



COMMUNIST REVIEW

- 100 Years since the Outbreak of World War I
- Seminar: The Struggle for Peace and against Imperialist Aggression
- CPB Scottish Committee Statement on Scottish Independence
- William Morris The Housing of the Poor
- Plus book reviews and Soul Food



# 1914-2014

## 100 Years of Imperialist Warmongering



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The  
Struggle  
for Peace  
and against  
Imperialist  
Aggression

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# editorial



By Martin Levy

“The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there”, says L P Hartley in the opening to his novel *The Go-Between*. Certainly, it is difficult for us to understand fully the thought processes of an era quite different from our own: we cannot go there and immerse ourselves in the ideas and values of that society. Hence our judgement is limited to the historical evidence, and to cultural interpretations of it, both of which may be far from objective – even arch-reactionary Winston Churchill recognised that “History is written by the victors.”

Yet, scratch under the surface, and it is possible to find features in common between different eras. Miners and their families who lived through the Great Coal Strike of 30 years ago, and experienced first-hand the police brutality in the pit villages, found strong parallels in the 2012 film *The Happy Lands*, a drama based on real events in Fife during the General Strike and Miners’ Lock-out in 1926. And tragically, the violence being meted out by neo-fascist forces in Ukraine has echoes of both the Nazi occupation and the Ukrainian nationalist rule during the aftermath of the October Revolution of 1917 and the end of the First World War – a period graphically described by Soviet novelist Nikolai Ostrovsky in *How the Steel Was Tempered*.

History, said Marx and Engels in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, is the history of class struggles. But since the ruling monopoly capitalist class does everything possible to disguise the existence of such struggles – or, failing that, to serve notice that it will resist with all its might – then the study of history itself is a part of the struggle. It reveals to working people not only the common features and inevitable negative consequences of capitalist society, but also the heroic history of the struggles for employment, conditions and decent pay, for social justice and equal rights, for peace and national liberation, all of which has relevance for today’s struggles.

It is in this context that we must view this August’s centenary of the outbreak

of the First World War. For most people in Europe alive today, WW1 – or the Great War, as it was known at the time – belongs to the dim and distant past, as an episode of madness and barbarism which will not be repeated. So, why is it important to David Cameron that the “sacrifice and service” be marked, and why has Education Secretary Michael Gove attacked “left-wing myths” allegedly being peddled by BBC programmes such as *Blackadder*? Because the right-wing myths about WW1, such as “sacrifice and service”, “king and country” and “my country right or wrong”, are an essential part of the ruling class ideology portraying not only supposed common interests across the class divide, but also a Britishness based on imperial grandeur and military might. Revelation of what really happened, and who was responsible for it, strikes at the very heart of the imperialist mantra; while the mockery of ruling class attitudes of that day encourages justified cynicism towards military adventures in the modern era.

But there is a further reason for the attempt to suppress the truth about the First World War – namely that, in 1917, it ushered in the era of socialist revolution. In Russia, the workers, soldiers and peasants, led by the Bolshevik Party, rose up to end the war and overthrow capitalist exploitation and quasi-feudal oppression, lighting a beacon which showed to the world that working people did not need bankers, capitalists and landlords but could run society for themselves. That, for the representatives of monopoly capital today, remains a dangerous idea which they want to stifle, just as Churchill, who was War Minister in 1919-20, wanted to “strangle the Bolshevik baby in its cradle”.

Indeed, the war of intervention by the Western powers against the young Soviet state immediately gave the lie to the description of the Great War as a “war that will end war”, a term first used by H G Wells in 1914, and one which rapidly became a popular catchphrase. Carried forward in popular hope, such a concept had no solid scientific

foundation, because it failed to recognise the causes of the Great War in the attempted redivision of the world by rival imperialisms, driven to that point by the economic imperatives facing their ruling classes.

War is the inevitable consequence of monopoly capitalism and imperialism, as the history of the last century has demonstrated. There is barely one year in which some war has not taken place, whether a full-scale world conflict, as in 1939-45, or more localised events, such as in Spain, Korea, Vietnam or Iraq. The overwhelming majority have been launched, directly or indirectly, by imperialist powers, to advance their interests, or have been wars of national liberation forced on peoples by the imperialist powers’ occupation of their lands or covert manipulation of their political systems. This again is something that our ruling class seeks to hide.

It is therefore fitting that, in this centenary year of the outbreak of WW1, communists in Britain and Europe launched two recent initiatives. Firstly, 28 communist and workers’ parties issued the joint declaration of 12 January which we publish on p 3 of this issue of *CR*. Then, on 22 February, the Peace Commission of the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) and the Coordinating Committee of Communist Parties domiciled in Britain (CCCPiB) held a seminar on ‘The Struggle for Peace and against Imperialist Aggression’. CPB Women’s Organiser Liz Payne gives an introduction to this event on p 4, while contributions from representatives of the CPB, the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) and the Tudeh Party of Iran (TPI) take up the following pages.

In the first article, Joanne Stevenson recalls the heroism of campaigners against WW1 while also drawing attention to the pervasiveness of capitalist propaganda about war. Then, in *US War Plans in the Pacific*, Ben Chacko gives an in-depth analysis of the dangers of the United States’ ‘pivot towards Asia’, which is both economic and military. This policy, he says, “makes explicit a previously implicit



US determination to contain China's growing regional presence". He draws attention to the Trans Pacific Partnership, a mirror-image of the proposed EU-US Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), and like it intended to promote the interests of US-based transnational corporations. On the military side he exposes the new US doctrine of AirSea Battle, which envisages unprovoked full-scale attacks on China's air defence systems and command centres, together with the imposition of a naval blockade to break China's trade links. Here we see again the organic link between imperialism and war; and it is vital that peace movements around the world expose the US strategy and redouble efforts to prevent it from becoming a reality.

In the next article Eleni Geropanagioti of the KKE stresses the origin of war in the intensification of inter-imperialist contradictions and warns against the possibility, in this period of severe financial crisis and sharpening contradictions in the south-eastern Mediterranean, of a military confrontation which can embrace "the entire region of the eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East and Northern Africa, the Persian Gulf, the Balkans and the Caspian Sea." Drawing parallels with WW1, she roundly criticises opportunists on the left for supporting bourgeois nationalism. However, her later comment that "the only way to address fascism is the struggle to overthrow the capitalist power that breeds it" appears to run counter to Georgi Dimitrov's call at the 7<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the Comintern for a united front against fascism; while her statement that "power can only be either

bourgeois or working class" seems to be contradicted by the later comment that "antimonopoly-anticapitalist struggle is the only way", involving a "people's alliance of the working class with the self-employed, the poor farmers, the youth and women of the poorer strata".

The contributions from Salam Ali of the ICP and Navid Shomali of the TPI are particularly apposite, in view of the fighting in Iraq and the rapprochement between Britain and Iran, just at the time these lines are being written. Writing before these recent developments, Salam Ali warns of the dangers of the Middle East "sliding along the path of sectarian wars" as a result of the blatant external interference in Syria, and of Iraq "sliding once again into sectarian strife", due to the "bankrupt sectarian-ethnic power-sharing system that was installed by the US occupation." The ICP had already called for urgent action by the democratic forces, and for popular initiatives, to safeguard Iraq's national unity. Navid Shomali makes clear that, before the current fighting, a reconfiguration of US politics in the Middle East had been taking place, through Washington's 'New Middle East Peace Plan', with Iran's theocratic regime "being seriously considered as a key player." The common denominators for mutual coexistence of the US and 'political Islam', he says, are neoliberal economic tendencies and pseudo-democratic tendencies. Despite anti-US posturing, Iran's government has been a keen implementer of neoliberal prescriptions from the International Monetary Fund and the country "has been primed for deep economic intervention by the US and the EU."

The themes of imperialism, war and

the fight for peace and social progress run throughout this issue of *CR*. They come up again in John Ellison's review of *The Good Soldier Svejk*, Liz Payne's review of a series of essays on Clara Zetkin and Mike Quille's *Soul Food*, which harks back to the earlier articles through poems on jingoism, Greece, Iran, Iraq and the ever-present threat of nuclear annihilation. In fact, with further contributions from Lars Ulrik Thomsen, Andy Goodall and Joe Clark, this has been a bumper issue for book reviews, though in Joe's case we have waived the usual length limit because of the subject matter in this 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary year – Nottinghamshire in the Great Coal Strike, and the role of communists in building the Miners' Union. Our issue is completed by an article from William Morris, recommended to us by reader Gerrard Sables following the *CR*71 feature on housing, a letter to the editor, and a statement from the Scottish Committee of the CPB, which argues that Scottish independence on the terms proposed is no more in the interests of working people today than it was in the 1970s, when communists and the left in trades unions led the way for a Scottish Parliament.

■ *Regular subscribers can now access a significant number of back issues of Communist Review via the members' and supporters' area of the Communist Party web site, <https://secure.communist-party.org.uk/>. You need to register first (which can be done online if you are a member or subscriber), then log in, and click on 'View Communist Review Back Issues'. It is also our plan to use this web space for discussion contributions which are too long for the print edition of *CR*.*

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# 100 Years Since the Outbreak of World War I

## Declaration by 28 Communist and Workers' Parties in Europe

100 YEARS AFTER the outbreak of World War I, we are living through a renewed debate about who lit the fuse. When again German imperialism's major responsibility for the four years of butchery among peoples is being questioned, this is certainly not in search of historical truth. It is about seeking theoretical and political legitimization for today's imperialist politics.

World War I arose from the major imperialist European powers' desires for expansion. It aimed to conquer new markets and resources, and to reallocate the existing ones. As the co-founder of the Communist Party of Germany, Karl Liebknecht, soon stated, it was "a capitalist war of aggression and conquest". At the same time, it was an opportunity for the rulers to contaminate working class consciousness in their own countries with the poison of opportunism, nationalism and chauvinism.

In summer 1914, there were two tight opposing military blocs in Europe: the tripartite alliance of Germany, Austro-Hungary and Italy, and the *Entente* of England and France, with which Russia then also allied. In 1915, Italy entered the war on the side of the *Entente*.

The Sarajevo assault [on Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand –*Ed*] was a very welcome opportunity for the great powers, already eager for war, to put their strategic concepts into practice. For the first time in history, the war which followed held all continents in its grip. 38 countries were involved, not counting the colonies of the time. Also, for the first time ever, war was waged in an industrial manner. 7 million people fell victim to the slaughter. Civilians became victims to famine and disease in dimensions unknown before. 20 million people were wounded and maimed, and an incredible amount of value was destroyed.

The slaughter ended with the aggressors' military defeat. The November Revolution in Germany and the revolutions in Austria, Hungary and other countries were stalled because of the right-wing social-democratic leaderships' active role in crushing them. In Germany the monarchy was overthrown and the republic was founded, but the generals and the power of monopoly capital remained. Their political survival later gave rise to World War II.

Social-democracy split in the course of World War I. The revolutionary forces separated from the 2<sup>nd</sup> International and founded communist parties all over the world. The Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia paved the way for the first workers' and peasants' state in the history of mankind. Thus, from the World War, a new hope for the world emerged – the hope of socialism. This is what the signatory parties still stand for.

"And, finally, the only war left for Prussia-Germany to wage will be a world war, a world war, moreover, of an extent and violence hitherto unimagined. Eight to ten million soldiers will be at each other's throats and in the process they will strip Europe barer than a swarm of locusts. The depredations of the Thirty Years' War compressed into three to four years and extended over the entire continent; famine, disease, the universal lapse into barbarism, both of the armies and the people, in the wake of acute misery; irretrievable dislocation of our artificial system of trade, industry and credit, ending in universal bankruptcy; collapse of the old states and their conventional political wisdom to the point where crowns will roll into the gutters by the dozen, and no

one will be around to pick them up; the absolute impossibility of foreseeing how it will all end and who will emerge as victor from the battle. Only one consequence is absolutely certain: universal exhaustion and the creation of the conditions for the ultimate victory of the working class."

Friedrich Engels, 1887<sup>1</sup>

■ *The declaration was initiated by the Workers' Party of Belgium, the German Communist Party and the Communist Party of Luxembourg, and then signed by the following parties: Workers' Party of Austria, Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, Communist Party of Britain, Party of Communists of Cataluña, Socialist Workers' Party of Croatia, Progressive Party of the Working People, Cyprus, Communist Party of Denmark, Communist Party in Denmark, French Communist Party, Pole of Communist Renaissance, France, Unified Communist Party of Georgia, Communist Party of Greece, Hungarian Workers' Party, Communist Party of Ireland, Party of Italian Communists, Communist Party of Malta, New Communist Party of the Netherlands, Communist Party of Poland, Portuguese Communist Party, Party of Communists of Serbia, Communist Party of Spain, Communist Party of the People of Spain, Communist Party of Sweden, Workers' Party of Switzerland, Communist Party of Ukraine. It was published at the Rosa Luxemburg Conference in Berlin, hosted by the newspaper Junge Welt ([www.jungewelt.de](http://www.jungewelt.de)), on 12 January 2014.*

## Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> F Engels, *Introduction to Sigmund Borkheim's Pamphlet, 'In Memory of the German Blood-and-Thunder Patriots, 1806-1807'*, in K Marx and F Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol 26, p 451.



# The Struggle for Peace and against Imperialist Aggression

**The  
Struggle  
for Peace  
and against  
Imperialist  
Aggression**



**Introduction by Liz Payne,  
seminar chair**

**Seminar organised by  
the Communist Party  
of Britain and the  
Coordinating Committee  
of Communist Parties  
domiciled in Britain**

The papers that follow were presented at a seminar organised jointly by the Peace Commission of the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) and the Coordinating Committee of Communist Parties domiciled in Britain (CCCPiB), in London on 22 February 2014. The seminar was initially proposed by the newly-established Peace Commission of the CPB in December 2013 after the Party had signed up to a set of common actions at the 15<sup>th</sup> International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties in Lisbon in November. To commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the First World War and the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War, one of the actions agreed in Lisbon was, jointly with other sister parties, to raise awareness of the danger of new military clashes and of the urgent need to enhance the struggle for peace and against imperialist aggression and war, highlighting that the struggle for peace is intimately linked with the struggle for socialism. The meeting was a first but important step in fulfilling this commitment.

The event was attended by representatives of, and delegations from, the Communist Party of Britain, the Communist Party of Chile, the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), the Hungarian Workers' Party, the Iraqi Communist Party, the Sudanese Communist Party and the Tudeh Party of Iran. The seminar was opened by Joanne Stevenson, convener of the CPB's Peace Commission.



# A Period of Unrelenting Wars

By Joanne Stevenson



POLITICAL MILITANCY against imperialist war is not a new thing. The Communist Party and Labour Movement have a long history of such militancy. Here is just one outstanding example.

During World War I there were many progressives who stood up in opposition to this needless destruction and loss of life. One such campaigner was Alice Wheeldon, who was born in 1866 in Derby. Alice became an intensely politically active revolutionary socialist. This militancy was also seen in Alice's children – Nellie, Hettie, Willie and Winnie – who were all active campaigners and agitators in opposition to World War I, in Derby, which was an important munitions centre. Indeed her son Willie, a conscientious objector who had gone into hiding, was working in an underground network which moved anti-war protestors in secret to evade arrest. In 1916 Willie's efforts to prevent local conscientious objectors from being sent to prison were halted and he himself was sent to prison.

In January 1917 Alice was sent four vials of poison. She later said their intended use was to kill the guard dogs at the camp for conscientious objectors. Alice, along with her daughters Hettie and Winnie and her son-in-law Alfred Mason, were all charged with planning to assassinate the Prime Minister and the leader of the Labour Party. It was claimed they intended to spike the boots with poison when they were put out for polishing in the hotel corridor at night. Hettie was acquitted

due to lack of evidence but the others were all convicted, solely on the evidence of a single MI5 agent.

Alice was found guilty of conspiracy to murder and sentenced to ten years in prison. Alfred got seven years and Winnie five. However, after a hunger strike by Alice and much public interest, all were released in December 1918. Weakened by her ordeal, Alice died less than 3 months later on 21 February 1919. Buried in her sister's grave, Alice has no stone to mark her, neither is there any memorial to her in her home town.

All of Alice's children went on to become active communists and supporters of the revolution in Russia. These heroes and true peace campaigners have only become recognised in recent years. It would be inconceivable now for governments to send millions of young men abroad, a quarter never to return, as they did then. No modern Western government feels it can do this. However, memories can be all too short. When all the major political parties ran scared and edged away from their intended direct intervention in Syria, few immediately recognised that the supposed 'failure' of an incredibly powerful people's movement against the Iraq war was now bearing the fruits of peace.

But there are always those who have not assimilated the lessons. Capitalist propaganda is often very difficult to resist, and its attempts to brainwash are ever more pervasive. For example, on the BBC 'Bitesize' GCSE website, children



(left to right) A prison wardress, Hettie Wheeldon, Winnie Mason and Alice Wheeldon.

can play a game, imagining themselves as American soldiers fighting "the enemy Viet Cong" during the Vietnam War.<sup>1</sup> During this game the users are given the choice of either dropping napalm or Agent Orange. They are told it is "quite safe for you, but little harm is done to the enemy soldiers." Children playing the game are rewarded for sadism and penalised for choosing the more humane options. I played one scenario repeatedly and the only way to survive was to attack and burn villages in zippo raids. When I tried any of the other options, I died. This programme does not portray anything of the horror of US atrocities or the effect war has, not only on soldiers but also on the millions of people in Vietnam. It does not teach the children the consequences of the actions they carry out – but then, that is not its intention, whatever the packaging might say!

Today, in a world where there are three simultaneous American-sponsored attempts to force a coup - in the Ukraine, Syria, and Sudan - it

seems we are in a period of unrelenting wars. The peace movement in Britain and the world should not try to see this only through the prism of a nuclear war, the tragedy that war is for civilians or the disgraceful failure of diplomacy. Rather communist and workers' parties need to draw on the spirit of Alice Wheeldon and shout out with pride her comforting words to her children from jail: **"Keep the flag flying and when we lose our madness, we will meet again."** Communists have not lost their sanity. We always knew that war benefits no ordinary person. The common sense of that is now evident to most people. However, the key is, how we can change the situation whereby the rich and powerful can still engage in war for profit? The future of humanity depends on this.

## Notes and References

1 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/history/mwh/vietnam/thewarinvietnamrev3.shtml>

# US War Plans in the Pacific



By Ben Chacko

IT WAS Hillary Clinton who originally defined the ‘pivot to Asia’ in an article in *Foreign Policy* magazine in November 2011. Writing as Obama’s first Secretary of State, she argued:

“Open markets in Asia provide the United States with unprecedented opportunities for investment, trade, and access to cutting-edge technology. Our economic recovery at home will depend on exports and the ability of American firms to tap into the vast and growing consumer base of Asia. Strategically, maintaining peace and security across the Asia-Pacific is increasingly crucial to global progress, whether through defending freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, countering the nuclear proliferation efforts of North Korea, or ensuring transparency in the military activities of the region’s key players.”<sup>1</sup>

This new stress on the Pacific sought to distance the Obama administration from Bush’s failed military interventions in the Middle East, and at the same time link foreign policy to economic recovery at home. It was therefore in part a political statement for domestic consumption. It should not blind us, however, to the

basic continuities of US State Department policy-making. The US had already, under George Bush in 2005, ordered the redeployment of 60% of the US nuclear submarine fleet to the Pacific. Nor did it imply any lessening of the US commitment to defend its interests in the Middle East – simply that the geographical locus for this defence was increasingly migrating to the Indian Ocean littoral: to the drone bases in Djibouti, to Somalia, Yemen, Kenya and Diego Garcia.

As a policy, however, the pivot to Asia is profoundly dangerous. It makes explicit a previously implicit US determination to contain China’s growing regional presence and seeks to involve other regional powers in doing so – some, like Japan, with dangerously revanchist governments.

The policy has two fronts. One is economic; the other military.

The economic front maintains the long-standing US policy of seeking to destabilise China from within. In the 1990s and 2000s it was hoped that the scale of external investment, the opening of the economy and the constraints of World Trade Organisation membership would bring the collapse of the country’s state sector and undermine the authority of the Communist Party. Instead, China’s growth has continued – disproportionately so during the world capitalist crisis of 2008-12 – and China has taken the lead in developing

RCEP, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership initiated at the ASEAN summit in 2011. The RCEP seeks to group sixteen Pacific economies within a free trade area that permits member states to retain full economic autonomy.

In response 2011 saw the US launch itself as the lead nation with Trans Pacific Partnership. The countries involved are the United States, Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam, and most recently, Japan. Together they cover approximately 40% of the global economy. China is not included; it is even known among diplomats as the “anyone but China” pact.<sup>2</sup>

The TPP is intended to boost trade and stimulate the US economy. Opponents have described it as a global corporate coup which would undermine democracy and entrench corporate power in almost every area of people’s lives. Although the talks have been conducted in strict secrecy, leaks have suggested that big companies will be allowed – via the investor-state dispute settlement – to sue governments who pass food safety regulations or laws protecting workers or farmers, claiming that they are a barrier to trade or likely to harm expected profits. Thus existing or future labour laws, minimum wage rates, health and safety laws and environmental regulations could be challenged in court.

It is, therefore, about much more than just trade. It allows

back door access to negotiations for the biggest transnational companies to create laws that they could never get passed in an open democratic system. Pharmaceutical companies, for example, are pushing for long-term patents to block the development of much cheaper generic drugs and keep drug prices high. Obama wants the US Congress to agree to fast track a TPP bill which would prevent Congress exercising its constitutional responsibility to scrutinise and amend the agreement.

There should be no doubt that the main objective of this agreement is the exclusion and isolation of China. Obama put the objective in these terms: “We’re organising trade relations with countries other than China so that China starts feeling more pressure about meeting basic international standards.”<sup>3</sup> These “standards” have clearly been defined by US transnational companies who have also fashioned the legal instruments to enforce them. According to Professor Jane Kelsey:

“China is the ultimate target of every US major proposal in this ‘new generation, twenty-first century agreement’, in particular stricter protection for intellectual property rights, disciplines on ‘anti-competitive’ state-owned enterprises, and processes and rules to stop ‘unjustified and overly burdensome’ regulation.”<sup>4</sup>





US Aircraft Carrier in the Persian Gulf

The military front represents an intensification of earlier programmes to secure a military/nuclear encirclement of China. It shifts a greater proportion of US military force into the Pacific. It expands the number of strategic bases. It requires alliances with other regional powers with a far more targeted focus. It elaborates 'tactical' battle plans, short of nuclear exchanges, such as AirSeaBattle and the use of naval power to control 'choke points' along sea routes essential for Chinese trade.

In a speech delivered to the Shangri-La Dialogue conference in June 2013, the US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel indicated the scale of US efforts to strengthen political and military ties to virtually every country in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>5</sup> He described greater cooperation – and in most cases deeper military engagement – with Japan, South Korea, India, Australia, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia, Burma, Vietnam, the Philippines, New Zealand, Thailand and Taiwan.

The United States will now deploy nearly 100,000 military personnel in the region, beefing up existing deployments and redistributing forces to the southern part of the Western Pacific. It will retain 40,000 troops in Japan and 28,500 in South Korea, and move 5,000 troops to the Pacific island of Guam.<sup>6</sup>

Darwin in Northern Australia will host 2,500 US Marines, the Philippines will take 500 US troops on a rotational basis while Singapore will provide a base for 4 new Littoral Combat Ships which can engage in close-to-shore operations in shallow water. Afloat will be 16,000 troops drawn mostly from Japan.

In total 60 percent of US naval and air force assets will be based in the Pacific by 2020 including "six aircraft carriers, and a majority of the US navy's cruisers, destroyers, littoral combat ships and submarines. These would be fortified by an increase in the number and size of military exercises in the Pacific, and a greater number of port visits."<sup>7</sup> Already US forces in the region conduct 170 military exercises a year and 250 port visits. One of these was the provocative series of joint exercises between the United States and South Korea in April 2013 involving 10,000 US troops and US bombers practising bombing runs against the Korean peninsula which triggered threats of countermeasures from the North Korean government.

At the same time the US is toughening up the military content of its regional alliances. This is particularly so in Japan where the right-wing ultra-nationalist government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe took office in December 2012 promising to

build "a strong Japan" with "a strong military". He has boosted military spending, taken a more confrontational stance on the Senkaku islands (known as Diaoyu in China), and is determined to free the military from the constraints imposed by Japan's pacifist constitution. The United States has encouraged the Abe administration to be more aggressive in its dispute with China over the unoccupied disputed Islands in the East China Sea. In a move welcomed by Washington, the Japanese government has agreed to increase its overall military spending by 2.9 per cent. In addition the United States plans by 2017 to start deploying 42 F-35B short take-off vertical landing stealth fighters (STOVL) and two squadrons of MV-22 Osprey vertical take-off transport planes which will allow the Japanese military rapidly to deploy troops in the event of a conflict over the Senkaku island chain.

Equally in South Korea the US is expanding its presence and encouraging territorial claims against China. A new military base complex described as the biggest building site since the Panama Canal is currently under construction at a cost of \$11bn. The new base - Camp Humphreys - will house most of the 28,500 US troops in the country and is situated 40 miles south of the capital Seoul. When civilian employees and family members are added the new base is expected to accommodate 44,000, making it the biggest base in Asia.

South Korea is also being prompted to militarise islands in the immediate vicinity of China – in particular, Jeju Island, nearly a hundred miles south of the mainland and just 300 miles from Shanghai. The South Korean military is now building a new naval base at Gangjeong village on the south of the island that will have a capacity for submarines and up to

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20 warships. Although it is described as a South Korean base, it has been deliberately designed to accommodate the much greater depths required for US nuclear submarines and US aircraft carriers. Under the Republic of Korea/ United States Mutual Defence Agreement the US Navy will have access to the base for its nuclear powered hunter-killer submarines, aircraft carriers and Aegis destroyers.

In the same aggressive spirit, the US is also re-developing its military presence in the Philippines and backing the latter's claims to the disputed Spratly islands.

Underlying these alliances is the new military doctrine of AirSea Battle (ASB).<sup>8</sup> The Pentagon describes it as an anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) strategy against any country which threatens its 'right' to project power to any part of the globe:

"Anti-access strategies seek to deny outside countries the ability to project power into a region .... Without dominant US capabilities to project power, the integrity of US alliances and security partnerships could be called into question, reducing US security and influence and increasing the possibility of conflict."<sup>9</sup>



The ASB concept, initially conceived by the Pentagon-funded Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, was given official endorsement in the Administration's 2010 Quadrennial Defence Review<sup>9</sup>:

“The Air Force and Navy together are developing a new joint air-sea battle concept for defeating adversaries across the range of military operations, including adversaries equipped with sophisticated anti-access and area denial capabilities. The concept will address how air and naval forces will integrate capabilities across all operational domains – air, sea, land, space, and cyberspace – to counter growing challenges to US freedom of action and to sustain operations in the global commons during peacetime or crisis.”

The battle plan would open with a “blinding campaign” where US forces would attack China's reconnaissance and command and control centres to impair the Chinese military's ability to target US forces off the Chinese coast. Next the United States would take the fight to the Chinese mainland,

striking long range anti-ship missile launchers and anti-satellite missiles, taking out air defence systems, command and control centres and other anti-access weapons.

In the context of China's oft stated ‘peaceful rise’ strategy it is a very aggressive response. Any attempt to carry out deep mainland strikes could easily be misconstrued by Chinese leaders as an attempt to knock out its nuclear weapons sites. The battle plan requires the development of US long range strike capabilities including the X-47B – a new stealth drone bomber which can attack Chinese missile sites.

A second strand within ASB<sup>8</sup> is that of naval blockade: to cut China's vital shipping routes to the Middle East and Asia by blocking “chokepoints” such as the Malacca Straits. Under the heading of ‘Implementing “Distant Blockade”’ the CBSA document talks of choking off Chinese seaborne commerce by “comprehensively blocking maritime shipping in and out of Chinese ports” in the event of a protracted war. In doing so US forces could “exploit the Western Pacific's geography, which effectively channelises Chinese merchant traffic” using “platforms most suited for this kind of operation, such as Littoral Combat Ships (LCS), patrol craft and small frigates”. As a result, the Chinese economy

would be starved of imported energy and raw materials. It is presumably with that purpose in mind that the US ‘pivot’ includes the deployment of 4 new littoral combat ships to Singapore, the first of which arrived in Changi Naval Base in April 2013.<sup>10</sup>

In sum, therefore, the ‘pivot to Asia’ represents a dangerous strategic development of long-standing US policy for the containment of China. In part it is a response to the failure of earlier policies that relied on a ‘soft power’ opening of China. In part it is a response to the scale of China's economic advance and the country's far more active international role, particularly as the central member of the BRICS alliance.

Not everything is likely to go the way the US wishes, of course. The history of east Asia means that the US is often forced to expend considerable diplomatic energy to get its two closest allies in the region, South Korea and Japan, to talk to each other; Obama himself had to drag Abe and South Korean leader Park Gyeun-he to their first ever meeting in The Hague in March 2014. Japanese leaders' tendency publicly to deny war crimes committed during the Second World War is as offensive to Seoul as it is to Beijing.

China's economic importance to the rest of its region is also undeniable.

While the TPP seeks to isolate it, the sheer size of its economy and the volume of trade between it and its neighbours (Sino-Japanese trade was worth \$334 bn in 2012, Sino-South Korean trade \$256 bn<sup>11</sup>) means it is by no means powerless to resist.

Currently it would appear that the Chinese leadership is determined not to get drawn into an arms race. It is clear about the challenges – even though it is very careful to avoid inflammatory rhetoric. A recent statement put the dangers thus: “In the international field, unilateralism and power politics in violation of the UN Charter and the basic principles of international law are manifest from time to time. Some capitalist countries have stepped up efforts to scramble for dominance in reshaping international rules, so as to restrict the space of development and discourse of socialism via inequitable competition, irrational order and unfair rules.” But it continued: “We are living in an interdependent world, a world that is increasingly becoming a community of common destiny. In this new historic era, all the progressive forces must join hands and work in concert to safeguard world peace, promote common development and achieve social advancement.”<sup>12</sup>

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# From the End of Wars to the Abolition of Exploitation



By Eleni Geropanagioti

**The  
Struggle  
for Peace  
and against  
Imperialist  
Aggression**



THE INITIATIVE for this discussion on the issue of war is of particular importance.

The very birth of the communist party arose as an expression of the necessity of the struggle for socialism, for the solution to the basic problem, *ie* the abolition of private ownership of the means of production, of the solution of the basic contradiction between capital and labour, between the deeply social character of production and its private appropriation. It is crucial to safeguard this orientation in order to resolve this basic political issue, that is to say the problem of who has power in each country. This issue is directly connected to the degree of a communist party's revolutionary emancipation and its readiness to respond to the goals that necessitated its establishment as well as to the regrouping and readiness of the labour movement itself.

The character of a communist party is not safeguarded merely by its communist title, but requires this party to be committed to the cause of realising the historical mission of the working class, the overthrow of bourgeois power. It requires realising that in contrast to the prevailing of capitalism over feudalism – given that capitalism emerged and developed on the terrain of an equally exploitative social economic system – socialism inherits an economic basis which is created by capitalism but has to create its power and economy on a

totally different basis. This is a key issue because a communist party cannot struggle for reforms, for intermediate stages between capitalism and socialism, for an allegedly humanised capitalism.

The above mentioned issues clearly define the framework for the elaboration of a strategy which all the communist parties have to carry out on a strictly scientific basis, based on Marxism-Leninism, recognising and understanding the natural laws of socialist revolution and construction.

Historical anniversaries, like the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War, and the related discussions that accompany them, can contribute to the accumulation of experience, to the clarification of issues regarding historical and timeless conclusions on the contemporary tasks of struggle of the communists. They shed light on historical turning points of the class struggle where social-historical incidents, such as the beginning of wars or the outbreak of capitalist crisis, objectively test the communist movement, its analysis, its ideological-political unity. The outcome of this process can be negative when a communist party is not prepared in terms of the analysis of its strategy, ideologically and politically so as to answer these issues on the basis of the relationship between capitalism, crisis, and war. This relationship shows that capitalism constitutes

an obsolete socio-economic system which is in decay and brings poverty, destitution, crises and wars. Only the revolutionary overthrow of this system can provide a way out for the working class, the exploited class, as well as for the other poor popular strata that have an objective interest in liberating themselves from the capitalist bonds.

The historical experience shows that both the First and Second World Wars were a result of the great intensification of inter-imperialist contradictions for the redistribution of the world. These contradictions were further sharpened due to the existence of the Soviet Union combined with the global capitalist crisis of 1929-1933.

Today the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) assesses that, after the deep crisis of capital over-accumulation, which manifested itself in 2008-2009 and has not yet been overcome in several capitalist economies, the tendency for important changes in the correlation of forces among the capitalist states has become more apparent. This process is occurring under the impact of the law of uneven capitalist development and concerns the higher levels of the imperialist pyramid as well. The inter-imperialist contradictions, which in the past led to dozens of local, regional wars and to two World Wars, continue to lead to tough economic, political and military confrontations, irrespective of the composition

or recomposition, the changes in the structure and the framework of goals, of the international imperialist unions, their so-called new 'architecture'. In any case, as Clausewitz said, "war is the continuation of politics by other means", especially in the conditions of a deep crisis of capital over-accumulation and important changes in the correlation of forces of the international imperialist system, in which the redivision of markets rarely occurs without bloodshed.<sup>1</sup>

The relation between capitalism, crisis and war leads to the increase of armaments, to the creation of new military alliances, to the modernisation of older ones such as NATO, to the realignment of the correlation of forces. Over this period there has been a remarkable race among emerging capitalist powers such as China, Russia and India in order to deal with their deficiencies and upgrade their military strength so as to correspond with the range of their business groups. The above-mentioned elements are further sharpening the contradictions in the region of the south-east Mediterranean, which has a crucial importance for the sharing of the loot, of the wealth and energy resources in the region, the transport roots of commodities. This confrontation can embrace, to one or the other extent, the





entire region of the eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East and Northern Africa, the Persian Gulf, the Balkans and the Caspian Sea.

The KKE is preparing itself, and orienting the working and popular masses in Greece, with regard to the possible involvement of our country in an imperialist war. Let us think: just one and a half years ago SYRIZA exerted social-democratic and opportunist pressure in Greece, celebrating the election of Hollande in France as a “victory of the left” and a sign that the EU was starting to change. Have those that opposed that pressure been proven right or wrong? Hollande has already launched a barbaric anti-labour policy and carried out two imperialist interventions in Mali and the Central African Republic. The Greek government is playing an active role in these interventions, providing headquarters in the city of Larisa. SYRIZA demands that the government have “more active policies”, namely that it should undertake more anti-people commitments in the framework of NATO and the EU.

In addition, the government of Hollande has been in the forefront of the pursuit of a military intervention in Syria. Besides, during the war in Yugoslavia the bourgeois governments in France and Italy, with the participation of the mutated communists, carried out similar actions engaging in bombings and bloodshed in Yugoslavia.

Furthermore, we should note the recent fragile agreements regarding Iran and Syria, as well as the particularly alarming invitation to NATO by the Palestinian authorities allegedly to play a role in the solution of the Palestinian issue. Our party is following these developments and expresses its solidarity with the peoples who are suffering. In addition, it supports the justified struggle of the Cypriot people, underlining that within the framework of

the EU the Cypriot people will have to face projects like the Annan Plan which they categorically rejected 10 years ago.

The existent dangers that these developments involve show clearly that the imperialist ‘peace’ is preparing new imperialist wars. The recent events in Kiev are linked to the intervention by the EU and the USA in developments in the Ukraine. These developments are the result of the fierce competition of these powers with Russia over the control of markets, raw materials and the Ukrainian transport network. From this standpoint, the support by the EU and the USA for the then-opposition demonstrators, who were allegedly fighting for ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’, for the accession of the Ukraine to the EU, are extremely hypocritical. In reality, the EU and the USA supported and utilised even armed fascist forces, who were active inside opposition then in the Ukraine, in order to promote their geopolitical goals in the Eurasian region.

Of course, linking Ukraine with contemporary capitalist Russia is not a solution for the Ukrainian people. The attempt to divide them and to lead them into a bloodbath, with immensely tragic consequences for themselves and their country, so that they choose the one or the other inter-state capitalist union, is entirely alien to the interests of the workers. The KKE denounces the foreign interventions in the internal affairs of the Ukraine. It condemns the activity of fascist forces, anti-communism and acts of vandalism against the Lenin monuments and other Soviet monuments. We express our solidarity with the communists and the working people of Ukraine and the conviction that they must organise their independent struggle with their interests as the criterion, and not judging according to which imperialist is chosen by the one or other section of the Ukrainian

plutocracy. They must chart the path for socialism, which is the only alternative solution to the impasses of the capitalist development path.

The peoples, particularly of the countries of the former USSR, lived in peace and prosperity during the years of socialism. For this reason, the majority of the population fondly recalls socialism, despite the fact that over 20 years have passed and the younger generations have not experienced its achievements. Today it is necessary for the communists to take a position regarding the issue of war based on their strategy. The Programme of the KKE which was approved by its 19<sup>th</sup> Congress notes: the KKE treats the issue of the defence of the country (borders and sovereign rights in general) according to class criteria, *ie* from the standpoint of the working class and the popular strata, and links it with the struggle for the disengagement from imperialist unions, the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and the construction of socialist society.

Moreover, history has taught that even in conditions of occupation, of the abolition of the nation-state structure, the working class cannot fight against occupation alongside the bourgeois class. It cannot ally with any of its sections. For the working class and the poor popular strata, war and occupation constitute the extension of capitalist exploitation, a product of the economic and political domination of capital. The working class is fighting against destitution, against oppression and the violence of the invader, against the intensification of exploitation, against international imperialist agreements. The ‘homeland’ of the working class is free from capitalists, out of the imperialist coalitions, a homeland where the working class has in its hands the power and the wealth it produces. The war of the bourgeois class for its own ‘homeland’ – irrespective

of whether it is an ally of the conqueror or resists – will take place for the interests of the monopoly groups, for the restoration of an agreement for the distribution of markets that will serve the national monopolies and not the interests of the people.

The KKE has drawn the necessary conclusions from the armed struggle carried out during the Second World War against the triple fascist (German, Italian, Bulgarian) foreign occupation of the country. Despite the preponderance of the armed sections of EAM-ELAS, which was led by the KKE, our Party was unfortunately unable to link the anti-fascist struggle, the struggle against foreign occupation, with the struggle to overthrow the rule of capital in the country. That was because there was not a unified strategy within our ranks. Today, drawing valuable conclusions from the history of our party, we develop such a strategy, having before us the dangers of engagement of our country in new local, regional, or more generalised imperialist wars.

The resolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress of the KKE noted:

“In any case, whatever form Greece’s involvement in imperialist war takes, the Communist Party must be ready to lead the independent organisation of the working-popular resistance so that it is linked with the struggle to defeat the bourgeoisie, both domestic and foreign as an intruder.”

During an imperialist war, the political vanguard of the working class, its party, has a duty to highlight the need for class unity of the workers, of alliance with popular forces, the internationalist dimension of the working class and the tasks arising from this. The stance in relation to war is the stance of class struggle

and socialist revolution, of struggle to convert the war into armed class struggle, the “only genuine war of liberation” for the proletariat, as Lenin characterised it.<sup>2</sup>

Let us see what happened with the outbreak of the imperialist First World War: social-democratic reformist parties openly betrayed the working class, and turned into social-chauvinist parties supporting the bourgeoisie of their own countries; they voted through the war budgets and sacrificed their own working class to the interests of capital, in the name of defending the homeland. They cancelled the decisions of previous international socialist conferences – carried with the intervention of Lenin and other Marxist revolutionaries – for a struggle to turn the imperialist war into a struggle of working class power. In his pamphlet *The Collapse of the Second International*, Lenin highlighted the rise of opportunism in war conditions, stating:<sup>3</sup>

“Opportunism means sacrificing the vital interests of the masses to the temporary interests of an insignificant minority of workers or, in other words, an alliance between a section of the workers and the bourgeoisie, directed against the mass of the proletariat. The war has made such an alliance particularly conspicuous and inescapable.”

We should note here that the manifestation of the capitalist crisis, the outbreak of war, promotes nationalist and fascist opinions that have an impact on the working class. It is of paramount importance to realise that fascism is born out of the capitalist system. Invoking anti-fascist fronts to address it is misleading, since forces that glorify capitalism cannot

cope with the rise of fascism. These forces demand the strengthening of bourgeois democracy in order to deal with fascism, whereas the only way to address fascism is the struggle to overthrow the capitalist power that breeds it.

The First World War and the issues it raised in relation to the very nature of the war and the attitude of the communists towards it, the struggle developed within the ranks of the international communist movement, accelerated the processes for its ideological-political and organisational separation from opportunism.

The line that the revisionists sought to impose was the subordination of the interests of the working class to the interests of capital. The direct result was their acceptance of the positions of bourgeois nationalism.

The revisionists of the socialist/communist movement chose reform over revolution. They embraced bourgeois management through participation in bourgeois governments and at the same time they glorified bourgeois parliamentarism. In the labour movement, using class collaboration as a slogan, they systematically cultivated reformist illusions, restricting the fight to the conditions of sale of labour, undermining the main issue of the struggle for the abolition of exploitation, to which they had become reconciled by giving up the fight against monopolies and capitalism.

The betrayal of the Second International in the First World War confirmed and sealed all the debate that had developed earlier at the beginning of the century about the characteristics of the party, the strategy of the communists, their position towards war and inter-imperialist and inter-capitalist rivalries. This debate had been led by Lenin. He was the one who supplied the struggle of the communists with the vital conclusion that

“The struggle against imperialism that is not closely linked with the struggle against opportunism is either an empty phrase or a fraud.”<sup>4</sup>

In the years that followed, this relentless and uncompromising struggle which Lenin described as a vital component of the fight against capitalism, was underestimated by the international communist movement. In practice the lessons of the October Revolution were undermined. Quoting previous strategic analyses made by Lenin that determined the responsibilities of the communists during the bourgeois revolution, during tsarist autocracy, the strategy of the communist party stagnated in strategies and political alliances that did not correspond to the conditions of domination of monopolies and did not take into account the fact that the October revolution had opened a whole new era. This is the era of imperialism, *ie* monopoly capitalism, the highest stage of capitalism, a period of transition from capitalism to socialism.

To this day, there has not been enough debate about the reasons and the conditions under which the international communist movement became disoriented and adopted an outdated strategic concept that reintroduced an intermediate stage between capitalism and socialism, postponing the struggle for socialism to the very distant future and transforming it into a declaration alienated from the tasks of the daily struggle. Not only was this line unable to give an explanation of why socialism is necessary and timely, but in effect it was also attempting to show that it was a superfluous, unnecessary struggle, making it obsolete.

We should therefore firmly maintain that power can only be either bourgeois or working class. The means of production can be owned either by capitalists or socially. Solutions ‘within the walls’ of the system, regardless of their intentions,

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not only do not form an approach to the socialist solution, but they favour the perpetuation of capitalism, they allow it more time, cultivating illusions amongst the workers.

That is why we say that the antimonopoly-anticapitalist struggle is the only way. The people’s alliance of the working class with the self-employed, the poor farmers, the youth and women of the poorer strata, is essential. We need an alliance for the overthrow of this rotten and outdated socio-economic system, capitalism, and for the creation of a new society, socialism-communism, where there will be no exploitation of man by man and development will be based on the needs of the people and not those of a handful of monopoly groups.

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# Iraqi People's Struggle Against War, for Peace and Democracy

By Salam Ali



IN THIS brief contribution, I will focus (as the title suggests) on our Iraqi people's struggle against war, for peace and democracy, and on some of the main lessons learnt from this bitter, long and continuing struggle.

March 20 this year marked the eleventh anniversary of the war and invasion of Iraq by the US and its allies. On 9 April 2003, three weeks after the start of the war, Saddam's regime, the most vicious fascist-type dictatorship in the modern history of Iraq, collapsed.

11 years on, Iraq is still confronting and suffering the heavy legacy of three decades of dictatorship and three wars: the Iraq-Iran war, 1980-1988; the First Gulf War, following Saddam's invasion

of Kuwait in August 1990; and finally the Second Gulf War of 2003. But the Iraqi people also suffered horrific 'internal wars', as well as 13 years of economic sanctions, the harshest sanctions regime ever imposed by the United Nations.

Saddam's regime unleashed a war of genocide against the Kurdish people, culminating in the barbaric use of chemical weapons in the Halabja massacre in March 1988 and the infamous Anfal campaign in Iraqi Kurdistan, when 180,000 people were annihilated and 4000 villages were destroyed at the end of the Iraq-Iran war. That war itself, started by Saddam in collusion with US imperialism, led to massive death and destruction

in both countries. It is worth remembering also that chemical weapons were supplied to Saddam by Western companies in the 1980s, when their governments turned a blind eye to their horrific use on the battlefields as well as against innocent civilians.

But it is important to point out here that, before the Iran-Iraq war started, Saddam's regime had launched a barbaric onslaught on the Communist Party and democratic forces, which began with executing 31 comrades in May 1978 under flimsy charges of organising within the armed forces. The anti-communist campaign, with physical liquidation and mass executions, continued unabated until the shameful

collapse of the dictatorship in April 2003.

I do not want to overburden you with facts and figures. But one example may help to bring closer the horrors of life under that barbaric regime, especially for communists and democrats, as party membership meant death and 'disappearance'. We have recently published a list of 167 comrades, women and men, mostly young people, executed in December 1982. This was not an isolated incident. The death machine continued till the eve of the war in 2003, when the regime launched the so-called 'prison clean-up' campaign, which included scores of communists and supporters who had still been languishing in the dungeons.

Here, once again, Iraq's recent history testifies to the valuable lesson that fascism and dictatorship breed war.

In addition, such regimes are used by imperialism directly, or to provide the pretext, to carry out its own aggressive schemes to serve regional and global aims for hegemony and domination. This is another lesson. The Iraq-Iran war, the First Gulf War and the US war and invasion of Iraq provide stark examples of this. There is strong evidence to support the conclusion that the US gave a green light to Saddam to invade Kuwait in 1990.

I still remember working alongside our comrades of the Tudeh Party of Iran, here in Britain, to launch

Supporters of the Iraqi Communist Party in Baghdad May 1, 2014





an international campaign in the mid 1980s to stop the Iran-Iraq war, and also, significantly, calling for peace and democracy. We both stressed at the time the close interconnection between peace and democracy.

Here again, it is important to reiterate the vital lesson learnt from bitter experiences of the Arab peoples since the June 1967 War with Israel; that the absence of freedoms and democracy serves the interests of imperialism and Zionism, and their schemes of war, occupation and hegemony. It is only when people enjoy freedom and democracy that they can safeguard their national independence and sovereignty, and can confront imperialist pressures and schemes. Only then they will be able to decide their own destiny with their own free will.

We believe that it is of utmost importance to give the necessary attention to the close interconnection between the struggle for political democracy and the struggle against imperialism and all forms of exploitation and oppression. Neglecting this dialectical interdependence, between these two struggles, leads to adopting one-sided positions and to the lack of solidarity with the forces that are fighting for national liberation and for democratic objectives that are in line with the general struggle against imperialism and neo-liberalism.

The Iraqi Communist Party openly opposed and rejected the warmongering and hegemonic policy of the neoconservatives in the US, long before the war on Iraq in 2003. We opposed the war, invasion and occupation, exposing its imperialist objectives. The slogan “**No to war – no to dictatorship**” correctly summarised the position of the Party. This position has been vindicated, thus enhancing the credibility of our Party among the people in Iraq.

*Here again is another vital lesson.* It is of utmost importance to reject and resist all the efforts by US imperialism and its allies, through NATO or other means, to ignite wars and military interventions in order to achieve their objectives to dominate the region and subjugate its peoples.

In this context, we draw attention in particular to the developments of the Syrian crisis and its serious repercussions on the whole region, including Iraq. The issue is no longer confined to the just rights and aspirations of the Syrian people for political reform, freedom, democracy and social justice. Blatant external, regional and international, interference has turned the crisis into a grave danger, with thousands of terrorists (so-called *jihadists*) and militias flooding into the country. As a result, the Middle East is facing the danger of sliding along the path of sectarian wars and other options against the fundamental interests of peoples and toilers.

In the unique and extremely complex situation that developed after the US war and invasion, with the collapse of the Iraqi state, following the collapse of Saddam's dictatorship, our Communist Party, along with the major political forces, resorted to political struggle as the main form of fighting against the occupation, and for regaining national sovereignty and independence.

Today, 11 years after the war, the Iraqi people are still facing the enormous legacy of US occupation, as well as the legacy of decades of fascist dictatorship, leaving behind a fractured society.

The ending of the American military presence in our country, over two years ago, in late 2011, was a victory for the will of the Iraqi people. It was an important step along the path of regaining full independence and national sovereignty. It came about as

a result of a unified popular stance and national consensus. Our Party had rejected all attempts to maintain foreign military presence on Iraqi territory, under any pretext or title. We also believe that one of the prerequisites for full sovereignty is to stand firmly against the covetous designs of regional powers that are exploiting Iraq's difficult situation to wage their proxy wars.

Our Party has been actively involved in organising and supporting mass popular protest movements against the bankrupt sectarian-ethnic power-sharing system that was installed by the US occupation. Democratic and social struggles are intertwined. We have strongly condemned government interference in the affairs of workers' unions, professional associations and civil society organisations.

The Party has also warned recently against the danger of the country sliding once again into sectarian strife, and has called for urgent action by the democratic forces, and for popular initiatives, to safeguard Iraq's national unity.

The deepening political crisis and the infighting among ruling groups, over power and privileges, has provided a fertile ground for extremist Islamist and shadowy groups to intensify acts of terrorism, carrying out heinous atrocities, with the aim of pushing Iraq into sectarian strife and civil war. More than 8000 people were killed last year. In one recent month, about 1000 people were killed by waves of car and suicide bombings. The victims are mainly innocent civilians, including workers and the unemployed in poor districts. These barbaric crimes and the perpetrators must be unequivocally condemned by all progressive forces, with effective support and solidarity extended to the Iraqi people.

Our Party, which represents the main force of the Left in Iraq, has

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exerted relentless efforts to achieve unity in action of the democratic forces. It has played a leading role in setting up a broad coalition called the Democratic Current, which was launched in Baghdad in October 2011. The Party is striving to transform it into an effective principal force in the ongoing intensified struggle over the future of Iraq. This vision requires greater efforts to involve the trade union movement and democratic organisations, especially those of women, youth, students and other civil society organisations, in mass struggles to defend human and democratic rights of workers and people.

This coalition contested the parliamentary elections on 30 April 2014 as part of a broad Civil Democratic Alliance. At the time of writing, preliminary results indicate that the Alliance gained 10 of the 328 seats.

We believe that overcoming the crisis of the sectarian-ethnic power-sharing system in Iraq can only be achieved by changing the political balance of forces in society, in favour of the supporters of a national democratic plan that calls for establishing a democratic civil state on the basis of the principle of citizenship, freedoms and social justice.

# Iran's Theocracy, the 'New Middle East Plan' and Prospects for Peace in the Region



By Navid Shomali

## Introduction

The Middle East has been living through a very sensitive chapter of its history. The end of the Cold War led to an unprecedented period of US aggression aimed at extending and reinforcing its hegemony in the region. In the absence of a Soviet counter-balance, the US consolidated its domination within markets and economies of the region. The prospects for a real change in Palestine have remained poor. Successive Israeli governments have refused to abide by international law or act on the basis of UN resolutions, and the Oslo agreement of 1993 between the two sides has rightly been described as 'one step forward, two steps backward'.

The terrorist attack of 11 September 2001 on the World Trade Centre provided the neoconservatives controlling the US administration with the perfect excuse to enact their plans for the Middle East and unleash the 'War on Terror'. These developments were aligned with their new doctrine hatched by the 'Project for the New American Century' (PNAC, 1997) think-tank in the aftermath

of the collapse of the Soviet Union. The prime objective of PNAC has been to ensure US world supremacy and actively to prevent the rise of any other superpower. Implementation of PNAC's principles has informed the blueprints of all subsequent strategy-makers in the US government.

Soon after the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, the US announced its 'Greater Middle East Plan' – to transform the political map of the region, stamp out Islamic fundamentalism and 'democratise' the Middle East. In 2006 the Plan was revised and refocused under another grand title, the 'New Middle East Plan'. There are important differences between the two plans and their present implementation by the Obama administration. The inefficacy of large scale military invasion for 'regime change' has been seriously reconsidered.

While US imperialism benefits from the threat of war, tension and military conflict in the Middle East, an objective analysis shows that in the current situation a major planned conflict in the region directly involving the US military is unlikely.

Propaganda around the likelihood of a Middle East war, in particular between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the US, has led to a distorted perception of the balance of regional forces and their interaction with US imperialism.

Political developments in the region seem to suggest that a reconfiguration of US politics in the Middle East and the wider region is taking place. Indications are that part of this reconfiguration is aimed at the inclusion of 'political Islam' in the 'New Middle East Plan', with Iran's theocratic regime being seriously considered as a key player. If successful, the new configuration in the Middle East will allow the US to influence and steer key regional developments in order to reinforce and perpetuate its global economic, political and military hegemony. A superficial analysis of the situation might lead to the assumption that the Middle East remains the 'main' theatre of operation for the US or that anti-western 'political Islam' constitutes a strategic threat to the US and its allies; whereas the direction of 'political

Islam' is in fact aligned with the strategic interests of the US in the Middle East.

The Tudeh Party of Iran has been closely monitoring developments in Iran and the wider region and has adopted specific positions on the basis of objective analysis of the situation.

## I. US Militarism, the New Middle East Plan and the Iranian Regime

The extent of direct US military intervention in the Middle East since 2001 has been unprecedented and the US military machine, together with its NATO wing and EU partners, remains the dominant force in the Middle East and one with a significant destructive capacity.

However, following more than a decade of large-scale military invasions and the commitment of huge quantities of hardware and personnel to the Persian Gulf, there has been only limited success in stabilising the situation in favour of US control of the region's markets and natural resources. The financial costs and the negative political fall-out from massive

US military operations have significantly negated their benefit while incurring astronomic costs. Also, during the last decade, the international complications arising from large-scale US military intervention have significantly increased. Public opinion globally has turned against costly direct military interventions in far-away countries. This is partly due to the effectiveness of global anti-war and peace movements in Europe and North America. Large-scale US military action has not produced the desired outcomes in line with the interests of global capitalism, due to unpredictable fluctuations in the price of oil, the possibility of disrupting the flow of oil from the oil-rich region and the exchange rate of the dollar.

In reality the high cost and low benefit of direct military interventions in the Middle East in more recent years, and the constant threat of military action against Iran, were at times a barrier to the achievement of the real objectives of advancing the 'New Middle East Plan'. The 'War on Terror' policy and the doctrine of direct military action in the Middle East pursued by George Bush's administration became politically and financially untenable, leading to setbacks for the right-wing neoconservative brand of politics at home and the subsequent election of Barack Obama.

US strategy has correctly recognised that the ruling regime in Iran can be a key partner in implementing the 'New Plan' for the Middle East. The fundamental question is perhaps the following: "After more than three decades of hostility and almost continuous confrontation with the 'Islamic Republic', does the US still need to eliminate this regime?" This question becomes more significant given that the 1979 Revolution has been defeated in reaching social and economic transformation

phases; its popular demands have been sidelined and the theocratic regime no longer poses the threat to US imperialism in the region that it once did.

More crucially, during the last two years, the financial sanctions designed by the US Treasury Department have proved to be an effective destructive weapon bringing misery into the lives of millions of Iranians. They have not only inflicted heavy damage on Iran's national economy but have also enabled the US government to use the control of the Iranian economy as a further tool to achieve its political aims in the country. For more than a year it has been clear that the US has achieved a decisive victory through the use of its financial weaponry, a feat that all the Pentagon's military might was unable to achieve. This has given the US powerful leverage not only in the '5+1' nuclear negotiations but also in other important issues of conflict with Iran. In November 2013, on the eve of the signing of phase one of the Geneva nuclear accord, \$100 billion of Iranian money from oil sales was still blockaded and only \$4.6 billion conditionally released! The US had threatened to completely stop the export of Iranian oil, the life blood of Iran's single commodity economy, altogether.

The theocratic regime, after two decades of implementing International Monetary Fund (IMF)-based policies and turning Iran into a dollar-based net import economy with sole reliance on the export of crude oil, has made the country an easy target for US sanctions. These sanctions have had a very damaging effect on the life of the Iranian people, and the economy has caved in and contracted rapidly. To safeguard its future, the hard-pressed regime embarked on a dramatic and cunning policy shift. Firstly, with the direct support and guidance of its

spiritual leader, Ali Khamenei, it entered into a highly confidential secret dialogue with senior US representatives. The US, having achieved total victory, had the upper hand in these negotiations and was represented in them by senior members of the State Department and subsequently by Senator John Kerry. Secondly, the regime went on to engineer the presidential election (24 June 2013) that installed as president Hassan Rouhani, a trusted figure known to the West as a pragmatic negotiator. The impression given was that the Iranian people, in a 'democratic election', had mandated the government to negotiate with the US.

Now is an important juncture for both the US and the theocratic regime as they open a new chapter that allows mutual coexistence. In this new relationship, the US is the dominant partner, holding Iran's national economy to ransom, while Tehran has staked its survival on making the new relationship work. Existence under the umbrella of the 'New Middle East Plan' provides the theocratic dictatorship in Iran with continuity and a temporary shield against its deadly enemy, the Iranian people. This new arrangement will allow the US to reconfigure its tactical policies in the Middle East and, in so doing, to give itself leeway to focus on plans to mitigate risks elsewhere in the world that threaten its global pre-eminence.

## 2. Iran's role in the New Middle East

The history of the past 35 years has clearly demonstrated that, for the theocratic dictatorship in Iran, there is only one holy mantra and that is its survival at any price. There is increasing evidence that since 2010 the regime has been involved in behind-the-scenes attempts to negotiate a regional role for itself that is compatible with US interests in the region following the

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formal withdrawal of active US military units from Afghanistan. There are strong indications that the US and EU have reached some agreement about Iran playing a key part in securing stability in Afghanistan and Pakistan after the departure of the US, British and NATO troops from Afghanistan at the end of 2014. If current developments proceed according to plan, Western countries are not opposed to Iran playing a key role in securing the future of the present set-up in Afghanistan.

A key factor influencing this is undoubtedly the political clout wielded by the Iranian regime in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon and Afghanistan. What makes the situation more intriguing is the fact that the Iranian regime has been in high-level dialogue with the US administration since 6 February 2009, when Mr Ali Larijani, the influential speaker of the Iranian Parliament, addressed the Munich Security Conference. A number of important top-level negotiations between the Iranian theocratic regime and the US administration in the following four years have paved the way to the current position.

## 3. The Position of the Middle East in Broader US Global Strategy

The main threat to US imperialism's global hegemony





is in the economic sphere and comes from South East Asia/China and South America. More specifically, the emerging economies and, in particular, the fast-growing economies of the so called BRICS countries, are a real and present threat to the unipolar world dominated by the US. These countries, by adopting economies oriented towards development rather than the naked 'free market' model, have the potential to develop into powerful economies outside the framework of global, neoliberal capitalism. The economic success of these countries, outside the economic framework known as the 'Washington Consensus', is an ideological and material threat to the US and major capitalist countries, providing an alternative economic approach on the basis of 'growth for development'. By contrast, the US and EU have never been able to recover fully after the 2008 economic crisis, and the struggle for social justice is a growing issue everywhere, which capitalism is inherently unable to address.

It has been widely observed that the US is now focusing its military and economic attention on the Pacific region and that developments in South East Asia are a focus. The ability of the US to exert political influence on states producing vital energy supplies to the emerging economies is crucial to its retention of global dominance, as is ensuring that the emerging economies remain subservient to the needs of global capitalism. The Middle East remains the main source of crude oil and natural gas, with Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran as the key producers. The first two of these countries are already within the US sphere of control. Iran's economy, enmeshed by US financial sanctions, can also act as the lever that ensures that Iran plays the desired role in US global strategy.

#### 4. Common Denominators for the Mutual Coexistence of the US and Political Islam: (i) Neoliberal Economic Tendencies and (ii) Pseudo-Democratic Tendencies

A destructive by-product of imperialist policies in the Middle East has been the instigation of a deeply reactionary economic order across the region. During recent decades, powerful oligarchic groups in the Middle East have been the major facilitators of economic and political backdoors for intervention by imperialist countries and capitalist corporations. This has also been the case in 'Islamic Iran', despite the theocratic regime's anti-US posturing.

In fact, Iran has been a keen implementer of IMF prescriptions for neoliberal economic adjustment. The new administration under President Rouhani is composed of well-known advocates and practitioners of the neoliberal economic model. In recent years, despite the rhetoric, Iran has been primed for deep economic intervention by the US and the EU. This now serves to provide the US and its allies with a powerful economic basis through which to exploit Iran's resources and markets. The flow of large-scale officially sanctioned British, German and French trade delegations in the last 12 months is breath-taking. Economic planners have been busy designing and negotiating ways to secure lucrative parts of Iran's sizeable economy and the opportunities to use Iran as the platform for launching activities elsewhere.

The range of dominant Islamic forces in the region, from the theocratic regime in Iran to the Islamic Justice and Development Party in Turkey and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, form a varied spectrum of 'political Islam'. But, despite significant

differences between them, all the dominant strands of 'political Islam' share disdain for democracy and disregard for any genuine social justice. They have a deep commitment to the most brutal manifestations of the neoliberal economic model, which favour the interests of the rich and damn the rest. For them social justice is reduced to no more than charitable acts for the dispossessed.

Neoliberal economic restructuring and joining the 'Washington Consensus' are cornerstones of the US 'New Middle East Plan'. The future dynamics of the Middle East in terms of imperialism's interventionist agenda are being reconfigured by the political and economic relationships between the West and the various strands of dominant comprador-bourgeoisie interest, with their strong connections to 'political Islam'. Iran's ruling brand of 'political Islam' is set to play a major part in these developments. It is no accident that the reshaping of US policy towards Iran's regime has had the effect of changing the balance of power in favour of those factions and social classes most committed to a neoliberal economy.

On the question of democracy, it is safe to say that it has not and will not be a priority within the 'New Middle East Plan', and only lip-service will be paid to it by Western officials. All the various groupings within the spectrum of 'political Islam' have demonstrated their total rejection of freedom and democracy. Certainly, as far as 'political Islam' is concerned, a kind of democracy that would allow participation of social forces in the pursuit of individual freedoms and social justice, for example trade union rights, is either prohibited or strongly resisted. Both Iran and Turkey provide good examples of how theocracy perceives freedom and democracy.

However, across the Middle East, the lack

of democracy and the wholehearted commitment of 'political Islam' to neoliberalism are viewed most positively in the context of the 'New Middle East Plan'.

#### Conclusion

The current shift in US policy in the Middle East is away from direct large-scale military engagement and towards aggressive interventionist diplomacy in order to refocus attention on threats to its global hegemony elsewhere. But the threat of war and conflict is never far away, as the 'New Middle East Plan' pursued by the Obama administration plays on deep-running tensions. The US will shift the balance of power in its favour by siding with one or confronting another state or grouping in the region. The unfolding and development of the new relationship between the US and Iran's dictatorship forms a key aspect of this policy.

US imperialism and its allies are once again propping up reactionary and undemocratic forces in the Middle East, and the heroic struggle of the masses for democratic rights and freedom is once again being trampled upon by local reactionary forces backed by imperialism. The struggle for democracy and social justice in the Middle East can only be achieved by the effective and united actions of the progressive forces in our region. The Tudeh Party of Iran has defined a clear role for itself and is focussing all its energy on this. It believes that it is only through mobilisation against the disastrous ambitions of imperialism and the forces of reaction that we can secure peace and progress in the region. In this critical struggle, the progressive forces have a major role to play. They must mobilise the widest spectrum of social forces in opposition to war, militarism and all imperialism's interventionist and aggressive designs.

# Statement on Scottish Independence

From the Scottish Committee of the Communist Party of Britain (CPB)

THE SCOTTISH Committee of the CPB defends the right of nations to self-determination and condemns the Coalition government for its threat to exclude an independent Scotland from the sterling area. If a majority of the Scottish people vote for independence on this basis, then their decision should be respected and facilitated.

Our commitment to the right to self-determination is one of principle. At the same time, the Communist Party maintains its other principle of judging the *exercise* of that right in terms of the class interests of the Scottish people and of those of working people in Britain and internationally.

On this basis Communists do not believe independence on the terms proposed is in the interests of working people today any more than it was in the 1970s. At that time Communists and the Left in the trade unions led the way in the fight for a Scottish parliament with powers to intervene in the economy, to develop public ownership and increase labour's power over capital – powers that would in turn strengthen the bargaining power of working people across Britain.

It is our conviction that independence as proposed in the White Paper would weaken such bargaining power and strengthen that of big business and of its state machine at both the British and the Scottish level. Membership of the sterling area would subordinate Scotland to current neoliberal policies without any power to change them – at the same time as seriously eroding the opportunity for united working class action across the nations of Britain to do so. Worse still, membership of the EU would oblige Scotland to incorporate in any written constitution the terms of the 2012 Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance. This Treaty requires even tougher controls on government spending than the Stability and Growth Pact, with the same objective: using unemployment as the market regulator to curb the trade union movement.



While it is conceivable that some of the most reactionary aspects of the White Paper, such as NATO membership and reducing corporation tax, might be reversed as a result of subsequent political mobilisation by the Left, we judge it to be extremely unlikely that there would be a reversal of positions on Sterling and EU membership. The transition to independence will take place at a time of diminishing oil revenues and unfavourable economic circumstances – allowing any Scottish government, and the big business-controlled media, to call for fiscal 'stability' in face of adverse market reactions.

Left-wing supporters of independence need to think through the consequences. The socialist Left does not possess anything like mass support in Scotland today. Election results show this. The inevitably rancorous negotiations over the division of resources will harden nationalist attitudes. Yet these years, 2015-2017, will be precisely when the terms of the new written Scottish Constitution will be determined, and the SNP's White Paper demonstrates a clear intent to do so on the terms set by big business and Scotland's own finance capital sector.

This is why Communists oppose this White Paper on Independence. Instead we continue to call for radical federalism as the best way of developing class

cohesion across the nations of Britain: national parliaments with powers of economic intervention, ownership and control, and a federal parliament with overall powers over economic policy and a constitutional obligation to redistribute in terms of social need.

We believe that this provides the best framework for uniting working people on class terms against the state power of big business. Currently that power is concentrated at British level and represents above all the interests of the City of London. Under a 'White Paper' Scottish Constitution big business will continue to exercise this power through its disproportionate ownership of the Scottish economy and the binding requirements of its instruments, the Bank of England and the EU Treaties.

A No vote in the referendum has to be made the springboard for remobilising the working class movement at British level to demand real constitutional change. The fight for radical federalism, as outlined in the *Red Paper on Scotland*, must begin now. At the same time the fight for the objectives of the People's Charter and the People's Assembly, backed by the united trade union movement in England, Scotland and Wales, must be stepped up. Radical federalism will only be won on the basis of class mobilisation across the nations of Britain.

# The Housing of

By William Morris

LET US on this matter be sure of one thing, that as long as there are poor people they will be poorly housed; those of our philanthropists who have really dealt with the subject practically have no doubt about that; and consequently all their endeavours are turned to one end, trying namely to get the 'poor' a little less disgracefully housed than they are at present; what they hope to accomplish is very little indeed, and they are so well aware of the difficulties of their accomplishing even this little, that they are terrified at the expression of any hope of realising a higher standard of comfort in this matter of housing than their most miserable palliation of the evil; because they cannot help feeling that the hope of Revolution must consciously or unconsciously underlie the hope of a somewhat higher standard, and that when this becomes obvious, as it soon must, the dominant class will shudder back from the whole subject, and bring to an end even the niggardly attempts of the 5 per cent philanthropists. In case it should be said that I exaggerate the humility of the hopes of these latter good people, I refer to a letter written by the most practical of them, Miss Octavia Hill, to the *Pall Mall Gazette* in the past spring, in which she actually allows herself to say that, after all, it is not so bad as one might think for a whole family to live in one room; by a room of course meaning the ordinary 12 foot square hutch

of an East End house.

Now, while we may well feel too stern of mood, when we think of the life-long tortures of the 'poor', to laugh even sardonically at such a limitation to the hopes of the philanthropist, I wish our friends to accept my assertion that Miss Hill is a well intentioned, disinterested and kindly person, for in that very fact lies the force of her words as an indictment of our present society; she, a good and eminently practical woman, with plenty of experience as to the extent to which it is possible to move the rich to help, and how far it is possible to use that help for the benefit of the 'poor', is forced to reduce her standard down to this point, lest the spectre of confiscation should rise to bar the way against her.

That she is quite right to dread that spectre, the behaviour of the present hole-and-corner Royal Commission has doubtless already told her; but we will leave her household paradise of one room for a while, nor will we much concern ourselves with the standard of decent housing held out by those huge masses of brick and mortar, which are rising up in various parts of the town to compete for the workman's scanty shillings against the closeness, squalor and huddled makeshift of the ordinary landlord; bare, sunless, and grim bastilles are these, and look like embodied nightmares of the hopeless thrift of the wage-slave, we will leave them also, and try to give



our masters the philanthropists some idea of what we consider decent housing for the working classes.

It might be advisable, granting the existence of huge towns for the present, that the houses for workers should be built in tall blocks, in what might be called vertical streets; but that need not prevent ample room in each lodging, so as to include such comforts of space, air and privacy as every moderately living middle-class family considers itself entitled to; also it must not prevent the lodgings having their due share of pure air and sunlight, necessities of life which the builders of the

above mentioned bastilles do not seem to have thought of at all. This gathering of many small houses into a big tall one would give opportunity for what is also necessary to decent life, that is garden space round each block. This space once obtained, it would be a small matter to make the gardens far more beautiful, as they would be certainly far more cheerful, than the square gardens of the aristocratic quarters of the town now are; it would be natural to have cloisters or covered walking or playing places in them, besides such cheap ornaments as fountains and conduits. Inside the houses, besides



# the Poor (1884)



such obvious conveniences as common laundries and kitchens, a very little arrangement would give the dwellers in them ample and airy public rooms in addition to their private ones; the top story of each block might well be utilised for such purposes, the great hall for dining in, and for social gathering, being the chief feature of it.

Of course it is understood that such public rooms would not interfere with the ordinary private life of each family or individual; they would be there for use, if any one wished to use them, as they quite certainly would, for the avoidance of waste and

the fostering of reasonable pleasure. I cannot be expected to forego the hint that these houses will be in no degree bare or prison-like: many cottages of the 10 shillings per week agricultural labourer that I have seen avoid that fault at any rate, and I can't see how it is possible that the city craftsman, with his habit of work and almost instinctive general capacity, should err on that side, if he had any starting point of hope given him, and proper leisure from mere bread-winning toil. I am quite sure that due cooperation among the men of diverse crafts who would inhabit these houses would make them not

merely comfortable and pretty, but beautiful even.

The possession of space and pure air, with the determination not to live in the midst of ugliness, which relief from anxiety and overwork would give our mechanics, who are ingenious and ready-witted still in spite of their slavery, would supply the stimulus for such town-houses being made proper dwellings for human beings, even in the transition period between the anarchy of today and the social order which is to come. A fair portion of the earth's surface, due leisure for the exercise of thought, ingenuity, and fancy; that is all we ask for making our dwellings healthful, pleasant, and beautiful. Yes, that is all! Ah, fellow-workers, it is no use asking our masters for these necessities: they cannot give them to us; there they sit in the Royal Commission asking – the Lord knows who – whether we have got these good things now, and whether if we have not got them we want them!

Understand this clearly, as long as labour, that is the lives of strong and deft men, is a commodity which can only be bought when it yields a profit to the non-worker, we cannot be allowed to use the earth to live on like men; it is all wanted for us to work on like machines; and just as much of the produce of our work will be given to us as will keep the machines going.

Workmen of England, you are just now agitating or being agitated for the purpose

of obtaining the suffrage for some of you who have not had it before; this you do, I am ready to believe, with the ultimate intention of getting the suffrage for all adult persons. This agitation may be worth the trouble if you make up your minds that when you get the suffrage you will vote that you shall be machines no longer, and see that your vote is carried out. For what is a machine? Is it not a force of labour which has no control over its own labour, but must be set a-going by a master?

Fellow-workers, what you have to do is to determine that you will be men, not machines, and will have full control as a body over your own labour, that you will organise it for the good of each of you and all of you. If you determine on this whatever it may cost, and it is worth any cost, you will obtain it, with the suffrage or without it: if you do not so determine, you may get the suffrage, but it will be given to machines; and then as to this matter of housing you can at the best only be housed as careless masters house their machines. Alas! I fear that many of you will be housed as careless masters house them.

■ *First published in Justice, 19 July 1884, pp 4-5; available online at the William Morris Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1884/justice/15hours.htm>.*

## BOOK REVIEW

# An heroic history

Review by Joe Clark

THIS IS AN excellent book, drawn from the intimacies of family life. Throughout the strike, Harry Paterson's father-in-law was a leading activist in Linby of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), though that commitment was not general within the family. In this well-researched account, Paterson achieves an honest understanding of the non-strikers, yet he shows total commitment to the 180,000 men and some women who saw the strike through. And, 30 years on, some non-strikers are prepared to examine their role, or otherwise stand exposed for the objective role they played in Thatcher's drive to destroy trade unionism.

Paterson is a professional writer, albeit as a music critic, and it shows. His book is more authoritative than other books on the period, such as Keith Stanley's excellent memoir, *Nottingham Miners Do Strike*. Skilfully, he balances the role of strikers against those who worked; NUM against the numerous gradations within the scab union UDM, from, at one extreme, the Coal Board stooges whose aim throughout was to force a split, to, at the other, the 'working' miners who merely wanted a quiet life. Paterson is particularly clear on the class nature of the offensive against the miners, and on the forces which Thatcher drew on or mobilised, within the media, the police, the Social Security system and the magistracy.

In a review, one cannot assume that the background which Paterson develops is generally known.

The level of productivity, and hence profitability, in manufacturing industry is largely determined by the extent of mechanisation. In mining, as in extraction industry generally, productivity also depends on geological conditions. Different coalfields have different characteristics – thinner

or thicker seams, more or less stable rock formations, dependable seams or fractured seams which preclude long-wall mechanised coal-ripping. Older pits tend to be located where shallower, near-surface, seams are found. Newer pits are deeper mines, where the cost of high mechanisation and of winning coal from such depths is offset by the thickness and consistency of the coal measures. The Nottinghamshire pits at the time of the '84/'85 strike were the more modern pits.

The NUM had not transcended these differences. The pre-'45 Miners Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) was wholly based on those differences. Hence the Nottinghamshire miners had wages far superior to those of miners elsewhere. They also worked in fully mechanised seams, whereas miners in older coalfields had known hand-hewing until recently.

The NUM made strenuous efforts to overcome these divisions. However the post-war period, despite the nationalisation of the pits, which saw great benefits for the miners, also saw the run-down of coal. Partly this was the closure of hundreds of small pits, or merging of smaller pits around one larger capacity shaft. But mostly it was the era of oil, increasingly used for power generation in stations designed to operate with minimum labour costs, paralleled with the advent of diesel or electric locomotives and the demise of coal-powered steam trains.

In conditions of falling demand for coal, miners' wages fell back compared with earnings elsewhere. The battle for jobs and wages, against falling demand for coal, was an unequal struggle for the NUM.

Nevertheless, advances were made – not, as one might have expected, in the more militant areas of Scotland and South Wales, but in the more productive

and strategically more important South Yorkshire coalfield, under the leadership of Jock Kane from the Armthorpe pit (whose village was to become the nearest this country has been to a police state, during the '84/'85 strike). The 1955 strike of the Doncaster panel of pits was the spark which laid the basis for a challenge to the rightwing-dominated Yorkshire Area NUM, and for Arthur Scargill to lead the Area and then the NUM nationally. This strike gave confidence to the miners, and gradually the NUM found its feet again, though still unable to prevent pit closures. Having said that, there was full employment, and not everyone relished working down the pit.

The key to the NUM going onto the offensive was the '72 and '74 national pay strikes, which were fully supported in all areas, including Nottinghamshire. It is salutary for modern workers to be reminded what those strikes achieved – and how. Beforehand pit workers had no underground lavatory facilities and no work clothes, just helmets and boots. The pits had got deeper, and the cutting faces extended further from the pit bottom, yet miners were not paid for underground travelling time on the man-riders. Modern working conditions had passed mining by. The success of the strikes created the conditions for a deluge of concessions to put the situation right.

In the 1972 face-to-face meeting at 10 Downing Street between Edward Heath and the NUM executive (the era of the derided 'beer and sandwiches'), the right-wingers limited themselves to snaffling fags from the desk supplies. The communists, however, recognising that Heath was on the run, piled on new demands to bring miners' conditions into the 1970s, demands which the public could never believe were necessary in that

## Look Back in Anger: The Miners' Strike in Nottinghamshire 30 Years On

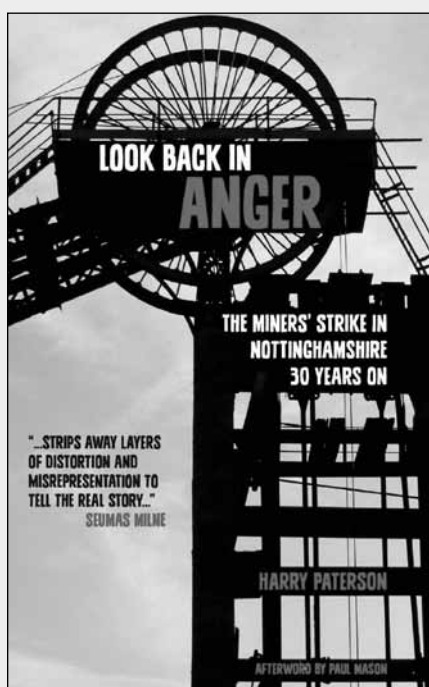
By HARRY PATERSON  
(Five Leaves, Nottingham, 2014, 298 pp,  
pbk, £9.99. ISBN 978-19-07-86995-2)

day and age, and which Heath and later Wilson were keen to accept, anything to end the strike. And how were the strikes won? By the flying pickets which, according to Scargill, were initiated by the communist Jock Kane.

The purpose of my reviewing this period is that it was not just over pay. The rising militancy had set the stage, in 1966, for the National Coal Board (NCB) to be forced to concede the Power Loading Agreement (PLA). This was no esoteric mining procedure, but the basis for unifying conditions for all mineworkers – a prerequisite for unity within the industry.

The PLA was inaugurated through a series of wage increases over 5 years, which each year gave a good rise to Nottinghamshire miners, but a larger one to all others, until all miners would be equal at the end of the 5 years. The industry was to be treated as a whole. It would produce the coal required. The economics would be adjusted between the coalfields so that profits from advantaged areas would supplement the earnings of older areas, and enable all miners to earn the national rate – the antithesis of Thatcherism.

The PLA was the culmination of decades of work by communists and the broad left in mining. Paterson deals well with its introduction, though the dynamics of these struggles are less graphic than those for the era on which his book is based. He portrays the PLA just as one factor in the build-up to the '84/'85 strike; but his description of the NUM's struggle against the NCB to defend the PLA lacks the bite of the rest of his narrative. The determination of the NCB to break the miners' unity deserves a book in itself. Suffice to say, the NCB won, and Nottinghamshire returned to its position of top earnings.



Paterson was not a miner himself, and is too young to have been involved anyway. He is not a social scientist, nor a labour movement historian. Perhaps his analyses and accounts seem all the fresher for that? But where his personal knowledge falls short, he exhaustively mines other people's – often to good effect – though sometimes his reliance on others leads him to fail to recognise the slant which others put on events and, more particularly, on personalities.

His main source for analysis of policy-making within the NUM, and of the tactics and strategies pursued outside Nottinghamshire, is Dave Douglass, who was a lifetime Durham and Yorkshire pit activist, and who has emerged as the TV and media spokesman for veterans of that epic struggle. Dave is a man of enormous experience politically and industrially. He is analytical and he has displayed notable courage both on the picket-line and in promoting his political understanding into the broader mining arena. His three books of autobiography contain a wealth of information about mining, international solidarity, class consciousness – and, it must be said, about a life of sexual exploits which range widely and in depth! They are also a mine of information about the huge number of leftist sects of which Dave Douglass has been a prominent member. He sings as well!

Young enough to have aimed

for national leadership in the era of communists Jock Kane, Sammy Taylor and Frank Watters, Dave was by-passed by more broadly-based candidates, which Douglass, as an extreme left himself, attributes to Watters' machinations.

Having said that, this reviewer holds Douglass in high regard – especially in retrospect, when his highly-charged class perspectives have been vindicated. And given that neither his position, nor ours of maximum unity, succeeded in holding off defeat, perhaps Douglass is more prepared to recognise his role as NUM, rather than as anarcho-syndicalist. His descriptions of work underground are graphic and show a great grasp of men, machinery, geology and social interplay in a dangerous occupation.

Why all this on Douglass? Because of anti-communism, which I'm sure Douglass would disavow, but which readers today of Paterson's book will not read in the same context as would Douglass, or myself. Paterson is not at all overtly anti-communist. Quite the contrary, he recognises it as a weapon against working class unity; however an unwitting, almost accidental, anti-communism characterises his accounts. There are many generous respects paid to individual communist miners, but their party affiliations are not mentioned. Where, however, a lapse from communist ideals is alleged, the victim has his party ties exposed.

A notable example of unnecessary labelling of communists occurs where Paterson deals with the establishment of the 'Spencer' union – a company union set up by a class-collaborating Labour MP in Nottinghamshire after the 1926 coal lock-out. The author writes that a miner who left the Nottinghamshire Miners' Association, part of the MFGB, to join the Spencer union, was a





## BOOK REVIEW

communist. That might have been so, but the author's understanding is amiss here. If that switch was all there was to it, the lad was not being a communist, if he ever had been. On the other hand many miners after '26 had to join the Spencer union to get a job, and paid into the MFGB as well. Contrarywise, the man who more than any other was instrumental in breaking the Spencer union – which in turn facilitated the old federal MFGB becoming the national union, the NUM – was a communist, Mick Kane. Later elected a full-time official of Derbyshire Area of the NUM, Mick had led a hard-fought 6 month-long strike for union recognition in the Nottinghamshire pit Harworth in 1936, following the victimisation of MFGB members. So crucial did the state regard it to protect the Spencer union that Kane was charged with riot and sent down for two years' hard labour. The Christmas 1936 issue of *Tribune* had on its front page a call not to forget class-war prisoners – with Mick Kane's photo centre top, page 1, flanked by Ernst Thälmann of the German Communist Party and the American, Tom Mooney. For Paterson to have been told this historical landmark, without mentioning Kane's party, is rather shocking.

Douglass is quoted as condemning Scargill's insensitivity over a house purchase. Quite so – but Douglass uses the phrase 'an alleged communist' to describe Scargill. How so? It is true that Scargill learned much from communists – from his days in Barnsley YCL (not mentioned in Paterson's book) and from communists Jock Kane, Tommy Degan and others. But whereas Scargill has question marks over the wisdom of his housing purchases, the leading communist Mick McGahey had none; and when Jock Kane was elected to full-time office in the union, he refused to leave his Coal Board house in Armthorpe to take an NUM house, preferring to remain in the long row, in a cottage with only an outside lavatory, where his members lived. They were communists.

In fact Arthur had an ambivalent attitude to the Communist Party. Whilst not endorsing the *Morning Star*, he must have recognised the importance of that daily voice, unique in the press, in support of the strike and facilitating

in every way solidarity, fund raising, benefits, support for arrested pickets, dissemination of information of all sorts.

On the other hand the growing weakness of the Soviet Union as a beacon in the world, the diminishing role of manufacturing industry in Western Europe, together with the rise of white-collar non-union professions, led to near-fatal divisions in the Communist Party. The then industrial organiser Pete Carter, despite having a fine record himself in the building trade, was clearly defeatist, failing to see the class realities of the strike, and seemed paralysed. General secretary Gordon MacLennan was trying to keep the 'Euro-communist' wing on board. Bert Ramelson, the Party's former industrial organiser, who knew Scargill well, was brought out of retirement to represent the Party's position to Scargill – but we appear to have no first-hand record of what he said. And, after the strike, Arthur made a shocking and totally unjustified attack on the Party at a public meeting in the presence of Ida Hackett.

Now Ida *is* listed as a communist in this book, as well she might be! Ida was awarded honorary membership of the NUM for her role in mobilising women's support groups among Nottinghamshire miners' wives. The daughter of a miner herself, Ida recalled her childhood, with her father being on strike in 1926. She was a fearless supporter of the NUM in Notts. Her standing in the Nottinghamshire movement among councillors, and against the pro-UDM MP, provided a conduit for these newly awakened women activists as to whom to trust, whom to draw into the struggle, how to break out of the pit villages into the nation as a whole and internationally. The role of communists in the mining areas, especially in Nottinghamshire, was exemplary, and for Arthur to denigrate it was unpardonable. Paterson, regrettably, hasn't the background to detect these anti-communist nuances.

I could go on: in Nottinghamshire, leading communist miners are mentioned, but without party affiliations. Fair enough, they were fighting in the NUM against Thatcher and the NCB. Fair enough, except that any alleged irregularity seems to justify the appellation communist, even where it is erroneous.

There is the additional point, of which Paterson seems unaware. The Communist Party had from the 1950s into the 1970s deployed full-time organisers in the coalfield areas. In the Notts/Derbyshire coalfield Fred Westacott built up a viable area committee, wholly political, but drawing in many miners. So successful was he that at the time the Irishman, Joe Whelan was elected Area Secretary, the Party had three very able potential candidates, each with high standing in their own pit and in the Notts NUM as a whole. And it had the discipline for two to withdraw in favour of Joe. By the '84/'85 strike, some of these men were retired, but their influence is shown in that the most militant Notts pits were where they had worked and represented their fellows.

Paterson spends much of his reportage on Linby pit, but it appears that his knowledge is restricted to the '84/'85 period. Linby pit banner has a photo of Joe Whelan at its centre. Joe's election to high office in 1977 didn't come out of the blue – in 1962 he had been elected Area Agent against a leaflet campaign by the Labour Party machine "Stop the Notts Area being controlled by Communists. Keep Whelan out". So the miners certainly knew whom and what they were electing. As a member of the Party's Linby pit branch, Joe was mentored by Frank Ellis, who had fought as an International Brigader in Spain, and who largely drafted the *Linby Manifesto*, which became the programme of the left in the Notts pits for many years.

It is a great pity that Paterson seems not to have read Fred Westacott's autobiography *Shaking the Chains*, whose pages 279-296 are a fascinating description of recent mining history in Nottinghamshire.

I have spent much of this review exposing this anticommunism, not because I am a communist, proud of the work of communists in this heroic strike, but because this book is important, as an historic record. It will be relied on as an authoritative analysis in future studies undertaken with even less intimate knowledge than Paterson has. It has therefore been necessary for me to extend this review to deal with these canards.

Moving on, the first thing to say – and Paterson makes this entirely clear – is that Nottinghamshire is not a pariah area



of the NUM. It was a battle ground, by the state against the miners, and within the NUM.

I recall travelling into Nottingham on a Sunday morning immediately before the strike took hold, before the Yorkshire pickets descended. We were held up as a huge convoy of police wagons, all with massive steel grids, were driven through, at speed, against the traffic lights. The message to Notts was all too clear – *we're in charge here*.

True the Nottinghamshire ballot, itself a bone of contention, and only held as a strike-breaking initiative, produced only 26% for the strike. Yet eight of the twenty-seven pits registered over a third and up to a half for the strike. Notts had a substantial left and communist support in the NUM. A tragedy was that the above-mentioned Joe Whelan, NUM Area general secretary, had died in September 1982. Joe was charismatic, popular and courageous. Henry Richardson, who took on Joe's mantle, was raw and inexperienced, yet it is a tribute to him that he was indefatigable in defence of his members, and stood out bravely to the end.

There are those who, recognising the importation of MacGregor and his US methods, recall the fate of the murdered Joseph Yablonski, when US miners rose against their collaborationist leaders; and who likewise felt disquiet about the never-revealed cause of death of Dr David

Kelly over Iraq and the supposed weapons of mass destruction; who then in flights of fancy put two and two together over Joe Whelan and make .... Whatever, the loss of Joe in 1982 was incalculable, since his presence in the angry mass meetings in the pit canteens would have bolstered the pit militants' morale. Joe it was, who on being introduced to Ted Heath in No 10 in 1974, greeted him with "Hello, sailor!"

All NUM areas had their battles – over picketing, travel restraints, etc, Nottinghamshire included. Notts NUM loyalists however had battles on all fronts. Funding had been lost to the UDM – the breakaway Union of Democratic Miners. They were denied facilities in the Miners' Welfares. They faced confrontations in the shops, in the street, in the clubs and within their families. Violence by scabs was never investigated – even when a picket was killed. Any confrontation or violence which could be blamed on a picket led to instant dismissal. Nottinghamshire miners had their solidarity, but it was an embattled solidarity, of minorities in their own villages.

But they did break out of this, men and women, going to the four corners of the country and far beyond, for food, clothing, donations and political support. And they fought the battles on enemy territory – arguing within the rump of the NUM for NUM policy and solidarity, as the majority, taking with

them the finances and offices, passed to the UDM; arguing to expose the shadowy forces of the UDM's backers, and the far-from-shadowy forces of the police, magistracy, and the media. They fought the Social Security system, which Thatcher converted into a weapon against the families of strikers.

This strike was an eye-opener to most miners. Many miners and miners' wives became politicised, no less in Notts than elsewhere. The difference was that elsewhere solidarity within the villages was of the whole community, and so held waverers in check. In Nottingham the narrower base of that solidarity meant that their strikers needed courage and determination of a higher order.

The struggles of those heroic strikers in the Nottinghamshire coalfield are faithfully recorded in this book, without 'objectivity', 'balance' and 'non-partisanship'. Yet the book *is* objective: the strikers' heroism is a factor in the situation which mere number-counting fails to recognise. It is loyal to the strikers, and to the strike leaders, Scargill in particular, for the predictions he made, the denials he received, and for the vindication, bitter though it was, which was his when the pits closed.

There are minor criticisms – Paterson's emphasis is on Linby pit, though there were similar experiences in Blidworth, Bolsover, Creswell and Sherwood, at least. A deeper criticism would be that the role of the *Morning Star* is not recognised in the book. Not only was the paper supplied free to all miners' activists, breaking down their isolation, but it also provided daily reports of what was being done and could be done in solidarity countrywide.

Paterson is to be congratulated on making all this intelligible, interesting, and entertaining. He has a nice line in irony, and his caustic turns of phrase expose facile dishonesty where a straight rebuttal would not. In particular, I welcome the fact that the Nottinghamshire publisher, Five Leaves Publications, should have produced this, so well, and at such an affordable price. They have an interesting portfolio, which does not usually extend to such overtly political work. The book carries a much deserved and generous endorsement from Seumas Milne and an afterword by Paul Mason.

## BOOK REVIEW

# Challenging war through ‘ambiguous

Review by John Ellison

AS THE 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War draws near, contemporary anti-war literature, which responded to that catastrophe created by rival imperialisms, demands remembrance. No great British work of fiction emerged to stand up to the war in all its awfulness. But in the aftermath of the collapse – as hostilities ended – of the Habsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire, one such work emanated from a Czech writer and should continue to be read and celebrated: Jaroslav Hašek’s extraordinary, magnificent, over-long yet unfinished *The Good Soldier Švejk*. This is an introduction to that great work for the uninitiated, and an enthusiastic tribute.

Hašek uses satire – in particular Švejk’s over-the-top enthusiasm for obeying authority – in order repeatedly to expose the absurdity and hypocrisy of the military, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the church.<sup>1</sup> Given this, and the fact that the early scenes of the book take place in the Czech capital Prague, it is not surprising that Švejk is regarded as a Czech national hero. But the themes of the book are of universal significance, and Bertold Brecht’s play, *Schweik in the Second World War*, attempted to take them forward into the fascist era: “The new rulers have even more grandiose and all-embracing plans than the old, which makes it even harder for today’s Little Man

to remain more or less alive.”<sup>2</sup>

*Švejk* was slow to be accessible to English readers. Its first English appearance was in abridged form in 1930. It reappeared in October 1939 as a Penguin Special. The first full, unexpurgated text, translated by Cecil Parrott (with Josef Lada’s immortal illustrations dotted along its course) was published in 1973. Spilling over with raciness and vitality all the way, it spans the period between the assassination of emperor Franz Joseph’s nephew, the Archduke Ferdinand, and the middle years of the war. Parrott was to top up his translation with a biography of Hašek, *The Bad Bohemian*,<sup>3</sup> which seems well-researched and illuminating about its subject as far as it goes.

At the moment of the assassination of the Archduke, Švejk is making some sort of a living selling dogs, ramping up their value by forging pedigree certificates. His first adventure begins when he arrives in a Prague pub. His contribution to discussion there about the Archduke’s demise feeds the suspicions of plain clothes State Security officer Bretschneider, who is ready to arrest anybody for the slightest signs of political dissent. Švejk suggests that Ferdinand should have been still fatter than he was, for then he would have had a stroke long before, thus neatly escaping later assassination. Disrespect for the emperor? But Švejk’s insists ardently on his patriotism. “If the

balloon went up today”, he tells Bretschneider, “I’d go as a volunteer and serve His Imperial Majesty to the last drop of blood.”

Švejk immediately throws doubt on his own loyalty declaration, for he goes on to say there must be war with the Turks, and that the Germans will side with the Turks, and that “You can’t find bigger bastards anywhere.” On this basis Bretschneider arrests an unflappable Švejk for high treason. “And thus it was”, comments the author, “that the good soldier Švejk intervened in the great war in his own sweet, charming way.” This was the first of many scrapes for Švejk, whose anti-war and anti-government outlook takes a very special form indeed.

From police headquarters Švejk is taken to a lunatic asylum, and then back to police headquarters, which is, says the author, pervaded by a “spirit of alien authority”. Hašek announces, without pulling punches: “With the exception of a few people who were ready to admit that they were sons of a nation which had to bleed for interests completely alien to it, police headquarters presented the finest collection of bureaucratic beasts of prey, to whom galls and gallows were the only means of defending the existence of the twisted clauses of the law.” Just before arriving at the door of the headquarters building Švejk adds to the grounds of his arrest by

shouting out to a crowd in the street: “Save our Emperor Franz Joseph! We shall win this war!” He is then confronted with the accusation that he has applied irony to his patriotic appeal, proving him to be an anti-patriot. The charges against him are faced with the difficulty that they rely on interpretation. As Eric Hobsbawm wrote in *The Age of Extremes*<sup>4</sup>, Švejk challenges the war through “ambiguous buffoonery”.

As he has begun, so he continues. His primary weapon, in the face of both civilian and military oppression, is the spoken word, in the form of a bottomless reservoir of distracting anecdotes, some short, some extensive, some plausibly derived from real-world knowledge, some patently flights of fancy. They reveal an astonishing fertility of imagination on the author’s part, and a remarkable ability to weld them into narrative and interaction between his characters.

One episode consists of a clash between Švejk and an odious Lieutenant Dub, who had been, in civilian life, a schoolmaster and teacher of Czech. Even then, says Hašek, “he manifested an unusual alacrity for expressing his loyalty to the crown on all possible occasions.” Not blessed with imagination himself, Dub is live bait for Švejk’s diversionary tactics. As the battalion moves closer to the Galician frontier, at one point Švejk is instructed by the officer, Lieutenant Lukáš,



# buffoonery'

## The Good Soldier Švejk: And His Fortunes in the World War

By JAROSLAV HAŠEK  
(Penguin Modern Classics, 784 pp,  
pbk, 2005 reprint, £10.99.  
ISBN: 978-014-044991-4)



whom he serves as batman, to obtain, clandestinely, a bottle of cognac. Švejk achieves this, but is then accosted, the cognac semi-concealed under his tunic, by the unpleasant Lieutenant Dub. Seeing the bottle's outline, Dub requires its production. Švejk shows it to him. It is labelled "Cognac", but Švejk explains that although it previously contained cognac it now contains water. Dub, "smiling devilishly", suggests that if it is water, Švejk should down it right away. The challenge is taken up, and the bottle's contents are soon inside Švejk. He then discards the empty bottle in a nearby pond, stating calmly, "that water really had a taste of iron". With Dub speechless and defeated, Švejk returns to his post without unsteadiness, though in need of sleep.

At another stage in the narrative, aboard a troop train, a railwayman is in conversation with Švejk while both are adjacent to the emergency brake handle. When both have their hands on that item, the railwayman explains how it works. Suddenly the train comes to a halt, and Švejk indignantly denies having activated the brake. The incident causes him, owing to the investigation set on foot, to be separated from the train, releasing thereby a new scenario for adventures.

Švejk's eccentricity is rivalled by that of other closely drawn characters. Thus a major-general attaches great importance to the

relationship between the rations of the soldiers and their regular use of latrines. Back to Hašek: "To the general everything was so simple. The road to military glory ran according to the recipe: at 6 pm the soldiers get goulash and potatoes, at half past eight the troops defæcate it in the latrines and at nine they go to bed. In the face of such an army the enemy flees in panic."

The major-general's obsessive outlook on the question is reflected in his visit to the latrines at the moment the soldiers, including Švejk, have been dispatched there to use them. "So now the soldiers sat neatly on their haunches, one beside the other over the dug-up pits, like swallows on telephone wires when they prepare for their autumn flight to Africa." Švejk now plays a master stroke. Observing that he and his fellow soldiers, while squatting, are failing to acknowledge the presence of a senior officer, he roars out for all to stand and salute. "Two sections with their trousers down and their belts round their necks rose over the latrines."

Yet while the major-general "smiles affably", oblivious of the deliberately ludicrous disruption, naked fury towards Švejk flows out of Lieutenant Dub.

*The Good Soldier Švejk* is tragi-comic in essence. The horrors of the war, introduced in measured amounts, are never far away from the comedy, and

Hašek's irony can be savage. As the book approaches its concluding vicissitudes, the author's camera rests on a brigadier who enjoys making speeches but is not effective in doing so, muddling everything up. Referring to the letters to the soldiers received from home, he describes their senders as "your dear bereaved ones", and infers that "if anyone had both his legs torn off by a shell it would be a beautiful thing for him to die with the thought that his field post number was 72, and that perhaps a letter was lying there from home, from his dear ones far away, with a package containing a piece of smoked pork, bacon and home-made biscuits."

As a character Švejk is irrepressible, individualised to the point of uniqueness, and profoundly devious behind his surface appearance of innocence, amiability and candour. As might be expected, he has a good deal in common with his creator, whose life was as disorderly as it was creative. This included activism in the anarchist movement, spells of custody, a period as a prisoner-of-war of the Russian army, membership of the Bolshevik Party and of the Red Army (achieving appointment as a town's Deputy Commandant) following the Revolution. His marriage had earlier ended with his fathering a child, who was aged 11 when Hašek, weakened by his lifestyle and experiences,

died shortly before his 40<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1923. He had completed only 3 of the planned 6 volumes of Švejk.

A memorable occasion, when Hašek out-Švejk'd Švejk, occurred at the beginning of the war when he acted in, and directed, a hoax on the Habsburg empire. Signing himself into a Prague hotel under a Russian-sounding name, and explaining he was looking into the activities of the Austrian general staff, he was an immediate target of the security men, who imagined a big Russian fish had swum into their net. The name under which Hašek had signed in read backwards, in Czech, "Kiss my arse". He was, he claimed, just a concerned citizen monitoring police preparedness. In custody as a result for five days, Hašek must have regarded this detention as a small price to pay for upstaging officialdom. A Švejk moment it truly was.

### Notes and References

- 1 <http://libcom.org/library/good-soldier-švejk-jaroslav-hašek>.
- 2 See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open\\_Marxism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Marxism) -Ed.
- 3 C Parrott, *The Bad Bohemian*, Bodley Head, 1978.
- 4 E Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*, Abacus, 1995.

BOOK REVIEW

# Absolute commitment to the working class

Review by Liz Payne

THIS COLLECTION of essays “proposes that Zetkin played a significant role in addressing the fundamental questions of class struggle and war and peace that dominated socialist politics in the early twentieth century” (p 8); yet Marilyn Boxer, in her introduction, poses the question why, given that Clara Zetkin was at one time arguably the best known woman socialist in the world, she is little known today. It is indeed a very significant question.

Zetkin (1857-1933) was a woman of remarkable talent and understanding and with absolute commitment to the working class. She was a renowned communist leader and life-long feminist. She was a founder of the Socialist (Second) International, and of the Socialist Women’s International (SWI) in 1907. It was in Copenhagen in the summer of 1910 at the second conference of the SWI that Clara Zetkin proposed the inauguration of International Women’s Day (IWD) – to celebrate the achievements of working women, and to press for their demands in every sphere. This is now celebrated annually on 8 March in scores of countries across the world.

Zetkin went on to campaign tirelessly for peace before and during World War I. At an extraordinary congress of the Second International at Basle in 1912, she made her famous appeal to proletarian women of all countries – reiterated at Berne in 1915 – to make “war against war”. She was a founder-member and leader of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) in 1919, and later represented it in the Reichstag; and she went on to play a key role as a member of the presidium of the Communist (Third) International.

This small volume contains five essays, together with the introduction by

Marion Boxer and an afterward by John Partington. The first four essays explore Zetkin’s work and influence in different countries – France, Britain, Russia and Germany. The final contribution is on Zetkin in the international arena.

In *Clara Zetkin and France: Eight Year Exile: Eighty Year Influence*, Marilyn Boxer considers the time between

autumn 1882 and 1890 that Zetkin spent in exile in Paris and how this affected her own development and that of the left in France. She made a major and lasting contribution at the founding conference of the Second International in Paris in 1889, where she put forward what was to form the basis of the working class position on ‘the women’s



## Clara Zetkin: National and International Contexts

Edited by M J BOXER and  
J S PARTINGTON  
(Socialist History Society Occasional  
Publications series No 31, London, 2013)



question'. Boxer charts the continuance of Zetkin's inspirational influence long after she had ceased to live in France, particularly via Louise Saumoneau against bourgeois feminists. Boxer concludes that Zetkin had an ambivalent influence, accusing her of sowing division among women by insisting on the class basis of feminism. This is to miss the point: class divisions were not of Zetkin's making and she championed the working class with integrity. This and this only was the basis of her feminism.

John Partington explores the influence on wartime Britain of Zetkin's role at the congresses in Basle in 1912, an assessment made on the basis of examination of socialist and left press coverage. Her stance on 'war against war' and women's role in waging it, and her insistence that the unity of the working class must transcend the battlefields, led to her acknowledgement as a leader of socialist thought in Britain.

Natalia Novikova writes on *Clara Zetkin and Russia, 1900s-1930s*. She traces Zetkin's links with the left in Russia from her youth, including through an early friendship forged in Leipzig and through her exiled revolutionary husband, Ossip Zetkin. She credits her, from the early 1900s, with the development of Alexandra Kollontai as a Marxist feminist theorist and activist. Zetkin was close to the leadership of the Soviet Union, including Lenin, and spent increasing time in Russia after her election to the presidium of the Third International. She died there in 1933 and is interred in the Kremlin Wall in Moscow. Such was her stature that many roads and buildings were named after her; but her influence and even her memory have not survived the collapse of the Soviet Union. Novikova attributes this to the

removal during the later 1930s of those who would have fostered her memory, and notes that in the so-called 'revival of feminism' in post-Soviet Russia, Zetkin is still largely ignored.

Florence Hervé's shorter essay *Defamed in the West, Idealised in the East? On the Reception of Clara Zetkin in Germany after 1945*, highlights the contrast in the way Zetkin was viewed in the Federal Republic of Germany and in the German Democratic Republic prior to the unification of the two states. She casts the two positions as ones of "detraction and hagiography" respectively and shows how Zetkin has now been largely erased from consciousness in the former GDR. She states that Zetkin has yet to be rediscovered in post-unification Germany but there is little by way of explanation of how or why she came to be forgotten.

The final chapter by Susan Zimmermann, *Clara Zetkin Goes International: The Socialist Women's International and Unequal European Global Order, 1907-1917*, focuses on the related aspects of representational politics and peace and war within the Socialist Women's International. It is perhaps the most instructive essay in the collection, in that it brings alive Zetkin's work within the time-frame of a crucial decade and across national boundaries. It shows her against the backdrop of socialist internationalism taking shape in the shadow of oncoming imperialist conflict and then in the midst of war,

insisting throughout (and to the end of her life) that workers must not do battle with each other and that women have a vital role to play in demanding and procuring peace.

This volume is to be welcomed for its timeliness, arising as it did from the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Zetkin's birth and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of International Women's Day, and for its potential to reignite interest in Zetkin. However, while each essay is interesting in its own right and 'life facts' can be gleaned, the five do not sit together easily as a collection, with often overlapping subject matter that strays well beyond the title of each chapter. Zetkin's legacy is described by all authors but is very insufficiently analysed, and it is clear from all the contributions that there is so very much more work to be done. This means that the question posed by Boxer at the outset remains unanswered.

It is no accident that the life, work and legacy of Clara Zetkin have been largely ignored, forgotten or buried, across much of the world. This is not solely because, as a woman, she has been air-brushed out of history, though this is undoubtedly a factor. In her day she was viewed with trepidation; Kaiser Wilhelm II castigated her as "the most dangerous witch of the German Empire". No less today, her contribution to the struggle against imperialism, exploitation and war and in particular to understanding of the central role of working class women in this struggle is not something that the exponents of capitalism and its mass media would want widely disseminated.

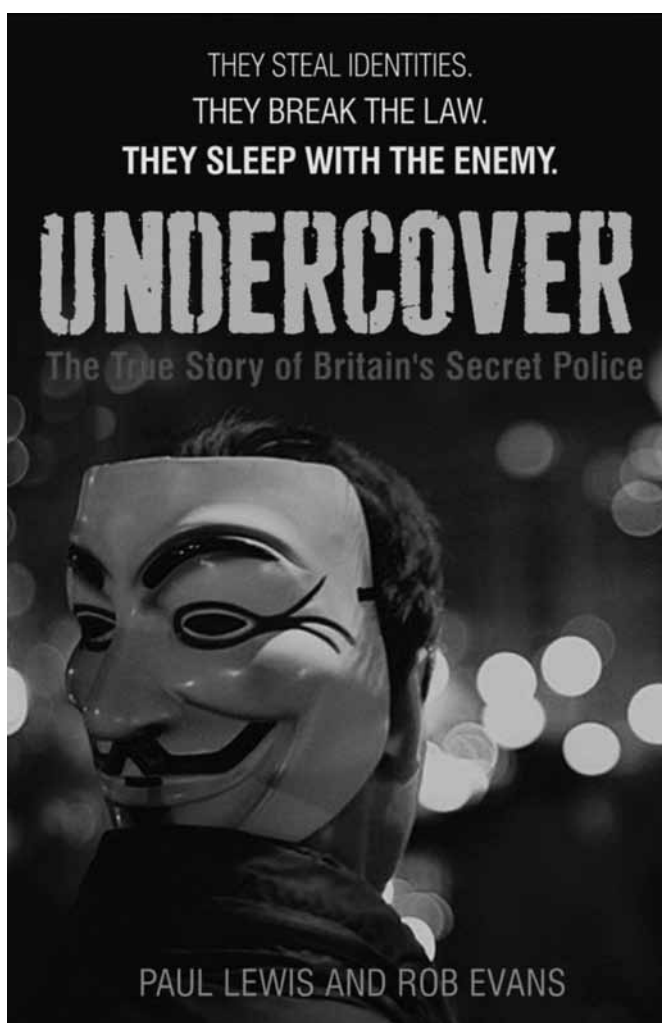
Her potential to inspire is truly dangerous to contemporary capitalism and for this reason much needs to be done to again bring to life the memory of this remarkable communist.



BOOK REVIEW

# Lifting the lid just a little

Review by  
Andy Goodall



**Undercover: The True Story of Britain's Secret Police**

By ROB EVANS and PAUL LEWIS  
(Faber & Faber, London, 2013, 352 pp, pbk, £12.99. ISBN 978-0-571-30217-8)

THIS BOOK covers the story of Britain's undercover police. It was a fascinating read and I recommend it to all.

I am not sure why I was surprised on reading the opening page of the book, which covered the scenes of GDR citizens rifling through Stasi papers, searching for the spies amongst them. The book quickly links this scene to an undercover policeman in London saying, "You do realise, this is going to happen to us one day. We're going to open a book and read all about what we've been up to."

So, is this book the book they all feared? Probably not.

The book tells us that the Special Demonstrations Unit was set up in 1968 with 10 officers and a £1 million budget. Apparently,

Harold Wilson so liked this idea he agreed to fund the department from the Treasury itself. These officers eventually became known as the 'Hairies', each of whose primary job was to become a different person and infiltrate targeted organisations. The number of officers had grown to 1,600 at the time of the book.

*Uncovered* is not an analysis of undercover work. The authors have

had no special access to secret documents and they would acknowledge that the activities of the extrajudicial force are far, far wider than the stories they cover. The book relies essentially on a couple of policemen and some victims coming forward and telling their stories. It is patently obvious that we know very little indeed of the greater part of the police's criminal activities.

The book mentions in

passing, but with no details, the spying on the anti-Vietnam war campaign, the Anti-Apartheid Movement, the International Marxist Tendency and a range of others. It mentions the Communist Party obliquely but nothing direct: this will require several books dedicated to us solely, come the day of our own Berlin Wall.

The stories *Uncovered* does tell in some detail are those with which the individual witnesses and specific police officers were involved. Typically, it appears that men (usually, though not exclusively) in their late 20s appear on the scene of animal rights, environmental, McLibel, anti-fascist, fascist organisations etc etc. They have some plausible story

about their appearance and lack of participation in their early 20s or late teens. They always seem to have a flexible job (gardener, part-time cleaner, etc) and access to transport, usually a van. They have cash and time. They plant the seed of their later disappearance (4 to 7 years later, if successful) – usually some story about living abroad due to death of mother or father, or generally feeling paranoid.

The book spends a lot of time detailing the psychological strain and practical problems facing the undercover officers in their work but also gives plenty of space, and real consideration, to the activist victims of this activity. Where the stories between the police and the activists differ, it is fairly easy for readers to identify who is lying or exaggerating – and, unsurprisingly, the police are frequently seen to be lying through their teeth.

The police officers who have come forward appear to have lied and exaggerated for their own personal benefit. I can imagine that at least one of them, Kennedy, who has hired Max Clifford, wants a Hollywood type of movie about his 'heroism'. Kennedy, who sold his story to the *Mail on Sunday*, pretended he was in hiding, claiming he feared for his life. The authors clearly do not believe a word he says on this issue and readers with an active brain cell will conclude likewise.

There is a short tale of suspicion by the International Marxist Group (IMG) that

one of their number was a police spy. They were, as it turned out, right. However, the interrogation in a pub consisted of their getting him drunk and asking more detailed questions. It appears that he passed, not least because they drank beer alongside him and were therefore less likely to identify flaws in the answers – lessons to be learned, for sure.

Last year, I read Ken Keable's excellent book, *London Recruits* – the secret undercover work of anti-apartheid activists on behalf of the African National Congress. The security around this proved essential, and we have no evidence that the police in Britain had any knowledge of this activity or had managed to insert an agent.

Mentioned in passing in the book is the growing corporate spying. At one point in the McLibel case, the police (via an undercover officer) and two separate private investigation firms (each hired by McDonald's without the other being informed) were all spying on each other.

It is obvious now that private corporate spies will be a bigger feature in the future, and as such are unlikely to be limited to late 20s in age. The current crisis of capitalism, alongside the enormous power and reach of corporations, means that the use of such practices is likely to become an industrial process.

This is just one more chapter in the class struggle.

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## BOOK REVIEW

# In combat against positivism and vulgar materialism

Review by Lars Ulrik Thomsen

THE ANTHOLOGY *Dialectics of the Ideal* was published in 2014, and it is an introduction both to the main ideas in Ilyenkov's article of the same name, and also to his philosophical work as a whole.

The book is divided into three parts, opening with an introduction to Ilyenkov's article by Alex Levant, which puts it into a historical context, then the article *Dialectics of the Ideal* itself. This work is in a way the crowning achievement of Ilyenkov's output that began in the 1950s. It amalgamates the experience he gained in the books *The Dialectics of the Abstract and the Concrete in Marx's Capital* and *Dialectical Logic: Essays on its History and Theory*.<sup>1</sup>

The second section, 'Contexts', contains an interview with Sergey Mareev, who was a close friend and colleague of Ilyenkov's. Following this, there is an article on Ilyenkov's work with psychology and intelligence, and the section closes with an account of Spinoza's influence on Ilyenkov.

The third and final part, 'Commentaries', addresses different approaches to Ilyenkov's philosophy and the tasks we face in the present: the concept of the ideal from a semiotic perspective; an article on Ilyenkov's book on Marx's *Capital* and the current debate on value-form; and finally a contribution aiming to demonstrate the relevance of Ilyenkov's work to the project of 'Open Marxism'.<sup>2</sup>

Ilyenkov's article was written about 1975, but first translated in its entirety in 2009 by Alex Levant. It comprises a substantially revised view of materialist philosophy, and aroused fierce opposition when Ilyenkov tried to get it published. In the article Ilyenkov shows how positivism and vulgar materialism

had taken hold in wide circles of the academic community in the Soviet Union in those years.

Ilyenkov continues with a presentation of classical German philosophy and illustrates how Hegel transformed and maintained the gains of Plato, Kant and others in idealistic philosophy. Hegel was the first philosopher who associated the formation of concepts *directly to reality*, although as a realisation of the Absolute Idea. These achievements in philosophy enabled Marx's and Engels' critical explanation of Hegel's dialectics, and paved the way for the greatest philosophical progress in humanity's recent history. Ilyenkov examines how Marx, through his analysis of the value-form, explains objective reality independent of human consciousness.

What strikes me is how we have underestimated the interaction of the ideal with the material, and thus simplified the dialectical relationship between the two opposite categories. People cannot function without the ideal – either as individuals or as a collective. This is reflected in the continual progress of science and culture, attained within the working process.

In Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, there is a scene where Hamlet meets his father's ghost at the castle ramparts. Hamlet's soul is shaken and he has a strong suspicion that a crime has been committed against his father. This mental imbalance means that he is subject to mysticism and superstition, which is an idealistic reflection of reality. It is idealism in the form that we know from religion, where one is able to 'cross' the borderline between life and death.

Ilyenkov's explanation of the

relationship between the material and the ideal is of an entirely different character. He sees the ideal as a social consciousness, independent of the individual and thus as a material power, reflecting processes that are rooted in reality – be it economy, historical processes or experience that has been processed to collective consciousness. The main question over the relationship between idealism and materialism lies in whether we reflect real or imagined processes, and in our ability to distinguish the borderline between the two categories.

However, this is only one side of Ilyenkov's work on dialectical logic. The other side is his recommendation not to confuse the method of abstraction with the concrete analysis. Here he makes an admirable contribution to our understanding of Marxist theory, especially in the logic of *Capital*.

The article has tremendous potential for a renaissance of Marxism, because Ilyenkov's philosophical work can overcome much of the scepticism that characterised the attitude towards materialist philosophy, in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The question is, whether the editors are able to put Ilyenkov into the proper context, both in terms of his relationship with his colleagues at the philosophical institute in Moscow, and where it comes to understanding the relationship between the ideal and the material. There is a tendency in the book to counterpose dialectical materialism to Ilyenkov, and to some extent he himself contributed to this contradiction.

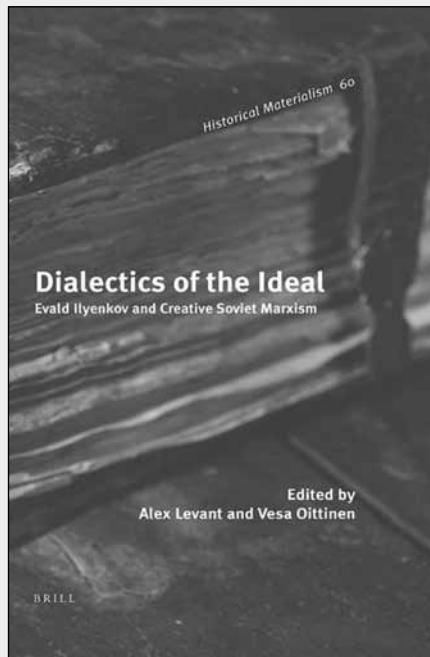
It is important to distinguish between *thinking about thinking* and the analysis of social issues. In the latter we may



## Dialectics of the Ideal: Evald Ilyenkov and Creative Soviet Marxism

Edited by A LEVANT  
and V OITTINEN

(Brill, Leiden, 2013, 221 pp, €99.00.  
ISBN 978-90-04-23097-2 (hbk), 978-  
90-04-24692-8 (e-book))



distinguish between different scientific disciplines, eg dialectical materialism and historical materialism. It is a tradition we have from the classics and it is very helpful in scientific work.

With an absolutist view on these questions, one gets an effusive [*überschwängliches*] (Dietzgen) picture of the dialectical relationship between the two categories. This was what Lenin discussed in *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, where he showed how the relationship between the material and the ideal is crucial.<sup>3</sup> We must avoid falling into the idealistic ditch and becoming a victim of vulgar materialism. It is this ditch that the editors end up in, to the detriment of a true understanding of Ilyenkov's contribution to philosophy.

No-one with sound knowledge of Marxism expects complete recipes from the philosophers; that is why "the educators must educate themselves"<sup>4</sup>. But there is a difference in how these

criticisms are implemented, and there is no doubt that the dialogue in the Soviet Union fell short of what one might expect in a socialist society, or in scientific research in general.

Ilyenkov's philosophy has the quality that it continues the tradition of the classics. It also helps to bring Marxism to a higher level, to meet the demands of *the scientific-technical revolution*. This means that our thinking has to be adapted to the new conditions. As Engels described it: "With each epoch-making discovery only in the natural sciences, it (dialectical materialism) must change its form."<sup>5</sup> This has nothing to do with revisionism, unless one does not understand Marxism

and consciously confuses the concepts.

In spite of all the difficulties Ilyenkov experienced in his lifetime, his philosophical work will go on living and contribute to further progress in many fields of epistemology and other sciences. There is still much work to be done, in order to process the results that he achieved.

### Notes and References

- 1 The two books were originally scheduled to be released together.
- 2 See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open\\_Marxism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Marxism) -Ed.
- 3 V I Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, Ch 4, Part 8, in *Collected Works*, Vol 14, pp 243-8.
- 4 K Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, No 3, in K Marx and F Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol 5, p 7.
- 5 Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of the Classical German Philosophy*, Part II, in K Marx and F Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol 26, p 369.

### Junk food: an irregular cartoon strip



# Letter to the Editor

From Andrew Northall

I THOUGHT readers of *Communist Review* might be interested to read some extracts about the Soviet Union written in a 1971 schoolchildren's geography textbook<sup>1</sup>, rediscovered as part of a recent house clearance.

Technically, this edition was published at the start of the period known as détente although in truth the Cold War, especially in ideology and the demonisation of the Soviet Union, never really went away.

I was struck however by the objectivity, clarity and sympathy with which it described the then Soviet Union, although using the word "Russia" in place of the USSR or Soviet Union.

"During the last forty years Russia (*sic*) has changed from a backward country with few factories into one of the greatest industrial nations of the world. The country is rich in natural resources: there are plentiful supplies of water power for making hydro-electricity, uranium for making atomic power, oil, coal, iron ore and other materials. Wool, cotton, grain and timber are produced in great quantity.

Many young Russians have trained as engineers and scientists and as a result the Russians are able to build fine tractors, lorries, trains, aeroplanes which fly non-stop from Moscow to New York, and rockets which can travel in outer space.

On a winter's day in Moscow the sky is often bright and cloudless and the air is clean and dry. The city is lit and heated mainly by electricity or natural gas. The only smoke in the city is from an occasional power station; there are no coal fires, and steam trains do not come into the city.

Like many Russian women, Mrs Beglov has a full time job. She works in a motor car factory where her husband is a foreman. The factory is owned by the state, as are all the factories, mines, forests, banks and railways in Russia.

Moscow's underground stations are almost like palaces. Many of them are built of white marble brought from the Ural mountains. Each station is different; the walls are decorated with paintings and marble statues, and magnificent chandeliers hang from the roofs.

At the weekend, cafés and stores are open, and the ballet, the puppet theatre and the circus are always crowded.

The Beglovs live in a new block of flats in the centre of Moscow. The rooms have double glass windows to keep out the cold and in the winter the flat is centrally heated. Every morning, gangs of men and women armed with crowbars break the ice from the pavements, and mechanical grabs tip the snow into the city's underground streams.

In summer, the temperature of Moscow is higher



than that of southern England. People swim in the park lakes, and water buses travel along the River Moskva. To escape the fierce heat, many Moscow workers rent a small log cabin in the pinewood suburbs outside Moscow, and travel to work by electric train.

During the summer, while their parents are working, Katya and Sasha live in a camp for the children of motor car workers.

All land in Russia belongs to the state. Most of the small farms in each district have been joined together to make large farms known as 'collectives'. The collective farm is really a village with the old boundary fences removed and with its own school, library and hospital.

The whole village helps during the harvest. The workers have their midday meal in the communal dining room, or hot dinners are taken to them by a travelling kitchen.

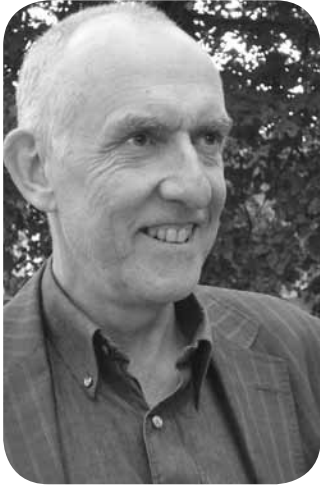
Most of the workers have a little land of their own and they may do what they like with the fruit and vegetables which they grow. In the country, the workers buy very little food as all the food they need is produced in their gardens or on the farm. They are given meat, eggs and milk as part of their wages.

In the hot dry Soviet Republics of Central Asia, more water is needed and, by changing the course of the rivers, Russian engineers are building a network of pipelines and irrigation canals. As soon as water has made the barren soil fertile, new vineyards, apricot orchards and cotton fields are planted."

I remember being quite inspired by these snippet descriptions of ordinary life in the enormous and varied Soviet Union and even as a young child thinking this was quite a sensible way to organise life.

## Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> J and D Gadsby, *Looking at the World*, Adam and Charles Black, London, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1971



# SOULFOOD

A regular literary selection

Selected by Mike Quille

## Fighting for the children of this world

THE LAST *Soul Food* column focused on Pablo Neruda. Here's a poem from another great South American communist poet, Cesar Vallejo.

### **Masses**

by Cesar Vallejo

When the battle was over,  
And the fighter was dead, a man  
came toward him  
And said to him: "Do not die, I  
love you so!"  
But the corpse, how sad! went  
on dying.

And two came near, and  
repeated it.  
"Do not leave us! Courage!  
Return to life!"  
But the corpse, how sad! went  
on dying.

Twenty arrived, a hundred,  
a thousand, five hundred  
thousand,  
Shouting: "So much love, and it can  
do nothing against death!"

But the corpse, how sad! went  
on dying.

Millions of persons stood  
around him,  
All with the same request: "Stay  
here, brother!"  
But the corpse, how sad! went  
on dying.

Then all the men on earth  
stood around him; the corpse  
looked at them sadly, deeply  
moved;  
He sat up slowly,  
Put his arms around the first  
man; started to walk ....

Surreal, surprising, imaginative, and soaked in that peculiarly South American sensibility which naturally allies left-wing politics and spirituality, Vallejo should really be the subject of a *Soul Food* column on his own. And perhaps he will be, one day. But for now, in order to complement the other articles in this issue, the poem is presented as the first of a few poems on the general themes of war, peace and internationalism, to fit

with the rest of this issue of *Communist Review*.

Expect difference, and listen out for similarity. The poems are from different periods, from different countries, and written in different styles; but on another level, they harmonise.

The title of Vallejo's poem was also the title of an American socialist monthly magazine. *The Masses* was published from 1911 to 1917, when it was closed down by the US Government for obstructing conscription. Here's a poem from the December 1914 edition.<sup>1</sup>

### **King of the Magical Pump**

by Charles W Wood

Oh, the loyalest gink with the  
royalest wink  
Is the King of the Magical Pump;  
Of the magical, tragical pump:  
The latest and greatest and  
right-up-to-datest  
And finest, divinest old I-am-the-  
State-ist  
Who ever held sway for a year  
and a day





In the Kingdom of Chumpetty-  
Chump.

And the magical pump in His  
Majesty's dump,  
That too, is a wonderful thing,  
A wonderful, thunderful thing.  
It's wonderful, blunderful,  
thunderful, plunderful,  
Cranky and yanky and get-out-  
and-under-ful:  
And what do you s'pose (if  
there's no one who knows)  
What it pumpetty-pumped for  
the King!

It pumped up his prunes and his  
new pantaloons  
And it pumped up his bibles and  
beer;  
His tribal old bibles and beer:  
For palaces, chalices, garters or  
gallusses,  
Or jeans for his queens or his  
Julias and Alices,  
The King of the Chumps, he just  
went to the pumps  
And whatever he wished would  
appear.

And the Chumpetty-Chumps  
who were pumping the  
pumps  
Which pumped up these thing-  
a-mum bobs,  
These thing-a-mum, jing-a-mum  
bobs,  
They humped it and jumped it  
and pumpetty-pumped it  
And fearfully, tearfully liked it or  
lumped it;  
While the King in his glee  
hollered "Bully for me!  
Ain't you glad that I gave you  
your jobs?"

Oh, the Chumpetty-Chumps  
were a wise lot o' gumps  
And they said a religious  
"Amen",  
A prodigious, religious "Amen".  
For ages these sages had had  
(it's outrageous)  
One jing-a-mum thing-a-mum  
each as their wages:  
And pray, who could say, if he  
cut off their pay,  
What on earth would become  
of them then?

But the King of the Chumps was  
a kindly old Umps  
And he paid them as much as he  
durst  
(as much as all such as he durst)

For humping and jumping and  
pumpy-pump-pumping  
Anything that a king could  
imagine their dumping:  
Till he said "Go to roost, we  
have over-produced  
And we've got to get rid of  
these first."

Then the Chumpetty-Chumps  
went to bumping the bumps  
In a tragic and thingum-less  
plight;  
In a thingum-less, jingum-less  
plight:  
They blubbered and lubbered  
and went to the cupboard –  
"No pumpee, no Chumpee"  
they said as they rubbered –  
Till the loving old King caught a  
thought on the wing  
Which was sure to set  
everything right.

Said the King of the Pumps to  
the Chumpetty-Chumps:  
"It is plain as the face on your  
nose,  
As the face on the base of your  
nose,  
The lesson this session of  
business depression  
Points out beyond doubt that  
foreign aggression  
Has caused a big slump in the  
work of the pump –  
So up men, and after your foes!"

Then in joy and in laughter, they  
upped and went after  
To fight for their country and  
King;  
For their pumpy old country  
and King:  
And dashing in, crashing in,  
bravely they're smashing in;  
(One jingum per dingum they  
get while they're cashing in)  
Until the Big Umps want to  
start up the Pumps:  
When they'll work for one  
thingum per ding.

Oh the loyalest Gink with the  
royalest wink  
Is the King of the Magical Pump;  
Of the magical, tragical pump:  
An oodle of boodle he's got by  
his noodle  
And umpty-nine Chumpties he's  
fed with flapdoodle –  
For we live for a thingum and  
die for a jingum  
In the Kingdom of Chumpetty-  
Chump.

Who says Marxists can't combine  
humour, political insight and poetic  
ability?

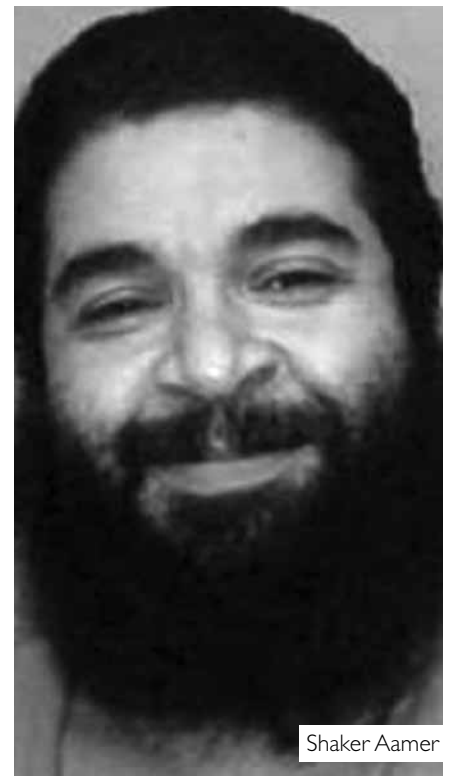
When he wrote the poem, Woods  
was probably thinking of Britain as the  
kingdom of Chumpetty-Chump. His  
own country would probably be the  
prime candidate now. Here's a poem  
from Shaker Aamer, a Saudi Arabian  
citizen and British resident who has  
been tortured and held in Guantanamo  
for over 12 years without charge. He is  
clearly still capable of irony.

### **They Fight for Peace** by Shaker Aamer

Peace, they say.  
Peace of mind?  
Peace on earth?  
Peace of what kind?

Is it just talk?  
Why do they argue?  
Is it so simple to kill?  
Is this their plan?

Yes, of course!  
They talk, the argue, they kill –  
They fight for peace.



George Bush admitted there was no  
evidence to justify keeping Aamer in  
prison.

Here are two Iraqi poems, starting  
with one about Bush.<sup>2</sup>



**Greeting Bush in Baghdad**

by Anon

*“This is a farewell kiss, you dog.” – Muntader al-Zaidi*

You are a guest in my country,  
unwanted surely, but still a  
guest.  
You stand before us waiting  
for praise, but how can we  
praise you?  
You come after your planes have  
rained death on our cities.  
Your soldiers broke down our  
doors, humiliated our men,  
disgraced our women.  
We are not a frontier town and  
you are not our marshal.  
You are a torturer. We know  
you force water down the  
throats of our prisoners.  
We have seen the pictures  
of our naked prisoners  
threatened by your snarling  
dogs.  
You are a maker of widows and  
orphans, a most unwelcome  
guest.  
I have only this for you, my left  
shoe that I hurl at your lost  
and smirking face,  
and my right shoe that I throw  
at your face of no remorse.

**The Needle**

by Hashem Shafeeq (translated  
by Sadek Mohammed)

She sat and darned a sock, a  
skirt,  
the threadbare curtains.

She drank her coffee in the  
shadows  
then stepped outside  
to examine the hem of her  
homeland.  
She saw the vast desert  
being torn like a dress.  
Undaunted, she twirled  
her needle till it twinkled,  
then set off to sew up the tears  
they had made in her country.

It’s one of those happy accidents  
of translation that “tears” has an  
appropriately double meaning in  
English.

In Iraq, there was military aggression  
by the main capitalist powers; in Greece,  
there is economic aggression by the same  
powers. Here are some poems from  
Greece.<sup>3</sup>

**Fatherland of the Times**

by George Douatzis

You did not think this was war  
for you couldn’t see the blood,  
the wounded,  
but you saw those, the dead  
bending over the garbage bins  
high noon in the heart of the city  
pleaders in the trash of  
shopping malls  
the hungry, the dead tellers  
begging  
you saw them

War I say, war  
with no ammunition and gunfire  
generals,  
the grey suits and the

white collars  
new aged computers used as  
heavy guns

War  
my refuge was sold  
your hands were sold  
dreams were sold  
voice, mouth were sold  
our existence was sold, you shall  
find it no more  
past and present alike,  
future, visions  
they all were sold

Is this the world we’ve created?  
Is this the one we’ve fought for?  
How can we look into our  
children’s eyes?

And please never forget  
that there is no greater guilt  
than our own tolerance

If you only knew with how  
little love  
the world could change ....

**Bearing Humanity’s Pain**

by Elsa Korneti

I stand amazed  
And look at myself  
Turned into what I always  
dreamed of

Slow and steady of step  
Faithful servant of law and order  
Dogged follower of the straight  
and narrow

I freeze into my assigned  
position

Rusty of joint  
I struggle to pick myself up  
when I fall

A key bores obstinately into my  
back

Never one to complain  
I endure all without a word  
Steady of sensibility  
Dead of tongue

I throw myself on the mercy  
Of those who scourge me,  
those who break me

Those who beat me, those who  
reject me

Just this, let it suffice me  
To be remembered now and  
forever

For that which I always dreamed  
of

For that which I have become  
A little Wind-Up Man



## Unexpectedly

by Lily Michaelides

Crisis bursts in everywhere.  
Her hair wafts in our faces.  
her heady perfume a smell of  
brothel  
she gazes snug and intense.

*The downhill streets of crisis.  
Balcony overlooking the valley of  
crisis.  
The escutcheon at the entry of  
crisis.*

Yet crisis, I reflect, is an abstract  
concept  
How could it vanquish the air,  
the mountains  
the sea, the sun?  
How can all that expansive light  
around us  
possibly belong to the crisis?

I disregard the warnings.  
I wear time in reverse, pluck its  
white  
temples, slap some red on its  
lips  
and surrender myself to your  
judgement.



Faiz Ahmed Faiz

Our next poem is by Faiz Ahmed Faiz, one of the most famous Urdu poets of Pakistan. It is dedicated to the young Iranians who gave their lives in protests in July 1952 when the Shah attempted to replace Mossadeq, the democratically elected prime minister, by an extreme reactionary. The protests succeeded in forcing the Shah to reinstate Mossadeq, together with his plans for nationalisation of the Iranian oil industry. Yet a year later, the US and Britain jointly toppled Mossadeq in a CIA-organised coup, unleashing the Shah's brutal military dictatorship. By then, Faiz himself was in prison in Pakistan for his political

activities, but the poem remains a tribute to the Iranian people's struggle for democracy and national rights, years before the recent Arab Spring.

## To the Iranian Students

by Faiz Ahmed Faiz<sup>4</sup>

Who are they, these  
Free givers whose blood-drops,  
jingling coins, go pouring  
Into Earth's ever-thirsty  
Begging bowl, pour and run,  
Filling the bowl brim-full?  
What are they, land of their  
birth, these young  
Self-squanderers whose  
Limbs' golden store  
Of surging youth  
Lies here in the dust,  
shattered –  
Lies strewn about the street and  
alley?  
Oh land of their birth, oh land  
of their birth!  
How could those eyes that  
laughed tear out  
And toss their sapphire gems  
away,  
Those lip their coral?  
Who gained, who turned to  
profit,  
Those hands' quivering silver?

Oh questioning stranger –  
These striplings, these young  
lives,  
Are fresh-grown pearls of that  
light,  
New-budded shoots of that  
flame,  
From which amid tyranny's  
dense night sprang  
The rosebed dawn of revolt  
And dawn was in every nerve  
and soul.  
Their ardent and golden flesh,  
Those coral and sapphire faces  
That gleam and shine there and  
gleam –  
Let the stranger who would see  
Stand close, gaze long!  
They are the jewellery of the  
queen of life,  
They are the diadem of the  
goddess of peace.

The Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet also spent a lot of his life in jail, for political dissent. His poetry is characterised by its empathetic voice, emotional directness, and its musicality. Here is a good example.<sup>5</sup>

## Hiroshima Child

by Nazim Hikmet

I come and stand at every door  
But none can hear my silent  
tread  
I knock and yet remain unseen  
For I am dead for I am dead.

I'm only seven though I died  
In Hiroshima long ago  
I'm seven now as I was then  
When children die they do not  
grow.

My hair was scorched by  
swirling flame  
My eyes grew dim my eyes grew  
blind  
Death came and turned my  
bones to dust  
And that was scattered by the  
wind.

I need no fruit I need no rice  
I need no sweets nor even  
bread  
I ask for nothing for myself  
For I am dead for I am dead.

All that I need is that for peace  
You fight today you fight today  
So that the children of this  
world  
Can live and grow and laugh  
and play.

## Acknowledgements

Thanks to all the poets and their publishers for these poems.

## Notes and References

1 The magazine, with the poem in it, can be viewed at [www.marxists.org](http://www.marxists.org), but the poem can also be found, along with many other good anti-war poems, in *Rendezvous with Death: American Poems of the Great War*, M Van Wienen, ed, University of Illinois Press, 2002.

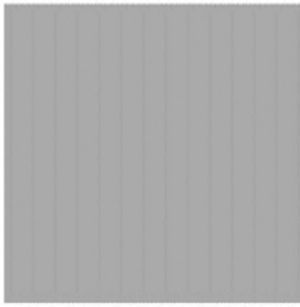
2 *George Bush in Baghdad* is from *The Poetry of Peace*, D Krieger ed, Capra Press, 2003. *The Needle* is from *Flowers of Flame: Unheard Voices of Iraq*, S Mohammed ed, Michigan State University Press, 2008.

3 *Fatherland of the Times, Bearing Humanity's Pain*, and *Unexpectedly*, are from *Crisis: Greek Poets on the Crisis*, Smokestack Books, 2014.

4 From *Hand of Zephyr*, 1952. Translated by Victor Kiernan, and published in *Elusive Dawn: Faiz Ahmed Faiz – A People's Poet*, M Zulfiqar and F Hussein, eds, Kala Sangam, Bradford, 2010.

5 From *Poems of Nazim Hikmet*, W W Norton and Co, 2002.

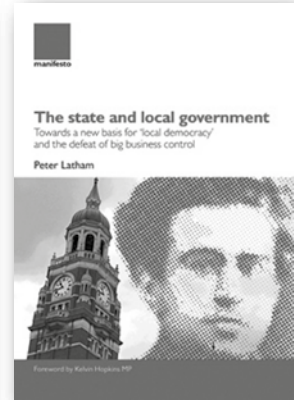
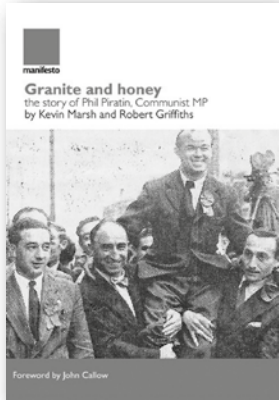




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