SANCTIONS:
AS LETHAL
AS WAR

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Introducing the Socialist Party
The Socialist Party advocates a society where production is freed from the artificial constraints of profit and organised for the benefit of all on the basis of material abundance. It does not have policies to ameliorate aspects of the existing social system. It is opposed to all artificial constraints of profit and run counter to the nature of capitalism itself.

Gradualist reformers like the Labour Party believed that capitalism could be transformed through a series of social measures, but have merely become routine managers of the system. The Bolsheviks had to be content with developing Russian capitalism under a one-party dictatorship. Both failures have given socialism a quite different -- and unattractive -- meaning: state ownership and control. As the Socialist Standard pointed out before both courses were followed, the results would more properly be called state capitalism.

The Socialist Party and the World Socialist Movement affirm that capitalism is incapable of meaningful change in the interests of the majority; that the basis of exploitation is the wages/money system. The Socialist Standard is proud to have kept alive the original idea of what socialism is -- a classless, stateless, wageless, moneyless society, or defined positively, a democracy in which free and equal men and women co-operate to produce the things they need to live and enjoy life, to which they have free access even at the risk of war, over the needs of the working class majority.

Editorial
Lethal Might Before Needs
As the calamity of Brexit continues to engulf British capitalism, its representatives and supporters indulge in all manner of fantasies and delusions.

We are assured that once the UK leaves the EU, the rest of the world would be falling over themselves to negotiate trade deals with it. Now we are told that the UK can again become a great global military power as it was in the good old days of the British Empire.

As Gavin Williamson, the Defence Secretary, put it in his speech to the Royal United Services Institute on 11th February, ‘Brexit has brought us to a great moment in our history. A moment when we must strengthen our global presence, enhance our lethality and increase our mass.’ However, this speech was not well received in certain quarters. His boss, Theresa May, was none too pleased with his plans to send an aircraft carrier to the Pacific, a move that the Chinese leaders would interpret as being provocative, as she hoped to establish closer economic ties with Chinese capitalism. Provoking other countries militarily is generally not seen as the best way to form advantageous trading relations with them. Indeed the Chinese leaders were so incensed by this, they cancelled a proposed visit to Beijing that Philip Hammond, the Chancellor, had intended to make with the hope of forging trade deals with them.

It is also ironic that Williamson proposed to take ‘action to oppose those who flout international law’ when the UK government has done that on several occasions.

However, the speech was more than posturing by a Churchill wannabee trying to promote his career. When he said the Western powers must be prepared to ‘use hard power to support our interests’, he was not just laying bare the current real tensions between Russia and China on one side and the Western Powers on the other, but was also revealing the essential nature of capitalism as a system whereby nation states need to compete with each other over global markets and that for this purpose vital trade routes and sources of raw materials need to be safeguarded. Thus they need to be constantly armed to the teeth and prepared for war. As too often when all else fails, war inevitably breaks out.

Perhaps the Labour Party in its response called out Williamson for ramping up the pro-war rhetoric? No, actually, Nia Griffith, the Shadow Defence Secretary, took the government to task for running down the armed forces over the years as part of their cost-cutting programme. The Liberal Democrat defence spokesman, Jamie Stone, also made a similar criticism that the armed forces had been ‘hollowed out’. It must be borne in mind that this speech was made at a time when there have been cutbacks in welfare and local services -- more people using foodbanks and local libraries closing. Therefore, what Williamson has also shown is that the priority of the capitalist state must be to advance the interests of its capitalist minority, even at the risk of war, over the needs of the working class majority.

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Getting Twitchy about copyright

It’s a well-worn comparison to say that the EU Copyright Directive is like the superjumbo, whose wings (but not the rest of it) are made in Britain.

When describing how capitalism works, Marxists talk about the finished product as containing embodied or ‘dead’ labour which has to be accounted for in the final price. For instance, in support of the process of reproduction, extractive, refinement, power, distribution, parts manufacture and shipping, and so forth. Socialists don’t pretend that you can separate and cost out all these elements of dead labour from the finished product. That would be like trying to unbake a cake back into its starting ingredients.

The argument only stipulates that the final price has to reflect all this labour otherwise the continued production and sale of this good, at this price, will not be viable.

Where this gets interesting is new developments in EU copyright law, which is in the process of being revised in the context of the internet revolution, and specifically the impact of hosting sites like YouTube and the various social media giants.

One element of the proposed EU Copyright Directive, Article 13, has Google objecting in horror: ‘Article 13 of the EU Copyright Directive states services such as YouTube could be held responsible if their users upload copyrighted works. This would harm innovation in旅游业, extraction, refinement, power, distribution, parts manufacture and shipping, and so forth. Socialists don’t pretend that you can separate and cost out all these elements of dead labour from the finished product. That would be like trying to unbake a cake back into its starting ingredients.

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Socialist Standard March 2019

Dear There,

Apparently, at exactly 11.00 am on Friday 29 March 2019, Brexit will descend upon us. I am wondering whether I should stay up and watch it as I do when there is a total eclipse. If a deal is not struck by this time then hell-fire and damnation is forecast to rain down upon the people of the British Isles, as alluded to by the ignominious EU President, Donald Tusk. I suspect that, if I wake up on Saturday morning with the sky still in total darkness, it is much more likely to be due to the onset of Nuclear Winter than a failure to renegotiate a variance of the Irish backstop.

I was wondering if, in all the hoo-hah and razzamataz of Brexit, you have had the chance to consider the latest development on our North American friends. In case you haven’t, I’ll just remind you that in the US, the wind has got up a noticeable that the United States will withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, claiming that Russia has violated the terms of the Treaty, whereas Russia claims that the United States violated the terms of the Treaty first. I love an adult conversation, don’t you, especially when the outcome may well depend on you.

As a result of the dispute over the INF treaty Russia has announced the reactivation of its Perimeter System which was decommissioned following the end of the Cold War; that is the first Cold War ending in 1991, not the current one. The Perimeter system is a nifty little arrangement to counter the United States potential of nuclear strike by antipatico, for example, such a pre-emptive strike could destroy Russia’s command and control systems; in which case a cluster of SS17 ICBMs will launch automatically on detection of seismic activity, compatible with that caused by a nuclear explosion. As these Russian SS17 missiles fly over the country, they will transmit a laudatory message to the population that they will make it hard to stop us and that we older this particular emotion becomes ever stronger until, with some, it almost entirely eclipses the ideas and emotions of their contemporary experience. This can be seen as one of the reasons for the political conservatism of the older generation within any population. Memories that have been selected and processed are, of course, safer and far more stable than the continual confession of truth (or that he feigned to be so as to take a dig at the Democrats). But he has no need to worry as they are merely reformed Social Democrats who are no threat to US capitalism. They may want to rein in the activities of these capitalists that are harming the long-term interests of the US capitalist class, as for instance over carbon dioxide emissions, but they don’t want to get rid of capitalism as a system. We don’t want to be too churlish about the revival of interest in the word ‘socialism’ not being an interest in genuine socialism in the sense of a society based on common ownership and democratic control with production directly to satisfy people’s needs. The very fact ‘socialism’ is no longer a dirty word means that real socialism can be discussed. As ‘socialism’ is a bringing closer together of what used to be the United States of America becomes a part of the world socialist commonwealth.

Socialist Standard March 2019

Nostalgia

AS ADULTS almost all of us have memories from our childhood and adolescence that produce intense emotions. For some reason they cannot be relied upon as representing some kind of accurate chronicle of the actions of the past and the conversations of the past. They are, however, essential for the development of the identity of the individual. It is the synthesis of the emotional development of identity and these memories of the past that produce the bitter-sweet phenomena we call nostalgia. It means that as we grow older this particular emotion becomes ever stronger until, with some, it almost entirely eclipses the ideas and emotions of their contemporary experience. This can be seen as one of the reasons for the political conservatism of the older generation within any population. Memories that have been selected and processed are, of course, safer and far more stable than the continual confession of truth. We feel comfort in the illusory feelings of safety and structure that some memories provide; but there are also others that can pose a threat to this illusion and for this reason we process them in a very different way – we usually suppress them. We tend to choose the memories that sustain the identity we want to believe in rather than those that can reveal another side of our character that we are not so comfortable with. This complex internal struggle is often at the very core of our political beliefs and can be revealed by the nature and type of nostalgia that we embrace.

My father’s nostalgia for the kind of football played in the 1960s that allowed England the World Cup was very different from my own – he saw it as a triumph for the old-fashioned authoritarian England manager ( Alf Ramsey) and I saw it as an expression of the cultural liberation inherent in the ’66 victory. The decadence that he perceived (in contrast to his belief in the authoritarianism that, for him, had won but dislike the naivety and superficiality. In retrospect one of the most obvious elements of naivety can be seen in the narratives that many of the films and TV of that time possessed. There always had to be a resolution that punished the wrongdoer and rewarded the ‘good guys’. Undoubtedly this fed into the politics of the time and seemed to require a ‘Black and white’ solution to the problems of the age. This moral illusion lies at the heart of a lot of nostalgia – a belief in a simpler time when there was a shared consensus in terms of social values. The moral ‘high ground’ that had justified the militarists used to defeat fascism was now utilised to defend the use of violence against the much more ambiguous ‘enemies’ of the moral morass that was the ’cold war’. In the 1969 movie The Bridge At Remagen there is certainly an element of class bias but it goes much deeper to the very essence of the identity of what it is to be English; the contemporary casual dismissal of the importance of class identity hides a deep obsession with it. The royal family has become the parade of celebrity soap operas due to nostalgia and its obsession with class – there still is a suspension of disbelief.

In shows like the Bridge at Remagen the millennial audience was an illusion which enabled my ‘golden age’ of nostalgia. Conversely I also have a nostalgia associated with his work as a union shop steward and his role within the working class community that flourished at that time. It would seem that most cultures, like individuals, have a memory of a ‘golden age’ that generates part of its identity. Of course the cultural residual individual are engaged in a reciprocal relationship which enabled my father to embrace his ‘Englandness’ and me to reject mine. Listening to the music and watching TV shows from that time will always evoke nostalgia in me but I’m very aware of the need for the formulaic and quasi romantic embrace of what they represent. I love the hope and confidence of a German officer who is about to be shot as an enemy of the Reich looks up at the sky and seeing aircraft he asks: ‘Ours or theirs?’ The answer is delivered: ‘Enemy planes, sir! ’ But who is the enemy? muses the officer – surely a sentiment born of the ‘national liberation’ that were raging during the making of the film.

In contemporary TV there is a stronger kind of nostalgia that reaches back even further to the pre-war Edwardian period. In shows like Downtown Abbey and Abbey Square we see an undoubted enthusiasm for portraying the rigid class system of the time when everyone knew their place. The English working class seems to indulge and even delight in the excesses of the aristocracy. There is certainly an element of class bias but it goes much deeper to the very essence of the identity of what it is to be English; the contemporary casual dismissal of the importance of class identity hides a deep obsession with it. The royal family has become the parade of celebrity soap operas due to nostalgia and its obsession with class – there still is a suspension of disbelief.

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There is still a long way to go to turn the Jewish- Bedouin areas in the Negev into a long-term and stable solution for a coexistence of the recognised settlements. This will require a comprehensive and sustained effort by all parties involved, including the Israeli government, the Bedouin community, and international organisations. It is a complex issue that requires careful planning and implementation to ensure the rights and freedoms of both communities are respected and protected.

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ETHNIC CLEANSING THE DEBT

In Israel/Palestine there exist communities of some what call the ‘illegal’ settlements’ and armed forces of past

justifications for the establishment of the Arab-Bedouin asset that the Negev desert where they are neither expressed nor undeveloped.

These are the Bedouin who make up around 3.5 percent of Israel’s population and thousands of Bedouin serve in the Israeli army. Although sharing a common language and some traditions there are significant cultural and social differences between the Bedouin and Palestinian Arabs.

The Bedouin comprise the youngest population in Israeli society—about 54 percent of the Bedouin population is younger than 14 and in 2003 the Israeli daily Ma‘ariv published an article entitled ‘Special Report: Polygamy is not legalised in the Bedouin community, but it is widespread among the Bedouin. Israel is now trying to end the practice of custom, prosecuting suspected Bedouin polygamists. But it is seen only as a ploy to gain them the ‘security threat’ and criminalise their community members. It’s simply: polygamy means men. Bedouin children, means more demographic concerns from a Zionist perspective, ’said human rights lawyer Rawia Alarubia.

The proposed mass expulsion of Bedouin under the Plan Prada raised concerns from human rights groups. In 2013, the Israeli government shelved the plan to forcibly relocate about 40,000 Bedouin Arabs to government designated towns. One of the plan’s architects stated that the Bedouin had neither been consulted nor assured of any move. I didn’t think anyone that the Bedouin agreed with the plan. I couldn’t say that because I didn’t present the plan to them, ’said the former minister Benny Ganz.

While the Plan Prada as originally conceived has been thwarted, the permittance of homes and the displacement of Bedouins has continued albeit in piecemeal form through a process of ‘development of infrastructure’. Israel approved an $800 million redevelopment project in 2017 as it moved two huge military bases into its southern desert.

‘We’re always hearing about billion dollar budgets, but we only see more demolitions, more police, and more Jewish settlements,’ said Bedouin lawyer Khalil Almour.

The Housing and Construction Ministry plans for 300,000 new homes in the Strategic District Development Plan, the Housing and Construction Ministry see as a long term and stable solution for a "Selvaggio" of the younger generation. In 2018, Ali Abu Al-Ron, the mayor of the village of Alajyal, said, "The majority of the village’s young people are in the military, working in the settlements, and working in the Sharon region." The Bedouin youth, he said, "are the majority of the village’s population."

Israel’s Bedouins have a daunting task ahead of them. The government has plans for a new major highway, Road 6. Originally 100 Bedouin families were to be moved but in December 2018, Agriculture Minister Uri Ariel declared he intended to take advantage of the new situation to expel a further 900 families. The government is committed to demonstrating governmental superiority over the Bedouin, Ariel declared, describing the construction of the road as an opportunity to ‘return to the state huge tracts of land. There are several other large-scale infrastructure plans that will displace Bedouin, including a road that will swing up extensive tracts of land and impact on the 1,400-strong Bedouin community. A new phosphate mine will also entail the enforced relocation of at least 10,000 Bedouin citizens. The corporation IMI is locating a massive testing facility in the Negev which will put some 1,200 Bedouin homes and other buildings at risk of forced displacement.

Israel’s government policy towards the Bedouin appears to be a formidable foe. The Goldberg report described it as a three-part plan: ‘No recognition of Bedouin rights over the land, a willingness to offer land claims compensation ‘beyond the letter of the law’ and conditioning the payment of ‘compensation’ on the evacuation of the land and transfer to one of the recognised settlements’. Israel’s Bedouin youth have a daunting struggle to preserve their land, their homes and livelihood in the face of a formidable foe.

ALJO
The Western powers promote sanctions as an alternative to war, holding that sanctions impose costs that exceed the benefits of objectionable policies of another country, there will be a change of those policies and if the targeted government declines to change, the affected population will protest, forcing their government to change. Economic sanctions are viewed as a useful tool to apply pressure on another country to mend its ways or as a punitive measure for its behaviour which avoids outright war. No matter how devastating the detrimental effects on the economy and the civilian population, sanctions are not as successful as claimed in achieving its objectives. Who now recalls the cost on ordinary people of the UN-imposed sanctions against Saddam’s Iraq? Who remembers when the then US Ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright, was asked, ‘We have heard that half a million children have died. I mean, that’s more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is the price worth it?’ Albright answered, ‘we think the price is worth it.’ The half million figure has since been judged as inflated but at the time it was seen as a credible figure.

Denis Halliday, United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator resigned after a 34-year career explaining he no longer wished to be identified with a United Nations that is... maintaining a sanctions programme... which kills and maims people through chronic malnutrition... and continues this programme knowingly,’ saying ‘I don’t want to administer a programme that satisfies the definition of genocide’. Halliday’s successor, Hans von Sponeck, subsequently also resigned in protest, calling the effects of the sanctions a ‘true human tragedy’. The resignation of Jutta Burghardt, head of the World Food Programme in Iraq, soon followed, stating, ‘I fully support what Mr von Sponeck was saying. It is a true humanitarian tragedy what is happening here and I believe any human being who looks at the facts and the impact of the sanctions on the population will not deny that he is right.’ Agam Hasmy, Malawi’s UN Ambassador to Geneva in 2000 ‘how ironic it is that the same policy that is supposed to disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction has itself become a weapon of mass destruction’. Throughout history, starvation and disease have killed more people than all other weapons of war.

Too often sanctions are applied to soften up a foe and is a precursor of war. Sanctions can even be used as a justification for war such as when Tony Blair, in his testimony to the Chilcot Inquiry, argued that ending the sanctions was one of the reasons for the war.

Economic warfare has been part and parcel of conflicts since time immemorial with city sieges and naval blockades. We can date economic sanctions back at least to the Megarian decree of Athens in BC, laid before the Scythian War. But later we had the Napoleonic Wars, the World Wars, the American long-enforced trade embargo on Cuba and the anti-apartheid boycott of South Africa. Why are there sanctions against North Korea, Iran and Venezuela. This article is not concerned about banks on financial transactions of named individuals but those that inflict suffering on the general population. Sanctions are viewed as an instrument of diplomacy, designed to pressure and to undermine a ruling regime. The purpose of sanctions is to cause a breakdown in the regimes civil society.

On 23 March 2018, the Human Rights Council condemned unilateral coercive measures by a vote of 28 in favour, 15 against and 3 abstentions, because economic sanctions create economic crises, disrupt the production and distribution of food and medicine, and resulted in refugees. Alfred De Zayas, a former secretary of the UN Human Rights Council, has said ‘Sanctions kill’. The United States usually targets the poorest people. ‘Modern-day economic sanctions and blockades are comparable with medieval sieges of towns with the intention of forcing them to surrender. Twenty-first-century sanctions attempt to bring not just a town, but sovereign countries to their knees. A difference, perhaps, is that twenty-first-century sanctions are accompanied by the manipulation of public opinion through “fake news”, aggressive public relations and a pseudo-human rights rhetoric so as to give the impression that a human rights “end justifies the criminal means” (undocs.org/A/HRC/39/47 ADD1).

Siege economy

John Pilger’s conclusion was that the sanctions were ‘One of the greatest acts of aggression: the medieval siege of Iraq.’

Patrick Cockburn wrote on the sanctions affecting Syria: ‘Economic sanctions are like a medieval siege but with a modern PR apparatus attached to justify what is being done. A difference is that such sieges used to be directed at starving out a small town or city while now they are aimed at squeezing whole countries into submission. An attraction for politicians is that sanctions can be sold to the public, though of course not to people at the receiving end, as more humane than military action. There is usually a pretence that foodstuffs and medical equipment are being allowed through freely and no mention is made of the financial and other regulatory obstacles making it impossible to deliver them.’

The difficulty in processing SWIFT transactions, the banking system’s clearing house for international money transfers, has hindered the import of medicines and other necessities so many of the biggest pharmaceutical companies refuse to do business with the country.

The São Paulo-based Alfredo Serrano, head of the Centro Estratégico Latinoamericano de Geopolítica, drew attention to the reluctance of banks to process Venezuelan international transactions, in order to obtain insulin and other medicines such as anti-retroviral and anti-malaria drugs.

The Lancet medical journal reported in July 2018 that sanctions against Iran jeopardised cancer patients and cancer research.

Sanctions have a snowballing effect. Foreign businesses, fearing they might cross a line into impermissible activities, prefer to shy away even from authorised trade. Transaction costs particularly related to food and medicate, while access to foreign currency to trade otherwise as large as $435 BC, before the sanctions lead to unprecedented levels of inflation and spikes in the price of basic goods like milk and vegetable oil.

Sanctions can and do kill the innocent. Sanctions rarely harm the decision-makers but have caused extreme hardship to those who are the weakest, the most vulnerable and the least political. Members of the elite with greatest access to government privileges are best positioned to survive and can even thrive. Under the sanctions, there are those who are savvy enough to exploit others’ deprivation for a profit. The sanctions put the price on commodities like sugar, rice and tobacco and create a lucrative market for tobacco traders. Smuggling and clandestine networks arise and result in a shadow economy in which corrupt officials are fully complicit.

Between 1944 and 1945 the UN had imposed sanctions only twice but now sanctions are being imposed with increasing frequency, with the United States either the key player in instigating them or taking the initiative by imposing its own sanctions, endangering global economic power as leverage to pressure other nations into compliance with its sanction policies. The United States has the ‘right to refuse to enter into commerce with other states, but not to exercise pressure on third-party states in order to harm their targets, and attempting to do this is a violation of the United Nations Charter. But as always ‘might is right’.

Obvious Vengei of the University of Zimbabwe makes a direct comparison with siege warfare: ‘The desperate dependency of the besieged population of Samaria and Jerusalem were exposed to are similar to what Zimbabweans experienced as a result of sanctions... Similar to the ancient siege system therefore, the Western siege of Zimbabwe through economic sanctions affected the ordinary people more than the so-called targeted individuals... As the military siege on Samaria and Jerusalem, Western sanctions were imposed on the ordinary people of Zimbabwe. The intention was to starve the ordinary people of Zimbabwe in order for them to vote out the ruling party... The logic was to incorporate the sanctions as the basic services to the ordinary people in order to instigate a revolt against the government... As observed with ancient Near Eastern military strategy of siege, this is usually the intention of the besieging aggressor; to create tensions in the besieged society in order to weaken it.’

Collective sanctions

There exists a glaring anomaly. It is illegal in war-time, a violation of the Geneva Convention e.g. the 1977 Additional Protocols to the 1949 Geneva Conventions prohibit any wartime measure that has the effect of depriving a civilian population of objects indispensable to its survival; Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention on the protection of civilians in wartime, for example, prohibits ‘collective penalties’. Yet under peace-time conditions economic sanctions are perfectly valid. Economic sanctions inflict collective punishment upon ordinary people when they have no connection to or control over the actions of the government whose actions have led to them being punished. Sanctions are inherently anti-humanitarian. As in siege warfare, it is the population and those least responsible for the state’s actions – children, the elderly, the sick – who bear the worst consequences. When countries are called ‘rogue states’ or ‘the axis of evil’, Western countries proceed to put economic sanctions on them. But the victims are invariably the common people and not the ruling dictator they have been complaining about – whether it was Saddam Hussein then or Assad or Kim Jong-Un now.

Economic sanctions imposed on authoritarian regimes often fail to bring about the political change they are meant to create even though the people had to bear the pain of sanctions.

Lee Jones, a senior lecturer at Queen Mary University of London, stated that according to the acceptability, sanctions succeed in about one third of instances. But a political scientist, Robert Pape, looked at these figures and argued that often the outcome was not caused by sanctions; it was caused instead by domestic insurgencies or by military threats, and if you take away those cases, then sanctions only succeed in fewer than 5 percent of cases. The ‘success’ story of South Africa is often cited to show that sanctions can work yet many commentators have suggested that the end of apartheid was due to internal political movements as much as to international sanctions. Politicians employ economic sanctions despite the evidence that they do not work– simply because the cost of military action is too high a price to pay. Cheaper to incite the civilian population to revolt by driving them to take to the streets than to wage war.

It is generally accepted that you should not be a judge in your own case; that the law must be clearly stated, and consistently applied; that individuals can only be punished for their acts, not their nature or their potential acts. However, states interpret and impose the law as they wish, without restraint. This means that a whole population is punished with the approval of ‘international law’. Sanctions imposed on a whole nation share all the characteristics of siege warfare such as blurring the distinction between the battlefield and civilians, sanctioning the violence of war through the destruction of society’s infrastructure.

Those who defend sanctions share the same belief as a kidnapper who refuses food and water to his victim because the victim’s family declines to pay the ransom demand. The siege tactic deliberately targets a civilian population with fatal consequences by withholding supplies and starving them yet it is a form of warfare which is considered legal and acceptable.

ALJO

Enforcing UN Maritime Trade Sanctions

Socialist Standard March 2019

Socialist Standard March 2019
On 23 January the president of the Venezuelan National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, declared himself ‘Interim President’ of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, denouncing the elected President Nicolás Maduro as an illegitimate dictator. The US government immediately announced its support, followed by a declaration from the Group of Lima, which is an institution embracing several countries of Latin America, all supported by the US government. Canada and a number of European countries also declared their support for Juan Guaidó. They all asked Maduro to step down or face imprisonment in Guantánamo Bay.

The US government, Juan Guaidó, Canada and the European countries indicated that they were supporting the interim government on the grounds that Maduro was a dictator who has reduced Venezuela to a situation of hunger, unemployment, repression, corruption, and lack of freedom. They asked him to call a fresh presidential election in eight days. In response, the government of Venezuela decided instead to call for a new election to the National Assembly, while the Supreme Court of Venezuela declared the self-proclaimed Interims President illegal.

The popularity of Nicolás Maduro has decreased since he was elected due to the government’s authoritarian measures and corruption. Others blame him for the economic and political crisis and the violence that exists in the country. Many workers have taken to the streets to protest against his government. During the last presidential election other candidates did not participate and there were a large number of abstentions.

US opposition

Since the election of Hugo Chavez in 1999, the Venezuelan government has been opposed by the US and sections of the capitalist class in Venezuela, but during his initial period he had the support of the majority of the Venezuelan workers and most of the governments of Latin America. His popularity was so high that in 2002 the US was forced to back away from a coup d’etat that they had orchestrated with certain sectors of the military forces.

Due to the then high international price of oil – which is the country’s main source of income – and as a member of OPEC, Chavez was able to implement certain social reforms, such as housing for the poor, medical services, educational programmes and a food programme. The level of poverty of the country decreased. And all these measures were considered by his supporters to be the implementation of socialism by the Bolivarian Revolution, or so-called Socialism of the 21st Century.

Chavez also helped create many cooperatives around the country and expropriated several corporations and turned their assets over to state ownership, others became joint ventures. Oil and gas were sold to China at a lower cost to compensate for the cost of transport and to penetrate the Asian market, and several agreements were signed with the Iranian government. Oil and gas were sold at low cost to the Cuban government in exchange for medical services using Cuban-trained doctors.

Social conditions in Venezuela have since deteriorated enormously due to a drop in the oil price and the embargo and sanctions imposed by the US, and also due to the largely state capitalist mode of production – which is the real system of production that exists in the Venezuela. The US and Canada will also have their eye on the large deposits of oil and natural gas, and also on the oil and large deposits of minerals that exist in the Orinoco Belt, such as lithium, nickel and iron ore. Several of these resources have been given to the Russian and the Chinese corporations, and the ecological impact in that region has been enormous.

The US government has indicated that all options are on the table including military intervention. The government of Venezuela has responded saying that it might turn into another Vietnam and has called for a dialogue including the members of the National Assembly. All have refused to have a dialogue with Nicolas Maduro, and the US government has frozen all Venezuela’s international accounts and sources of income; they have taken over Gito which is Venezuela’s international petroleum corporation situated in the US, and Britain has sold back $5.5 billion of gold that the Bank of England had been keeping in trust for the Venezuelan government. In addition, the US is going to transfer all the oil proceeds – more than $7 billion – to the interim president. According to some economic statisticians, the loss from the embargo on Venezuela has cost the country more than $350 billion in total.

Due to the measures taken by the US government against Venezuela and the implementation of new sanctions, the Venezuelan government is going to transfer all the proceeds of their oil sales to a Russian bank in Moscow as Russia has lent more than $50 billion to Venezuela in military aid and for mining. China has lent more than $60 billion in exchange for oil. Both countries have opposed the actions of the USA at the United Nations and have indicated that they reject the new government and support Maduro as president.

A possible military confrontation with the US and alliances of military powers in other Latin American countries, such as Brazil, Colombia and Argentina, against Venezuela would become a very bloody battleground, due to the fact that all the armies have been heavily armed by the US, Russia and China, and most of these armies have modern armaments. It would be a war where many class brothers and sisters would kill each other defending one or other side in the conflict.

Not socialism

Since the very beginning when Hugo Chavez was elected President of Venezuela and declared himself a socialist, we have shown that he was just a left reformist, not a revolutionary socialist, and that socialism cannot be introduced by a leader in the name of the working class, by implementing reforms within the framework of a capitalist society and nation-capitalist enterprises to be run by the state apparatus. We add that the problems that Venezuela was confronted with and its failures could not be blamed on socialism because a form of state capitalism was the economic model that was going to be established by the leaders of the Bolivarian revolution; that Chavez, Fidel Castro, Peron, Cardenas, and other Latin American leaders were bourgeois nationalists who were opposed to the influence and domination of the US ruling class in the region. They wanted to expand their own markets and capitalist interests there, as was reflected by engagement with Mercosur which is a Latin American version of the European Market, by the Bank of the South, a Latin American version of the IMF, and showed by the Cooperatives in Bolivia which are joint ventures between the state and the peasants of Bolivia based on a capitalist mode of production and run as typical capitalist corporations.

The USA and its president have used the crisis in Venezuela as a pretext to blame its problems on socialism and to attack the emergence of socialist ideas within the youth and some sectors of the US working class. Both are confusing social democratic reforms with socialism such as: Medicare for all, increase of taxation on the rich, better housing conditions for the poor, elimination of inequality, renovation of the country’s infrastructures, more state regulations, and better programmes for the elderly and the veterans. Most of these measures were implemented by Roosevelt’s New Deal during the Great Depression and none of them are an indication that socialism was established in the USA.

For many years the Socialist Party of Great Britain and its companion parties, including the World Socialist Party of the US, have established a clear distinction between social democratic reforms, state capitalism, and socialism. Socialism is socialism-communism as a post-capitalist world society based on the common possession of the mean of production administered democratically, which is a stateless, moneyless, wageless society of free access to available wealth. This cannot be established by a leader, or a vanguard party acting in the name of the working class within the framework of the capitalist mode of production, capitalism is an economic system which cannot be reformed to work in the interest of the workers.

Whatever is taking place in Venezuela has nothing to do with socialism or communism, and all the failures of the Bolivarian Revolution, its leaders and the so-called United Socialist Party of Venezuela, cannot be blamed on socialism or communism. Venezuela is a capitalist society where workers are economically exploited to produce surplus value and are wage slaves like in any other capitalist country, as in all other parts of the world. It is a state-run capitalist system similar to the ones established in the former USSR, Eastern Europe, China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam adapted to their local circumstances. MARCOS
That the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere has gone up since pre-industrial times (from 280 parts per million to 410 ppm today).

That the average global temperature has also gone up since records began in the 1850s (by about 1°C, to about 15°C or 59°F today).

That this is not just an accidental correlation but that the first has caused the second. CO₂ is a greenhouse gas, i.e., a gas that absorbs heat from the Sun, in fact without it and the other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere (especially water vapour, ie clouds) the Earth’s temperature would be –18°C.

That most of the increase in CO₂ is the result of human activity, in particular the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil and natural gas) since the mid-nineteenth century to generate energy and transport power. In one sense this is a good thing because it means that it is easier for humans to stop it than if there was some natural phenomenon.

That a rise in the average global temperature has various effects, the main ones being:

- a rise in sea levels as oceans warm up and so expand and as the polar icecaps begin to melt;
- more stormy weather in some regions due to more energy being in the atmosphere;
- changes in regional agriculture conditions and ecology, disaster in some places though not necessarily negative everywhere.

Guestimates

We know definitely that, unless the rate of emission of CO₂ is stabilised, average global temperature is going to continue to rise and that this will affect sea levels, the weather, and regional agricultural and ecological conditions. (In fact it will continue to rise for a while even if emissions were stabilised tomorrow, as an effect of past emissions). The question is by how much and to what extent. This is where the speculation begins.

Net of vipers

Co-ordinated global action is what is needed, but capitalism impedes this. Capitalism is a world system under which capitalist enterprises and states compete against each other to secure markets and sources of raw materials. It is driven by an economic imperative that imposes itself on those organising production to use the cheapest available methods so as to survive in the struggle to make and accumulate profits. ‘Growth’ of production is built-in to it. Energy is a key input of all production; its cost affects the competitiveness on both home and world markets of goods produced within the frontiers of a state. This is why states are particularly concerned with the cost of energy and its security of supply. At the moment coal, oil and natural gas are still cheaper than alternatives such as renewables and nuclear, which is why they were used in the past and continue to be used.

When Trump says that he is not going to accept any measures that are ‘bad for business’ he is expressing the position that all states take and have to take. No state is going to decide unilaterally not to use its cheapest source of energy, even if it is one that emits CO₂, as that would increase its energy costs and undermine its competitiveness internally as well as on world markets. So the current world capitalist system is built-in to it. The capitalist world is divided have agreed that the United Nations should take the initiative. However, the various climate change conferences that the UN has organised have shown that the ‘nations’ are far from being ‘united’. They have proved to be a veritable nest of vipers as each state tries not only to advantage itself but to disadvantage its rivals.

The only agreement that has been possible – in fact, given capitalism, the only one that is possible – is one which disadvantages no one compared to everyone else. This was the outcome of the 2015 conference in Paris which agreed that all states should commit themselves to reducing emissions so as to avoid average global temperature rising 2°C above pre-industrial levels (a further 1°C from today) by the end of the century. However, as the UN is toothless and can’t impose anything on states, it left to each state to decide, in the light of its particular circumstances, what measures it would take to contribute towards this.

In November the journal Nature Communications published an article analysing the measures pledged by states in pursuit of the Paris Agreement (www.nature.com/articles/s41467-018-07223-9), one of whose conclusions the Guardian (16 November) summarised as: ‘Under the Paris agreement, there is no top-down consensus on what is a fair share of responsibility. Instead each nation sets its own bottom-up targets according to a number of different factors, including political will, level of industrialisation, ability to pay, population size, historical responsibility for emissions. Almost every government, the authors say, selects an interpretation of equity that serves its own interests and allows them to achieve a relative gain on other nations.’

The conference in Katowice didn’t alter this but just worked out common rules for verifying whether the self-determined measures were being implemented and to what extent. It left unchanged a state’s right to decide what measures to adopt.

Lowest level consensus

Under capitalism, the best that can be achieved is some non-binding inter-governmental agreement that would disadvantage nobody commercially. Clearly, this is pretty minimalist, a consensus at the lowest level. The promised measures, if adopted, will have some effect in slowing global warming, which should mean the IPCC’s worst case scenario of a further rise in average global temperature of 4.8°C by 2100 would be reduced, even they are not enough to limit the rise to a further 1°C (making the rise 2°C since pre-industrial times). It is looking highly unlikely, if capitalism continues, that the rise will rise.

The lesson is that those concerned about global overwarming should direct their efforts to getting rid of capitalism and replacing it with a system where the Earth’s natural and industrial resources will have become the common heritage of all humanity, would be put to the operation of the current economic imperative to seek and accumulate profits and will provide the framework for co-ordinated global action to deal not only with global warming but other current problems such as world poverty and constant war somewhere in the world.

Adam Buck
The One Big Union

The One Big Union, therefore, seeks to organize the wage worker, not according to craft, but according to industry; according to class and race and creed. Therefore, call upon all workers to organize irrespective of nationality, sex, or craft into a workers’ organization, so that we may be enabled to more successfully carry on the everyday fight over wages, hours of work, and conditions of employment as a class for the day when production for profit shall be replaced by production for use (One Big Union Constitution).

In a late 1918 Winnipeg Canadian unionists placed a number of radical resolutions before the delegates at that year’s Trades and Labor Congress Convention. In particular, they wanted the Congress to abandon craft unionism for industrial unionism, but their critical questions were sidetracked by other questions as conciliation, censorship and the war effort. Every one of the proposals was defeated. Before returning home, the delegates founded the Industrials, the first national western Canadian labour conference in 1919 to discuss ways that they could have more impact on the TLC. By the time the delegates from western Canadian unions arrived in Calgary for this meeting in the spring of 1919 they were no longer interested in fixing the TLC. Instead, they believed the time had come to create a new industrial union that would not discriminate between skilled and un-skilled, foreign-born or Canadian-born workers.

On 13 March a conference of trade union activists was called at Calgary who had grown discontented with the TLC. The 237 delegates who attended agreed to secede from the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada and the American Federation of Labor and to form a new industrial organisation. They adopted the name One Big Union, along with various other slogans of the moment, and included five Socialist Party of Canada (SPC) members and which provided many of the activists of the new union. However, those from the SPC did not abandon their project of building a party for an anti-political syndicalist dream. The OBU’s central committee was anti-socialist and anxious to build a mass-membership union. As such, the OBU’s relationship with the Communist Party of Canada was often rocky. As early as 1924, various leading members of the OBU and its constituent unions were expelled from the Communist Party, which was taking a more orthodox line. In 1925, the OBU expelled the tail-enders of the association, and its leadership began to lose control of the movement.

Unholy alliance

The weakness of the members of the OBU was not in daring to dream and to act on these dreams, but in realizing how many and how powerful the guardians of capitalism were. The OBU would be broken by an alliance of the official and unofficial union leaders, the employers, the federal government and the Communist Party. The weakness of the OBU was that its membership was scattered across the country and that the national organization was merely a federation of various local unions. The OBU members were scattered across the country and that the national organization was merely a federation of various local unions.

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We've been hearing a lot about traditional politics being 'broken'. There is deep dissatisfaction and disillusionment with all political parties, with their failed policies, their increasingly transparent dishonesty, the personal ambition of their members above, and their idiotic circus of privileged shooting matches in the Palace of Westminster. But beneath the surface, our discontent is really a frustration at the social system itself, and its inability to deliver genuine comfort and security for all, regardless of which party has its hands on the wheel.

This is an age of profound social crisis, both culturally and economically. We are witnessing new levels of corruption, decadence and mendacity in public life. Decades of intelligent discourse and positive social evolution seem to be unraveling in front of our eyes. Frustration with the present things are leading to a new surge in irrationality and abuse. The past year has seen a dramatic increase in the number of violent racist attacks in the USA, Britain and throughout Europe. The gap between rich and poor widens, and the rich and powerful are succeeding in persuading large numbers of the impoverished to scapegoat those even poorer or more vulnerable, rather than focus on their actual exploiters.

More and more the issues facing us are global and deadly in their urgency. In that contest, the petty squabbles within the British Labour and Conservative parties are irrelevant and absurd in their self-importance and pomposity. There is an increasing risk of major and possibly nuclear conflict, which could kill millions. Even though Britain is one of the world’s most developed states, the figures for pensioner poverty and chronic underemployment are shocking and worse.

Confidence in the democratic process is plummeting to new lows. There is evidence of the French gilet jaunes and those who have taken to the streets in Hong Kong, which are being partly hijacked by expressions of anti-semitism, whilst groups of political thugs in Britain have also done high-viz uniforms, a devout, confused and blunted protest against the so-called ‘Liberal elite’.

The social problems which we have vexed us throughout modern history could have been solved long ago, by a radical and perceptive recognition of the need to change the system itself. But real radicalism has at each turn been dismissed, as much by the Left as by conservatives, in the name of ‘realism’ and reasonable expectations. We inhabit a social system of brutal capital accumulation and dehumanisation which can only get worse, and periodically implode as it is doing now. This could be a time for a great positive change, if we question and replace the underlying economic system – or for a plunge into the abyss, if once again we don’t.

Whilst Labour and Tory seem to be falling apart at the seams, the Greens and the Greens seem to be doing better. There was a very telling moment when Kirsty Wark interviewed Anna Soubry for Newsnight about the new Independent Group. Wark pressed her on what they stood for and she had absolutely no idea. It was a shock. We are totally divided into rival groups of those who own and control the planet’s resources. More than 99 percent of us have no real stake at all in the system.

To resolve the climate crisis will absolutely necessitate ending the economic system of minority ownership and profit. Likely we are fighting a losing battle but it is a battle worth fighting. We inhabit an economic system of brutal capital accumulation and dehumanisation which can only get worse, and periodically implode as it is doing now. This could be a time for a great positive change, if we question and replace the underlying economic system – or for a plunge into the abyss, if once again we don’t.

CLIFFORD SLAPPER

The Hand-Made Tale

WHEN WE’re stuck at work, stressed out and fed up with the usual hierarchies and doings of the everyday, we longed to know about doing something more imaginative and fulfilling? Days spent not being a small cog in a machine, but doing what we’re passionate about to make an end product of which we can be proud. The Arts and Crafts movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries recognised that work could be more satisfying than it has become in capitalism. This movement was a reaction to the growth of industrialism, at which time mean machines with anonymous workers, numbers of smoky, dirty mills and factories. Its prominent members were artists and socialists who railed against industrialism, and mass production in particular, churned out both dull, impersonal commodities and alienated, exploited workers. It harked back to a romanticised view of medieval times, when production meant individually-crafted pottery, furniture and ornaments. Emphasising human dignity and being creative. Arts and Crafts designs were simple, light and airy, in contrast to the dominant fashion for wealthier Victorians’ homes to be cluttered, dark and stuffy. Patterns were often inspired by nature, such as the floral motifs of William Morris’ wallpaper and William De Morgan’s pot and tiles.

Trying to recreate both the artworks and the working practices of the Arts and Crafts movement left behind BBC2’s The Victorian House Of Arts And Crafts. In this show, six craftsmen and -women spend a month living and working together, each week using traditional methods to make arts and Crafts-inspired items for a particular room of the house. The idea of craftspeople working together as a community comes from The Guild and School of Handicraft, founded by Charles Robert Ashbee in 1888. This was a collective of workshops run with the aim of seeking ‘not only to set a higher standard of workmanship but also to create an atmosphere of the same time, and in so doing, to preserve the status of the craftsmen.’ The programme aims to prove that they had ‘pointed out where artists can bounce ideas off each other, share knowledge and experience, and find ways of working well together.’

Although they are already skilled in trades such as metalwork, woodwork, pottery and textiles, the show participants are accompanied by materials, tools and techniques from the 19th century. Through the weeks the projects are becoming more and more ambitious, with printing wallpaper from carved blocks and making a chair by weaving its seat from rushes using a pole lathe to turn wood for the legs. As well as using practical methods most of us are unfamiliar with, the Arts and Crafts movement also championed styles of work which differ from that which many of us are used for. For example, rest of the movement aimed for a new society where work could again be personal and satisfying. This doesn’t have to mean using old techniques. As Charles Robert Ashbee said, ‘We do not reject the machine, we welcome it. But we would desire to see it mastered. The movement’s political views were shaped particularly by John Ruskin and William Morris. Ruskin criticised the alienating nature of employment during the industrial revolution, but naïvely believed that society’s ills could be cured by a ‘noble class’ of philanthropic industrialists (see Socialist Standard, June 2000). Morris’ views were more imaginative and perceptive, recognising that the drudgery and exploitation of employment itself will remain as long as employment itself exists. His vision of the future, detailed in News From Nowhere (1890) of a world where employment is pleasurable and voluntary, as it would be if services and industrial work were done by machines. The Arts and Crafts movement remains relevant today for those who want to design and print their own wallpaper, but for anyone who wants a better way of living and working. The Victorian House Of Arts And Crafts was a welcome reminder of a movement which isn’t just stuck in the past.

MICK FOSTER

picking a winner each week, which again seems to go against the movement’s ethos. Despite this, the participants are in the enviable position of being able to sketch their ideas while sitting in the kitchen, heading to a workshop to make them real. Having the opportunity to collaborate, experiment and be creative is a nourishing experience for them, echoing the movement’s belief in the therapeutic benefits of crafting by hand.

The Purpose of Art

Whether it’s a welcome reminder of a movement which isn’t just stuck in the past, or indeed an optimistic sliver of positivity in a time of crisis, the programme focuses much more on art than on the movement’s political ideas. Rather than just being nostalgic for previous ways of working, the movement aimed for a new society where work could again be personal and satisfying. This doesn’t have to mean using old techniques. As Charles Robert Ashbee said, ‘We do not reject the machine, we welcome it. But we would desire to see it mastered. The movement’s political views were shaped particularly by John Ruskin and William Morris. Ruskin criticised the alienating nature of employment during the industrial revolution, but naïvely believed that society’s ills could be cured by a ‘noble class’ of philanthropic industrialists (see Socialist Standard, June 2000). Morris’ views were much more imaginative and perceptive, recognising that the drudgery and exploitation of employment itself will remain as long as employment itself exists. His vision of the future, detailed in News From Nowhere (1890) of a world where work is pleasurable and voluntary, as it would be if services and industrial work were done by machines. The Arts and Crafts movement remains relevant today for those who want to design and print their own wallpaper, but for anyone who wants a better way of living and working. The Victorian House Of Arts And Crafts was a welcome reminder of a movement which isn’t just stuck in the past.

MICK FOSTER
socialist

you can talk about poverty but not about
currently discussing with any specific
encouraging them to feel that they are
change agents, solutions rather than the
problem. MarketWorld's few jobs to
young career seekers who want not
to make money but to feel good about
themselves while doing so.

The image that emerges of the capitalist
depicted as an entity of single identity, with
abrupt alternation between Dr. Jekyll and
Mr. Hyde in the ruthless and rapacious
to which is why Carnegie made his workers
toil such long hours at such low pay in the
heavily industrialized areas of the United
States, in order to fund public libraries.

Capitalists evidently do not mind
talk. While the tendency is to talk
deliberately not like being told to do less harm. Some of
the most celebrated philanthropists do the most harm in their role as
capitalists, e.g., as The Richest Man in Babylon.

One example is the Sacker family,
owned by Purdue Pharma, whose highly profitable patents on painkillers allegedly fuelled the opioid
epidemic. Incredibly, rent is not even mentioned
among the significant problems historically
addressed by the discipline of political science. This was essentially one
of the key problems that Keynesian
solutions to the crisis of capitalism
were founded upon, and that
the present-day crisis of capitalism
seems to lack. The idea of
profitability, but, like the dog that didn't
bark in the night, in the steps the ruling
class may take to avoid its effects. Rather
than simply pointing to periodic crises of capitalism, we are in some ways
better pointing to the inevitable need to
dismantle and disrupt the existing
social relations in order to engage in
a new spurt of profitability for one
families of another, if not of capital.

Notwithstanding this, there are useful
capitalists, it is one reason why the
crisis of capitalism is not currently
being discussed by the masses. The
tendency is to talk about the crises of
capitalism, but, like the dog that didn't
necessarily mean that Marx's tendency is observed in
action. Other factors may be in play (which
these essays sometimes mention, without
exploring).

There is little or no discussion of
primary accumulation — what the Marxist
geographer David Harvey describes as
accumulation by dispossession. That is, wealth acquired through the
property rules, but by fraud or force (the
great historical example being slavery). This
point is that, though the logical effects of
loss of surplus profits will be
differential surplus profits will be
manifest as inflationary pressures. An observable,
stable, decline in the rate of profit is the key factor in
economic crises. Roberts notes that there is
disagreement among Marxian economists
as to whether the declining rate of profit
can be empirically observed. This book is premised on the fact that it can.

For Marx the rate of profit is the
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The Catholic Church and the Pill

Mussolini’s massacre of the Abyssinians, Hitler’s systematic murder of the European Jews, the American slaughter of Vietnamese—none of these atrocities, or others like them, caused more than mild rumbles in the Roman Catholic Church—and yet Catholics were deeply involved in all three. But the use of the pill has caused a series of explosions which threaten to blow it apart at its rotten seams. The contrast would be laughable if it were not so tragic. The Pope’s rulings on oral contraceptives has caused more Catholics to question the authority of their church than any other event this century. It has called forth more jokes than the Propho affair. And the jokes and arguments have arisen because people are struggling to understand and digest a seemingly absurd situation. For thousands of Catholics it was a shock situation, because the pill seemed to offer the answer to all the objections that the church had raised to mechanical or chemical contraceptives. Many of them were already using the pill in expectation that the Pope would bless it, and there was a powerful lobby of bishops and influential lay Catholics supporting this decision. When finally, after long delay, and against the majority advice of his own Commission, Pope Paul’s encyclical forbade its use by Catholics, the majority of Catholics and non-Catholics alike was close to incredulity.

That was seven months ago. Many non-Catholics have already forgotten it—or at least they would have done if it had not been for the way Catholics are still reacting. For many, particularly in countries like Holland, France and Britain, the resettlement of the pill issue has led to a continuing series of minor rebellions on other issues such as the celibacy of priests, the virginity of Mary, and the dominance of Rome. It is plain now that the Vatican must prepare for many years of dissent and controversy.

(Socialist Standard, March 1969)

Declaration of Principles

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

Object

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 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.

5. 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 awesomely 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 brought to the system which deprives them of the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly for the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise 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 awesomely 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 brought to the system which deprives them of the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

Our political views are shaped by the circumstances we find ourselves in and how we relate to our situation. How does a socialist understanding of capitalism and the aim for a free and equal world compare with other political stances and belief systems? Why should we have a socialist viewpoint? And how does it impact on our lives? Our weekend of talks and discussion looks at what it means to have a socialist outlook in the 21st century.

Full residential cost (including accommodation and meals Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) is £100. The concessionary rate is £50. Day participants pay £25. The full cost includes a £10 deposit which is non-refundable if not paid by the 1st of June.

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

Meetings:

MARCH 2019

LONDON Saturday 23 March, 2.00 p.m. – 4.00 p.m.
Public meeting on Brexit
Speaker: Bill Martin
Venue: Quaker Meeting House, 20 Nigel Playfair Avenue, W6 9YJ

MANCHESTER Saturday 23 March, 2.00 p.m.
Poverty
Venue: Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, M2 5NS

APRIL 2019

LONDON Annual Conference Saturday 27 – Sunday 28 April, 10.30 a.m. – 5.30 p.m. on Saturday 27 10.30 a.m. – 5.00 p.m. on Sunday 28
Socialist Party’s Premises 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN

To book by post, send a cheque (payable to the Socialist Party of Great Britain) to Summer School, The Socialist Party, 215 High Street, London, SW4 7UN.

E-mail enquiries should be sent to spgschool@yahoo.co.uk.

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

(continued from page 21)
Trump the Saviour

Given that we the people have elected the likes of Viktor Orban, Rodrigo Duterte, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Daniel Ortega, the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front, even Adolf Hitler, it’s little wonder that some people have turned to prayer. Well, for many Christians, including Sarah Sanders, the Whitehouse Press Secretary, those prayers have been answered and we have been blessed with Donald Trump. ‘I think God calls all of us to fill different roles at different times and I think that He wanted Donald Trump to become president. And that’s why he’s there. And I think he has done a tremendous job in supporting a lot of the things that people of faith really care about’ (cnsnews.com, 31 January). One contributor to the site, MJ, went so far as to state: ‘I definitely agree that God chose Donald Trump to be our president! The devil and hordes of his demons have done everything they know to try and hinder and stop him from accomplishing God’s purposes, yet he remains in office. Why? Because he has given his life to God and desires to restore Christian values to our nation to make it great again. Bless him, Lord!’

Cortez the Redeemer

The religious Left is no better. In a commentary titled ‘The Biblical Values of Ocasio-Cortez’s Democratic Socialism’ (sojo.net, 31 January) we are informed ‘The Bible envisions a just and equitable social order. As King explained, “God never intended for some of his children to live in inordinate superfluous wealth while others live in abject, deadening poverty.” Democratic socialism seeks to build a more humane society, not by force or compulsion, but by way of the age-old democratic practice of “one person, one vote.” For this reason, democratic socialist policies can only move forward if the American people understand their value and vote for them.’ Surprisingly, there is a kernel of truth here: genuine socialism can only come about through majority understanding. But, religion, be it of the Left or Right, supports the status quo. Quotations from the Bible are offered in support of healthcare for all, a fair wage and a minimum one for all, as well as fair treatment of workers. The real message is, however, you’ll get pie in the sky when you die!

So the fight continues on two fronts, to replace religion and supersede atheism through socialist understanding.

No Gods, no Masters

Marx (1847): ‘The social principles of Christianity have had eighteen centuries in which to develop, and have no need to undergo further development at the hands of Prussian consistorial councillors. The social principles of Christianity justified the slavery of classical days; they glorified mediaval servitum; and they are able when needs must to defend the oppression of the proletariat, though with a somewhat crestfallen air. The social principles of Christianity proclaim the need for the existence of a ruling class and a subjugated class, being content to express the pious hope that the former will deal philanthropically with the latter. The social principles of Christianity assume that there will be compensation in heaven for all the infamies committed on earth, and thereby justify the persistence of these infamies here below. The social principles of Christianity explain that the atrocities perpetrated by the oppressors on the oppressed are either just punishments for original and other sins, or else trials which the Lord in His wisdom ordains for the Redeemed. The social principles of Christianity preach cowardice, self-contempt, abasement, submission, humility, in a word, all the qualities of the canaille; and the proletariat which will not allow itself to be treated as canaille, needs courage, self-confidence, pride, a sense of personal dignity and independence, even more than it needs daily bread. The social principles of Christianity are lick-spittle, whereas the proletariat is revolutionary. So much for the social principles of Christianity’ (Otto Rühle, Karl Marx: His Life and Works, 1929).