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GROW OLD? FALL SICK? VOTE LABOUR!

The Tories used their general election manifesto to reveal their true callousness.

They decided to squeeze more money out of elderly people to pay for social care, and hit less well pensioners by cutting winter fuel payments and ditching the "triple lock" on pensions. (Introduced in 2011 the triple lock guarantees that the basic state pension will rise by a minimum of either 2.5%, the rate of inflation or average earnings growth, whichever is largest).

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Manning finally free

By Simon Nelson

Chelsea Manning was released from Fort Leavenworth, the maximum security prison on 18 May, after seven years of harassment, brutality and enforced solitary confinement.

Manning was sentenced in August 2013 for leaking classified wire cables and military records to WikiLeaks.

At the time she was a military intelligence analyst and for slightly bizarre reasons will remain classified as a member of the military for a period after her release.

Soon after she was sentenced she went public with the fact she was a transgender woman. The US military continued to hold her in an all-male prison, humiliating her and refusing to provide any access to appropriate medical care or for the hormone therapy and other treatment she and her supporters requested.

She attempted suicide twice and if her sentence had not been commuted there is a high chance she would have died in prison. The blame would lie with the US military establishment and government if she had.

DRACONIAN

Manning was originally sentenced to 35 years in a military court, where the prosecution wanted to go for the death penalty charge of treason.

She has been the victim of the most draconian sentence ever imposed for leaking classified documents.

Most famously the WikiLeaks release included the "Collateral Murder" video showing a US Apache helicopter killing more than a dozen Iraqi civilians and two journalists.

Manning's crime was only to expose the inner workings of US imperialism where, through both its diplomatic relations and areas of its military manoeuvres, civilian life is treated purely as "collateral damage."

While Manning's sentence was commuted by Obama, it was under his leadership and that of the then State Department Secretary, Hillary Clinton that more individuals were prosecuted under the Espionage Act of 1917 than any other administration.

Shoring up the support of the Democratic Party's base was a far more likely calculation. There has been no pardon, no exoneration. That shows others who may follow what the potential punishment would be.

Jeff Sessions the US attorney-general, made the Trump administration's position very clear, "stepping up our efforts on all leaks ... whenever a case can be made, we will seek to put some people in jail."

Can the FBI bring down Trump?

By the International Socialist Organization (US)

Trump's firing of FBI Director James Comey unleashed a legal and political crisis.

With the Justice Department appointing a special prosecutor to investigate over [Trump's] objections, he could still claim he's the victim of "the single greatest witch hunt in American history"

Don't expect Trump's downfall by the end of the month. In fact, don't discount a Trump rebound if his handlers can somehow rein him in. Trump's main adversary in the internal Washington power struggle is the law enforcement and intelligence services bureaucracy, which more than anything else wants a return to the status quo.

The opposition to Trump—which began with sometimes historically large protests cannot be allowed to narrow to the most conservative possible challenge: Anonymous leaks from intelligence officials questioning Trump's patriotism and ability to keep state secrets.

One day after he fired the head of the FBI, Trump held a meeting in the Oval Office with the Russian foreign minister and ambassador. Not only that, but Trump barred the U.S. media and allowed a photographer from the news agency owned by the Russian government.

Unnamed "current and former U.S. officials" told the *Washington Post* that Trump had "revealed highly classified information" in the closed meeting—which turned out to be a report from Israeli intel-

ligence alleging an ISIS plot to blow up airplanes with bombs that can be hidden inside electronic devices.

Trump's National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster flatly denied the *Post* claim and then Trump tweeted that he could reveal any intelligence he wanted to whoever he wanted!

The whole Russians-in-the-Oval-Office circus raised the question of whether we're supposed to trust the word of the most dishonest administration ever or anonymous allegations from intelligence agencies whose mission includes lying to shape public opinion.

The biggest bombshell of all was the news that Comey had written a memo to fellow FBI officials after the White House meeting where Trump apparently asked him to end the FBI's investigation of McMaster's predecessor, Michael Flynn, into whether he lied about his contacts with Russian officials during the campaign.

REPUBLICANS

Now, Republicans in Congress who were trying to ignore the scandal were forced to ask Comey to testify in Senate hearings.

One rule of American politics to bear in mind is that the course of Washington scandals is driven not by legalities, but politics.

The Watergate scandal that brought down Richard Nixon began with a 1972 break-in at Democratic Party national headquarters in the Watergate hotel in Washington. Criminal behaviour, yes — but



Former FBI Director James Comey — Out to get Trump?

Nixon paid a price because of the pressures building up in society, most importantly, the anti-Vietnam War movement.

Plenty of presidents have been responsible for more serious crimes than a break-in, but didn't have to resign.

Until this last week, the Republican Party establishment was prepared to work with Trump. They might hate Trump for taking over their party, but enough other people liked him, despite his historic unpopularity, to elect him president, which is more than any other Republican could say.

That's why Republicans at first pathetically tried to downplay Trump's firing of Comey.

But the real question for the GOP isn't whether Trump broke the law, but whether he's still an asset. Certain parts of the establishment have a stake in seeing the administration carry on, but on the big-ticket items that Wall Street and Corporate America are drooling over, Trump looks more and more like a distraction, which could fuel attempts to get him out of the picture.

The main opposition to the Trump White House right now isn't coming from Republicans, but the apparatchiks of the national security state.

If opposition to Trump is reduced to rooting for him to be brought down by any scandal at all, then the tendency will be to side with the national security state when its anonymous mouthpieces

charge him with the same violations of government secrecy that were used to send Chelsea Manning to a military prison.

Now that there is blood in the water, the Democrats are coordinating all their efforts with the goal of winning back control of Congress in the 2018 midterm elections.

The problem isn't that more people are rallying around Trump — whose popularity continues to be incredibly low — but that support for the Democrats among their own voters has fallen. Probably because those voters are sick and tired of a party that doesn't stand for anything other than being more responsible guardians of the status quo than Trump.

The same dynamic from 2016 presidential election continues: Trump is increasingly unpopular, but so are his Democratic opponents and the base voters for the Democratic Party are increasingly disillusioned.

Trump may yet be overthrown by his own corruption and incompetence, but before you bet on that outcome, remember this: That's what we all thought during the presidential campaign last year after the release of Trump's infamous "grab them by the pussy" tape.

The anger at Trump has to be channeled into active opposition. Socialists and the left can make the case that the whole system should be impeached.

• Full article bit.ly/2rdu3U1

Phoney election in Iran

From the Iranian Workers' Action Committee

On 19 May 2017, the Iranian regime yet again held phoney [Presidential] "elections" to disguise the basic fact that it is one of the most repressive capitalist dictatorships in the twenty-first century.

Along with the "presidential elections" there were also "local elections" in Iran's cities and villages.

Adopting the policy of an active boycott as on previous occasions, activists of the Workers' Action Committee (WAC) went on the streets of many cities and towns in Iran sticking up posters, distributing leaflets and spray painting slogans against the regime and calling for the release of political prisoners and jailed labour activists.

They also included condemnations of the regime's medieval health and safety standards, as highlighted by the recent tragic deaths at the Zemestan Yurt coal

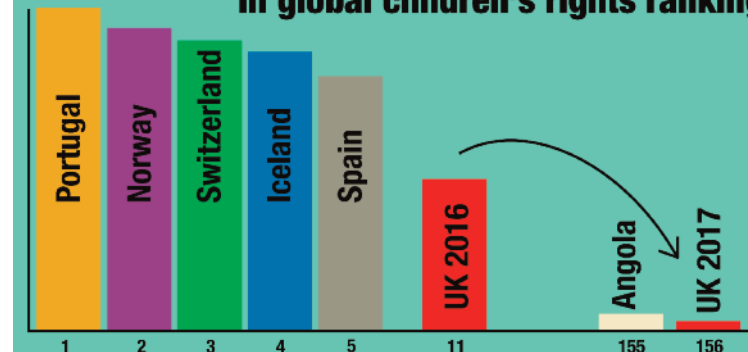
mine.

Over the past few weeks WAC activists extended their work from Tehran into Karaj, Rasht, Sanandaj (the capital of Kurdistan province) and other cities.

Below, an example of WAC activities.



The UK has dropped from 11th to 156th in global children's rights rankings



Based on the KidsRights Index 2017 which collects data from Unicef and the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and rates countries on five areas: Life, health, protection, child rights, and education. The UK has fallen largely due to structural discrimination faced by groups of children, particularly those from a Muslim, Gypsy or Roma background.

The waning of Chavismo?

By Pablo Velasco

For the last seven weeks Venezuela has experienced violent opposition protests intent on toppling the elected Maduro government.

Since the beginning of April, over 50 people have been killed during demonstrations orchestrated by the right-wing Mesa de la Unidad Democrática (MUD – Democratic Unity Table). In the worst case, these events may precipitate the overthrow of the government by rightist neoliberal forces or pave the way for a military coup. Even if they fail, the events are a further stage in the demise of so-called Bolivarian 21st century “socialism” launched by Hugo Chávez and much heralded by much of the left in recent years.

Nicolás Maduro became president of Venezuela in 2013 after Hugo Chávez’s death. The Bolivarian regime was already on crisis during Chávez’s last years, but the situation has worsened markedly. In December 2015 the right wing opposition won the National Assembly elections and used this as a base to ratchet up attempts to overthrow Maduro. In October 2016 the National Assembly escalated their assault by voting to initiate a trial of Maduro on the spurious grounds that he had “abandoned” his office.

The immediate trigger for the current round of right-wing mobilisations was a Supreme Court ruling on 29 March this year that found the National Assembly in contempt of court. The pro-Maduro judiciary said it would take over the National Assembly’s legislative powers or would hand them over

to another power. The right-wing declared this as a “coup d’état” and mobilised its forces against the Maduro government.

The economic circumstances behind the current clashes are dire. In recent years the vast majority of Venezuelan people have suffered a catastrophic deterioration in their material living conditions. While Chávez was able to utilise rising oil prices to fund social programmes, once the oil revenue diminished so too did these welfare provisions. Triple-digit inflation has eroded the currency and stripped the shops of basic necessities. In a society where half of the workforce is already employed in the informal economy, living standards have plummeted and with it a significant degree of support the Bolivarian regime used to command.

INTERNATIONAL

The international context is important too. Both the Bush and Obama administrations were openly hostile to the Chávez government and backed the right-wing opposition’s attempts to undermine and remove it.

However the advent of Trump’s administration, with its promise to “do anything we can to help Venezuela” represents a further level of pressure on the beleaguered Maduro regime. Venezuela under Chávez and Maduro put itself firmly in the camp of reactionary “allies” Russia, China and Iran as an apparent geopolitical counter to US pressure.

Although Russia has announced more wheat exports to Venezuela in light of the economic situation, it is not at all clear that it will be able to

prop up the Venezuelan regime against the US and its internal right-wing backers

Therefore it appears the Maduro regime is at a dead end. The AWL was critical of the Chavista movement from the beginning, pointing to its Bonapartist authoritarian populism, notably the role of the military to stabilise the state and administer the economy, which remained firmly capitalist in its internal and external relations. At the same time Chávez incorporated sections of the labour movement and the left into his ruling PSUV party, while systematically undermining efforts to build an independent working class movement, such as the UNT union federation. Chávez’s state capitalist model was never a socialist alternative and the unravelling of its modest reforms has punctured its radical and “anti-imperialist” pretensions.

INDUSTRY

In Venezuela today 90% of all companies are in private hands and state-owned industry is run on a capitalist basis.

The Maduro government includes business and military representatives who administer a bourgeois state in support of Venezuelan capital. The government clings to the fantasy that an oil price rise will revive its fortunes and renew the social programmes. The Bolivarian regime is riddled with corruption and has become increasingly anti-democratic, postponing the regional elections in December 2016.

The slogan “Que se vayan todos” (throw them all out) is indicative of the disgust many Venezuelan



workers share for the Maduro government and its right-wing opponents. However it would hopelessly abstract for Venezuelan workers and international socialists to take a “plague on both your houses” approach. Working class independence and consistent democracy would be damaged not advanced if the rightist opposition succeeds with US government support in bringing down the current regime, just as it would have been in the coup attempt against Chávez in 2002.

The only progressive force that could replace the Maduro government is a militant, independent socialist labour movement – and sadly such a force does not exist at present in Venezuela. The interests of Venezuelan workers are not served by prettifying the Maduro government or pretending it is some sort of socialist project. Workers should defend the light and air of bourgeois democracy without illusions in the Chavistas and with-

out losing sight of the opposition as the greater current enemy.

The working class movement exists and fights in Venezuela, as shown by the size of the May Day demonstrations and other mobilisations in recent weeks.

Unfortunately the bulk of those out campaigning do so under the banner of Chavismo. The revolutionary left remains weak, with some Marxists such as *Lucha de Clases* still mired inside the ruling PSUV party. The Marea Socialista current, which left the ruling party in 2015, was raided by the police last year. The Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo takes a more critical stance, albeit based on a rigid “orthodox” Trotskyism. Venezuela cries out for independent working class politics in the current crisis.

international socialists should do everything possible to help the forces trying to insert this perspective into the situation.

Macron’s government of “civil society”

The French socialist newsletter *Arguments pour la lutte sociale* reports on Emmanuel Macron’s government appointments

Emmanuel Macron has nominated a relative unknown for his Prime Minister, but Édouard Philippe is a perfect representative of the Deep State of the 5th Republic.

He was Human Resources Director... of the UMP [Sarkozy’s centre-right party] at its foundation, appointing full-time staff for Alain Juppé, until he was sidelined by Sarkozy; after which he worked as a lobbyist for Areva, the company linked to the state which deals in uranium from Niger. That underpins the French nuclear industry – not just civilian nuclear infrastructure, which provides the sole point of obsession for ecologists and the

“insoumis”, but also the military nuclear structure and a central node of the French presence in Africa. Philippe, with his unscrupulous hipster look – that’s who he really is.

The rest is yet to come. The Minister for Labour, [Muriel] Pénicaud was HR Director for Danone, whose nominee for Cabinet Director is Antoine Foucher, former head of “social affairs” in [French bosses’ union] MEDEF.

The Interior Minister will be Gérard Collomb, a key designer of the “Macron product”, regional baron and local potentate. He has nominated Stéphane Fratacci for his Cabinet Director, who was part of Sarkozy’s “Ministry of National Identity” before becoming a Prefect in Doubs, and expelling Roma from France under Hollande.

The Culture Minister, [Françoise] Nyssen, makes a good impression thanks to the good intellectual reputation of her publishing house

Actes Sud, but she is also a publishing magnate who is in the process of cornering the market, and is allied to the Anthroposophical sect, which hates French state schooling.

Speaking of state education, we recently heard that at the closing session of a local conference of Departmental Delegates for National Education, the new Education Minister, [Jean-Michel] Blanquer, delivered a speech in which he refused to use the words “state [or public] education”: this right-wing ideologue who supports decentralisation [of schooling] has in any case already been effectively acting as a minister, by being a member of ministerial cabinets under successive governments, of both the right and the left.

Here too is a snapshot of the deep state which is rooted in ministerial cabinets coming out into the light (there is a precedent for this sort of thing in the National Education Ministry: its name is Claude

Allègre!).

This government, of “civil society”, gives a new meaning to the term “civil society”: an énarque [high-ranking mandarin and graduate of the prestigious National Administrative School] who has hopped through the revolving door between boardrooms and high public office. It is in no sense a government of renewal.

It is a synthesis: a synthesis of the recycled UMP right, who have been handed the key posts of the Minister of the Economy (Bruno Le Maire) and budget cuts (the Sarkozyst Gérard Darmanin, minister of “Action and Public Accounts”, the Ministry of the Civil Service having been done away with!) the “left” of regional princeling led by Gérard Collomb, and what links it all together is this so-called “civil society”, which in reality is nothing other than the deep state of the 5th Republic, which is obliged to come out into

the light to take matters directly in hand...

Let us be clear: if there is a majority against Macron, Les Républicains, the Front National, and against the bureaucrats who were victorious in June, then the outcome will not be cohabitation, but confrontation with a minority-backed and illegitimate Presidency; and therefore the legitimacy of the 5th Republic will be thrown into question.

The struggle for this unity, that is, the struggle to assert debate between all the candidates who place themselves “on the anti-Macron left” could, if one or several political forces organised it on the national level, be victorious.

However it turns out, the preparations are now underway for the sequel: unity in class struggle against the Macron bureaucrats.

The SNP and the Tory #rapeclause

SCOTLAND

By Dale Street

#Rapeclause was one of the four most popular Twitter hashtags used by SNP MPs and MSPs in the run-up to the Scottish council elections held earlier this month.

SNP MSP Humza Yousaf tweeted about “Tory born-again Brexiters and rape-clause advocates.” Fellow SNP MSP James Dornan explained: “If you’d rather vote for the Tories than SNP, you’re a right-wing Rape Clause supporting enabler.”

(Ex-)MP Paul Monaghan tweeted: “The rape clause is beneath contempt and reveals nothing but a callous disregard for human life.” Fellow (ex-)MP Pete Wishart appealed: “Now more important than ever. Vote till you boak. Make sure the rape clause candidate is absolutely last.”

Following in the footsteps of their parliamentarians, cybernats made #rapeclause and #rapeclouseruth (i.e. Scottish Tory leader Ruth Davidson) central to their case for voting SNP in the council elections. For example:

“Thursday #council17 election. A great chance to show Ruth Davidson how disgusted you are by the Rape Clause #rapeclouseruth #rapeclause. ... Time Tories are punished for Rape Clause at council elections #council17 #rapeclouseruth.”

With the general election campaign now underway, #rapeclause and #rapeclouseruth remain particularly popular hashtags for cybernats.

#Rapeclause refers to the requirement that as of April of this year victims of rape must complete a lengthy form to obtain child tax benefits for a third or subsequent child born

as a result of rape.

This is an exercise in humiliation, one which forces victims of rape to relive the trauma of rape and which could cause damage to their mental health. The fact that the bulk of the eight-page form can be completed by a health professional or social worker is irrelevant.

This bureaucratic imposition on rape victims is the result of broader Tory cuts in welfare spending: as of April, child tax benefits are restricted to the first two children. But exemptions apply to children born from rape (and multiple births, and adopted children).

The solution to the #rapeclause is to scrap the cap on restricting child tax benefits to the first two children. If there is no cap, there is no need for exemptions, and no need to subject rape victims to a process of bureaucratic humiliation.

There are certainly SNP parliamentarians, members, supporters and voters who are genuine in their opposition to the #rapeclause and link their campaigning against it to the demand for scrapping the cap on child tax benefits.

SNP HYPOCRISY

But the broader Scottish-nationalist campaign around the #rapeclause and the political role which it plays is steeped in opportunism, hypocrisy and an irrational demonisation of their political opponents.

Reviving an SNP meme from the period immediately following last year’s EU referendum, #rapeclause is used to equate Tories with Nazis and fascists in general:

“We need silent protests at every Tory meeting with #rapeclause #foodbanks #Try-Brexit. Don’t let friends of fascism get elected. ... The extremely low calibre of Conservatives promoting fascist policies like #rapeclause in Scotland. Vote for better and

fairer.”

“France, Holland and Austria rejected far-right Nazi candidates. It’s our turn on June 8th. #ToriesOut #VoteSNP #rapeclouseruth. ... #rapeclouseruth and #CantTellTheTruth-May: two of the most vile women in this country today. Hitler would be proud ...”

Demonisation of the Tories for promoting infanticide (“How dare the working poor have children! Kill them! Screeches the darling of the Tories #rapeclouseruth.”) leads into the demonisation of those deemed guilty by association — even if the supposed “association” is a fiction:

“So, Labour, Greens, Lib-Dems didn’t condemn this vile #rapeclause. Your Tory friend #rapeclouseruth is a disgrace. ... Labour openly campaigning for the #rapeclause Conservatives in the Borders and the Highlands. This is a conspiracy.”

“So now we have @kezdugdale in cahoots again with #rapeclause @ruthdavidsonmsp. Both happy to wear the Orange sash of sectarianism.”

Political critics of the SNP and its record in power can also be tarred with the same #rapeclause brush:

David Torrance, a journalist who has written articles critical of the SNP government (because that’s the kind of thing journalists do) becomes “Tory boy Torrance” who “ticks the predictable boxes to talk up #rapeclouseruth et al.”

And a nurse who criticised the SNP’s record on health in last weekend’s Scottish Leaders Debate was subjected to a vicious cybernat witch-hunt, including: “Ranting ‘nurse’ on #LeadersDebate is a Tory councillor’s wife — a #rapeclause supporter! How does that square with her ethics?”

#Rapeclause is also invoked in support of that favourite demand of true Scottish nationalists: a targeted consumer boycott of insufficiently patriotic businesses.

Taking them down a peg

LETTER

Andrew Northall (letters, *Solidarity* 438) asks important questions about taxing the ultra-rich and the merely well-off.

No socialist strategy, I believe, can escape the risk of a “counter-revolutionary reaction” from the rich.

That is not just because of our challenge to their income. It is because of our challenge to their wealth and their power. No socialism is possible without taking the top 1% down a peg, and they will resist that ferociously.

At certain times they will shrug and pay more tax. Labour’s plans are modest. In 1944-5 (under a Tory-led government), Britain had a top income-tax rate of 98%, which meant that almost no-one was paid a rate in the top tax brackets. The top rate remained around 90% or higher for a long time. It was 96.25% in the late 1960s.

Only, the ultra-rich still held power: ownership, control, and a thousand ways to enjoy luxuries and yet escape tax.

If we look beyond the Labour manifesto, socialism means challenging that power of the ultra-rich. There is no way to do that without also organising the working-class numbers and determination to quell (as Engels put it) a slaveholders’ rebellion.

And yet socialism is not, as some put it during the Occupy movement, a matter of

“99%” against the top 1% alone.

Marx wrote of “the constantly growing number of the middle classes, those who stand between the worker on the one hand and the capitalist and landlord on the other”. He didn’t mean school teachers or social workers, but the army of associates of, managers for, and assistants to the capitalist class who pocket five-figure salaries but do not own any significant portion of productive wealth.

“The middle classes... are a burden weighing heavily on the working base and increase the social security and power of the upper ten thousand”.

More income, in total, goes to that relatively large number of managers, officials, lawyers, top bank workers, head teachers, etc. than to the few at the very top. Kropotkin tells of the banker Amschel Rothschild, in the 1848 revolution, announcing that his fortune amounted to five shillings each if divided between all. He would give anyone who asked their five shillings. “Three or four passers-by asked for their five shillings, which he disbursed with a sardonic smile”. The rest were bemused. The banker kept his fortune.

Moreover, if a political overturn were to evict the top 1%, but leave the remainder of the top 10% or so with their current advantages, then before long the social hierarchy would be restored, only with a new 1% at the top.

The well-off-but-not-plutocrats enjoy privilege as well as comforts. Redistributing from them to the majority means taking away their autocratic powers as managers or officials, the private schools and hospitals to which they pay fees, the super-luxury hotels and shops and transport where they spend, their retinues of domestic servants; and dividing up some of their palaces to create new homes.

Officials and managers in a socialist society need to be on workers’ wages. In the Bolshevik years after the Russian revolution of 1917 (before the Stalinist counter-revolution), the “party maximum” rule prevented any party member, however high her or his official post, getting more than a skilled worker.

We need to level down ultra-“wages”, not out of “envy”, but to overturn hierarchy. It does not mean pauperising the well-off. We can realistically hope to win the support or acquiescence to socialism of a large number of them. But some will resist as ruthlessly as the plutocrats.

As Marx pointed out, the Church of England, though not a capitalist firm, “will more readily pardon an attack on 38 of its 39 articles than on one-thirty-ninth of its income”. The Church’s “director of investments” pockets over £400,000 a year.

Martin Thomas, Islington

A visit by Ruth Davidson to the Express Bakery in Dumfries resulted in: “Bakery to avoid in Dumfries: Express Bakery. Product recall: these #rapeclause apologists have had their fingers in your pies.”

For a swathe of Scottish nationalists the #rapeclause is not just yet another example of bad Tory policies. It is the essence of Britishness and the British state, and further evidence of the need for independence:

“The BritNats coalescing around the #rapeclause party. Given the collapse in Labour support, realignment of politics in Scotland almost complete... All together to help Theresa May rape Scotland. #VoteSNP to save Scotland.”

#Rapeclause serves the same role as “Red Tories”. In 2015 the SNP used “Red Tories” to target and undermine support for Labour. In 2017, faced with a resurgence of support for the Tories, the SNP is using #rapeclause to try to stifle that resurgence.

And the SNP’s focus on the #rapeclause stinks of hypocrisy.

BENEFITS CAP

In August of 2013, as the debate about the 2014 referendum began to pick up steam. Alex Salmond committed the SNP to imposing a benefits cap in an independent Scotland.

Nicola Sturgeon was given the job of working out the details. (This was not a specific cap on child tax benefits. It was an across-the-board benefits cap. That made it even worse.)

In the 2015 general election campaign, in which the Tories proposed the welfare “reforms” which include the child tax benefit cap, Sturgeon declared that scrapping the benefits cap was not an SNP priority.

When the Tories’ welfare “reforms” subsequently made their way through the Westminster legislative procedures, two SNP MPs (Hannah Bardell and Corri Wilson) sat on the Commons Public Bill Committee which scrutinised the legislation — but did not denounce the #rapeclause.

After the Tories’ legislation had become law, the SNP denied that Holyrood had the powers to not apply the cuts in Scotland. Proven wrong on this, the SNP then promised “real, credible, affordable plans” to mitigate the impact of the cuts. There is still no sign of those plans.

In fact, Holyrood has the powers not just to scrap the #rapeclause but also the two-child cap itself. The cost of scrapping the cap over the next four years would be £195 millions. This is roughly equal to the money the SNP Holyrood government will be losing — each year, not over a period of four years — from scrapping Airport Passenger Duty.

The #rapeclause was on the statute books for over eighteen months before it came into effect. But only in the run-up to the council elections did the SNP discover that the #rapeclause was the defining feature of the Tories, all opponents of independence, and the British state itself.

And some of the cybernats so incandescent with rage at the #rapeclause clearly have a long way to go in improving their feminist credentials.

Denouncing “#rapeclause Ruthie” as “a despicable, divisive and dangerous wee witch” smacks of Tommy Sheridan’s attitude to his female political opponents. So too does another cybernat’s cultist description of Sturgeon, Davidson and Dugdale:

“Let’s summarise: A fearless leader who loves her country. A harridan who supports the heinous #rapeclause. The next ruler of Narnia.”



Grow old? Fall sick? Vote Labour!

The Tories used their general election manifesto to reveal their true callousness.

They decided to squeeze more money out of elderly people to pay for social care, and hit less well pensioners by cutting winter fuel payments and ditching the "triple lock" on pensions. (Introduced in 2011 the triple lock guarantees that the basic state pension will rise by 2.5%, the rate of inflation, or average earnings growth, whichever is largest).

Initial proposed changes to social care had the appearance of something worked out on the back of an envelope, were uncoded, and immediately provoked a huge backlash.

Currently anyone with assets of over £23,250 is expected to pay the full cost of their care. If you are in a care or nursing home, the value of your house can be taken into account up if your total assets are over £100,000. But

that is not the case if you receive care in your own home.

The Tories reversed this position saying the value of the home may be factored in if you receive care at home, although — maybe they thought they were being humane here — the money will not be taken from your estate until after your death.

Some people could now face losing their home after they die and will not be able to pass it down to their children.

The Tories also removed the cap on the amount people had to pay.

Labour led the outcry against the proposals, dubbing them a "dementia tax". Theresa May was forced to make a u-turn and reintroduced the cap on payments (though not specifying what that cap might be), mumbling about how the whole package was still in the process of being planned.

This is not much of a u-turn. People will still risk losing their home to pay for care in their own home. £23,000 is not an amount most working class people have tucked away for a rainy day. Many, even most, homes are worth over £100,000. This is a big and regressive change.

It is very ironic that working-class people can now be forced to lose the value of the home the Tories encouraged so many to buy often, extolling the pride over having "something to leave for future generations".

The Tories' real intention is to open up new markets in the insurance industry for products to cover elder care. With private companies in on the "business of care", after-death sale of homes will likely be forced, no matter who is living there.

Working-class people will also avoid asking for social care in order to protect the value of their home, opting to live with discomfort and stress. Elderly spouses and other family members will take up the burden of care.

As socialists we do not champion the ownership of private property. We support inheritance taxes for the very wealthy and ultimately, the communal, social and democratic ownership of all property and wealth.

However we must defend the right of working-class people to hold on to the value of family homes — homes which have been paid for out of a lifetime of wages.

Although Labour has not said it will scrap all social care charges, it has promised to keep and increase the cap on spending and increase the social care budget under a National Care Service.

Labour should have promised to scrap charges but it is clear that the Party's priority's are clear and very different to the Tories.

Everyone is likely to become sick or old. There is only one rational political choice to make: vote Labour!

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Labour: rebuild the welfare state

By Gemma Short

The welfare state created by the 1945 Labour government was a little bit of the “political economy of the working class” carved out of a still capitalist economy (a phrase Karl Marx first used to describe the victory of the fight for a ten-hour working day.)

To some extent the ruling class has been forced to accept a minimal level of state provision. There is a constant battle over what proportion of profits is redirected, over who should receive support, and what sort of support is given. The ruling class has been winning that battle for some time. The space carved out of capitalism by the working class where people are provided for according to need, not means to pay, is being ever narrowed.

Thatcherism was an abrupt attack on the welfare state. The internal market was introduced in the NHS, which also went from crisis to crisis as funding was restricted; the first moves to take schools out of local authority started with grant-maintained schools and privately-sponsored City Technology Colleges (today's academies and free schools being their vastly more widespread descendants); council house tenants were given the right to buy their homes cheap and the social housing stock plummeted; homelessness ballooned; child poverty more than doubled; the proportion of pensioners living below the poverty line went from 13% to 43%; unemployment benefits were cut and benefits means-testing expanded.

For many millions of working class people the election of a Labour Government in 1997 signalled hope that the welfare state would be restored, despite signs to the opposite from Blair. As we commented at the time “people expected Blair to be better than his promises”. Thatcher said that “Britain would be safe in his [Blair's] hands”.

This general election has a decidedly different feel. The support behind Labour,

which appears to be increasing, is based around a manifesto which contains clear policies to reverse cuts to the welfare state and redistribute income.

In the end the Blair and Brown governments did increase spending on the NHS and schools, and introduced tax credits and pension credit. But a great amount of the new money went to PFI schemes and to subcontractors. Marketisation grew.

Under the Tory led governments since 2010 the welfare state has been repeatedly raided and in some areas it has simply ceased to exist. Labour needs to do more than just stop further raids. It needs to rebuild. In some ways the policies in the Labour manifesto do this, in others they are lacking.

EDUCATION

The Labour manifesto calls for a National Education Service. Deliberately designed to echo the National Health Service, the manifesto describes it as a “cradle-to-grave education service, free at the point of use”.

The flagship policy of the NES is the abolition of university tuition fees. Given that Labour Students continues to fight against free education in NUS and only a few years ago Labour only proposed a cut in fees to £6000, this is a huge victory for the left. An entire system of competition between Higher Education institutions and marketisation of education has been built on top of tuition fees. Abolishing them severely undermines this. Labour should also reintroduce maintenance grants linked to the cost of living. Current graduate debt should be written off, and the Teaching Excellence Framework abolished.

Labour has pledged to abandon the Tories' new schools funding formula which would see some schools lose as much as 35%, and has also said it will address the existing chronic underfunding of schools. The most significant erosion of school education has been the academies program which has



caused a collapse in local education authorities (the council-run bodies which previously ran almost all state schools). The very basis for a democratically planned and run education system has been taken away.

Services which rely on being shared across schools, music lessons, special educational needs services, school transport, educational psychology services etc., have stopped existing in many parts of the country. 87% of academies say they are buying services they used to get from the local authority from other (private) providers. Local authority organised supply teacher provision has gone, in favour of unscrupulous and expensive private supply agencies. Each academy decides its own admissions policy, and increasingly local authorities have difficulty finding a school place for some students.

The Labour manifesto pledges that no school will be forced to become an academy. Yet with 65% of secondary schools now academies, damage has already been done. Labour should “remunicipalise” school education, put school funding back in the hands of local authorities rather than schools directly, and rebuild local authorities with school workers, parents and students having a say in the running of schools.

Everyone promises to fund the NHS, but there is a very stark difference between the Tories' pledged £8 billion and Labour's £30 billion plus capital investment. Labour's manifesto also proposes to halve fees paid to management consultants, scrap the “Sustainability and Transformation Plans”, and make the NHS the “preferred provider” to run services.

Between April 2010 and April 2015 86% of

contracts for pharmacy services, 83% of contracts for patient transport services, 76% of diagnostic services, 69% of GP/Out of Hours services, 45% of community health services, and 25% of mental health services were awarded to non-NHS providers.

According to Keep our NHS Public, that amounts to £10 billion of NHS contracts going to private providers, with between £5-10 billion wasted in the procurement process. Labour should make the NHS the *only* provider not just the preferred one.

DEBT

£2 billion flows straight out of the NHS annually in PFI debt payments. St Bartholomew's and the Royal London hospitals pay £2 million a week in PFI debt interest alone.

The Labour manifesto says nothing about PFI debts. Labour should pledge to write off the £80 billion NHS PFI debt, levied to pay for hospitals which cost £11.5 billion in cash terms.

Theresa May on 22 May accused Corbyn of “playing politics with social care” — as if the £4.6 billion cut from social care budgets and the 1.2m older people whose care needs go unmet are not a political issue.

A fundamental part of the crisis in the NHS, is a simultaneous crisis in social care. As councils cut social care provision to the bone, frail patients cannot be discharged from hospitals to the community. The same patients, without support and care in the community, end up at A&E.

While the Tories' “dementia tax” places the burden of paying for care onto those who

“If the Tories win, schools face heavy fire over the next few years: cuts (£400 per primary school student, £550 secondary) and pressure to further competition, market-orientation, and exam-obsession. And the revival of grammar schools.”

Labour's promises to stop the cuts and to edge back towards local democratic control offer welcome respite. School students will also welcome the winding-down of uni tuition fees, the restoration of EMA, and the £10 minimum wage.

Teachers, parents, and students should keep up pressure for Labour to move into positive change, radically reducing exams and testing, generating space for creative learning, and democratising schools internally.”



**Pat Murphy, National Union of Teachers
National Executive (p.c.)**

Welfare state



local authorities. That means a shift from local government control, and a shift to lower paid jobs with worse conditions. A National Care Service should mean public sector jobs, not further funding for private care companies.

The Tories have turned the benefits system into a system of pauperisation, especially for the disabled. The bedroom tax, cutting housing benefit for under 21s, benefit sanctions, cuts to child tax credits, work capability and Personal Independence Payment assessments, cuts to Employment and Support Allowance. According to the Resolution Foundation think-tank the poorest third of families have borne the burden of 67% of benefit cuts. A single parent with a baby earning £17,000 a year faces £610 in benefit cuts, from measures planned by George Osborne which came into effect this April. Further pre-planned cuts are due to roll out over the next few years.

According to the British Attitudes Survey, attitudes on benefits have suffered a long-term decline, but mostly after Thatcher had left power, and thanks to Blair. The level of agreement with spending more on welfare benefits for the poor fell from 61% in 1989 to 27% in 2009, and was 30% in 2014.

Attitudes also vary by type of welfare spending. In 2014 67% placed pensions first or second in their priorities for extra spending, but only 13% said benefits for unemployed people should be one of the top two priorities for additional spending. 45% support less government spending on the unemployed.

The Labour manifesto is a marked shift from this attitude. The section on social security begins “poverty in Britain is rising due to the Conservatives’ attempts to balance the books on the backs of the poorest. They have slashed social security over the last seven

need care, Labour’s manifesto promises a National Care Service, again echoing the National Health Service, with £8 billion of funding over the lifetime of the next Parliament and an additional £1 billion in the first year. This will mean care providers can pay a real living wage to staff, including paid travel time, and end 15-minute care visits.

Between 2009 and 2013 15% of adult social care jobs shifted to private providers from

“There’s a lot of good stuff on the NHS in the Labour manifesto. It commits to about £7.5bn funding every year. This is what is needed to address the years of chronic under-funding, and is recommended by organisations such as The Kings Fund. It is the only party committing to this. Labour says it will do this by redistributing income from the richest in society, and from corporate taxation. They have been unashamed about making this clear despite criticism from the media.

There is an unequivocal commitment to reverse the Health and Social Care Act — not present in previous manifestos, which only committed to repeal parts of it.

Importantly Labour says it will foster a new relationship with health workers, working with health trade unions. Particularly it will lift the 1% pay cap for NHS workers, and reinstate the NHS training bursary.

Dr Yannis Gourtsoyannis, BMA junior doctors’ committee member and Momentum NCG member (p.c)



“DPAC are on the whole very pleased with the Labour Party policies on disability, which mostly match closely our manifesto asks to Labour. In particular we are delighted to see a commitment to end the current flawed Work Capability Assessments and Personal Independence Assessments. And the commitment to end the horrific sanctions regime which unfairly penalises those with a Mental Health condition or Learning Difficulty and has led to the deaths of disabled people, including David Clapson and Mark Wood.

A reversal of the £30 a week cut to ESA and an end to the dreaded Bedroom Tax are also very important to us.

Making the UNCRPD part of domestic law is a hugely important and welcome commitment and overall perhaps the most important provision longer term to protect disabled people’s human rights. While we also view the commitment to have a national social care system as a vital step towards making social care provision universal and fairer, we would have liked to see more in the manifesto relating specifically to Independent Living.

Many of the other manifesto promises would also, we believe, help disabled people, including renationalisation of the railways, and energy supplies, publicly-run schools, abolition of tuition fees, a living wage and an end to charging for Employment Tribunals.

Disabled People Against the Cuts

years, leaving more people in poverty, subject to a punitive sanctions regime, and reliant on food banks.” It pledges to “scrap the punitive sanctions regime, scrap the Bedroom Tax, reinstate housing benefit for under-21s, and scrap cuts to the Bereavement Support Payment.”

The rate of job seeker’s allowance has fallen far below the cost of living. Labour should be bolder and make sure nobody lives in poverty for lack of a job. The ability of people to keep a roof over their heads and feed themselves and their families should not be dependent on the decision of bosses over your job. If the risk of extreme poverty on losing a job was reduced, more workers would feel confident to stand up bosses driving down wages and conditions.

HOMES

Tories like to boast that Thatcher built more council homes than Blair, and sadly it’s true.

Under Thatcher’s government 2.63 million homes were built, of which 18.9% were council homes (mostly built in Thatcher’s first three years when her policies had not yet worked through). Between 1997-2010 2.61 million were built, but only 0.3% were council homes. Instead the Blair/Brown governments shifted social housing to housing associations and arms-length organisations, but even they built few new homes. The Blair/Brown governments failed to repeal Thatcher’s right-to-buy policy and pushed councils to transfer their stock to housing associations.

According to figures from the House of Commons Library house building since 2010 has been at its lowest since the 1920s. Private renters are paying an average of 47% of their net income on rent (72% in London). House prices in England have risen 140% since but average wages have only increased by 33%.

The Labour manifesto promises to build more housing, including social housing (council and Housing Association), and give councils back the power to build council homes as they need. It will introduce secure three-year tenancies for private renters with an inflation cap on rent rises, ban letting

agency fees, and conditionally suspend of the right-to-buy scheme (councils can resume sales if they replace homes like-for-like). It lacks the vision of a council home building scheme that could transform working-class peoples’ lives — a scheme where decent, maintained homes are seen as a standard provision for people, not a temporary measure to help the very worst-off.

The Labour manifesto is a significant shift from decades of neo-liberal consensus where the “political economy of the ruling class”, the rule of the market in every aspect of our lives, has almost destroyed the “political economy of the working class” carved out of capitalism in the shape of the welfare state.

The importance of the Labour manifesto lies less with the actual policies and more with the significance of its break with the neo-liberal consensus. If carried out in full it only goes part of the way to reversing the damage done by the Tories since 2010, let alone of Thatcher and Blair since 1979.

On the election of the Labour government in 1997 we said:

“The fall of the Tories has unleashed what is for the ruling class and the new government a dangerous mood of expectation. Nobody has any reason to believe that Blair will prove untrue to his own nature and his own politics, and go on to satisfy the hopes of all those enthusiastic crowds celebrating the fall of the Tories. The release of hope is what is important here... Hope is a commodity more precious than government promises, or, for that matter, government deeds.

“When those raised up now to unwarranted hope in the new government learn that they can’t rely on Blair, they may carry that hope over into doing things for themselves and develop out of it a belief that it is possible for them to do things. A belief that many things, long thought impossible, really are possible now that the heavy tombstone of Tory rule has been shifted. Hope will stimulate and liberate desire. Desire and hope will stimulate action.”

The idea of the “political economy of the working class” has been put back on the table. We can start to carve it out of capitalism again.

The limits of Labour's multilateralism

By Clive Bradley

There has been some recent media attention on Jeremy Corbyn's alleged past links to the IRA and the claim that he is a "pacifist" — meaning, he is opposed to any and every kind of military intervention, even around "humanitarian" issues.

Corbyn does have a record of support for the Republican movement in Ireland (that is, not the IRA as such, but the nationalists fighting for a united Ireland), and he was long involved with the Stop the War Coalition, which did indeed oppose — sometimes, in Workers' Liberty's view, with terrible arguments — the major military interventions involving Britain since the Iraq war (Libya; Syria); the key forces within it including Corbyn, also opposed intervention in Kosova.

But in both cases, while Corbyn's own politics are influenced by a left-wing tradition of political "softness" towards noxious movements simply because they are at odds with "the West", his record is probably more concretely connected to a desire to resolve conflicts through negotiation and diplomacy. (This is true, I think, even of his more controversial statements about, for instance, Hamas, the Palestinian Islamist movement).

And this commitment to diplomatic solutions comes top of the Labour manifesto promises on foreign policy. "We will put conflict resolution and human rights at the heart of foreign policy, commit to working through the UN, end support for unilateral aggressive wars of intervention and back effective action to alleviate the refugee crisis," it states, boldly.

Referring to "ongoing wars across the Middle East, unprecedented numbers of refugees, global terrorism, climate change, the threat of nuclear conflict, a devastating food crisis across East Africa and beyond, an erratic US



administration and a more combative government in Russia..." it insists that: "We [must] exhaust diplomatic solutions alongside international, regional and local partners within the framework of international law."

Though describing the Trump administration as "erratic" seems a bit of an understatement, here Labour is at least prepared to call into question a "special relationship" that previous Labour governments (Blair, obviously, but going back long before that) have embraced.

The statement goes on: "When [Trump] chooses to ignore [our shared values] whether by discriminating on the basis of religion or breaking its climate change commitments, we will not be afraid to disagree."

On one key conflict, Syria, Labour promises to "work tirelessly to end the conflict and get the diplomatic process back on track" — which is implicitly critical of recent military actions. It is unclear what this implies regarding the ongoing, less high-profile Western military involvement in the Syrian conflict. And Corbyn personally does not have the best record on denouncing Syria's murderous president Assad. But as far as it goes, Labour's policy is unobjectionable.

"Labour is committed to a comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on a two-state solution — a secure Israel alongside a secure and viable state of Palestine." This for sure is the only basis upon which peace can be achieved.

The Party also promises to address other conflicts — it mentions "Kashmir, Libya, Nigeria, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen." Indeed on Yemen — where the Tory government has backed a brutal Saudi-led war, Labour demands "a comprehensive, independent, UN-led investigation into alleged violations of [human rights] in Yemen, including air strikes on civilians by the Saudi-led coalition. We will immediately suspend any further arms sales for use in the conflict until that investigation is concluded." This would be a welcome change indeed in British foreign policy. A more comprehensive look at arms sales in general would have been more welcome still.

Many such conflicts pose sharply perhaps the most vital issue facing Europe and the Western world — the refugee crisis, which is driven by wars and poverty and shows no sign of abating. On this, Labour is vague: "In the first 100 days of government, we will produce a cross-departmental strategy to meet our international obligations on the refugee crisis." That is an improvement on the Tories' utterly lamentable record. The commitment to "conflict resolution", if it led to anything in practice, would be a part of any meaningful solution to the crisis.

But only part. Immigration is at the heart of the political debate. The issue was clearly central in fact to the Brexit vote. It is the issue which, above all others, the Corbyn leadership finds it hardest to challenge mainstream prejudices. On one level this is hardly surprising — given the toxic stream of anti-migrant propaganda delivered daily by so

much of the media (the *Daily Mail* being an obvious example). If Labour took an unequivocal line supporting free movement it would be savagely attacked in the press — and many of its core voters, those who voted for Brexit and so forth, would prove hard to win over in the short term (certainly before the election).

While Labour this time certainly avoids the idiotic pandering to these prejudices which marked the Miliband campaign in 2015, still it is backtracking from earlier, stronger statements. Labour is, of course, better than May's Tories. But a general sense of good-will towards immigrants and migrants, and promises to "meet obligations", do not equal a policy.

And on defence policy, Labour's current commitments are a very long way to the right of what might be expected from the Corbyn team. Labour will support Trident. More: "Conservative spending cuts have put Britain's security at risk, shrinking the army to its smallest size since the Napoleonic wars". Labour, by contrast, commits "to spending at least two per cent of GDP on defence [to] guarantee that our Armed Forces have the necessary capabilities to fulfil the full range of [their] obligations." No doubt this reflects compromises with Labour's pro-NATO right wing.

There is certainly much to support in Labour's manifesto commitments on foreign policy, but the broad sweep of it is pretty "mainstream" — multilateralist, favouring diplomacy over armed intervention, with some commitments to the rights of immigrants (whether from EU countries or refugees), but nothing hugely specific, and nothing which could be construed as particularly radical.

It is, nonetheless, for sure, a step forward in comparison to the Blair years.

British socialists meet for European unification (1949)

ANOTHER DAY

From *Labor Action*, 5 December 1949

The British Centre of the Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe, in its London conference, October 22-23, attended by delegates or observers from local Labour Parties, the Independent Labour Party, the Commonwealth and Fabian Societies, as well as several unions and peace organisations, produced a series of resolutions which are of importance to the world socialist movement.

The resolution on "Political Relations Between Europe, Britain, the Commonwealth and Empire" point up the independent and democratic program for the unification of Europe as opposed to the "integration" scheme proposed by Economic Cooperation Administrator Paul Hoffman, now under discussion in Europe.

The British Centre calls upon the socialist members of the European Assembly to insist "as a condition for participation in Western Union, upon a constitution giving full powers to the central political Authority to build a planned economy for Europe and to acquire ownership of the key industries concerned in that plan."

The United States integrators advocate

"free competition" which has long since led to monopoly. And, according to the latest reports... cartel agreements among big industries in Western Europe are growing apace, to beat the proposed elimination of tariff barriers.

The British Center resolution couples with political unity and the power to nationalise the economy:

(a) Provision for the countries of Eastern Europe to participate as soon as they accept the basis of democracy, i.e. liberty of thought, speech, association and action, within social conduct.

(b) Complete independence from the two power blocs.

(c) The public ownership of the essential industries and services, and public control of finance and exports and imports on a European basis.

(d) The liberation of the colonial territories of all the European powers.

The dominions of the British Commonwealth, as well as representatives of all the colonial peoples within the European armies, would be invited to send representatives to a joint council in order to establish political and economic partnership with the European Union.

Such a union of Europe is proposed by the authors of the resolution as a really effective bulwark against war since it would be independent of both Russia and the United States, the two major contenders. In this respect it shares the view of *Labor Action* in ad-

vocating an Independent Western Union. The final aim of this union, according to the resolution, should be to encourage the establishment of a World Socialist Federation by providing a powerful example, stimulating the acceptance of socialism in the US and of democratic controls through revolution in Russia.

The resolution on "Germany and Europe", while recognising that the recovery of Germany is the key to European recovery and quintessential if Europe is to gain her economic and political independence, has one glaring omission. It fails to ask for the elementary demand—if Germany is to become democratic, let alone a part of a European union based upon socialist planning — that the occupying powers get their troops out.

A seat in the Council of Europe, abolition of restrictions on German manufacture, an end to dismantling, are called for. Rather than an isolated internationalisation of the Ruhr, the resolution asks that the Ruhr statute be used "as the first step in the Europeanization of the coal, mineral, steel and electrical-power industries of Western Europe, based on the principle of common ownership and democratic control".

The main thesis of the "resolution on industrial democracy" highlights another point which is stressed by the Independent Socialist League. This is the view that nationalisation of the means of production is not socialism "unless policy formation and administration are democratically controlled

by the workers of all grades in each industry, including workers on the land and in the services."

The resolution calls for the establishment of industrial democracy as part of a general policy of decentralisation of political, economic and social power, such a policy alone being compatible with the principles of democratic socialism. It condemns both private capitalism and nationalisation as at present conducted....

The unilateral action by the British, which forced some 25 other countries to devalue their currency, is deplored. While economic dependence upon the United States by Britain is recognised, the resolution makes note of the results of the present foreign policy: an £800 million per year expenditure on armaments, the loss of over a million workers engaged in war production and a more likely possibility of war than of peace.

The solution to the problem of dependence, as to other problems, is foreseen internally by the transfer of the ownership of the means of production and distribution to the community, accompanied by industrial democracy and (externally) by long-term socialist planning of Europe and the liberated colonies.

While recognising that the success of such a program might lead to American economic isolation, they feel that their solidarity with the American working class will be not weakened but strengthened.

Isolating the Russian revolution

The following abridged article is by Morgan Philips Price, the Russian correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian*. First published in the US magazine *Class Struggle* in May 1919, it describes the foreign policy of all the ruling classes in Europe towards Russia after the October revolution.

One of the most deadly weapons wielded by the ruling classes of all countries is their power to censor the press; for thereby they are able to create under the pretext of military necessity an artificial public opinion with the object of hiding their foul designs.

Never was this fact more clearly demonstrated than at the present moment; never was it more obvious that the governments of the Central Powers and the Allies, in order to suppress the workers' and peasants' revolution in Russia, must hide from their own people the truth about [the Russian] revolution, must represent it to the proletariat of the west as the work of a gang of robbers...

Living here in the besieged castle of the Russian Workers' and Peasants' Soviets, surrounded by the armed hosts of the European warlords, I am in a position to see more clearly than those outside this iron ring the power possessed by the ruling classes, whose foul designs include the strangling of the youngest of the governments of the toiling masses.

Telegrams to my newspaper are suppressed, or, if passed by the British censor, are decapitated, so that no sense is left in them, postal communication is severed, provocative rumors about what is happening here are spread in London and Paris, and my attempts to deny them are frustrated. The technical apparatus of the capitalist states of Western Europe is set in motion against those whose duty it is to tell the truth about the Russian Revolution and to convey to the West the cry of the Russian people for help.

Knowing therefore the love of freedom and the sense of justice of the British working man, I am in these few lines appealing to him to understand the facts that I have here set before him — facts which I have obtained after four years' residence in Russia....

REVOLUTION

The Russian Revolution in March, 1917, was nothing less than the first practical step taken by the working classes of a European country to protest against the indefinite dragging on of the war for objects hidden in the Chancellories of secret European diplomacy.

There is no better proof of this than in the fact that the first act of the first all-Russian Soviet conference in May, 1917, was an appeal to the workers of the world to lay down their arms and make peace with each other over the heads of their governments. The Russian workers and peasants were brought to this conviction by their intense sufferings during the previous two and a half years. The war... had brought their economically poorly developed country to ruin, the industries were at a standstill, famine was raging in the towns, and the villages were filled with maimed soldiers.

Long before the March revolution one could see that the Russian army was no longer capable of the offensive and meanwhile all the towns in the interior of Russia were, even in 1916, filled with deserters.

The "Bolshevik" revolution of October,

1917, was the second protest of the Russian workers and peasants against the continuation of a war which they had not the physical strength to carry on, nor the moral justification to support.

It seemed better for them to risk the dangers of making peace single-handed with the Prussian warlords than be ruined by being dragged along in a war for the objects which were disclosed in the secret treaties between the Allies.

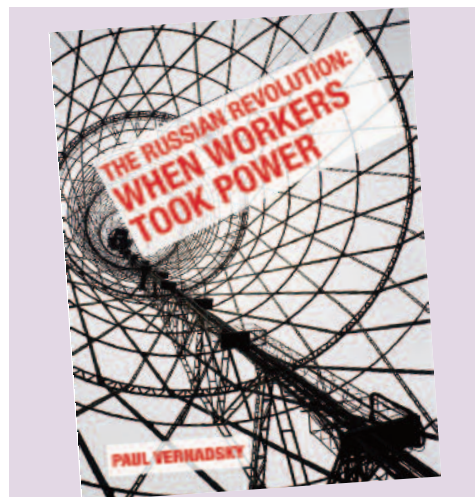
The October Revolution differed from that of March. For the first time in the history of the world a people realised that only by radically altering the whole form of human government was it possible to put down war. Declining all ideas of a compromise peace between the rulers of the countries at war (a solution which would only have led to another war) the workers and peasants of Russia dared to create a government, which, by putting an end to the political and economic power of landlords and financial syndicates, definitely rooted out that poison in human society which alone is the cause of war.

For the Russian people under Tsarism saw more clearly perhaps than the workers of England and Germany that the competition between the great banking and industrial trusts of London, Paris, Berlin and New York for spheres of influence, mining and railway concessions in undeveloped countries like their own, was the root cause of all modern wars and that, therefore, to put an end to war, the social and political system which breeds the exploiting trust must be once and for all overthrown.

From this it follows that the workers and peasants of Russia after the October Revolution were forced to undertake a task, which the weak Kerensky government (controlled, as it was, mainly by landlords and bankers) could not even attempt to solve, namely to take directly under its authority the principal means of production, distribution and exchange. For this reason the railways, waterways and mines were declared state property and the banks taken under government control.

But no sooner was this done than the governments of England and France began to plot for the overthrow of the Russian Soviet Government.

The Allied governments began to spread rumors that the leaders of the Russian workers' and peasants' government were agents of Germany and had betrayed the working classes of England and France, because they



The Russian Revolution: when workers took power can be purchased for £14.80 including p&p. From bit.ly/RuRev. A study guide can be downloaded at the same URL.



In March 1918 after German troops advance, the Bolshevik governments sign the Treaty of Brest Litovsk, ceding vast areas in return for peace

had brought Russia out of the war. [But] the necessity for Russia to obtain peace was dictated, firstly, by the impossibility of undertaking the work of social reconstruction at home, if a foreign war was draining the country of its material resources; and, secondly, by the desire of the workers and peasants of Russia to maintain a neutral position between the armed camps of Europe, and to show to the workers of other lands that they had no partiality to any of the warring governments.

GERMANY

By these tactics they were largely responsible for the great strike in Germany during January 1918.

This was the first real protest of the German people against the war, and the policy of their government. Contrast with this the tactics of the Allied governments, who, in spite of their loud assertions that by armed forces alone can Prussian militarism be crushed, have after four years' battering away at the Western front at the cost of thousands of the noblest lives failed to call forth a single demonstration in Germany against the war.

But the strike in Germany failed and the German government was left free to crush the Russian Revolution. Why did the strike fail?

Because Hindenburg and the Prussian junkers were able to appeal to the more uneducated and less class-conscious among the German people and to say to them: "Don't withdraw your support from us, because, if you do, the Allied governments will ruin Germany and reduce you to slavery."

They were able to point to the secret treaties, published by the Soviet government, which showed that the Allies had been fighting to annex Germany up to the left bank of the Rhine, and that their governments had not repudiated these treaties.

It was only when the Soviet government saw that the Russian Revolution had been deserted by the Allied democracies and betrayed by the German proletariat, that they were compelled reluctantly to sign the cruel Brest-Litovsk peace. And the very fact that the Kaiser and his hirelings imposed such onerous conditions shows how much he feared the Russian workers' and peasants' revolution and how abominable is the slander that the Bolsheviks are the agents of the German government, since it was not the Russian peasants and workers that deserted the Allies, but the Allies, yes, and I fear the working classes in the Allied countries, who

deserted the Russian peasants and workers in the hour of their distress.

What was the policy of the Soviet government of Russia after the Brest-Litovsk treaty? I submit that it was a policy which aimed at maintaining the strictest neutrality between the two great fighting camps. Yet the governments of Germany and the Allies did everything to make the maintenance of neutrality impossible, because they looked upon the Russian workers and peasants either as objects for economic exploitation or as cannon fodder to be used by them.

The Soviet Government was forced to give up the Black Sea fleet to Germany (as a matter of fact a great part of the fleet was blown up to prevent its falling into German hands) and was forced to accept the principle of individual exchange of war prisoners, whereby hundreds of thousands of Russian workers and peasants were left to work in Germany in slavery under the Kaiser. And why had the ultimatums, which were showered upon the Soviet government from Berlin, to be accepted? Because the Russian army had been ruined. And why was it ruined? Because the Allies had tried, all through the spring and summer of 1917, to force the Russian workers and peasants to fight for the objects which were disclosed by the Bolsheviks in the secret treaties [including the carving up of the Ottoman Empire in the event of Allied victory].

Whenever the Russian people, either through the Soviet or through the more progressive members of the Provisional Government, asked the Allies to define their war aims, they were met by platitudes about liberty and justice.

Meanwhile the peasants and workers were starving and had no prospect before them but endless war for the undefined aims of foreign governments.

But in spite of its isolation the Soviet Government, in the spring of this year, commenced a program of social reconstruction. In order to succeed in this sphere it was necessary to receive help from economically more advanced countries...[this was refused at every turn].

The governments of England and France, in order to recoup themselves for the losses of the London and Paris bankers incurred by the Russian Revolution are now trying to overthrow the Soviet government and reestablish a government with the aid of armed hirelings, which will impose again the milliard tribute of the loans of Tsarism upon the backs of the Russian workers and peasants.

I categorically assert that the anarchy and famine now raging in Russia is the deliberate work of the imperialist governments of Europe, and in this respect the governments of the Allies and of Germany behave like vultures of the same brood.

At the end of the eighteenth century the landlords of England declined to treat with the ambassadors of the free French republic and declared war upon a people who had cast off a feudal tyranny. Today the banking oligarchies in London try to strangle by isolation and spread of famine the great movement of freedom that has sprung up in Eastern Europe.

They will not succeed now, just as they did not succeed then, and the conquests of the Russian Revolution will endure, as did the conquests of the French Revolution last century.

But to bring this about, the workers of England must know the truth, and, knowing it, must dare to act.

Where we stand

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

The capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class must unite to struggle against capitalist power in the workplace and in wider society.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control, and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
 - A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
 - A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
 - Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
 - A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression.
- Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
 - Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
 - Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
 - Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
 - Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.



If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

Events

Thursday 25 May

Fund our Children's Future — Harrow public meeting
7.30pm, Harrow Baptist Church, College Road, Harrow HA1 1BA
bit.ly/2pGx4TD

Saturday 27 May

Stop school cuts Newcastle rally
12.30pm, Grey's Monument, Newcastle, NE1 6JG
bit.ly/2pBK21t

Saturday 27 May

East Dulwich Picturehouse strike
2.45pm, East Dulwich Picturehouse, 116A Lordship Lane, SE22 8HD
bit.ly/2pQTcXr

Saturday 27 May

Sisters Uncut General Election rally
12 noon, Camden Road, London NW1 9LQ
bit.ly/2qfmNcf

Saturday 27 May

Stand Up for Your School: Enfield Fair Funding Protest March and Picnic
10.30am, Hazelwood School, London N13 5HE
bit.ly/2rcH33l

Saturday 3 June

Nottingham Picnic and Rally: People's March for Education
12 noon, The Arboretum, Waverley St, Nottingham NG7 4HF
bit.ly/2rLNTK5

Have an event you want listing? Email:
solidarity@workersliberty.org

More online at www.workersliberty.org Workers' Liberty @workersliberty

Scots nationalism can be pushed back



SCOTLAND

By Anne Field

The SNP performed so well in the 2015 general election that it wants to make 2017 a repeat performance, albeit with a few changes to the roles to be played by the different characters.

Exploiting the boost given to nationalism and national-identity politics by the 2014 referendum, the SNP succeeded in persuading Scottish voters in the 2015 election that they key question was not which political party should form the next government, but which political party would best represent Scotland.

Unsurprisingly, the SNP's answer to its own question was: the SNP. The SNP was "stronger for Scotland". A vote for the SNP would therefore make Scotland "stronger at Westminster" and give Scotland "a stronger voice at Westminster."

Although, at the time of going to press, the SNP has yet to launch its election manifesto, it is already repeating its lines from 2015. As Sturgeon recently wrote in her column in the *Glasgow Evening Times*:

"The important question is this: Who will be best at standing up for Scotland's interests? ... The need to stand up for Scotland at Westminster has never been greater. ... It's vital that we have strong voices standing up for Scotland at Westminster ... by electing SNP MPs."

"A stronger voice for Scotland" was needed at Westminster, claimed the SNP in 2015, in order to put pressure on a minority Labour government to implement its manifesto commitments.

But this claim was simply incredible. The policies which the SNP promised it would make a Labour government implement were policies explicitly ruled out by the White Paper on which the SNP had fought the referendum campaign

only eight months earlier.

In September of 2014 the SNP had promised to cut corporation tax and freeze income tax in an independent Scotland. By May of 2015 it was appealing for a vote for the SNP as a vote to make sure a Labour government increased corporation tax and increased income tax for the wealthy.

But now, in 2017, the SNP is providing a different reason for electing SNP MPs who will "stand up for Scotland at Westminster."

This time it is not a matter of "pressurising" a Labour government into implementing its own policies. In fact, Sturgeon has repeatedly dismissed the possibility of a Labour government: "No-one is really in any doubt that the Tories are going to win the election across the UK."

This time it is the prospect of a Tory government which demands the election of a phalanx of SNP MPs to Westminster. "Who will be best at standing up for Scotland's interests and holding the Tories at Westminster to account?" writes Sturgeon.

The scenario of an imminent Labour government has been replaced by the scenario of an imminent Tory government (even though the SNP promised in 2015 that a vote for the SNP would "lock the Tories out of Downing Street"). But the appeal to vote SNP for "a stronger voice for Scotland" at Westminster remains unchanged.

The third element in the SNP's script for the 2015 election was the denunciation of Labour as "Red Tories". (The SNP did not even attempt to explain how Labour could be "Red Tories" and yet propose a programme for government which the SNP wanted to see implemented.)

The SNP's use of the "Red Tories" label was the product of a political calculation rather than a serious political analysis. The SNP's goal in the 2015 election was to unseat Scottish Labour MPs (of

whom there were 41) rather than Scottish Tory MPs (of whom there was just one).

Sticking the "Red Tories" label on Labour served that political goal.

But the political landscape which confronts the SNP in this general election is different from the one in 2015. Labour has just one seat left in Scotland. And the Tories are enjoying a substantial electoral resurgence.

The SNP therefore now dismisses Labour as an irrelevance and concentrates its fire on the Tories instead. The 2015 meme of Labour-are-Red-Tories has been replaced by the 2017 meme of Tories-equal-rape-clause. (See page 4.)

Whether the SNP's repeat performance will prove successful is unclear.

The post-referendum wave of Scottish nationalism has begun to ebb, even if it still exercises a toxic influence on Scottish politics. And the SNP's standing has been undermined by its record in Holyrood, along with its increasingly blatant intolerance of political criticism.

But the task confronting Labour campaigners is not to assess the SNP strategy's chances of success. It is to ensure that that strategy is a failure. This means placing centre-stage the fight for a Labour government which follows through on its election manifesto commitments.

The Scottish Labour right cannot be relied on to do that. Rather than try to win over SNP voters by highlighting Labour's policies, they prefer attempting to win over traditional Tory voters by being more anti-second-referendum than the Tories themselves.

The politics of the Scottish Labour right were responsible for Labour losing 40 of its 41 seats in 2015. Now, in 2017, the Scottish Labour right cannot be allowed to sabotage the chances of the election of a Labour government.

Cinema workers protest at Cineworld AGM

By Gemma Short

Cinema workers at East Dulwich Picturehouse in south London will strike on Saturday 27 May to coincide with the opening of the new *Pirates of the Caribbean* film.

Workers at the other cinemas involved in the dispute have just voted for further strikes, and will be on strike on 3-4 June to coincide with the Sundance Film Festival, which Picturehouse hosts.

Cineworld held its Annual General Meeting on 18 May and Picturehouse strikers bought some shares in order to go along and embarrass Cineworld bosses. Three Picturehouse workers asked company chair Tony Bloom for Cineworld to start paying the Living Wage. Bloom said Cineworld would meet with the union Bectu as long as both sides acted in "good



faith" — presumably meaning workers should stop striking and lose their bargaining power. Bloom also said that Cineworld should not become a Living Wage accredited employer, saying: "If we agree to the living wage and it rises to £15 next year we'll be bound to follow that." Yes, Mr Bloom, and so you

should be bound!

Workers will have a picket line and demonstration at Picturehouse Central during their strikes on 3-4 June.

• Support the strike: www.picturehouselivingwage.com

Argos warehouse workers strike

By Peggy Carter

Workers at Argos warehouses across England, Wales and Ireland have been taking part in a two-week continuous strike since 17 May in a dispute over job security and terms and conditions.

Argos attempted to get the strike called off but a High Court judge threw out the case the day before the strike was due to start.

Argos has refused to give guarantees that jobs will not be contracted out, and workers fear a

culture of contracting jobs out will lead to job losses and worse terms and conditions. According to the union Unite, earlier in the year Argos revealed plans to transfer nearly 500 workers from one distribution hub in Leicestershire to a contracted-out hub in Kettering, meaning workers will have to travel 26 miles to work.

Workers who do not want to or cannot transfer will be faced with leaving their job with no re-



dundancy pay.

• Send messages of support to mickcasey1@googlemail.com

Students support lecturers' strike

By Charlotte Zalens

UCU members at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) were due to strike on 24 and 25 May over cuts which will see the University close its campus in Crewe, leaving 160 staff unsure of their future.

The strikes were suspended after the bombing in Manchester on 23 May.

As reported in *Solidarity* 438, these cuts are part of an increasing pattern across Higher Education with 150 jobs at risk at Aberystwyth, 139 at University of Wales Trinity St David, and with voluntary redundancies at Sunderland, Durham and Plymouth. The University of the Arts London has also announced course closures at its Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon sites.

The University of Manchester has announced 171 job cuts.

Students at the University of Manchester have launched a campaign against the cuts, and will be holding a solidarity demonstration with the MMU strikes on 24 May. Their statement says: "the University of Manchester has announced plans to lay off 171 members of staff, with over 900 being told their jobs were at risk.

"This comes as part of Manchester's '2020' plan – which aims to 'streamline' the University by 2020. The plan has ties to the Higher Education Bill and the Teaching Excellence Framework, both which aim to turn Universities into profit-making machines. The goal is to become a smaller but more elite university, regardless of the costs to staff or the impact on students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Student numbers will also be slashed

to increase the University's score in the TEF.

"The University has tried to blame Brexit for these changes, but in reality holds over £1 billion in reserves and in excess of £465 million cash in its bank account. These cuts are not necessary and they are not fair.

"If the University is allowed to get away with this, it will be just the beginning of a whole host of unfair policies introduced as part of the 2020 scheme. One member of the senior management team even said, "In the corporate world, we'd be laying off 400-600, so this is nothing." We say it isn't nothing – it is the lives of real people, and the education we are paying so much for!

"We didn't let them get rid of catering staff, now let's say no to losing our lecturers. Save our Staff!"



Train companies threaten striking guards

By a railworker

Rail workers are continuing to fight the spread of Driver-Only-Operation despite threats from employers and the threat in the Tory manifesto to limit the impact strikes can have on train services.

Drivers on Southern Rail, organised by Aslef, will stage an overtime ban from 2 June after drivers rejected the latest deal.

At Northern Rail Aslef has secured an important "no discipline agreement" for drivers who refuse to cross the picket line. This is a significant move and will hopefully encourage more drivers to support the guards' strike and not cross picket lines.

However on Merseyrail guards who are RMT members have been threatened with removal of their

eligibility for promotion to driver if they continue to strike. Aslef conference, happening as *Solidarity* goes to press, has passed a motion in solidarity with the guards. The motion instructs the General Secretary to "serve notice on Merseyrail that Aslef will be balloting our members on Merseyrail over this outrageous intimidation and victimisation of trade union members for taking part in legal industrial action."

Guards on Northern, Southern, and Merseyrail were due to strike on Tuesday 30 May, but as *Solidarity* went to press those strikes had been suspended.

• Follow our Northern Rail workers' bulletin *On Guard* online at www.workersliberty.org/blog/42544

LSE threatens cleaners

By Gemma Short

Cleaners at the London School of Economics (LSE) will continue their weekly strikes with the next strike on Wednesday 24 May despite threats from the university.

On Monday 22 May workers received a letter from LSE thanking cleaners who have broken the strike, and accusing striking cleaners of "breaching the Government Code of Practice on Picketing" and of being "selfish" and causing the

"suspension of student exams". The letter continued that LSE would be gathering evidence to take action against those involved.

Ironically the letter also asked workers not to take part in the strikes as it "damages the reputation of LSE".

Cleaners are strike for parity of pay and conditions with directly employed workers.

• Support the strike: www.uvwunion.org.uk/justiceforlsecleaners

School strikes suspended

By a Lewisham teacher

NUT members at Forest Hill School in Lewisham have suspended their strike action against swingeing cuts for the duration of the exams.

In doing this, the teachers were motivated by concern for their

pupils. They are demanding that the school leadership distribute their statement about the suspension of action to all parents. They are also seeking a debate with the school leadership and the council over the cuts.

The NUT group is considering how best to keep the campaign going and defend their school.



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AGAINST THE TERRORISTS, FIGHT TO REBUILD HOPE

By Colin Foster

Only a rebirth of social hope can cut the roots of the vindictive-ness-obsessed, death-obsessed political-Islamist movements.

The bombing at the Manchester Arena, which as we go to press has killed 22 and injured 59, has been claimed by Daesh as its own. Experts say that may be inaccurate and macabre boasting; but almost certainly the killer was an Islamist clerical-fascist of some sort.

We join many others in extending our solidarity to the families and friends of those killed and injured.

It will be good if the police can arrest any who collaborated with the attacker, and good if the Iraqi army (with US backing) can complete their battle to push Daesh out of Mosul, where it has ruled since June 2014. But recent decades show that no-one can have confidence in the cops or big-power armies to quell this clerical-fascist terrorism; that in fact their actions, like the clumsy "Prevent" program, like successive curbs on civil liberties, like the USA's 2003 invasion of Iraq (launched under cover of the "war on terror" declared by US president George W Bush in 2001), like the USA's record in Afghanistan since it came in to push out the Taliban in 2001, will feed the despair underpinning the



terrorists rather than mend it.

Daesh extols the attack as killing "crusaders", extracting "revenge", and terrorising the "mushrikin" (polytheists or atheists). The attack has to be put into some historical context.

Cults of death run through the history of fascism. The Spanish

Falangists (part of Franco's forces) had the slogan Viva la Muerte, Long Live Death.

For the death cult to reach the pitch of suicide attacks on randomly chosen civilians, often young people or children (and, world-wide, more often what the Islamists see as the wrong sort of

Muslims than non-Muslims), requires a particular mix.

Religion: cults of martyrdom, beliefs in afterlife rewards. Despair: an across-the-board rage at the modern world. Logistics: the idea that these attacks on "soft" targets bypass overwhelming military might.

Systematic suicide bombing starts, in the modern world, with the Sri Lankan Tamil Tigers movement in 1987. They borrowed it from the Islamist movement Hezbollah, in Lebanon, which in 1983 had done a truck bombing of the US Marine base in Beirut and forced the US to withdraw.

With the Tamil Tigers — who eventually made hundreds of suicide attacks — and Hezbollah, there was some connection to determinable political aims (force the US out of Lebanon, force the Sri Lankan government to cede Tamil independence), though the tactics meshed with politics which made the Tigers and Hezbollah menaces to "their own" people too.

From the 1980s, and even more from the early 1990s, Islamic clerical-fascists took the lead in this tactic, and shifted it increasingly to attacks, like the Manchester one, which fail even to claim a determinable political goal. They had been boosted by Khomeiny's seizure of power in Iran in 1979, the near-victory of Islamists in Algeria in the early 90s, and the Tal-

iban's gaining power in Kabul in 1996.

The balance of their attacks has shifted away from targets which could be held, however tenuously, to symbolise oppressive power, towards "soft" civilian targets.

The UK's top "anti-terrorist" cop said in March this year that his forces had forestalled 13 terrorist attacks since June 2013. We have no way of checking his figures. He may be right. The facts show that the established powers and measures have no success at draining the swamps of hatred which lead to more and more attacks and attempts. Only a renewed socialist labour movement can do that.

After the 7 July 2005 Tube bombings the British police reported 269 religious hate crimes against Muslims and mosques in the next three weeks, six or seven times the level of the previous year. Such responses increase the suffering, rather than decreasing it.

Britain could scarcely have a meaner-spirited, more closed-door, attitude to refugees from Syria than it already has. Any further worsening there should be opposed.

Many of those refugees are fleeing the clerical-fascist terror of Daesh and similar movements in Syria. The fight against that terrorism calls for welcoming them.

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