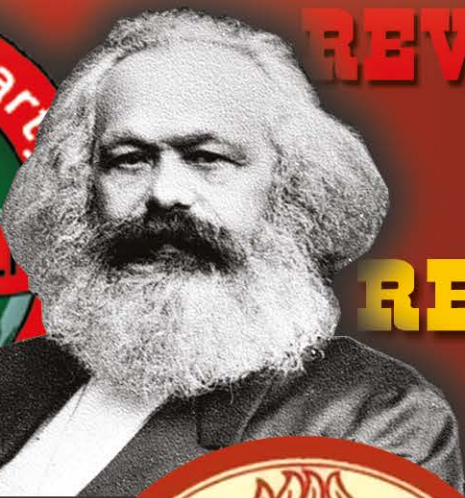


socialist standard

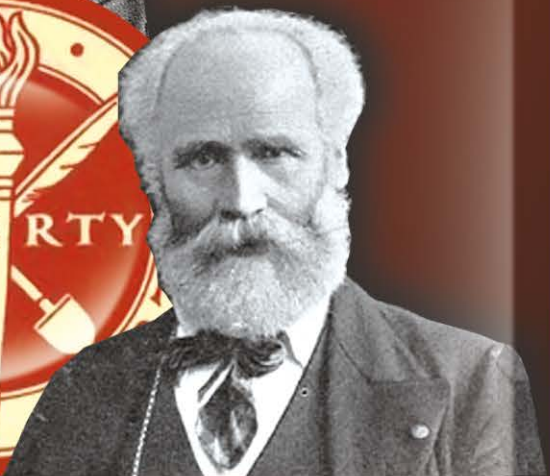
August 2020
Vol.116 No.1392
£1.50

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



**REVOLUTION
OR
REFORM?**

**100 YEARS OF
REFORMIST
FAILURE**



**CAPITALISM CAN NEVER SERVE
THE INTERESTS OF THE MAJORITY**

*also: Housing
Imperialism
Charlottesville*



socialist standard

Contents August 2020

Features

- 10 Housing**
A Marketless Future
- 12 Imperialism**
Leftist Humbug
- 14 Charlottesville**
Lessons in Stone
- 16 Normal Wisdom**
A Life Less Living

Regulars

- Editorial 3**
- Pathfinders 4**
- Cooking the Books 5**
- Material World 9**
- Cooking the Books II 18**
- Proper Gander 19**
- Reviews 20**
- 50 Years Ago 22**
- Rear View 24**
- Free Lunch 24**

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 war.

The *Socialist Standard* is the combative monthly journal of the Socialist Party, published without interruption since 1904. In the 1930s the *Socialist Standard* explained why capitalism would not collapse of its own accord, in response to widespread claims to the contrary, and continues to hold this view in face of the notion's recent popularity. Beveridge's welfare measures of the 1940s were viewed as a reorganisation of poverty and a necessary 'expense' of production, and Keynesian policies designed to overcome slumps an illusion. Today, the journal exposes as false the view that banks create money out of thin air, and explains

why actions to prevent the depredation of the natural world can have limited effect 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 in accordance with the principle 'from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs'

All original material is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivs 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-ND 2.0 UK) licence.

Why capitalism can't work for us

Capitalism is a way of organising the production and distribution of wealth where goods and services are produced for sale and where the resources needed to produce them are owned by just a minority of the population. This combination of minority ownership and production for sale gives rise to economic laws which govern the operation of the system. It means that, to get a living, the excluded majority are forced by economic necessity to find an employer who will pay them a money wage which they use to buy what they need to stay alive.

Wages are a price, the price of human mental and physical energies that can be used to produce wealth. That price is determined by what it costs to buy the food, clothes, housing, entertainment, etc needed to create and recreate those energies. In other words, wages reflect, other things being equal, the cost of living. This, however, is less than the value produced when workers labour to produce wealth for sale. As a result, the owners of productive resources realise a profit

when they sell what their employees have produced. Capitalist production is thus not simply the production of goods and services for sale but their production for sale with a view to profit.

The source of the incomes of the two classes in capitalist society is wages for the excluded majority and profits for the owning minority. Wages always reflect the cost of living; making profits become the primary aim of production.

This being so, as long as capitalism lasts, there is little chance of the excluded majority getting to consume more than they need to create their particular type of working skill, nor of production serving any other aim than profit-making.

The law of wages says that, if part of what workers need to consume to recreate their working skills is covered by a payment from the state or by a free service, employers won't need to pay them so much as wages. What one hand gives the other takes away.

The law of profits says that anything that reduces profits or impedes profit-

making, such as taxing profits too much or imposing measures that increase production costs, will provoke an economic downturn.

There is no escaping these consequences of attempts to reform capitalism to benefit the excluded majority.

Socialists draw the conclusion that there is no point in trying to reform capitalism to make it work in some other way. That simply cannot be done. Efforts should be directed instead to ending capitalism by making the means of wealth production the common property of society as a whole, which will end the operation of the economic laws of capitalism and allow society to gear the production and distribution of wealth to satisfying people's needs.

Common ownership – the abolition of class ownership – and production and distribution directly for use, that's the only viable alternative to capitalism.

FREE
3-month trial
subscription
to the
socialist
standard



For a 3-month trial subscription to the **socialist standard**, or to request more details about the Socialist Party, complete and return this form to **52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN**.



Please send me an info pack



Please send me a trial subscription to the **socialist standard**



Name

Address

Postcode

Subscription Orders should be sent to the address above. **Rates:** One year subscription (normal rate) £15. One year subscription (low/unwaged) £10. Europe rate £20 (Air mail). Rest of world £25 (Air mail). Voluntary supporters subscription £20 or more. Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'.

PATHFINDERS

Dust to Dust

'BELOW THAT thin layer comprising the delicate organism known as the soil is a planet as lifeless as the moon', wrote Jacks and Whyte in *The Rape of the Earth: A World Survey Of Soil Erosion* (1939). Soil erosion was big news in the 1930s, when rapacious farming created a dust bowl that blew 'black blizzards' across America from the Great Plains to New Mexico. Since then farming techniques have become less rudimentary, yet what has capitalism really learned about managing the environment? Mainly how to double down on exploiting it, and never mind the downstream consequences.

A new documentary about the future of agriculture entitled 'The Need to Grow' starts with the shocking report that there is only 60 years' worth of farmable soil left on Earth, because it is being turned to flyaway dust by pesticides, herbicides, deforestation and monocropping. This 60-year figure hangs over the entire documentary like the shadow of the Apocalypse as a succession of hands-on experts tell us that we need to act now by individually growing what we can, even if it's only a basil plant in a window box.

What does the viewer take away from all this? From a British point of view, all the yes-we-can positive vibes and skyscraping kale plants are being produced by tanned farmers in sun-drenched Californian plots, and one wonders how upbeat they would be if faced with a small damp yard in the back-to-backs of Lancashire. True, they showcase some pretty clever stacking systems to get the best out of a small space, but most workers probably couldn't afford the upscale garden-centre prices.

And who are they kidding with this window box stuff anyway? The overwhelming requirement for any sustainable crop is space. Botanist James Wong quotes an estate agent survey saying that the average UK garden is around 3.7 square metres (although this is a dubious figure given what estate agents are wont to call a 'garden'). With 3.7 m², a top gardening expert growing the best all-round food crop (potatoes) in ideal conditions could only produce enough calories to last five days. To last a year would require 266m², which is about the size of an allotment (*New Scientist*, 15 April - [bit.ly/20wAiTB](https://www.newscientist.com/article/20wAiTB)).

If the solutions look a tad unrealistic to the average plant-challenged suburbanite,

what about the premise, that there's only 60 years' worth of planetary soil left? Well, this figure has an interesting history. Back in 2010 a Sydney professor suggested a 60-year deadline based on estimated rates of UK soil erosion, but it was an off-the-cuff speculation about the UK only (*Telegraph*, 3 February 2010 - [bit.ly/30nv9CG](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2010/02/03/60-year-deadline-for-soil-erosion/)). Then in 2014 a small study looking at back gardens and allotments in Sheffield found that, not very surprisingly, allotment soil was significantly healthier than heavily worked local farmland. *Farmers Weekly* reported the lead scientist as saying 'With a growing population to feed, and the nutrients in our soil in sharp decline, we may soon see an agricultural crisis.' Fair comment perhaps, but *FW* printed the story under the banner headline 'Only 100 harvests left in UK farm soils, scientists warn'. Where was the quote mentioning this 100-year calculation in the body of the story? There wasn't one (*Farmers Weekly*, 21 October 2014 - [bit.ly/30kPY1x](https://www.farmersweekly.co.uk/news/only-100-harvests-left-in-uk-farm-soils-scientists-warn/)). In fact the study never made this claim, or anything resembling it. *FW* seems to have invented it.

Other journalists with deadlines ran with the story, doubtless without checking or even reading the original, and pretty soon the 100-year figure found itself being extrapolated to the entire world, as if conditions in Sheffield somehow prevailed from the Amazon to Alaska. Less than two months after the *FW* story a top official of the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation was already trimming the 100-year figure down to a more headline-grabbing 60 years, but without citing a source (*Reuters*, 5 December 2014 - [reut.rs/3eCXhae](https://www.reuters.com/article/3eCXhae)). Not to be outdone, and possibly in a bid to grab some personal column inches, UK environment secretary Michael Gove astonished audiences by ratcheting Doomsday down to a mere 30 years, citing the Sheffield study as sole evidence (*Guardian*, 24 October 2017 - [bit.ly/3fCIH4Y](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/oct/24/michael-gove-30-years-soil-erosion)).

What happened to the axiom 'extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence'? It looks like nobody, including the makers of 'The Need to Grow', bothered to put in any spadework on research. Except for James Wong, that is, who spent 8 hours digging through academic publications looking for the 100-year calculation, or indeed any



calculation, thereafter consulting a number of soil scientists who told him that no such calculation existed and would be impossible to derive anyway (*New Scientist*, 8 May 2019 - [bit.ly/2Wr8PXx](https://www.newscientist.com/article/2Wr8PXx)).

Why would anyone produce a major documentary narrated by a Hollywood star and not check basic facts? It would surely be too cynical to point to the \$20 DVD price or the avalanche of sales spam you get once you've signed up to watch the film. More likely they believed the formula: worst threat equals highest motivation. That's debatable, but it's also dishonest and counter-productive, because if people think they've been misled by bogus facts, they're quite likely to dismiss the problem.

And soil destruction really is a problem regardless of deadline, as Wong and every soil scientist is keen to point out. Few things illustrate the existential stupidity of capitalism like its destruction of the very means to grow food. Ancient societies like the Sumerians wiped themselves out through soil destruction, so it's not as if we're unaware of the problem. John Seymour, quoting Jacks and Whyte above, made this clear decades ago: 'If the soil goes we all go: let there be absolutely no doubt about that. There is no future for our species if we destroy the soil' (*Changing Lifestyles*, 1991).

But in capitalism nobody is listening. Individual growers have to decide between protecting their income or protecting the environment, and altruism doesn't pay the bills. Monocropping, pesticides and deforestation do pay the bills, with catastrophic and unsustainable effects on the planet's soils. The profit system is incapable of altering course or stopping. But the human race can stop it, by taking the planet into common ownership and managing it sustainably. If we don't, we risk a global tragedy of the commons that could be everybody's funeral.

PJS



If not now, then when?

The days pass by now in a strangely routine way – I rise early, turn on the radio and whilst having breakfast listen to the news; now, as each and every day, entirely filled with Covid-19. I then set about my work. I am a sculptor, so what little work I did have has now evaporated, along with any income (the arts are not really that important in a society where beauty has little value). Life has become a little like the one experienced by the character played by Bill Murray in the 1993 film *Groundhog Day*.

In the early days of the pandemic, I, like many people in that peculiar British way, drew humour from the awful truth of the virus, and jokes about the lack of toilet paper did the rounds on social media. The actual reality had not, perhaps, hit home. Also, (and this was widely discussed, particularly in those early days) there was the universal awareness by people of which jobs really were important and necessary to allow society to function in a meaningful and efficient way – refuse collectors, shop workers, delivery drivers, bus drivers, farm labourers and, of course, care workers and nurses. Ironically, all were notably workers with the lowest pay scales (and also jobs that were looked down on by many people). People even came out of their houses to ‘clap for our carers’ – a gesture heartily supported by the government, who seemed to experience an odd case of amnesia when it came to remembering how, a few years previously, they had treated the nurses who could not afford to live near the hospitals where they worked and were forced to resort to food banks, or Jeremy Hunt’s jack-booted handling of the junior doctors’ requests. As the conversations between people developed during April, it was not unusual for them to reflect on the possibility and likelihood of a ‘new form of society’ that would rise, phoenix-like, from the smouldering pile of post-pandemic ashes. Lots of people were finding life less stressful (although, it should be said, not those who were confined in flats with an abusive partner or whose lives meant that the lockdown just exacerbated an already dire existence), with no need for urgency or frantic meeting of deadlines, and were beginning to question whether the media’s often-used ‘return to normal’ phrase was appropriate. Was where we were and how we were living before ‘normal’ at all?

Slowly and inexorably, society was, due to the pressure and dictates of the virus, moving towards a new way of living; people were organising themselves, very rapidly, into

caring communities, displaying selfless generosity and acting locally. Hours were spent by individuals making PPE items for health workers, or providing meals for delivery drivers. Freed from the constraints of daily toil and exploitation, the real human traits began to emerge. Far from lazing around, work and contribution towards a happy and functioning society was becoming the ‘new normal’. So surely, one would think, if not now, then when would humanity reflect on the manner in which capitalism functions, and realise that nothing we do requires the physical existence of money, let alone a system predicated on profit and ever-growing destruction of resources, the environment and people. I must admit that I felt the time was perfect; all the indicators were there – it only needed people to reflect and think for a moment. It did not need a revolution, just a simple change of perception – an epiphany moment when people realise that ‘this cannot and need not go on’ and, more importantly, understand what to put in its place.

So, why then are we where we are now – nearly four months on? The initial talk has, it seems, settled into a state of ennui. The media has relentlessly bombarded us with promises of ‘relaxing lockdown rules’ and ‘returning to normal’. Of course we all know (and it doesn’t take an economist to figure this out) serious economic malaise will follow very soon if workers are not working and businesses are not trading and ‘growing’. Therefore, and despite the fact that there is no cure or vaccine, the governments worldwide are desperate, largely regardless of the risk to workers’ lives, to get people back to work. The economy has, once again, triumphed over the needs of the people.

So, with no fundamental change in the dangers imposed by the virus, queues stretch for miles outside Primark, KFC, Homebase, Starbucks, Sports Direct and dozens of other faceless commodity outlets as lockdown is relaxed and the public are being encouraged to spend their cash on ‘non-essential’ items, is there any chance of change? Sadly, things aren’t looking hopeful; the power of a capitalist society to engineer the way the majority of people think is so powerful – the belief that buying the latest item of shoddily made tat will somehow make you a better, happier or more fulfilled person seems now to be ‘hard-wired’ into the masses.

‘Socialism? That’s just utopia!’, to which we reply – have you actually checked out the meaning of utopia?

GLENN MORRIS

LETTERS

Think about socialism

In July, BBC Radio 4 ran a series of programmes on 'rethinking' things in the light of the experience of the coronavirus and lockdown. Here are contributions sent by two Socialist Party members.

If we want the world to change for the better, we have to change everything. Otherwise we're just rearranging the deckchairs. And so far that's what the 'Rethink' programmes have been about – slightly different ways of doing the same thing. By 'the same thing' I mean vast economic inequality with a tiny number of people wallowing in most of the wealth we all produce. I mean the market forcing its decisions on governments. I mean the whole buying and selling and working for wages system. What do I offer in its place? I offer using the world's abundant resources to feed, clothe and house everyone to a decent level through a system of voluntary cooperation and democratic organisation with free access to all goods and services. People contribute their work and skills according to their ability and take according to need. It can be achieved by people in a majority getting together, deciding this is what they want and voting for it democratically on a world scale. What can be simpler? Give this system what name you like, it doesn't matter – all it needs is an effort of the imagination.

HM

Reply: There's never been a better time to 'rethink', but the rethinking has got to be truly radical. It has taken a blip in

capitalism for millions of people worldwide to be thrown on the scrapheap and be plunged into despair, for people who never thought it would be possible to have to resort to foodbanks in this country and to face starvation elsewhere. That's how precarious capitalism is for nearly all of us with its imperative to sell, sell, sell, to consume, consume, consume. Once something happens to prevent that, all hell breaks loose. But, if we don't do something significant now, the regime we live under will just carry on and all the well-meaning attempts to make things better – for example the green movement, the feminist movement, the BLM movement – will just be co-opted by the system, absorbed into it and there won't be that fundamental change that's necessary. By fundamental change I mean looking beyond producing things for profit and instead producing for need via a collective, voluntary effort by humanity as a whole. In that sense the Covid crisis has pointed the way. It's shown that we can get together collectively and help one another in a constructive organised way. The lesson we need to take from this is that we can and have to organise society in just this way. It's the need we all have to make money to survive that has caused Covid-19 and that, even without any virus crisis, causes wars and poverty. If we don't move to a rational, resource-based organisation of society where we are all economically equal, we can 'rethink' till we're blue in the face, but it will be the 'same old same old'.

JB

COOKING THE BOOKS

Big Deal!

When Boris Johnson announced the bringing forward of a modest package of public works, he remarked that 'it sounds positively Rooseveltian. It sounds like a New Deal. All I can say is that if so that is how it is meant to sound to be' (*Times*, 30 June). He was referring to the policies pursued by the Roosevelt administration in America in the 1930s.

When Roosevelt assumed office as President in 1933 the US was confronted with an unprecedented economic crisis – a huge fall in output, mass unemployment, a frozen financial system. To try to deal with this, his administration adopted a programme of public works (for which he is remembered) and of restricting production until stocks cleared (which is not remembered, but which is essential before capitalism can recover from a slump).

Re-elected in 1936, he expanded the public works programme. Capitalist production recovered to some extent but in 1937-38 there was another recession. As for unemployment:

'When Roosevelt ran for re-election

in 1936, the unemployment rate was 16.9 per cent, almost twice what it had been in 1930. (...) When Roosevelt ran for the unprecedented third term [in 1940], unemployment was 14.6 per cent' (bit.ly/3etPmfg).

No wonder a *Times* sub-editor, in a note explaining Roosevelt's New Deal to readers who might not have been familiar with it, wrote:

'The extent to which it helped the US economy to recover from a deflationary recession remains a matter of debate. Some argue that FDR, as the president was known, did not spend enough and that it was the Second World War that finally put the US economy back on track as government spending soared.'

The 'some' referred to who wanted FDR to spend more on left-wing reformists, and currency cranks, who do not understand how capitalism works. The Roosevelt administration could in theory have spent more on putting people to work on infrastructure projects but this would have had to have been at the expense of private capitalist investment, a fall in which would have had the opposite effect of more unemployment. But it is true that

mass unemployment in the US only ended when the government mobilised resources to fight a war.

The New Deal was opposed by some sections of the capitalist class who regarded it, as Johnson's hero Churchill put it in an appeal to Roosevelt in 1937, 'this war on wealth and business, this war on private enterprise' (quoted in the *Guardian*, 29 June). Most capitalists, however, were more level-headed. Roosevelt himself was reported as having said, in May 1935, that 'I want to save our system, the capitalistic system.'

By capitalism he meant private capitalism as production for profit by private capitalist enterprises. This survived as the dominant form of capitalism in the US. It was never really in need of 'saving'. Nor was capitalism in its more accurate sense of production for profit on the basis of wage-labour, since those Roosevelt wanted to save private capitalism from – the fascists who wanted America to emulate Hitler's Germany and the 'communists' who wanted it to emulate Stalin's Russia – were merely advocating alternative ways of operating this.

LETTERS

Dear Editors

I think I agree with almost everything you stand for but. I don't understand how global, neoliberal 'capitalism' can be replaced with global socialism in practice.

The capitalists have all the money, time and resources including the technological fire-power to oppress the people.

I don't see how socialism can be achieved in one fell swoop – surely it would have to involve a 'reform of capitalism' period first?

I'd be grateful if you could address this problem – a group of us are just trying to work out how best to aid the socialist cause and your organisation is being considered.

Dorothy Reich

Reply: The current world order of capitalism can and will only be replaced by socialism when the overwhelming majority of people throughout the world understand and appreciate what real socialism is likely to mean in practice.

The entrenched capitalist class do indeed control both all resources and 'technological fire-power'. That's the basis of the capitalist system and their rule. But we have the advantage of numbers – we are the overwhelming majority – and we operate production from top to bottom and make up the bulk of the armed forces. When we get our act together they won't be able to stop us establishing socialism through democratic political action.

As things stand, the term socialism (or communism as it is sometimes called) has been tarnished by all states who declare themselves either socialist or communist, but who are in fact really capitalist.

Piecemeal reforms cannot pave the way to socialism because reforms are limited to only working within the current framework. Nor do we support the notion of a government which tries to run capitalism in the interests of the majority, even if it intends for this to only be in the short-term before socialism.

Reforms only aim at trying to improve the current system rather than changing it, working for reforms distracts and diverts us from challenging the system itself. By way of an analogy, reforms are like 'treating' an injury with painkillers – you feel a bit better for a short time, but this wears off and the cause of the pain still remains.

It is up to people like you and us and the working class of this and all other countries of the world to join together and share the kind of ideas being propagated by ourselves and our companion parties. -- *Editors*.

What about overpopulation?

A reader has asked us about overpopulation, commenting that socialism 'might be easier with a reduced population'.

It is true that socialism would be a lot easier to implement and operate with less people to provide for. But if wishes were horses, all beggars would ride, as the old saying goes.

The reality is that globally the population is growing and the question is, can it be reduced? The stark answer is no – even if fertility rates were lowered. The number of people in a country continues to rise for years after people stop having children-- a phenomenon known as population momentum.

Thus, the projection is that global population will go from approaching 8 billion today to about 11 billion in around year 2100 then plateauing and then finally begin to drop back to about what it is today.

So socialists fully expect and are required to plan for an increased number of people, something that we cannot avoid regardless of any family planning which is already being increasingly adopted without any compulsion by better educated and more empowered women, even in patriarchal dominated cultures.

Our argument is that with rational allocation of resources that should not be a problem and that free access can still be accomplished. We do have the capability of comfortably coping and still create a sustainable steady-state zero-growth economy eventually.

This is not to say that it will not be a critical crisis for capitalism and is in fact another reason why for the sake of humanity it must be done away with.

Along with a population rise we also have the related issues that will arise in the future.

Firstly, the demographic problem of higher numbers of elderly with less adults of working-age to support them. China's one-child policy resulted in what was called the 1 - 2 - 4 paradox. One active worker supporting retired parents and because of better health prospects his or her grand-parents. Such family support is essential in countries lacking social safety-nets for the old and frail.

We also have the situation of urbanisation and overcrowding in slums and shanty towns of some major cities as the industrialised plantation-type cash-crop farming leads to the end of the small-farmers. (To be exacerbated by climate change in many areas of the world)

And thirdly, we have the nationalist prejudice against the movement and migration of people. We witness this right

now. The youth of Africa thwarted by lack of prospects seek opportunities in Europe where there is already a declining work-force that requires an influx of newcomers. But rather than be welcomed, they are being excluded.

Socialists cannot deny these conditions result in suffering and misery for as long as we live under capitalism. But we challenge the view that solutions cannot be achieved with the establishment of a cooperative society. In fact, only socialism can overcome them.

ALJO



UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

LONDON

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

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

West London branch. Meets 1st Tues. 8pm. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. spgb@worldsocialism.org

MIDLANDS

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

NORTH

North East Regional branch.

Contact: P. Kilgallon, c/o Head Office, 52 Clapham High Street, SW4 7UN.

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

Manchester branch. Contact: Paul Bennett, 6 Burleigh Mews, Hardy Lane, M21 7LB. 0161 860 7189.

Bolton. Contact: H. McLaughlin. 01204 844589.

Cumbria. Contact: Brendan Cummings, 19 Queen St, Millom, Cumbria LA18 4BG.

Doncaster. Contact: Fredi Edwards, fredi.edwards@hotmail.co.uk

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

Kent and Sussex regional branch. Meets 2nd Sun. 2pm at The Muggle Inn, High Street, Maidstone ME14 1HJ. Contact: spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org.

South West regional branch. Meets 3rd Sat. 2pm at the Railway Tavern, 131 South Western Road, Salisbury SP2 7RR. Contact: Ray Carr, Flat 1, 99 Princess Rd, Poole, BH12 1BQ. 01202 257556 or 07929627689.

Brighton. Contact: Anton Pruden, anton@pruden.me

Canterbury. Contact: Rob Cox, 4 Stanhope Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6AB.

Luton. Contact: Nick White, 59 Heywood Drive, LU2 7LP.

Redruth. Contact: Harry Sowden, 5 Clarence Villas, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 1PB. 01209 219293.

East Anglia. Contact: David Porter, Eastholme, Bush Drive, Eccleson-on-Sea, NR12 0SF. 01692 582533. Richard Headicar, 42 Woodcote, Firs Rd, Hethersett, NR9 3JD. 01603 814343.

Essex. Contact: Pat Deutz, 11 The Links, Billericay, CM12 0EX. patdeutz@gmail.com.

Cambridge. Contact: Andrew Westley, wezelecta007@gmail.com. 07890343044.

IRELAND

Cork. Contact: Kevin Cronin, 5 Curragh Woods, Frankfield, Cork. 021 4896427. mariekev@eircom.net

NORTHERN IRELAND

Belfast Contact: Nigel McCullough. 02890 930002

SCOTLAND

Edinburgh branch. Meets 1st Thurs. 7-9pm.

The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh. Contact: J. Moir. 0131 440 0995. jimmyjmoir73@gmail.com

Branch website:

<http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/>

Glasgow branch. Meets 3rd Weds. at 7pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Contact: Peter Hendrie, 75 Lairhills Road, East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 0LH. 01355 903105.

peter.anna.hendrie@blueyonder.co.uk.

Dundee. Contact: Ian Ratcliffe, 12 Finlow Terrace, Dundee, DD4 9NA. 01382 698297.

Ayrshire. Contact: Paul Edwards 01563 541138. rainbow3@btopenworld.com.

Lothian Socialist Discussion @Autonomous Centre Edinburgh, ACE, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA. Meets 4th Weds. 7-9pm. Contact: F. Anderson 07724 082753.

WALES

South Wales Branch (Swansea)

Meets 2nd Mon, 7.30pm (except January, April, July and October), Unitarian Church, High Street, SA1 1NZ. Contact: Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. 01792 643624.

South Wales Branch (Cardiff)

Meets 2nd Saturday 12 noon (January, April, July and October) Cafe Nero, Capitol Shopping Centre, Queens Street, Cardiff.

Contact: Richard Botterill, 21 Pen-Y-Bryn Rd, Gabalfa, Cardiff, CF14 3LG. 02920-615826. botterillr@gmail.com

INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

LATIN AMERICA

Contact: J.M. Morel, Calle 7 edif 45 apto 102, Multis nuevo La loteria, La Vega, Rep. Dominicana.

AFRICA

Kenya. Contact: Patrick Ndege, PO Box 13627-00100, GPO, Nairobi

Zambia. Contact: Kephass Mulenga, PO Box 280168, Kitwe.

ASIA

Japan. Contact: Michael. japan.wsm@gmail.com

AUSTRALIA

Contact: Trevor Clarke, wspa.info@yahoo.com.au

EUROPE

Denmark. Contact: Graham Taylor, Kjaerslund 9, Floor 2 (middle), DK-8260 Viby J.

Germany. Contact: Norbert.

weltsozialismus@gmx.net

Norway. Contact: Robert Stafford.

hallblithe@yahoo.com

Italy. Contact: Gian Maria Freddi,

Via Poiano n. 137, 37142 Verona.

Spain. Contact: Alberto Gordillo, Avenida del Parque. 2/2/3 Puerta A, 13200 Manzanares.

COMPANION PARTIES OVERSEAS

Socialist Party of Canada/Parti Socialiste

du Canada. Box 31024, Victoria B.C. V8N 6J3 Canada. SPC@iname.com

World Socialist Party (India) 257 Baghajatin 'E' Block (East), Kolkata - 700086, 033- 2425-0208. wspindia@hotmail.com

World Socialist Party (New Zealand)

P.O. Box 1929, Auckland, NI, New Zealand.

World Socialist Party of the United States.

P.O. Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144 USA. boston@wspus.org

PUBLICATIONS

PAMPHLETS (£4.00 each unless stated otherwise)

What's Wrong With Using Parliament? (£2.50)

Ecology and Socialism

From Capitalism to Socialism (£3.50)

Africa: A Marxian Analysis

Socialism as a Practical Alternative

Some Aspects of Marxian Economics (£5.50)

How the Gods Were Made by John Keracher

Marxism and Darwinism by Anton Pannekoek

Art, Labour and Socialism by William Morris

How We Live and How We Might Live by William Morris

The Right to be Lazy by Paul Lafargue

Socialist Principles Explained (£2.50)

The State and the Socialist Revolution by Julius Martov

An Inconvenient Question

Sylvia Pankhurst on Socialism (£3.00)

Why Socialists Oppose Zionism & Anti-Semitism (£3.50)

Rosa Luxemburg on Socialism

The Magic Money Myth

BOOKS

Strange Meeting: Socialism & World War One: £4.50

Are We Prisoners of Our Genes? £5.50

Socialism or Your Money Back: £4.00

Centenary of the Russian Revolution: £8.00

All of the above books (25% discount) £16.00

DVD

Capitalism and Other Kid's Stuff: £5.75

Poles Apart? Capitalism or socialism as the planet heats up: £5.75

All prices include postage and packing. For six or more of any publication, reduce the price by one third.

Return this form along with your cheque or money order to:

The Socialist Party, Clapham High St., London SW4 7UN

NAME:

ADDRESS:

POSTCODE:

MATERIAL WORLD

War drums in the China Sea

CAPITALISM CONTINUALLY creates the conditions for confrontations between countries concerning the control of resources and trade routes. Socialists never tire of pointing out that the primary function of military power in capitalism is to protect and expand control over resources, markets and transport routes on behalf of the capitalist class of the country concerned.

America's 'deputy sheriff' in the South Pacific, Australia, is significantly beefing up its armed forces, increasing military spending by \$270 billion over the next ten years. Australia is set to acquire 200 long-range aircraft-launched anti-ship missiles and other capabilities to deter future conflicts. It will also invest in developing a hypersonic missile defence system. There is a \$50 billion future submarine project and a \$7 billion underwater surveillance network to detect submarines approaching Australia's coast.

In July, the USS Nimitz and USS Ronald Reagan, two US aircraft carriers, conducted naval exercises aimed at demonstrating its superior naval capabilities over China. The United States accused China of intimidating its South East Asian neighbours. The United States declare that freedom of maritime navigation is an issue of 'national interest' and for another country to challenge America is to effectively declare war upon the United States, which is exactly what China appears to be doing in the South China Sea, a resource-rich and highly contested waterway. The loyal camp-follower of the US, the UK, has also periodically sent its warships into the contested waters to protect 'freedom of navigation'.

While those aircraft carriers were on patrol, China engaged in its own military drills near the disputed Paracel Islands. China is constructing its second aircraft carrier and also investing heavily in submarines, to be equipped in the future with 'carrier-killer' ballistic missiles.

Armament imports by Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia have all increased and much of the weapon types being purchased are for a potential sea war. The acquisition of such sophisticated weapons indicates two things: first, that South East Asian nations are wary of China's intentions and secondly, they are tooling up for a possible war.

Aside from China's claim of sovereignty, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan

and Vietnam also lay claim to parts of the South China Sea, a busy sea lane with a third of the world's shipping passing through various straits and choke points carrying \$3 trillion of trade, while half the world's fishing boats operate in its waters as well as there being a number of the region's undersea internet cables. The oil en route to East Asia through the South China Sea is many times the amount that passes through the Suez Canal and the Panama Canal. The energy supplies for South Korea, Japan and Taiwan as well as China come through the South China Sea.

They also all seek to exploit the extensive oil and gas reserves which exist. Oil reserves of billions of barrels and trillions of cubic feet of natural gas remain to be tapped. Technological advances mean countries are able to drill for oil far from shore, making it economically crucial to control as much off-shore territory as possible. This expansion of oil exploration and drilling in the South China Sea has

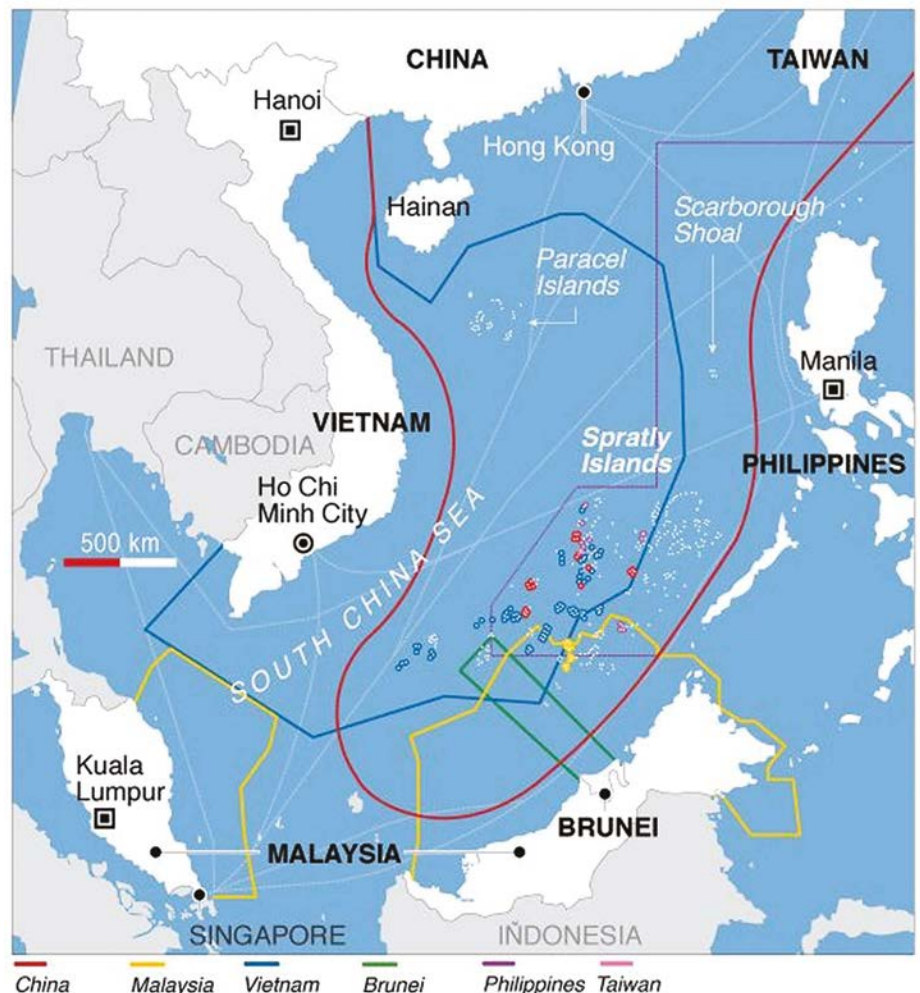
raised the stakes and looks likely to escalate sovereignty disputes.

This is not to mention another rivalry over territorial waters brewing between China and Japan over claims to some uninhabited islands in the East China Sea. The dispute is actually also about the natural gas resources. We indeed should be gravely concerned over the possibility of war between China on one hand, and other rival claimant states in the South and East China Seas on the other.

ALJO



Credit: Joe Bishop



Credit: deadeave easyflow

What happens when there is no housing market?

Decent, functional and even beautiful living accommodation is unarguably one of humanity's prime needs. It is the one prime need in fact that, more than any other, save food and water, is vitally conducive to harmonious and pleasant living at all. Conversely, the lack of it is almost always a cause of misery, meanness and domestic strife. The question of housing allocation in a socialist society is therefore by no means a novel one, and has been discussed and debated for a very long time. That old Fabian fraud George Bernard Shaw, for example, once said that he was often asked who would live in the big house on the hill in this socialist society of his, and Bernard Shaw's ever-ready response was 'The same as now, whoever can afford to live there will'.

We beg to differ. All of what we say below notwithstanding, if there is one certain fact concerning life in a future socialist society that we can predict, it's that how much money you have will most definitely not be the deciding criterion that determines where you live. There won't be any money for a start – bits of colourful paper, or, more so these days, numbers on a computer screen, that denote how deserving you are of living decently as a human being.

Shaw's solution to capitalism's housing problem, like that of the other 56 pseudo-brands of 'socialism', was simply an ill-thought out version of reformed capitalism, inexorably welded to and determined and dictated by the market for houses. In socialism, there won't be any market for houses. Shaw's 'solution' was, bizarrely, simply predicated on the continuing existence of the very cause of the housing problem in the first place.

But, to be fair to him as much as possible, Shaw's non-solution of reforming capitalism in such a way as to solve the housing problem, has been practically everybody else's non-solution too. Long before Shaw was preaching his illogical nonsense, one of the pioneers of socialist ideas, the co-author and life-long friend of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, wrote a short series of articles entitled *The Housing Question*. Engels was writing in the mid-Victorian period, a time when the 'success' of British capitalism was at its height and yet, a time also, when the housing conditions of the working class were especially miserable, unspeakably wretched and degrading. Needless to say, then as now, all manner of reformist nostrums were proposed by a whole range of political activists; from followers of the French anarchist Proudhon, who advocated that every worker within existing capitalism should have their own little private property dwelling, bought on the 'never, never', to representatives of the capitalists themselves, with their 'factory-provided houses' abominations. These, needless-to-say, were not only factory-provided, but factory-owned and job dependent, with all of the horrors of job loss and consequent eviction that were entailed. Indeed, in criticising these proposed multi-various reforms, Engels' work is almost entirely devoted to dealing with the ways and means of how *not* to solve the housing question.

Not a problem of housing

As a matter of fact, as Engels explained repeatedly, the real issue is not at all a 'housing' problem – that is, a shortage of labour power or a dearth of nature-given materials that are necessary to provide everyone in society with housing accommodation commensurate with their needs – but a capitalism problem. Deal with the real issue of capitalism's

general diktat of production for profit, and the housing question, like every other misnamed 'problem' in capitalism, will solve itself. It is the only concrete solution to the problem of lack of housing, the inferior quality of housing and the location of housing. If there is any other solution, apart from the common ownership of resources proposed by the Socialist Party, it has never been revealed. All we hear today, from Housing Associations, charities and political parties are mere echoes of the ideas and social quackery that Engels exposed and lambasted as absurd nonsense 150 years ago.

Having stated the general solution to the housing 'problem' we are invariably questioned as to how the solution of common ownership will work in practice. Socialist society will undoubtedly require administration at a local level, a regional level and even a world-wide level. How this administration is organised and functions will be a matter for the inhabitants of socialism. What decisions these socialist bodies take, and how they will be implemented and even enforced if necessary, will be entirely up to them. That goes without saying. Although we refrain from crystal ball-gazing, we can, of course, make some general points as to what might happen in regard to housing provision in socialism. There are two things, we would imagine, a socialist society will want to deal with immediately. The first is the homeless problem.

For the first time ever, a problem that has been grappled with constantly in all modern societies, that has been discussed *ad nauseam*, fought over, lied about, written about endlessly, and thousands of charities and other organisations have done to death for as long as capitalism has existed, will at last be capable of solution. The administrative bodies in a socialist society will know best at the time how to do this.

The second task will be to look at the existing occupied housing stock, its condition and the needs of its occupiers, with a view to rehousing those in the worst of circumstances immediately. Again, decisions will need to be taken by socialism's representative bodies over how best to implement this aim.

As a party, we have never claimed to be in possession of ready-made solutions for each and every question that the future socialist society will need to take up. Nor would it be sensible or desirable for us to do so. In regard to housing alone, the actual considerations and requirements are seemingly inexhaustible. The production and transportation of bricks, copper piping, slates, sand, cement, glass, wooden batons, joists and fencing, to name but a few of the most obvious that spring to mind, are each a major operation in themselves. Plumbers, electricians, roofers, bricklayers, joiners, glaziers and gardeners, will all need to be coordinated. Further, surveying, land availability, planning, road traffic considerations, amenities provision, public transport, again to name only those that readily spring to mind, give an additional idea of the complexities involved. It is absurd to suggest that we living today should make concrete plans for all this.

Likewise, the number of people involved in existing professions that are tied economically (and are mostly useless, with little or no connection to the actual construction of buildings) to housing in capitalism, that will be unleashed by socialism's construction for use economy, run into the tens of millions. Our pamphlet *From Capitalism to Socialism*, lists over 70 of these professions themselves. And that's only in regard to housing. The number of people engaged in useless jobs

in capitalism generally and not connected with housing but who would be available to be deployed in that area where required is astronomical.

We don't know

How will socialist society allocate Shaw's big house on the hill? Our answer is, and can only be, we have no blueprint. It will be up to the inhabitants of socialism to decide 'who gets what'. More importantly, even if such a question is legitimate, it certainly has no significant bearing on the case for socialism that we argue in the present.

However, such questions can be useful in one sense, for they highlight the chief difficulty of prediction: why should we assume that the social norms of today will be exactly those of the future? Certainly, there is no reason to believe that the attitudes of those living in an entirely different type of society will be exactly the same as today. To expect the norms of life in capitalism as it exists now to remain exactly the same as when there are, for example, a billion socialists, is naive enough. To expect a socialist society to be, in the first place, established on the notions and ideas of capitalism, and even more unlikely, remain completely static, is patently absurd and flies in the face of all past human experience.

Is it likely that people in a future socialist society will have the same desires, concerns, views, needs, aspirations or requirements that we find so 'natural' and indispensable in capitalism today? No matter how rigid and seemingly set in stone they appear now, it is absolutely certain that our present concerns for property ownership, for big houses, for big cars, for the baubles and trinkets so beloved of capitalism's apologists, and in a nutshell, a concern for 'who gets what', will be simply looked upon with astonishment and incredulity and, eventually, intense curiosity.

Is such a belief in the possibility of such a profound change taking place idealistic or utopian? The history of a mere couple of decades or so tells us no. Not even the imaginative genius of Oscar Wilde could have ever dreamed of such an utterly unimaginable event as two men getting married – to each other! Think about that and consider the extraordinary change in attitude that has taken place in such a short historical time span, so that, apart from a small minority of religious bigots, no one bats an eyelid at what once was, barely yesterday in historical terms, such an inconceivable proposition as to be simply dismissed out of hand by practically every human being on the planet. Yet now it is widespread and the 'norm'.

But to speculate, perhaps, in the immediate aftermath of the transition from capitalism to socialism, as a start, the inhabitants of socialism will decide, after making adequate provision for the existing occupants, to agree a list of the 500 (1000? 2000? 5000?) biggest and most beautiful private dwelling buildings in a metropolis such as London. Perhaps they will then decide to convert 100 into havens for the mentally ill, 100 into centres for the care and healing of victims of sexual abuse, 100 into centres for the study and treatment of those suffering from seemingly uncontrollable and socially harmful sexual urges, and 100 into recuperation centres for those suffering the effects of being incarcerated under capitalism for crimes against property.

Perhaps also, in an advanced socialist society of 20 years



standing, when most or all of these problems have been eradicated, the majority of the very same buildings will, one by one, be simply left to run themselves as examples of by-gone notions of desirable (or even undesirable) architecture, with accommodation upstairs for those who want to preserve and protect them. The point is, we simply cannot predict what will happen.

How will socialist society come into 'possession' of these buildings? Again, we don't know. Is it possible that they will be simply requisitioned for the use of everyone? Absolutely. After all, to describe the matter bluntly, the capitalist revolutions of the past

were to privatise the earth and everything in it and on it, to proclaim the rights of private property and to convert it into the ownership of a few.

A socialist revolution will be aimed at taking the property back we have created, taking it out of the hands of a parasitic few and to place it at the disposal of society. That is what a socialist revolution is.

How the inhabitants of a future socialist society will act, what their priorities will be, and what is important and desirable for them, can be safely left to them to decide.

What happens to an insignificant number of 'more desirable than others' buildings is only one aspect of the matter, and by far the least important. The question of housing provision in general, both now – as in the lack of it – and the potential that socialism will undoubtedly open up, is far more important.

To make glib, possibly well-intentioned – though usually ultimately utterly futile – proposals to deal with housing problems in capitalism's restrictive profit-driven market for houses is one thing; to deal with the necessity to provide healthy, decent, and even – a purely subjective opinion, of course, beautiful – living accommodation in socialism's production for use on the basis of a free access economic system, is quite another.

We would make it abundantly clear again, in any discussion of how a socialist society will deal with the general allocation of housing, that we cannot speak for a future society in regard to what decisions will be necessary in the construction or location or provision or allocation of housing – any more so than we can on the future prospects for harmonicas or hairnets.

Our only concern at present is to drive home the necessity for the one over-riding solution to the problems of capitalism and that is socialism. This will create the only possible basis for solving the so-called housing problem. And this, as we say repeatedly, for the simple reason that it isn't a problem at all, but merely a consequence of the artificial scarcity in housing created by capitalism's disgraceful and disgusting inherent drive for profit. Socialism will unleash the tremendous construction capability necessary so that we can begin practical steps towards not only solving issues like homelessness and slum-dwelling, but constructing beautiful housing accommodation – we are, after all, admirers of the ideas of the early Marxist William Morris – so as to meet the self-defined needs of every human being.

N.McC

Given that many believe that those living in the 'Global North' are living off the backs of the people in the 'Global South', we begin a multi-part series of articles correcting this, starting with the origin of this mistaken view.

Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto* was not just a scathing indictment of capitalism; it was also a paean to its material achievements which were seen as preparing the ground for communism.

Remarkably anticipating today's globally interconnected world, it spoke of capitalism's expansionist dynamic, propelling it to spread out across the world from its heartland in Western Europe:

'The cheap prices of commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production.'

These days the shoe is on the other foot: the footprint of Chinese capitalism is everywhere visible in the guise of its mass-produced commodities and those 'Chinese walls' have long since become just a tourist attraction. As Marx said:

'The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future' (Capital, Vol 1).

However, this 'diffusionist' perspective has not gone unchallenged among those claiming allegiance to Marxism. In the early 1900s Trotsky developed his concept of 'combined and uneven development' which he coupled with another – 'permanent revolution' – in opposition to the 'stagist' model of the Mensheviks. That model maintained that a relatively backward country like Russia needed to pass sequentially through two distinct stages – a 'bourgeois democratic' revolution (which socialists were urged to support) followed by a socialist revolution once capitalism had become sufficiently developed.

Trotsky argued that Russia exhibited a dualistic character -- a modern urban-based capitalist sector and a vast pre-capitalist peasantry – which necessitated a quite different model. The Russian bourgeoisie were too weak to implement a 'bourgeois democratic' revolution themselves. Consequently, it fell to the workers' party to do this. Concurrently, the new 'workers' state' should move towards implementing a socialist revolution. Hence the idea of a continuous 'permanent revolution' – two revolutions rolled into one.

However, Trotsky acknowledged that Russia alone lacked the productive capacity socialism required and so opposed the concept of 'socialism in one country' promoted by Stalin and Bukharin. For a socialist revolution to succeed this depended on developments elsewhere – notably, the advanced countries:

'We rest all our hope on the possibility that our revolution will unleash the European revolution. If the revolting peoples of Europe do not crush imperialism, then we will be crushed – that is indubitable. Either the Russian revolution will raise the whirlwind of struggle in the west, or the capitalists of all countries will crush our revolution' (1930, History of the Russian Revolution).

The 'European revolution' did not occur. Nor was there any good reason to expect it might. After all, most workers there had been patriotically supporting one capitalist bloc against another in World War One. But in Russia, too, the vast majority were not socialists either (as Lenin repeatedly acknowledged) and without a conscious socialist majority you can't have a 'socialist revolution'. Thus, having seized power in 1917, the Bolsheviks had little option but to develop capitalism.

The unpalatable implications of this for a self-proclaimed 'Marxist' like Lenin helps to explain his subsequent subterfuge in trying to rationalise away developments there. Though

he generally did not anticipate the coming upheaval in 1917 would be socialist, it later became commonplace among Bolshevik cadres to refer to it as a 'socialist revolution'. That was only credible if you completely redefine what socialism meant which is precisely what Lenin did – identifying it with a form of 'state-capitalist monopoly' made to 'serve the interests of the whole people' (1917, *The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It*).

This new definition grew out of Lenin's belief that state capitalism was a 'step forward' for Russia. Though he distinguished between 'socialism' and other forms of state capitalism – such as in wartime Germany – he nevertheless endorsed the latter too, arguing that 'our task is to study the state capitalism of the Germans, to spare no effort in copying it and not shrink from adopting dictatorial methods to hasten the copying of it' (1918, *'Left Wing' Childishness*).

Lenin's semantic gymnastics help us to better understand other aspects of his worldview – most notably how he envisaged a 'proletarian revolution' unfolding. According to him, this was likely to first occur, not where capitalism was most advanced (as Marxists contended), but rather 'at the weakest link in the imperialist chain'. Russia, though itself an imperialist power, was a paradigmatic example, being heavily dependent on foreign capital. By breaking that chain here this would induce a domino effect, starting in Europe and culminating in capitalism's overthrow worldwide. When this did not happen Lenin increasingly shifted his focus from Europe to national liberation struggles against imperialism in the 'backward' countries as the way forward.

For Lenin, imperialism was the 'highest stage of capitalism', commencing in the late nineteenth century. He was not referring to imperialism in general but rather a new and virulent kind of imperialism originating in certain structural changes within capitalism itself – notably, the emergence of 'monopoly capital'.

In his book, *Imperialism: A Study* (1902) which influenced Lenin, the liberal, J.A. Hobson, wrote of a shift from 'competitive capitalism' to 'monopoly capitalism', after the late nineteenth century Great Depression. Monopoly capitalism was the 'tap-root' of the new imperialist era exemplified by the 'Scramble for Africa'. Hobson opposed the then establishment view that 'trade followed the flag', arguing instead that trade could flourish without the need for colonial conquest.

According to him, what fuelled imperialism was the accumulation of surpluses of capital beyond what the advanced countries could profitably invest domestically. These surpluses arose out of extreme inequality. Given the capitalists' 'higher propensity to save', redistributing wealth in their favour, not only increased their savings ('capital') to the point of excess; it also reduced the workers' income and thus exerted a restraining influence on their capacity to consume.

Consequently, there was diminished scope for the capitalisation of profits, because of insufficient market demand. This depressed prices and solidified a movement toward monopoly by making it increasingly difficult for small businesses to survive.

Lenin concurred with Hobson's 'capital surplus' theory but



**IMPERIALISM
AND
LABOUR
ARISTOCRACY**



CAPITALISM THE OUR CRACY'

disagreed with his 'underconsumptionism'. As Charles Barone notes, Lenin seemingly argued that capital would be exported, 'not because it was absolutely impossible to invest in the home market but because it could obtain a higher rate of profit abroad. The variance of profits existed ostensibly because of the uneven development of capitalism where capitalism had become "overripe" in some countries' (*Marxist Thought on Imperialism: Survey and Critique*, 2016).

According to the labour theory of value, a higher rate of profit initially occurs where production is more labour-intensive (typically the case in the economically backward colonies) since 'living labour' is the sole source of profit. This rate tends to decline with mechanisation and industrialisation (as was happening in the developed countries) though that would be compensated for by an increase in the absolute mass of profits.

Normally, under competitive capitalism, this situation would be mitigated by the tendency for profit rates to equalise through the flow of capital towards industries temporarily experiencing above average profits, thereby increasing supply and thus eventually reducing prices (and profit rates).

However, in the context of the new imperialism, Lenin held that Marx's 19th century model of competitive capitalism no longer applied. It was being progressively replaced by monopoly capitalism which interrupted this tendency for profit rates to equalise. As Paul Sweezy contended in *The Theory of Capitalist Development*

(1968), under monopoly capitalism, the 'equal profit rates of competitive capitalism are turned into a hierarchy of profit rates, highest in the most completely monopolized industries and lowest in the most competitive'.

If so, we would expect investment to incrementally flow into the monopoly sector at the expense of the competitive sector. Rudolf Hilferding in *Finance Capital* (1910) suggested this is precisely what was happening. Bank capital and industrial capital were merging into finance capital, the ultimate form of capital most closely associated with imperialism. Centralisation of capital would eventuate in the formation of a general cartel which would fuse with the state, replacing market competition with planned production. This probably influenced Lenin's own thinking on the allegedly progressive role of state capitalism.

For Marx, super-profits could indeed arise from monopolies (and developments like technological innovations). However, he did not go as far as Hilferding in thinking this would kill off competition: Monopoly produces competition, competition produces monopoly. Monopolists compete among themselves; competitors become monopolists (1847, *The Poverty of Philosophy*).

For Lenin, the primary source of super-profits originated not within the domestic economies of advanced capitalism, however, but rather from the export of capital to the colonised countries. These super-profits were enormous, being obtained over and above the profits which capitalists squeeze out of the workers in their own country (*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*).

One would expect this to be reflected in the pattern of investment given that capital tends to flow to wherever the

rate of return is highest. However, the evidence suggests, firstly, that the great bulk of capital then, as now, raised in the advanced countries was invested domestically rather than abroad (as foreign direct investment – FDI). Secondly, most FDI was itself invested (as Lenin acknowledged), not in the colonies but in other advanced countries – particularly America. Thirdly, at this time there were few controls on the movement of capital internationally so it is unlikely that the equalisation of profits rates would have been significantly impeded. Finally, fluctuations in FDI flows tended to follow the same pattern as domestic investment, implying a roughly similar rate of return – a conclusion empirically supported by historians like D K Fieldhouse and others.

Bukharin, in *Imperialism and World Economy* (1915), wrote of two contradictory trends shaping modern imperialism. While monopoly capital made for the decline of competition domestically, internationally competition was intensifying in the guise of economic nationalism (mainly in the form of tariffs rather than capital controls).

Lenin called this state of affairs monopolistic competition – the imperialist conquest of foreign territories opened up additional markets to soak up the expanded output of domestic manufactured goods whilst affording opportunities to invest surplus capital in the primary sector of these colonies, employing a super-exploited workforce to produce cheap raw materials for export to imperialist countries themselves.

Thus, in contrast to Marxian diffusionist thinking, Lenin (following Trotsky) argued that imperialism shored up and perpetuated the 'uneven development of capitalism' and, with that, spatial variations in the rate of profit. Repressive colonial policies that pushed down wages, the establishment of native reserves to subsidise labour costs out of the proceeds of peasant farming and the persistence of labour-intensive production techniques constituted the material basis of these 'imperialist super-profits'.

Before modern imperialism some countries (notably Germany) had been able to rapidly develop their economies, exploiting what Trotsky called the 'privilege of historical backwardness' and join the select club of imperialist powers. However, by the early twentieth century this was no longer possible. Those powers having carved up the rest of the world amongst themselves, one could only expand its sphere of influence at the expense of another. This is what led up to the First World War.

It was then, wrote Lenin, that the 'world proletarian revolution' was in the process of 'clearly maturing'. The events in Russia, he suggested, could 'only be understood as a link in a chain of socialist proletarian revolutions being caused by the imperialist war' (*The State and Revolution*, 1917).

But Lenin's reading of the situation was hopelessly misguided. A 'socialist proletarian revolution' would surely have entailed an emphatic widespread rejection of nationalism and, as noted, there was little evidence of that happening then. Indeed, ironically, Lenin himself was a fervent advocate of the 'national liberation' of 'oppressed states' from the 'oppressor states', convinced that political independence would strike a blow against imperialism and, by extension, monopoly capitalism.

Nothing could be further from the truth as the subsequent history of post-independence states in the Global South bears out.

(To be continued)

ROBIN COX

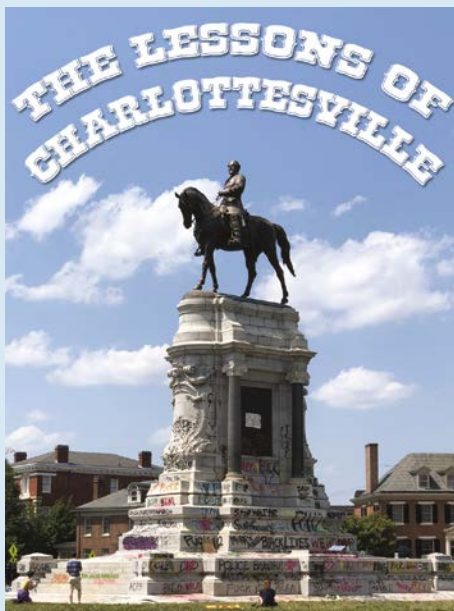
We are approaching the third anniversary of the Unite the Right rally that took place in Charlottesville, Virginia, on 11 and 12 August 2017. These events are particularly noteworthy today as we are seeing something of a repetition. Several white supremacists, neo-Nazis, neo-Confederates, Klansmen, self-proclaimed members of the alt-right, etc gathered, supposedly to protest against the removal of a statue of Confederate general Robert E. Lee. What might have been justified under 'defending American history' led to a racist and violent demonstration that resulted in the murder of a counter-protester, Heather Heyer. Today, following the Black Lives Matter movement, there is a continuation of the same discussion. In the UK, a statue of Winston Churchill has been defaced with the statement 'was a racist' under his name. Debates go on about whether a statue of Lord Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of the Scouts and admirer of fascism, should be left up. Of course, many have come out of the woodwork to defend the statues, with more rationalisations than countable. Perhaps less has been learned from Charlottesville than one might hope.

Jason Kessler, an American neo-Nazi, organised the demonstration against the decision to remove a statue of Robert E. Lee from Charlottesville's Lee Park. This became a focal point for various white-supremacist movements, with notable members of the 'alt-right' like Richard Spencer joining in. Quickly, more and more far-right support for the organisations started pouring in, turning into a broad-church racist movement. Chants such as 'Jews will not replace us' and the Nazi slogan 'Blood and Soil' began to sound. The Ku Klux Klan began to participate. The 'Proud Boys', a fascist group that organises and promotes political violence, also joined. Under freedom of expression and assembly, an extremist demonstration hundreds-strong was enabled.

Of course, this was met with significant resistance. Anti-racist and anti-fascist counter-protestors also organised, despite the lack of police protection that the right wing enjoyed. Ecclesiastical groups, social-democrats, civil rights activists, anarchists, and more gathered in Charlottesville to both oppose the racists and defend those they felt were threatened. Police action often simply ignored violence against counter-protesters (when it was not contributing to it). Violence then erupted between the protesters and counter-protesters. At its height, a white supremacist, James Alex Fields Jr, drove his car into a group of counter-protesters at about 30 mph before reversing into more. He killed a civil rights activist, Heather Heyer.

There is much in this that is frightening, including the fact that similar events are still happening. Something worth dwelling on is how racist sentiment can divide the working class, pitting its fragments against one another.

This is perpetrated most viciously by people like Richard Spencer, who believe themselves to be above the working class. They try to appeal to the white working class, focusing on the 'race' divisions which are very prominent in America. This, in turn, makes those captivated deny their identity as members of a class and buy into their supposed identity as a race. They are then more easily tempted to associate with people like Richard Spencer, or even Donald Trump, who hold the working class in utter contempt. The fact that the



mainstream right and the fringe are not disconnected is well supported by Trump's refusal to condemn the white supremacists, claiming that there were 'very fine people on both sides': being goaded by ideas like race simply masks the material reality of the class structure of capitalism, obscuring it behind veils of ethnicity and religion.

The white supremacists use the language of 'degeneracy', condemning those deemed unworthy by them to service towards the higher classes (which, of course, includes them). Some appeal to an idea of a golden age taken away from these noble few by the corruption of the masses. Some members of the working class might even believe this, thinking themselves or others to be inferior to the elites. If this attitude became widespread, it would be one of

the biggest threats to the possibility of socialism. Socialism depends upon the consciousness of the working class of their own potential to liberate themselves.

Marx, early in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, writes that 'the tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionising themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honoured disguise and borrowed language'. The statues of past figures, supposed heroes, do weigh like a nightmare on our brains. There are so-called great men. This shouldn't be the case. There are people who have made impacts on history, to be sure, but supported by innumerable others whose names are lost to us. Hero worship is quite close in character to the rhetoric of the extreme right, who want to convince the masses of certain groups' superiority. Furthermore, the picture of history presented by statues is significantly distorted, as it is one guided principally by the attitudes of the ruling class. This is rarely an accurate picture of events. Which people are chosen to be commemorated and which are not is often quite telling. This will do nothing but lead the working class to tacitly accept class structure.

There are still lessons to be learned from Charlottesville. Besides the point that 'it could happen here', there are more general issues about the class struggle. White supremacy and other forms of obscuring the class war will always focus on dividing the working class and trying to convince them of their own inferiority. Of course, the necessity of class oppression is a lie told again and again to maintain power. To draw from the opening of the *Eighteenth Brumaire* again, hopefully the tragedy has already passed and we only have to deal with the farce. Unfortunately, the reinvigorated debate about statues suggests otherwise. While we are in the thrall of the past, there is limited progress to be made. The mainstream debate is limited between whether we should have a statue of this person or that person or not, but there is a deeper question to be asked about why we have statues at all. We'd be better off realising that there are no singularly great men. Serious change is brought about through massive popular movements acting together, not through the enlightened leadership of the few.

MP SHAH

From the development of the first tools and the wheel through to the invention of the printing press, the steam engine, the microprocessor and beyond, technology has always shaped how we live. Scientific developments take place in the context of the social and economic conditions of the time. In capitalism, technological progress and how technology is used are driven by what is profitable and cost effective more than by what is really needed and wanted. This means that technology is often used in ways which go against our best interests, whether through environmental damage, the development of ever-more destructive weapons or the misuse of data gathered online and through social media. In a future socialist society based on common ownership and democratic organisation of industries and services, technology could really be used to benefit us, in harmony with the environment.



The Socialist Party's 2020 Summer School looks at technological progress and its application in the past, present and future. This weekend of talks and discussion is an exciting opportunity to share and explore revolutionary ideas with others, through the SPGB's Discord server. To join in or for further information, e-mail spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk.

Friday 7th August 7.30pm

Is Marxism technological determinism?

Adam Buick

"In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living, they change all their social relations. The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist." (Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, 1847)

"It is the development of tools, of these technical aids which men direct, which is the main cause, the propelling force of all social development. It is self-understood that the people are ever trying to improve these tools so that their labour be easier and more productive, and the practice they acquire in using these tools, leads their thoughts upon further improvements. Owing to this development, a slow or quick progress of technique takes place, which at the same time changes the social forms of labour. This leads to new class relations, new social institutions and new classes." (Anton Pannekoek, *Marxism and Darwinism*, 1912) To what extent, if at all, is this a theory of technological determinism? How do changes in technology lead to a change of society?

Saturday 8th August 10.00am

How the Socialist Party can use technology better

Jake AWOFA

Socialist Party sympathiser Jake AWOFA's site 'A World of Free Access' has a following of 17,000 on Facebook, and he joins us from Western Australia to open a discussion on ideas about how the Socialist Party can make better use of technology. How can our online and social media presence be improved? Can technology help us be (even) more democratic? What are our views on Discord?

Saturday 2.00pm

Ideology as technology

Bill Martin

This talk looks at how the way we think is

a form of technology. Starting with mundane objects, like a bicycle, it looks at how the ideas behind inventions are not the outcomes of lone geniuses and inspiration, but are connected to social relations and practices. It discounts the idea that history is driven by simple technological changes, and looks back to the age of conquest to show it was how technology was applied, rather than the possession of technology itself, that was behind the establishment of the European empires. It concludes by looking at the implications for socialism and how a future society might use technology.

Saturday 4.00pm

How we feel about technology - the views of Günther Anders and beyond

Mike Foster
'Philosophical anthropologist' Günther Anders' theories about our attitudes towards technology were formed in the middle of the last century, when television and the nuclear bomb represented the latest in human achievements. He argued that technology makes us feel ashamed, not because of the impact of the mass media or the threat of nuclear war, but because we have become inferior to the technology we have created. Since Anders' time, technological progress has given us smartphones, artificial intelligence and the world wide web, feats which he would argue further humanity's obsolescence. This talk gives a Marxist perspective on Anders' theories and their implications in today's hi-tech world.

Saturday 6.00pm

Quiz night

Saturday 7.00pm

Social

Sunday 9th August 10.00am

Digital technologies as a core of social organisation of the future

Leon Rozanov

Direct democracy may have worked well in ancient Greek city-states with thousands of decision-makers. Now with most modern

states having millions of citizens, the most widespread form of democracy is representative, and it is easily hijacked by the interests of capital owners or political figures who serve them. Even if socialist ideas were to become more widespread, it remains a question, how exactly would democratic principles that we all consider indispensable be put to work for a socialist society to function efficiently?

One of the earliest markers of human societies differentiating themselves from other animals was language, and later its written form, text. We have learned to pass knowledge on to future generations, and the earliest texts are almost exclusively collections of rules and laws that helped organise societies according to their commonly shared values and beliefs. If we want to create a successful future society based on socialist principles, we need to cement these principles in the text of modern technologies - software code - that will have principles of equality, fairness and resource- and need-based economy built into the digital technologies specifically designed to help run this society.

Sunday 11.30am

The 4th Industrial Revolution, what it is, what it means, what capitalism is doing with it, and what socialism could do with it

Paddy Shannon

Just as people didn't stop using stone as a material when they learned to use bronze, then iron, and then plastic, industrial revolutions have also overlapped, with first-generation steam turbines still producing second-generation electrical power, controlled by third-generation digital computer interfaces. Now a tsunami of new acronyms including AI, IoT and VR is breaking over the top of all that, the so-called 4th industrial revolution. If you're still having trouble figuring out how to do online shopping on your home computer, you'd really better strap in and hold onto your hat, because capitalism is about to go to warp speed.

Reginald was fortunate to find gainful employment with the General Steam Navigation Company at Tower Hill, to which he bicycled the length of the Old Kent Road. In its way, it was a precursor of today's call centre. Ranks of commuter captives processed bills of lading recording the movement of mysterious materials between unheard-of locations.

Most of Reg's companions seemed reconciled to spending their working lives there and others were close to the end of servitude. A few could be spotted nodding off after discussion of last night's television and football was exhausted; some of the ex-military managers sported trim moustaches and buttonholes, refreshed daily by their wives from suburban gardens. After the shocking novelty wore off, Reg, like the chained escapologist who entertained crowds outside in the lunch hour, began to plan how best to wriggle free from his confinement. After deciding on his treble from *Sporting Life* he would make his way each day to the bookie, past religious zealots, tattooed freaks and an angry bloke shouting about the abolition of wages.

Years passed slowly and uneventfully and a fretting Reg began gingerly to embrace the Age of Aquarius, Lady Luck having kept her distance. An advert in *Oz* magazine for a lackey in a Chinatown laundry was redolent of Eastern promise and opportunities to let everything hang out. His new daily tasks remained humdrum but he didn't let mangle injuries deter him. Lunchtimes were spent at a theatre showing short plays, with sandwich, in St Martin's Lane. His first visit, a production of *The Exception and the Rule*, haunted him for some while. It told of a rich and cruel merchant crossing a desert to close a lucrative deal. As water begins to run out, his porter attempts to offer his master refreshment from his own bottle, which is mistaken for a sly attack and the porter is shot dead. Its message was that common humanity has become increasingly alien and the friendly man should be afraid. Reg, however, soon became distracted by less elevated matters and adept at pilfering sums from the laundry's antique till, which he spent at Bunjies Folk Cellar, a haunt of bohemians and what were called 'existentialists'. There he learned of the life of the poet-boxer, dandy and legendary provocateur, Arthur Cravan, who tangoed till dawn and had



a penchant for pulling down his pants in public. By comparison, Reg felt a nonentity: he was notable only for ironing Rudolf Nureyev's underwear.

Wishing his pockets could be well protected at last, Reg discovered that Mr Wang and the 1980s had other ideas. His lack of tonsorial and hygienic fastidiousness deterred prospective employers and

he eventually settled for a part-time research operative job at Pussy Global, which operated from a Croydon basement. His first assignment did not augur well. What did unsuspecting recipients of his phone calls 'think of Barker's cat food? Choices were: a) It's meowtastic; b) I'm purring with pleasure; c) I'm quite pleased with it; d) I'm neither pleased nor displeased with it; e) I'm a smidgen displeased with it; f) It could have been a bit better; all things considered; g) I detest it. Once a respondent had calibrated their response, Reg would ask: 'Would you recommend Barker's to a friend?' Since most purchasers immediately cut him off or yelled 'I don't give a stuff', he began to wonder whether his time could be spent more fruitfully. Was he contributing in his small way to unrelenting civilisational progress or was he totally away with the fairies? Could it be that interest in human beings was essentially as consumers? As he understood that three-quarters of the population didn't enjoy their work, Reg wondered if his spare-time pleasures -- playing the ukulele and baking bread (not simultaneously) might somehow mutate into a new career.

A wizened philosopher at Bunjies claimed that no man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man. He boldly opted next to wet his feet in the hospitality business, lift attendant cum bellhop at the Great Eastern Hotel being advertised as 'guaranteed to stimulate'. There he rubbed shoulders with and was tipped by the rich or degenerate, lugged their Gucci suitcases, opened limousine and luxury suite doors, delivered champagne and smoked salmon, dealt expertly with soiled laundry, ran iffy errands and retired exhausted to a bedroom the size of a lift but lacking muzak. Guests too mean to tip him should have been advised not to use their toothbrushes that night, or ever again. Exasperated, he suggested that his strumming talents might be displayed in the piano bar occasionally, but this

merely resulted in an enforced spell of cleaning windows. Reg, sick of ups and downs, needed a change of direction.

A foray into left-wing politics was unfortunately no less disappointing. A brief encounter at a tube station enticed him into the heady world of day-to-day struggles and permanent revolution, which to an innocent's delight looked just around the corner. He was briefly a Trotskyist among younger and much better-educated comrades, who foisted upon him an eternal and universal 'truth' capable of being known only by an elite. Barricades would be needed, 'false consciousness' and Roneo machines abounded and ends justified means. It was recommended that he read something called *Grundrisse* but he never got past page 6 (a wag at work remarked 'Oh, yeah, read that – the butler did it'). After a few years propositioning the passing general public, he began to sense his IQ slipping relentlessly into the gutter. He briefly flirted with groups of assorted anarchists but was struck by their refusal to abide by majority decisions unless they wanted to and a preference for small medieval-like networks with knobs on. Reg, losing weight and feeling queasy, resorted to remedies at Speakers' Corner, where Islamic fundamentalists, messianic vegans and a man expounding a world of free access vied for attention. His diet in the days before his wage packet was unappetising leftovers well past their sell-by dates. Big Macs began to look mouth-watering.

Uncertainty being ever-present, Reg took to the security business next. Muscles 'R' Us provided vigilant stewarding at a variety of venues, Lord's Cricket Ground being our neophyte's baptism. The domain of the rhubarb and custard tie was a place of strict protocol, with obligatory collared shirts, tailored blazers and trousers required to be tucked into Reg knew not precisely where. His confusion of debentures with dentures added to his problems and led to multiple fracas. Sotheby's, however, was an oasis of calm and orderliness. Russian oligarchs, Arab royalty and investment fund managers were no trouble at all and happily paid market price millions for pieces eminently suitable for storage in Swiss vaults or places well out of sight. Buyers refreshed themselves beforehand in the auction house restaurant, which served Lobster Club Sandwich, Tempura King Prawn, Lemon Beurre Blanc, Caviar and a bottle of Château Haut-Mayne for not much more than three figures. Reg slipped out for a quick break when he could: he was a proud supporter of the persecuted BLT community, although he usually took the lettuce out first.

The last episode in Reg's working life saw him seek to bring some dignity and, he hoped, sunshine to the lives of the isolated and elderly housebound. Only the lonely knew the way he felt at night. Initial experience of the Care Time agency suggested he'd found his calling, but as the rota of domestic visits lengthened a limit of only 15 minutes was scheduled for each stay. To help wash, dress, feed, take out the bins and interact at break-neck speed was more an insult than a blessing. Rosy, who enjoyed telling saucy tales of her time cleaning betting shops, offered him coins from her purse to finish his tasks; Cyril, once something in the City, pledged to slip him a few quid to prolong the highlight of his day. Reg always refused money and completed what was necessary, although this increased the length of his working day, to

the extent that half of his duties – sometimes stretching to 17-hour periods – were unpaid. He took care to avoid the spitting, vomiting, muggings and stabbings when returning home late at night. And he never did find time to read his carer's guide and safety rules which, like the list of side-effects accompanying medications, were there chiefly to evade litigation and financial liability.

Reg's suppressed desperation ended at Bognor Regis, a shelter from the storm offering semolina pudding on Friday and bingo as necessary. He knew he mustn't grumble. Bouts of depression increased despite royalty's constantly expressed concern and he looked back on his past with a sort of tender contempt. Shallow politicians, upright when creeping and dignified at their most stupid, extolled a better society; campaigners strove to eradicate persistent iniquities; and the almighty gods of science and technology were gradually to free humankind. All had proved illusory and he scorned commerce's sugared lies. Economists revised projections of their adjusted figures and concluded something more or less approaching 'no idea'. Things, thought Reg, were either absurd or there was an order which we can aspire to and actually trust. Why had he not assumed greater responsibility for the course of his life and known his place on the global Monopoly board? He did, though, take some comfort that he was now well out of harm's way.

MT



Party News – Discord in the Ranks

IT'S not like socialists to curl up our tootsies and give up at the first sign of trouble, so we're not likely to let a once-in-a-century global pandemic cramp our style. Instead, like many others during the current lockdown, we are responding to physical restrictions on meeting by going online. We're using the audio-only Discord system to save bandwidth, and because most of us are not sufficiently photogenic to want to look at each other every day. The system works pretty well and we've already held a couple of online talks, as well as several branch and Executive Committee meetings. It's not been entirely plain sailing of course, with some members having to drag headphones or microphones out of attics or cellars only to discover that they last worked efficiently when Sony Walkmans were still a new fad. Others have had computer problems as Discord doesn't work with very old operating systems, or with the super-restrictive Windows S. Actually Discord was originally designed for gamers, who tend to a) be digital natives and b) have state-of-the-art gear. Many socialists, it is fair to say, do not belong to this social demographic, so online conferencing software can be something of an uphill struggle. That's why, for the next few weeks, there will always be someone on the server, ready to talk or answer user questions, at 12 noon and again at 7.30pm, UK BST, unless there's an evening talk on.

Still, we're making progress, with around 50 members online at the time of writing. Companion parties have got involved too, with members from the USA, Canada, Europe, Japan and India. And of course visitors are very welcome too, and are free to join any online Discord meeting just as they would be free to attend any physical meeting by the Socialist Party or its companion parties. This is a great opportunity to chat to socialists from around the world without leaving your house! And if anyone is thinking of joining, having a live chat about it with members is much more fun and informative than simply filling in a form on the website.

If you'd like to drop in and chat to us online, or come to one of our talks or other events, just drop us a line to spgb@worldsocialism.org and ask for an invite.



DISCORD

COOKING THE BOOKS

Consumption – not the driver

Interviewed on the *Andrew Marr Show* on 14 June, the Chancellor Rishi Sunak stated that the economy was 'driven by consumption'. It is understandable why he might think this since consumption (consumer spending) accounts for some two-thirds of GDP. But it does not follow that it is therefore this that drives the economy. In fact, it isn't.

Apologists for the system claim that under capitalism 'the consumer is king'; that, in other words, production is carried on – even initiated – in response to what consumers want as indicated by what they are prepared to pay for and do pay for. But this does not explain how consumers come to have money to spend in the first place.

Most consumers are wage and salary earners who get their spending money from the sale of their capacity to work at a particular job, their labour-power, to an employer. So, where do employers get the money to pay them from? It's a part of the capital they must have to start up a business and keep it going. Marx divided the capital of a business into constant capital (plant, machinery, raw materials, power, etc) and variable capital (the money to pay the wages of the productive workers it employs).

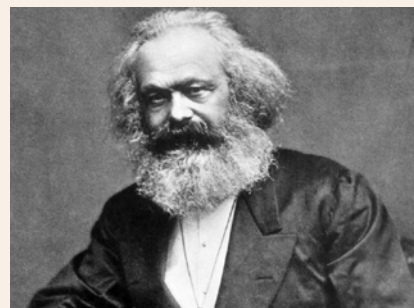
Under capitalism production is initiated by capitalist firms seeking

to expand their capital by making and accumulating profits. It goes like this. Capitalists invest in production, including hiring workers; workers exercise and use up their labour power to produce new value, including the value of their labour power; capitalists pay workers as wages the value of their labour power; workers spend their wages on buying what is needed (food, housing, clothes, entertainment, holidays, etc) to recreate their labour power to replace what they used when they worked; capitalists buy the renewed labour power; and so the circuit recommences.

Marx put it this way:

'From the point of view of society, then, the working class, even when it stands outside the direct labour process, is just as much an appendage of capital as the lifeless instruments of labour are. Even its individual consumption is, within certain limits, a mere aspect of the process of capital's reproduction ... Individual consumption provides, on the one hand, the means for the workers' maintenance and reproduction; on the other hand, by the constant annihilation of the means of subsistence, it provides for their continued re-appearance on the labour market' (Capital, Volume 1, chapter 23. Penguin edition p. 719).

What this means is that what workers buy to consume is the reproduction



of what variable capital is invested in. Capitalist apologists speak unashamedly of workers as 'human capital'. Some Marxists describe workers' consumption as variable capital. This is not strictly true (it's only that both have the same value) but it gets over the point that workers' consumption is a part, not the initiator, of the circuit capital goes through to increase its value.

What drives the economy is business investment for profit. This depends on the prospects for profit-making and goes up or down depending on whether these are good or bad. Less business investment means fewer workers employed and so less consumption; more business investment means more consumption. So, far from consumption driving the economy, it's the other way round. Consumption is the tail not the dog.

Turning The Page

The 1980s was when ‘page three’ was most well-known, especially after Samantha Fox became a household name. When she was aged 16, her mother sent clothed photos of her to the *Sunday People* for its ‘Girl of the Year’ contest. This led to a photoshoot, and Fox agreed to topless photos thinking they wouldn’t be published, as she was still at school. She and her family were shocked when they saw one of these pictures plastered on the *Sunday People’s* front page. Fox remembers being told by a photographer ‘you’ve got the face of a child but the body of a woman’, and only realised how sinister this was in hindsight. Some newspapers had sickening ‘countdowns’ to when their models reached 16 and they could be shown partially naked. All of this was somehow acceptable, or at least just something to put up with. It wasn’t until 2003 that legislation came in to make 18 the minimum age to appear unclothed in print.

Socialist Standard August 2020

As summed up by Clare Short, ‘what page three says is ‘take me, use me, throw me away’. This isn’t only an attitude towards women which ‘page three’ photos encourage among the public, it also describes how models have been treated. Being groped (i.e. sexually assaulted) on a chat show or being preyed on by drunks at parties were seen as part of the job. A particularly sad example of how women have been treated is what happened to Emma Morgan. In the 1990s, her boyfriend sent a topless photo of her to the *Sunday Sport*, which printed it without her knowledge. That Morgan (like Fox) wasn’t considered important enough to even be asked if she minded having such an image published highlights the extent to which women have been demeaned. Morgan’s modelling career started by being used and it ended in a similar way, when she says she was set up by an undercover journalist who filmed her taking illegal drugs. The story appeared in the *News of the World* with the headline ‘Page 3 Girls’ Drugs And Vice Scandal’ and as a result Morgan lost her contracts, spat out by the same industry which had got her into the situation.

The decline of 'page three' came about not through changes to legislation, but following a grassroots campaign run by author and actor Lucy-Anne Holmes. Her 'No More Page 3' crusade began in 2012 when she noticed the disparity between how men and women were depicted in

Of course, it's a step forward that fewer people now believe it's acceptable for women – and girls – to be reduced to 'page three' fodder, but the feature's demise doesn't seem all that significant considering that far more extreme images can easily be found with a few clicks of a button. It's likely that 'page three' has largely died out more because newspapers can no longer rely on softcore porn to sell copies than due to campaigns. What's profitable has shifted away from print to online. So, rather than 'page three' being brought down, it's instead been superseded. The market will find new ways to objectify women as long as there's money to be made.

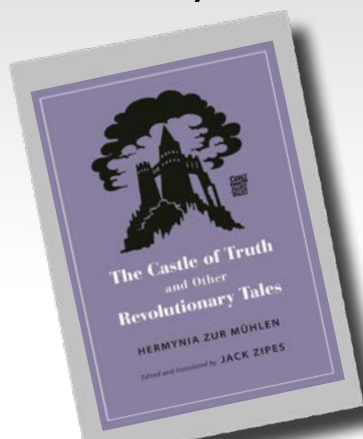
MIKE FOSTER



Credit: David Hawgood

REVIEWS

Fairy Tales



By Hermynia Zur Muhlen. Edited and Translated by Jack Zipes for the series, 'Oddly Modern Fairy Tales'. Princeton University Press, 2020.: **The Castle of Truth and Other Revolutionary Tales.**

Hermynia Zur Muhlen, born into the Austrian upper class in 1883, earned the sobriquet 'The Red Countess' by rebelling against her upbringing and embracing a left-wing outlook. She did, however, marry an Estonian/German baron and tried to convert his estates into a cooperative enterprise under the control of the workers. The project failed, but illustrates her acceptance, common amongst many left-wingers, that socialism is something brought to the workers.

A member of the German Communist Party, Zur Muhlen began to reflect on how children's literature could change their socialisation. In 1921, her first book of radical fairy tales, *What Little Peter's Friends Told Him*, was published. Many more followed, including the one that lends itself to the title of this collection, *The Castle of Truth*.

The first impression on reading these tales is the didactic nature of them. The rich are greedy and careless of the lives of their workers. Meanwhile, those workers are portrayed as being too dumb to see how they are being done down.

In *The Carriage Horse* (1924), militant unionism is expressed through the eponymous horse coming among the exploited farm horses and organising them to strike for better fodder. The strike is undermined by dumb oxen who take on the tasks of the horses, until they agree to stop doing so, but only through the threat of violence. The horses win their fodder rise, but remain essentially in the same situation they were at the beginning. The oxen remain dumb.

This theme runs through the stories. Even when a worker acquires the

wherewithal to become a capitalist in *Ali, the Carpet Weaver* (1923), he quickly transforms into rapacious employer. The bloated plutocrat beloved of Bolshevik posters was an obvious model.

Another element becomes apparent when Ali gains that wherewithal through a good deed supernaturally rewarded. His eventual comeuppance also comes via the 'Good Spirit' who will return at some unspecified future point to judge all exploiters.

Although Zur Muhlen was a lapsed Catholic, perhaps, as is often claimed, Catholicism is never entirely set aside. Come the 1950s she was a lapsed communist, having parted company with the KPD during the rising Stalinism of the 1930s. She turned back to religion, if not Catholicism, which perhaps provides an alternative understanding of her tales.

Zur Muhlen does deal with a variety of political issues: the absence of concern for workers' wellbeing (*The Coals*, 1921), critical thinking (*Why*, 1922), ideological myopia (*The Glasses*, 1923), technology (*The Servant*, 1923), nationalism (*The Troublemakers*, 1923), persistence of radical ideas (*The Castle of Truth*, 1924), religion (*The Fence*, 1924) and others exploring similar themes.

Twenty years later Zur Muhlen was writing in a more traditional mode of fairy tale. *The Crown of the King of Domnonee* (1944) involves an innocent younger prince betrayed by malevolent elder siblings that all resolves to a happy, royal, ending. *The Story of the Wise Judge* (1944) revolves around a poor but wise young woman who solves a number of riddles to prosper. The radical tropes have largely disappeared.

The politics of the 1920s stories are those of idealised Bolshevism, liberation being brought to the working class by the enlightened, or a reformed, more benign capitalism. Society is still one in which money plays a crucial part, just more fairly. There is no sense that capitalism, state or moderated, remains capitalism.

These tales, illustrated by George Grosz, John Heartfield, Heinrich Vogeler and Karl Holtz in the spare pen and ink style of the 1920s, were written for children. It is difficult to see the appeal in them for the young who would have to be old enough to appreciate the language and concepts, making them too old to be interested in fairy tales. A story read to two children aged 7 and 9, voracious readers both, did not make it to the end. Different times maybe, but were children more receptive a century ago?

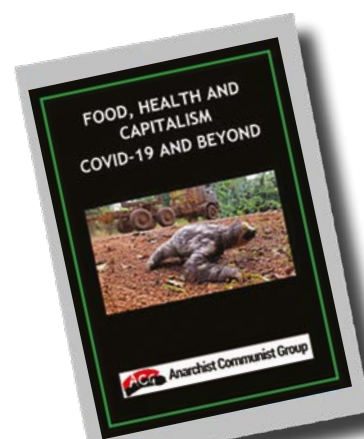
That this collection comes from the Princeton University Press declares

its academic interest. This it has in abundance for the insights it gives into Communist political thinking of the time, the identification of state capitalism with Soviet Communism and the issues outlined above. It sits within the 'Oddly Modern Fairy Tales' series edited by Jack Zipes, who has done a commendable job of translating Zur Muhlen's tales.

If you are looking for a collection of fairy tales for children, this is not it. Should your interest be in the literary expression of political and historical ideas, then it is.

DAVE ALTON

Right Direction



Food, Health and Capitalism. Covid-19 and Beyond. Published by the Anarchist Communist Group, June 2020. 45 pages.

The Anarchist Communist Group (ACG), formed in 2018 by former members of the Anarchist Federation in Great Britain, states its aim as 'a complete transformation of society', explained as 'the working class overthrowing capitalism, abolishing the State, getting rid of exploitation, hierarchies and oppressions, and halting the destruction of the environment'. Among the group's activities is the production of pamphlets arguing their case, the latest of which looks at the way capitalism produces food and the part this has played in the Covid-19 virus.

Despite its limited length, this is a well-researched and highly informative publication which outlines very effectively how the profit system, the driving force of today's world capitalist economy, dictates an increasingly intensive exploitation of land and animals, leading to a 'perfect storm environment' for diseases which are likely to be infectious. It outlines the conditions of industrial farming that, after causing previous virus epidemics such as

MERS, Ebola and SARS, have now led to the current Covid-19 pandemic which in its indiscriminate worldwide spread is causing panic and threatening social and economic breakdown. It explains how these viruses stem from a form of intensive agriculture, in which 'the more you can produce with fewer inputs, the greater the profit', with the effect on human health (not to speak of the welfare of animals) always a secondary consideration.

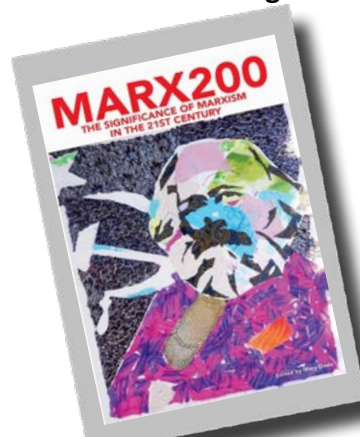
So, for example, both intensive factory farming of domestic animals and the slaughter, preparation and sale of an increasing range of wildlife in the Far East in crowded and insanitary conditions provide an ideal breeding ground for deadly viruses to 'jump' from animals to humans and then spread indiscriminately. In addition, the quadrupling of global meat production in the last half century has resulted in most land resources being used to feed animals destined for slaughter rather than to grow food directly for human consumption. This has led to an epidemic of obesity among some populations, but at the same time, as the pamphlet points out, in many parts of the world people die of starvation and, even for example in the UK, it quotes estimates that, even before the present virus hit, at least 3 million were going hungry, while 14.6 million were suffering from food insecurity. The entirely irrefutable reason given for all this is that, while some people get obese because of the cheap, unhealthy food that they eat, others go hungry because they do not have the money to buy enough food of any description. This, the pamphlet insists – again irrefutably – is quite simply the outcome of a system that puts profit before need. As it says, 'capitalism has penetrated everywhere on earth in its search for profits'.

What remedy then does the ACG propose to resolve deadly industrial farming practices, food produced for cheapness rather than quality, and, even in the more economically advanced parts of the world, poverty amid plenty? It advocates 'the need to create an agriculture system which is not based on the need to compete in the market economy and in which human need and health is the main priority' and goes on to say that 'instead of tinkering with the system... we need to get rid of it altogether and replace it with a food system that can truly meet the needs of everyone... the aim is for food to be free'. So far so good. This seems to mirror the aim of the Socialist Party, ie a society of free access with production for need not for profit. But then, this pamphlet, in its final section entitled 'Basic Principles of a Revolutionary New Food and Agriculture', seems to water down this objective advocating not a free access society as such but rather single initiatives such as 'land reform' 'collectivising agriculture' and

'developing co-operatives for distribution and consumption'. All it seems within the framework of the current overall capitalist system, this being implicit in the characteristically reformist call to 'begin to transform our society now'. A pity, because the way to truly transform society is not for individuals or groups to fight capitalism's imperatives within the current system but to band together to persuade the majority of wage and salary earners to take democratic revolutionary action to usher out the whole framework of capitalism (profit society) and bring in socialism (a free access society based on the satisfaction of human needs).

HOWARD MOSS

Remembering Marx



Edited by Mary Davis: **Marx 200. The Significance of Marxism in the 21st Century.** Praxis Press. 2020. 120 pages.

This is a collection of the talks given at an international conference organised by the Marx Memorial Library to mark the bicentenary in 2018 of the birth of Marx.

The Marx Memorial Library was set up in 1933 by the Communist Party and fellow travellers and is still controlled by successors of that party. The contributions are a mixed bag. There are some interesting contributions on technology and on ecology. The political ones reflect the views of the organisers.

There are a couple of claims that need challenging. John McDonnell in the opening article makes the dubious statement that 'from the earliest days the ideas of Karl Marx' were part of the Labour tradition. This is not so. The Labour Party was set up as a trade union pressure group in the House of Commons. Most of its leaders were Liberals known as 'Lib-Labs'. Even Keir Hardie explicitly rejected the class struggle.

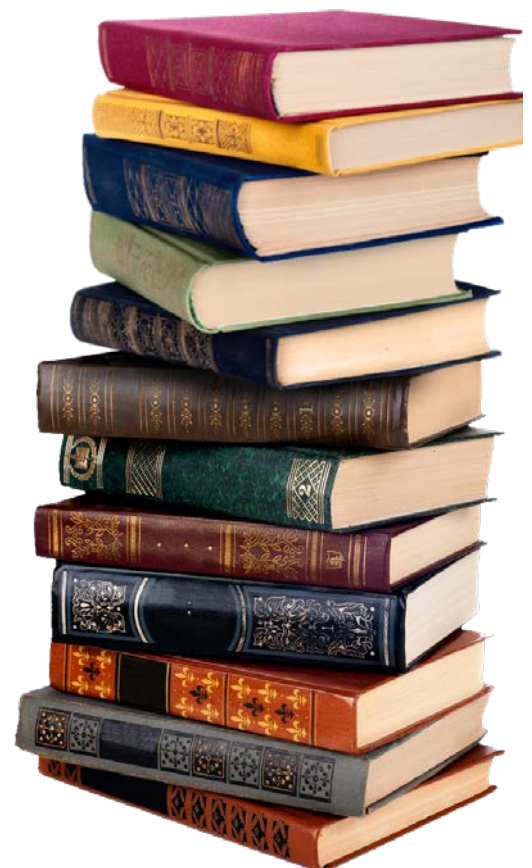
The editor, Mary Davis, says in her contribution that, because women's wages are on average lower than those of 'white males', 'Women are clearly super-exploited, thus the increased

surplus value yielded by their labour power greatly enriches the owners of the means of production.' This is based on the widespread but un-Marxian misconception that the degree of exploitation is measured by the level of the wage a worker gets – if you get low wages that means that you are 'super-exploited' compared with those who get paid more.

However, a high or higher wage does not necessarily mean that less surplus value goes to the employer. It will if the job is the same; in that case an increase in wages would reduce the employer's profits. A higher wage in a different job, on the other hand, generally reflects a higher grade of labour power as one that is more productive, both in the sense of producing more in a given period of time and of more new value created. In fact, it could be that the higher-paid worker's wage is a smaller proportion of the greater surplus value produced than that of a lower-paid worker in another job, i.e., that the rate of exploitation is higher.

Women workers (not female capitalists and so not women in general), like all wage workers, are exploited and 'equal pay for equal work' is a sound trade union demand but this does not mean that those on low pay are more exploited in the Marxian sense than the rest of the working class.

ALB



50 Years Ago

Human Needs and World Resources

No comprehensive and detailed survey of the world's resources in relation to needs of its people has ever been made. Those able to do this, the scientists and statisticians working for governments and inter-governmental organisations, have never been asked to collect this information. The politicians to whom they are responsible and whose task it is to preserve the capitalist system are not interested in whether the world could produce enough to meet human needs. They are more concerned with seeing that no more is produced than can be sold profitably. Nor would they welcome a survey that would expose the wasteful and restrictive nature of the system they uphold.

Nevertheless scientists have examined separately the various aspects of this question and their findings do establish one fact: the world has, and has had for some time now, the natural, industrial and human resources to provide for the needs of all its people.

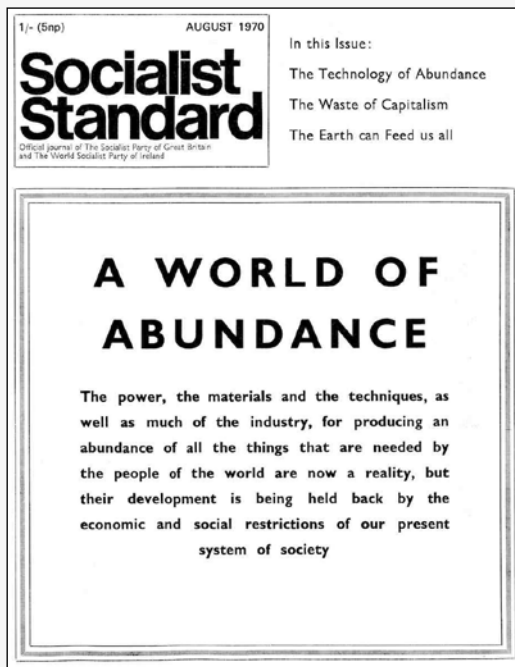
In stating this we are merely saying what any well-informed person should already know. But in our

attempts to convince people that Socialism (a world based on common ownership with production solely for use) would be a workable alternative to capitalism we come across a well-entrenched popular prejudice. We are told that the resources to abolish hunger and slums and ill-health and ignorance just do not exist. This is a prejudice that is encouraged by the economics that is today taught in the schools and universities with its loose talk of "scarce resources". Of course the supplies of what mankind needs are not limitless, but

they are still enough to more than meet what is likely to be needed in the foreseeable future. The problem is not allocating scarce resources but arranging for abundance to be produced.

We are devoting most of this issue of the *Socialist Standard* to combating this prejudice by presenting the evidence on which we base our claim that a world of abundance is technically possible. We shall also argue that it will not be socially possible until a social revolution has made the world's resources the common property of all mankind so that there will no longer be any vested interests to prevent their being used to satisfy human needs.

(Editorial, Socialist Standard special issue on 'A World of Abundance', August 1970).



Socialist Party official logo Cotton Bags—on sale now

Price just £3.50 (£5 including UK P&P)



These stylish cotton bags come in black with the Socialist Party logo screen printed in white on one side and with a shortened web address.

They measure 38 x 42 cm and have two shoulder length cotton handles.

On sale now from The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

Price just £3.50—add £1.50 for UK P&P. Sent in cardboard packaging. Please supply name and address. For bulk or overseas orders please email spgb@worldsocialism.org or phone 0207 622 3811.

Wash bags if used frequently, but only in cold water and do not iron over design or tumble dry.

Meetings

All meetings/talks/discussions are currently online on **Discord** (unless it is stated that the meeting or talk is on Zoom). Please contact the spgb@worldsocialism.org for how to join.

Members of Central Branch are advised that there is an informal discussion group hosted fortnightly on a Sunday by Paul Edwards at 7.00pm (BST) in the Discord online server. The next date for your diary will be Sunday July 5th at 7.00pm (BST); and, then every second Sunday thereafter. Please, do consider joining in. This is a great opportunity for all.

AUGUST 2020 DISCORD EVENTS

Wednesday 5 August, 7.30pm BST
The FAQ Workshop
**HAVE WE FETTERED THE
WORD 'SOCIALISM'?**

Thursday 6 August, 3.00pm BST
The FAQ Workshop
CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Friday 7 – Sunday 9 August
SUMMER SCHOOL
(details on page 15)

Wednesday 12 August, 7.30pm BST
The FAQ Workshop
LOVE & STUFF

Thursday 13 August, 3.00pm BST
The FAQ Workshop
WHAT'S IN THE HIGH STREET?

Friday 14 August, 7.30 BST
FRIDAY NIGHT TALK
To be announced

Wednesday 19 August, 7.30pm BST
The FAQ Workshop
WHEN IS IT TOO LATE?

Thursday 20 August, 3.00pm BST
The FAQ Workshop
SOCIALISM AND MORALITY

Friday 21 August, 7.30 BST
FRIDAY NIGHT TALK
**'MENTAL ILLNESS':
An issue for Socialists?**
Speaker: Jonathan Cohen

Sunday 23 August 3.00pm
**DANGEROUS WOMEN –
ELEANOR MARX**

Wednesday 26 August, 7.30pm BST
The FAQ Workshop
THE JOY OF SECTS

Thursday 27 August, 3.00pm BST
The FAQ Workshop
COMMUNICATING THE MESSAGE

**Friday 28 August,
7.30 BST**
FRIDAY
NIGHT TALK
To be announced



Declaration of Principles

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

Object

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

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

Gordon Docherty – Obituary

West London branch regret to have to report the death of Comrade Gordon Docherty in June at the age of 79. He hailed from Glasgow where he joined the local branch in 1964 after listening to Party speakers in George Square. He served an apprenticeship as a turner lathe operator at the Harland and Wolff shipyard in Govan and was one of a number of Glasgow comrades who moved to London at the end of the 1960s. As a skilled engineering worker he had no problem in finding a job, at the Lucas CAV factory in Acton where he was an active trade unionist and AEU shop steward. In 1974 he won a landmark court case – which the New Statesman called 'the case of Mr Docherty's furniture' – which resulted in hundreds of thousands of furnished tenancies becoming unfurnished and so enjoying a greater security against eviction. He was a regular attendee at branch meetings and other branch events till last year. Our condolences go to his family and friends.

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.



Iran - a capitalist, theocratic dictatorship

Apparently, 'The Islamic Republic of Iran's blending of religion and Marxist negation of private property means that beneath its veneer of turbans, veils, mosques and prayers, it is a totalitarianism that shares much with Communist and Socialist states like the Soviet Union or current day Venezuela: Orwellian exploitation of workers in the name of the worker, repression of all basic rights, severe loss of livelihood, a kleptocratic class that maintains regime survival, and all manner of lies to sustain the myth of a just, egalitarian society battling the evil, capitalist West. Like in other anti-capitalist states, workers in Iran are prohibited from organizing. The assumption is that a Godly, Marxist state has elevated the "mostazafin," or the downtrodden in whose name the revolution was waged, and is always and already providing for all. The regime pummels propaganda to maintain the myth of economic liberation but the truth is that Iranian workers are routinely denied wages, lack benefits, are forced into exploitative contracts and suffer from dangerous work conditions' (nationalinterest.org, 27 June). This, save for the undoubted class division and mass suffering, is the kind of arrant nonsense which socialists encounter all too frequently in a propaganda version of Wack-A-Mole, and have challenged relentlessly for over one hundred years. Going back in time, 'A Joker's Conception of Socialism' (*Socialist Standard*, December 1918) concerned drivel spouted on the subject by Winston Churchill. We in the World Socialist Movement are not dogmatic masochists: we stick to our principles and the original meaning of socialism – common ownership, democratic control and production solely for use – because our socialist theory consistently provides an insightful analysis of the contradictions of capitalism, because of the repeated failure of the alternatives put into practice, and because

the prospect of socialism as the meeting of our real needs provides the motivation. Occasionally, however, we find articles written by non-socialists which directly or otherwise support our case, such as those below.

One human race

'Medical science has long been used for the consolidation of power rather than for solidarity with the oppressed. We see how Black mothers are blamed for their own mortality in childbirth and how starkly high rates of COVID death in Black communities are preposterously misattributed to differences in hormone receptors or clotting factors; all the while letting racism off the hook. We wish to remind fellow physicians that medical science has never been objective. It has never existed in a vacuum; there have and will always be social, political and legal ramifications of our work. Our assessments may be employed in criminal justice cases; our toxicology screens may have profound effects on the livelihood of patients; our diagnoses may perpetuate sexist and racist stereotypes. Our lack of ill intent cannot be our alibi—we must be accountable for not just our work but also how it is used, lest our medicine becomes the very weapon that harms. Medicine requires inclusion of the social context of disease in order to uphold its sacred oath of doing no harm. If we focus only on molecular pathways and neglect to articulate the role of structural inequities—of racism—in our country, our reports on the causes of death and injury in our patients will erase the roles of their oppressors' (blogs.scientificamerican.com, 6 June). Here we can only quibble with Dr Ann Crawford-Roberts' use of the phrase 'our country'. Workers have no country: 'Study Shows Richest 0.00025% Owns More Wealth Than Bottom 150 Million Americans' (*Common Dreams*, 10 February, 2019).

Capitalism is THE pandemic

'Once again, the U.S. is undergoing a media-driven COVID-19 scare after a "spike" in infections. But as we noted earlier this week, the number of cases depends on the amount of testing. The key gauge to watch is deaths. They've been falling since April, and there's strong reason to believe they're lower than the official count suggests. The dreaded Wuhan virus is no doubt a nasty bug, worthy of our vigilance and ongoing concern. That said, its virulence, as measured by the daily number of deaths, appears to be waning, as the chart with this piece, courtesy of the COVID-19 Tracking Project of the Atlantic, clearly shows. The average number of daily COVID-19 deaths on a weekly basis has fallen from a peak of just over 2,000 to 700 or so. That's a roughly 65% decline' (issuesinsights.com 25 June). The phrase *lies, damned lies and statistics* springs to mind here, but perhaps Dr Marx's favourite – doubt everything – is more apposite, particularly where mainstream media is concerned.



Credit: Kena Betancur/Stringer/Getty Images

