare etc. are primarily in the interest of the parasite, not the host.

A rich reformist

Joining the parasitical 1 percent is difficult for those not belonging to families who have had our blood in the bank for generations. But one who has managed to climb the greasy pole recently is none other than Bernie Sanders. cnbc.com (6 June) reveals that he 'had a surprisingly good financial year in 2016' as he supplemented his annual income of \$200,000 [£157,000] - a paltry sum, 'making him one of the least wealthy senators' - with \$858,750 [£674,000] from book royalties. We reviewed

Our Revolution in the April edition of this journal, and berniesanders.com where he states 'the issue of wealth and income inequality is the great moral issue of our time, it is the great economic issue of our time, and it is the great political issue of our time'. Our objection to him is not that he is rich, but that he is a reformist not a socialist.. The World Socialist Movement does not exclude capitalists from membership. Had Frederick Engels and William Morris lived long enough and demonstrated agreement with our Declaration of Principles, they would have been welcomed into our newly formed Party.

Here, there, everywhere

Capitalism exists throughout the world. We recently tweeted: Socialism has NOTHING to do with Venezuela, the Soviet Union, North Korea, China etc. That is a LIE capitalists and politicians want you to believe as it keeps them rich and powerful. Wherever there is a privileged elite in control of waged workers there is a capitalist economy. Socialism means a society with NO ruling class. Elites are found everywhere, including Angola. There the majority of our class exist on less than \$2 (£1.60) a day and 90 percent of Luanda's population must do so in slums. Yet the Angolan President's son just spent £440,000 on a set of photographs. Daddy's fortune 'has been estimated at US \$20 billion, which would put him among the world's 50 richest people....José Eduardo dos Santos has not spared any effort in ensuring that his legacy continues through his family. The most famous of his children is businesswoman Isabel Dos Santos, 44, the only female billionaire in Africa. As well as being president of the Administrative Council of the state oil company Sonangol, she has investments

in various multinationals, from banks to telecommunications, totalling a fortune of US \$3 billion' (globalvoices.org, 4 June).

Another old elitist

Socialists know that Simon Sebag Montefiore is a lousy historian (we reviewed his Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar in March 2006), so imagine the surprise when Catherine Merridale's Lenin on the Train (2016), described by him as 'the superb, funny, fascinating story of Lenin's trans-European rail journey to power and how it shook the world' (standard.co.uk, 17 November 2016), provides this gem. 'But it was Lenin himself who made it clear that the Bolsheviks would reject democratic values.' He 'had not traveled back to join a coalition,' Merridale writes according to the review of her book in the New York Times, but 'to undermine the provisional government and establish a dictatorship in the name of the proletariat. It was Lenin who instituted severe censorship, established one-party rule and resorted to terror against his political enemies. Stalin took these measures to further extremes for his own sinister purposes.'" (nytimes.com, 9 June).

