

Labour Affairs

Incorporating the Labour and Trade Union Review

No. 277 May 2017

Price £2.00 (€ 3.00)

Trust Me, I'm A Vicar's Daughter

With Labour trailing the Tories by around 20 per cent in the polls, Corbyn's support for a snap general election on 8 June has been called an act of political suicide. But if he had opposed the holding of an election the media would have said the Labour party was running scared of the voters. It would also have been an historically unique act on the part of the main opposition party in parliament. Opposition parties mostly welcome a general election as an opportunity to get rid of the government. The election campaign begins officially on 3 May and strange things can happen over the six week period. Labour has about half a million members and many of them will be out there campaigning. Face-to-face meetings can make a big difference. Political armageddon for Labour is not therefore a done deal.

The risks are great. But if the Tories keep even half their current lead, Theresa May will be returned as Prime Minister in a much stronger position. She will then claim she has the endorsement of the people to negotiate a Brexit that wholly favours Britain. In other words a hard Brexit. This was the clear implication in her statement to the House of Commons on 19 April, when she said that the government's small majority wasn't enough to negotiate from a position of strength. This was an odd comment to make given that MPs endorsed the voters' decision to leave the European Union by voting overwhelmingly to trigger Article 50. Yet in spite of her tough hard Brexit talk, May knows she will have to compromise to get a deal that suits Britain. Compromises that may not be to the liking of her Eurosceptics.

But the overwhelming support of MPs for Article

50 wasn't enough for Theresa May, the vicar's daughter. She wanted complete obedience from her congregation in the chamber of the House. She claimed, bizarrely, that the country was united following the referendum result, but that parliament was divided. She accused Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the SNP of attempting to sabotage the Brexit negotiations and of threatening to oppose a final deal. This distortion of the respective parties position didn't deter the Europhobe Daily Mail from urging May to 'Crush The Saboteurs'. Who would have thought that we have a parliamentary democracy where the duty of the opposition is to oppose the government? Does this 'newspaper', which once supported Adolph Hitler, question that in a parliamentary democracy it is the duty of the opposition to oppose the government?

Her claim that her government has delivered the 'certainty, stability and strong leadership' that the country needs, also begs the question why she is so keen for a general election having said on a number of occasions in recent months that it was not necessary. One can only deduce that she wants to remove all meaningful scrutiny of the Brexit negotiations and ease the passage of a final deal. She presents a bold face, implying that her government will get a good deal for Britain from the negotiations. But in reality she knows it could be a bad deal. Which is why she said a few months ago that 'no deal is better than a bad deal'.

At Prime Minister's Questions, and on every other occasion, Theresa May grasps the opportunity to put a positive gloss on what she claims are the government's achievements: record funding of education and the NHS, protecting pensions and

creating over a million more jobs. While simultaneously attacking a divided Labour party and its weak leadership, its economic incompetence, and its softness on defence and security. Such is the certainty of her and the government's superiority over Labour that it leaves one puzzled why she refuses to take part in TV debates with Jeremy Corbyn and other party leaders. She can wag her finger and attack Corbyn and Labour in the largely private sanctuary of PMQs. But clearly isn't prepared to defend the government's record in a televised debate with Corbyn and Labour in front of a potential audience of millions.

May's clear intention is to focus the election campaign on Brexit. Her message to voters will be to trust her to deliver on the people's verdict to leave the European Union. But this message ignores the fact that 48.1% voted to remain in the EU. Why should they urge her to deliver something they didn't vote for? The Tory 2015 manifesto proposed that Britain should remain a member of the single market. Now Theresa May wants to leave the single market in order to stop immigration from the European Union. Undoubtedly, immigration from the EU was a major factor in the minds of those who voted to leave. May says she will deliver on that, but her Brexit ministers and also employers have indicated that Britain will continue to need these workers. This leaves May with a serious, apparently unsolvable, problem. As Home Secretary in the Cameron government she was responsible for immigration numbers. She failed abysmally,

with net migration increasing year on year, most of it from outside the EU over which the government has control.

On the domestic front, a strengthened Tory government will enable May and Hammond to ditch the economic policies of Cameron and Osborne. They will be free to set their own economic agenda, including policies on direct and indirect taxes. May has already indicated that she intends to make taxation an election issue with her boast that the Tories are the low tax party. This may turn out to be a gross error, narrowing her and Hammond's options if tax revenues are lower than forecast. There will be much obfuscation from May and Hammond, but tax rises under the Tories are more likely than not.

Over the course of the campaign Labour can expect a Tory blitz on its tax policies following John McDonnell's intention to increase income tax on those earning £70,000 and above. But the party can counter this by playing to its strengths on the NHS, on school funding and on social justice issues such as fairness and inequality, which polls show resonate with the voters. Corbyn has already highlighted these issues since the election was called. He needs to continue to hammer home Labour's strong message of support for a fairer, socially just society.

But Labour has a hard task ahead if it is to form a government. It is vulnerable to a loss of at least 50 seats in England, where the Tories were in second place in 2015. Thirty of these seats, with a majority of less than 3,000, are particularly

Labour Affairs

Contents

No. 277 May 2017	ISSN 2050-6031
	ISSN 0953-3494
Corbyn and Theresa May Editorial	1
Labour Has the Young Voters	3
Ken Livingstone's Unwelcome Truths about Antisemitism by Gwydion M. Williams	10
<i>Poems by Wilson John Haire</i>	
Beholding	9
Gasworks	9
What A Spiffing Game!	13
Our Day	15

Regular Features

Parliament and World War One by Dick Barry	4
Views from across the Channel by Froggy	8
Orecchiette	14
Notes on the News by Gwydion M. Williams	16
Diary of a Corbyn foot soldier by Michael Murray	20
Parliament Notes by Dick Barry	21

Labour Affairs

Published by the Ernest Bevin Society

Editorial Board

Dick Barry Christopher Winch
Jack Lane Madawc Williams

labouraffairs@btinternet.com

Website: <http://labouraffairsmagazine.com/>

Distribution

Dave Fennell

Editorial Address

No. 2 Newington Green Mansions
Green Lanes
London N16 9BT

vulnerable. Just twelve of the thirty are in the midlands and north of England. Nevertheless, Labour faces an uphill fight to retain many of its core midland and northern constituencies where the Leave vote was high. It is also vulnerable to losing five seats in Wales, where its majority was less than 3,000 at the last general election.

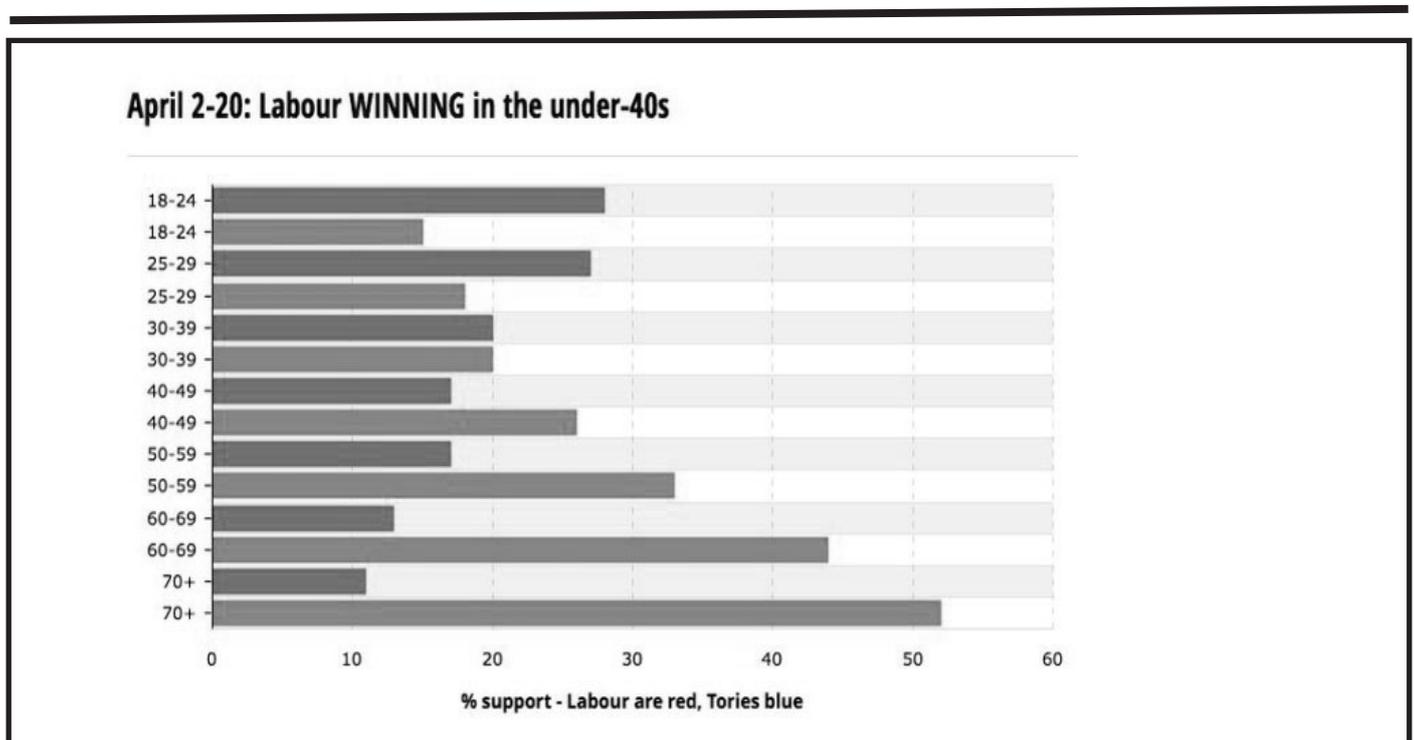
It is a truism that divided parties don't win elections. The general election has therefore given Labour the means to cast aside its internal squabbling and come together as a united party. With the odd exception the party appears to be united. But the odd exception is the former party leader and Prime Minister Tony Blair. Within hours of the calling of a general election, Blair

issued a statement in which he seemed to urge voters to support a candidate who was on the Remain side during the referendum campaign.

The statement warns against a 'Brexit At Any Cost' majority in the House of Commons. Blair's counter to this in the statement is for voters to elect 'as many MPs as possible with an open mind on this issue who are prepared to vote according to the quality of the deal and the interests of the British people'. In Blair's mind this clearly rules out pro-Brexit candidates, as Commons debates so far have shown that it is the Remain supporting members who have shown an open mind by constantly challenging Theresa May. Presumably, in seats held by pro-Brexit

Labour candidates, Blair would urge voters to support the passionately pro-Remain Liberal Democrats.

In calling a general election, Theresa May has answered the prayers of Lord Mandelson who sees it as an opportunity to dump Jeremy Corbyn as party leader. Mandelson knows that only a Tory victory will achieve this. He is therefore effectively praying for this. While there is a chorus of voices within the Parliamentary Labour Party calling for Ken Livingstone to be expelled from the party for alleged antisemitism, there is nothing but the sound of silence over Blair's and Mandelson's anti-Labour comments. With this in mind, we can only pray for a Labour victory on 8 June.



The graph of age groups comes from <https://enemyinastate.wordpress.com/2017/04/26/shock-corbyn-would-win-if-only-under-40s-voted-new-mega-poll-says/>

Young people actually have got the message. But old people are scared, even though they have the most to lose from cuts to the National Health service.

It remains to be seen if the Tory rejection of the 'Triple Lock' on pensions makes a difference.

Parliament And World War One

by Dick Barry

THE IRISH CONVENTION and the DEATH OF MAJOR REDMOND, M.P.

11 June 1917

Mr. ASQUITH I beg to ask the Prime Minister if he can make any statement on the subject of the Irish Convention?

The PRIME MINISTER (Mr. Lloyd George) Now that each of the leading political parties in Ireland has had an opportunity of considering our proposal to summon an Irish Convention, I am glad to be able to state that they have given their assent to the invitation. I propose to give, therefore, in greater detail than has hitherto been possible, the proposals of the Government as to the constitution of the intended Convention.

We have been pressed from a good many quarters to make the Convention a small one, but we found it, with regard to the present condition of Irish politics, difficult and almost impracticable to have a small body in which all interests should be represented, and because it is necessary not merely that the Convention should come to an agreement, but that it should be a Convention whose agreement would be likely to secure the adhesion of all interests. Bearing that in mind, before the House adjourned for Whitsuntide, the Government, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has stated, had completed their proposals as to the composition of the Convention. They are the proposals which will be carried into effect in the invitations now about to be issued, the character of which I will briefly state.

Firstly, we have sought to secure representatives of the every day life of the country, and for that purpose

we shall invite each county council and each county borough to send its chairman. These gentlemen are chosen annually for their offices.

Mr. GINNELL They are not.

The PRIME MINISTER And the chairmen of county councils are, I believe, being chosen in the course of the next two or three weeks. A considerable part of the urban population of Ireland is found in the small towns and urban districts, and we propose to invite the chairmen of these areas in each of the four provinces to select two Members to sit in the Convention. The Government thought that the Churches ought to be invited, and we expect the presence of four representatives from among the Roman Catholic Bishops, together with the Primate, Dr. Crozier, and the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Bernard, as representing the Protestant Church of Ireland, and Dr. John Irwin, the Moderator of the Irish Presbyterian Assembly. We shall invite as spokesmen of Commerce the chairmen of the Chambers of Commerce of Dublin, Belfast and Cork. As spokesmen of Labour we shall invite representatives of the Trade Councils in Dublin and Cork and representatives of Trade Unions in Belfast—in all, five representatives of Labour.

I come lastly to the direct representation of organised political opinion. The hon. and learned Gentleman (Mr. John Redmond) made it clear, when the subject was before the House, that he did not seek that nominees from among his friends should outnumber the nominees of the Ulster Party. We propose to invite the hon. and

learned Gentleman and the hon. Baronet (Sir J. Lonsdale) to give us each the names of five members. We shall also ask the hon. Member (Mr. W. O'Brien) to suggest two names. We intend, further, to invite the Irish representative peers to name two of their number and the Irish Unionist Alliance, who speak for the Unionists of Southern Ireland, to name five. There remains the question of representation of Sinn Fein. Certain spokesmen of associations which profess Separatist doctrines have warned us that they will not enter the Convention. We hope that some recognised spokesmen of opinions not voiced by the Irish Parties present in this House will be heard in the Convention, and for this purpose we shall reserve five places.

A Convention of selected gentlemen who are put forward to speak for parties and interests would not necessarily comprise all interests or secure the presence of all the Irishmen who their countrymen generally would desire should be heard. The Government will nominate, therefore, from among leading Irishmen of all sections, fifteen members of the Convention, and will endeavour to exercise this power of nomination so as to promote the object which all sober and loyal Irishmen have in view. The total number of the Convention will be 101. We shall proceed to make our nominations when we have seen the names of the representatives chosen by the various interests. With regard to the Chairman, we should infinitely prefer that Irishmen should choose their own chairman, but if they still

prefer that we should adhere to the original idea which I set out when I first announced the Convention, we are prepared, on behalf of the Government, to nominate a chairman, and to submit his name to the King for approval.

Before I sit down, I think it would be appropriate, especially having regard to the statement which I have made with regard to the Irish Convention, if I were to give expression in the best way I can to the deep sense of loss which pervades this House at the death of one of its best known, one of its oldest, and certainly one of its best-loved Members. I have known Major Redmond for over twenty-seven years. He was one of my best friends, and there never was a more loyal or more steadfast friend. I feel I cannot adequately express the sorrow which we must all feel at the fall of this lovable and chivalrous figure.

Both Houses of Parliament have made a noble contribution to the sacrifices imposed upon the people of these islands by this terrible War. I think eight or nine Members of this House — [Mr. Gulland: Eleven.] — have given their lives for the cause of freedom and international right which the nations that constitute this Empire have undertaken to champion in this War. That is not the sum total of the personal loss sustained by Members of this House. Of these Members — if the number be eleven — at least ten of them were young and full of promise. From their gifts the country was entitled to expect great service in the future, but great as the service was which they could have rendered, we feel that the example that they have set in the hour of their country's fate is a greater service than even they could have rendered by their lives here, for it has set its seal upon equality of sacrifice. It was the country's

need in that critical hour.

Among those noble examples of heroism, the heroic sacrifices of Major Redmond stands quite apart. He had arrived at an age when, by the common consent of all belligerent lands, men could not be expected to endure the hardships of war and to face the dangers of war. Of his own free will he stood dangers, perils and privations, and he did it all with that cheerful courage which always radiated from his personality. I have seen officers who served with him in France, and as Irishmen they spoke with pride of his gallantry. He was a fine soldier. We shall miss him very much in this House.

On the rare occasions when he came back here on leave, men of all sections and parties were delighted to see him, to greet him, and to hear him. We shall never forget his last appearance amongst us in this House. He had gone through some of the bloodiest battles of this sanguinary conflict. He looked worn and aged with privations that his years unfitted him to bear. He, at any rate, could have claimed, and no one could have challenged him, that he had done his share. There were political tasks awaiting him at home in which his genial presence, his great personal popularity, and his moving powers of speech would have been useful. He elected instead to face death on the battlefield, and he did it. I think I know why he did it — in fact he said so. There was no man who was more convinced of the justice of the Allied cause. There was no man who was moved to deeper indignation

at the wrongs of the small nations which have been trampled by a cruel despotism. But he was above all an Irish patriot, and he felt that this was Ireland's greatest opportunity of winning liberty for herself by fighting side by side with Britain in the great world-struggle for freedom. It is for Ireland that he gave his gallant life.

We all remember his last appeal to us here, and I think that now this Convention is being launched on its career, I cannot do better than read his words: Why must it be that, when British soldiers and Irish soldiers are suffering and dying side by side, this eternal old quarrel should go on? ... In the name of God, we here, who are about to die, perhaps, ask you to do that which largely induced us to leave our homes: to do that which our fathers and mothers taught us to long for; to do that which is all we desire — make our country happy and contented, and enable us when we meet Canadians, Australians or New Zealanders side by side, to say 'Our country, just as yours, has self-government within the Empire.'" — [OFFICIAL REPORT, 6th March, 1917, cols. 442 and 445, Vol. XCI.] He was carried tenderly and reverently from the battlefield by Ulster soldiers on an Ulster ambulance. The solemn appeal which I have read comes to us now from an honoured grave on the frontier of the land he gave his life to liberate.

Mr. ASQUITH I desire to associate myself, and I think I may say the whole House, with the tribute which my right hon.

Editorials and older articles at our website,

<http://labouraffairsmagazine.com/>

This also has old issues of Problems magazine.

Friend has paid to Major Redmond. He had already been three years a Member of this House when I first took my seat here thirty-one years ago, and for more than the lifetime of a generation his service in Parliament had been unbroken. I have many delightful recollections of the days when as young Members of Parliament he and I used to find ourselves side by side on English and Scottish platforms pleading for Irish self-government. Few men that I have known who have lived well on into middle life remained from first to last so entirely unchanged in temperament, in character, in ideals. He never swerved by a hair's-breadth from the mission to which he had devoted himself from his earliest youth. He was a convinced and an ardent Nationalist, but he had a certain genius of imagination and of sympathy which enabled him always to understand the scruples and difficulties of honest opponents, whether in Ireland or in Great Britain.

His passionate love of liberty—for such it was—was not limited in its range to his own country or his own race, and when he perceived—as he did, and as my right hon. Friend has reminded us—at the very beginning of the War, with quick and penetrating insight, that the principles in which he believed were being translated into universal terms and put in issue on a world-wide theatre, he threw himself heart and soul, with all the energy and contagious enthusiasm of his nature, into the struggle. We have never had in our ranks a more brave or more devoted comrade, and we here who were for so long his colleagues, I think, have a special title, now that he has died a hero's death, to a share of our own in the pride and gratitude and mourning of the Empire. The incorporation

of all Ireland in that Empire, not formally, but by ties and chains of confidence, of real affection, and of lasting loyalty, will be the best and most enduring tribute and monument that we can raise to his memory.

Mr. DEVLIN I desire, on behalf of all my colleagues, to express the profound gratitude which we feel to the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend who has just sat down for the touching and eloquent references which they have made to the death of our beloved colleague, Major Redmond. If the splendid and noble death of our brave and gallant comrade has called forth such eulogies from the English Benches on both sides of the House, Members will understand how deep and heartfelt must be the grief of his bereaved colleagues who sit around us. It would be impossible for me, as one of his closest personal friends, to do justice at this moment to his 'memory, but I do feel that one of the bravest and noblest hearts in Ireland has ceased to beat. He was loved by his colleagues for his personal loyalty—his boundless, personal loyalty. He was loved for his good faith, for his noble chivalry, for the intensity of his purpose, for his sublime courage, and, above all, for his high sense of public duty.

For over thirty years in this House, and in Ireland, he laboured with unceasing zeal, and he fought with sublime courage for what he conceived to be the liberty of his nation and his people. He fought for their liberty in Parliament; for it he suffered in prison; for liberty he fought in France; but he always fought for those high ideals which had been the animating and inspiring purpose of his life, and finally he went out to fight for the freedom of the world, and he fought for the freedom of the world that his own nation might share that universal

emancipation, and his death was his last contribution to the cause of human liberty. His memory to us on these benches will ever be a deep and precious asset, and all Irishmen will say of him: That he is freedom's now and fame's, One of the few immortal names that were not born to die.

I should be glad, after offering that personal tribute and expressing that feeling on behalf of my colleague, that I might be allowed to resume my seat. But I trust that the House will not think it bad taste on my part if I just make one passing reference to the preliminary observations which were made by the Prime Minister when he was announcing the character of the constitution of the Convention. This House at this moment is deeply moved, and we are suffering from the shadow of a great sorrow, and in that melting mood may I appeal to the right hon. Gentleman to make an immediate announcement to the House of Commons, as a preliminary to the Convention which we all hope in the providence of God will bring peace and liberty and union to Ireland, that the right hon. Gentleman will now boldly and frankly announce that the Sinn Fein prisoners will be released? If he desires the Convention to be a success—and I profoundly believe he does, and that that is one of the great purposes of his life—surely no end can be served by holding these men in prison and embittering still further that ill-feeling that exists in many parts of Ireland. I do hope that the right hon. Gentleman in the interests of Ireland, in the interests of the Empire, in the interests of the success of the Convention, and in response to the generous and sympathetic instincts of all liberty-loving people in every part of the world, will declare that these men shall be released.

The FIRST LORD of the ADMIRALTY (Sir E. Carson) Perhaps the House will allow me to add my small contribution of tribute to the memory of my much lamented, esteemed and lifelong opponent, Major Redmond. I have known him for more years than I can calculate—from the day he was called to the Irish Bar. I have disagreed with him on every subject in politics which has ever arisen in this House and elsewhere, and we were always on opposite sides; but I feel glad to think that I never had in the course of those long and many years one bitter word with him either in public or in private life. I always respected him. I always knew his sincerity, and there was no man, however he might disagree with him, who could not but believe in the earnestness with which he prosecuted the cause in which he believed.

I have just come back from Belfast, where I had to preside at a conference of five hundred delegates from Ulster, and where I advised them strongly to enter this Convention. And I am glad to say that they took my advice. You cannot in your own mind disconnect an incident such as the calling of this Convention, after many years of bitter domestic strife, with the incidents which are taking place, and of which the death of Major Redmond is one. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has stated that he fell fighting beside the Ulstermen, and that he was taken away and cared for in an Ulster ambulance by Ulstermen. I cannot help recalling the fact that the first Member of this House who made the supreme sacrifice was an Ulsterman. Let us put these facts together. It is not necessary to dwell upon them. They are eloquent.

And after all, if in the trenches we can fight side by side all for the common cause of liberty, certainly so far as I am concerned, and as I said in Belfast on Friday, I trust that I shall in my time see some solution of that long-continued Irish question that would meet the ideal of liberty of all parties in Ireland. In the grave crisis which confronts us, in the loss of Members of

this House to whom we looked across from day to day, there is indeed a great deal of food for reflection. We cannot but think of what shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue.

Mr. WARDLE I feel that if I were to remain silent some misunderstanding might arise as to the position of myself and the party to which I belong, and though I do not desire to intervene in this Debate at any great length, I feel that I must say one or two words upon this occasion. I cannot boast of the long, acquaintance with Major Redmond which has been referred to by the Prime Minister, the late Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the First Lord of the Admiralty, but I have now been in the House for eleven years. I have come into close and personal contact with the late Major Redmond, and I should like to add my tribute to the personal qualities, which he always displayed, to his geniality, his lovability, his courage, and his passionate desire to see the settlement of that long trouble in his own country, and I should like on behalf of the party to which I belong to say that we deplore his loss as greatly and as sincerely as any other party in this House, and we desire to associate ourselves fully to the greatest extent to the tributes which are laid upon his honoured grave. I remember his appeal in this House on the last occasion when he addressed it. He has paid the price of liberty, and I hope that the appeal which he then made and which is still fresh in the minds of Members will result, as the last speech to which we have listened gives us some ground for hoping it may result, in the complete settlement of a difficulty which has baffled us for generations, but which, were it settled, would make the British Empire in my opinion the most complete exponent of liberty that the world has ever seen.

Mr. GINNELL I desire to say a few words. The gallant Gentleman, whose loss the whole House without exception deplores, has laid down his life according to his own judgment for a cause which his country has never adopted, and which it never will adopt. He died not far away indeed from the

field of Landen, on which Marshal Patrick Sarsfield shed his blood, and Sarsfield, on putting his hand to his breast and finding that his life blood was flowing regretted with his dying breath that that blood had not flowed for Ireland. Unfortunately, precisely the same thing occurred on the present occasion. [HON. MEMBERS: “NO. NO!”] Men sacrificed their lives for Ireland, while men, who risked their lives for Ireland, after having laid down their arms, have been prisoners of war in your hands—that is, those who entered through accident were either led to execution or are to-day in chains, while this House professes to desire the fruition of the cause for which they are enchained. Will the death of a Member of this House facilitate the day when that relation between the two countries will have ceased to exist? I say it will not. The Prime Minister professes to summon what he calls an Irish Convention, an assembly of one hundred, most of them being persons who could not get themselves elected by any body of the people in Ireland to-day.

Mr. RONALD McNEILL On a point of Order, Sir. I would like to ask what is the Question before the House?

Mr. SPEAKER There is no Question before the House. I understood the hon. Member was going to pay a tribute to the memory of the late Major Redmond.

Mr. GINNELL I have precisely the same purpose for which the Prime Minister and the speakers who followed him rose—to deal with the Convention.

Mr. SPEAKER The hon. Member will be out of order if he deals with the Convention.

Mr. GINNELL On the point of Order, Sir, have not other hon. Members been allowed to deal with the Convention?

Mr. SPEAKER There is no question before the House. There have been passing references by one or two speakers to that subject, but it would be quite out of order to discuss it.

Froggy

News From Across The Channel



What next?

We can assume that Emmanuel Macron will be elected on May 7th even if the élan against Marine Le Pen isn't what it was against her father in 2002. There isn't the same surprise and shock. Also the situation has changed. Globalisation and deindustrialisation have increased, and so has the realisation that France can't do anything about them without going against EU rules. The solution is either to leave Europe, or else to join in the fiscal and social dumping, as practised by Britain.

The country is divided between those who would leave Europe (or try and reform it), and those who embrace Europe and want to reduce taxes and reduce regulation, in particular that of the Labour Code. At the moment the former are represented by Le Pen and the latter by Macron. The question of the free movement of people/immigration is the other component of the race between the two candidates.

Support for the candidates depends on what globalisation has done for you. If it has destroyed your livelihood, roughly as in Eastern and Northern France, you are more likely to vote Le Pen but if it has given you a livelihood, as in Western France, you are more likely to vote Macron.

There should be a movement to oppose liberalism (social and fiscal dumping, and free movement of people) other than Le Pen, but there isn't. The left who should have organised such a movement

has spent its time campaigning for side issues and lost the support of the working class. That leaves them with no candidate to support for the second round. They are out of it. Melenchon for example is not calling for people to vote Macron against Le Pen (pending a consultation with supporters). On the crucial issues, and at a crucial time, the left are not there.

The Communist Party, if it is worth talking about political ghosts, is calling for a Macron vote. The general secretary said it was important to counter Marine Le Pen, 'who supports dictators like Trump, Putin and Bashar Al Assad'. This is the level of thinking among the once defenders and representatives of the working class.

Macron will have problems ruling the country, with Le Pen voters seething, and the opposition to social dumping still strong: the past few years have seen demonstrations against the reform of the Labour Code, and this will presumably continue.

One particular reform is that of unemployment benefit. It will no longer be an entitlement, dependent on contributions paid, said Macron. The unemployed will have rights, but also duties. They will be offered work, and if they refuse, their benefit will be decreased then stopped. They will receive one offer of a 'decent' job, and they will be able to refuse once, but not twice. How easy will it be to get measures like this through Parliament?

The president and the Prime

Minister both have executive powers. In periods of cohabitation, as happened in the past, the President and the Prime Minister belong to different political parties. The presidential elections bring in a president of one political colour, and the general elections bring in a majority of a different colour. The president has to choose a prime minister among the majority.

The Hollande government wanted to push through deregulation of the labour code, but did not have a majority. It used decree powers to do so. This was possible because the president and the prime minister agreed. What sort of majority will Macron have?

General elections will take place this coming June. There will be a multiplicity of candidates. The traditional parties, the Socialists (whose candidate, Hamon, scored 6.36% of votes in the presidential elections), the Republicans (Sarkozy's old party, with Fillon, who came third with 20%), plus the CP and their 7 present MPs, the National Front, the Greens, etc. will present candidates. Macron will put up 577 candidates from his movement 'En Marche!' (Forward!); Melenchon will put candidates who support 'France Insoumise' (Defiant France/Unsubmissive France).

The left candidates will stand in competition with each other, unless negotiations are successful. None have a program that inspires confidence concerning the big issues of globalization and liberalism.

Melenchon offers excellent sentiments: his is the only ‘humanist’ movement, as he proudly said. The traditional Gaullist right, with its pro-Russian and anti-American sovereign elements, are also stuck. Sarkozy has called for a Macron vote.

The Le Pen program is not convincing economically and socially. It is difficult to see how she would govern. There is nobody to vote for on May 7th if you want to see brakes applied to globalization and to free movement of capital and people. This should give French citizens pause for thought, especially on the left.

A different point of view, taken from a French blog. (Translation)

View from a Marseille prison: Macron and Hollande are heroes.

“I have just come from the prison of the Baumettes whose public is strongly ethnicized. Visiting families are kept waiting for hours and everyone is talking, in particular about the elections. I can assure you that there won’t be a problem voting Macron for the second round, a good part of the “Mediterranean” world, shall we say, has already voted Macron in the first round, since they already benefit from the self-exploiting status that Macron dreams of... Moreover, the fear of Marine Le Pen and the arbitrariness that would ensue, is not just fantasy, but also based on lived experience.

Besides in the Baumettes, while the prison staff is quite friendly, you have a fairly good view of arbitrariness not only for the delinquents but for their families, who are treated like them. In short, whether you are outside or inside, Macron has become a hero and Hollande enjoys increased admiration: he is congratulated on his manoeuvre, people admire his cleverness in planning to protect France from the right and from the extreme right by this amazing manoeuvre...

I would have to go round the proletarian world, that of the “Mediterranean” workers and see if the will to beat not only Marine but her Marseille supporters who are much more intolerable than you might imagine listening to Marine, a sickening, fascistic lot ... has succeeded in propelling Macron and Hollande to the rank of national heroes, I hope not ... But we are undoubtedly in a moment of regression as far as anti-capitalist thinking is concerned.”

GASWORKS

Do you mind he asked if I punch
your best friend in the mouth
for I’ve gotta hunch
and for this I can vouch
it was whispered over lunch
it’s as sad as it gets
I have to tell a lie
I’ll always be in your debt
if you’ll be the fall-guy
by standing aside
this lie you’ll endorse
and the standing of the jihadists
you’ll reinforce
but you’ll understand that punch
wasn’t really meant
it’s to pacify that Whitehouse
clique
and throw them off the scent
otherwise my future is bleak

Wilson John Haire

BEHOLDING

They play power-politics
despite the terrain
following the dogs-of-war
though limply on the wane
for they are the under-dog
poisonous
as strychnine
practising diplomacy
as a machine
their word is fire
to kerosene
they don’t need proof
nor investigation
lapping up any US accusation
their foreign minister is a pus-filled
leaking balloon
their UN rep
empty as the moon
as undertakers they know
the death of nations
without thought of damnation
they moralise through their
imperial church
that sees all opponents besmirched.

Wilson John Haire.

Ken Livingstone's Unwelcome Truths

by Gwydion M. Williams

“After Ken Livingstone was today suspended for a further year from the Labour Party as the result of a long delayed quasi-judicial process that was not in accord with natural justice, five Jewish Labour Party members, who gave evidence in support of Ken Livingstone at the hearing, issued the following statement:

“We are appalled by the decision to continue the suspension of Ken Livingstone.

“The case brought against Ken was not that he was antisemitic. Instead it was claimed that he upset a significant part of the UK's Jewish population. This upset had been caused by his (accurate) statement that some Zionists and Hitler had wanted to get Jews out of Germany, and that prior to the War they reached a temporary agreement to help bring this about. The Zionist motivation was to increase the numbers of Jews going to Palestine.

“If a political party adopts the principle that it suspends every member that upsets some part of the population where would it all end? Labour should respect freedom of expression.

“The decision to continue the suspension of Ken is mistaken. It is an attempt to protect Israel from criticism, while simultaneously weakening the position of Jeremy Corbyn, a principled supporter of Palestinian rights.

“It is the verdict, not Ken Livingstone, that has brought the Labour Party into disrepute.”¹

Livingstone was attacked because he refused to let the very real sufferings of Jews during World War Two to be used as cover for Israel ignoring Palestinian rights and grabbing far more land than their fair share. And because he mentioned the awkward fact that Hitler was not against the idea of Jews recovering Palestine, if it got them out of Germany. But as usual, the mainstream media cast fog and darkness over ‘off-message facts’. They said that some historians have doubts, but didn't say just what was in doubt.

All sorts of doubts exist over the Battle of Waterloo – was it won by Wellington, Blucher, or sheer luck? How many times did the French cavalry charge? But what cannot be doubted is that Napoleon lost. Likewise it is a solid truth that before World War Two, Hitler did work with Zionists to get as many Jews as possible out of Germany. This is detailed in many reliable sources, including an on-line Jewish encyclopaedia:

“HAAVARA, a company for the transfer of Jewish property from Nazi Germany to Palestine. The Trust and Transfer Office Haavara Ltd., was established in Tel Aviv, following an agreement with the German government in August 1933, to facilitate the emigration of Jews to Palestine by allowing the transfer of their capital in the form of German export goods. The Haavara Agreement is an instance where the question of Jewish rights, Zionist needs and individual rescue were in deep tension. Jewish organizations outside of Germany had declared a boycott against German goods and hoped to delegitimize the Nazi regime. The Zionists saw this agreement as a way of attracting Jews to Palestine and thus rescuing them from the Nazi universe even if that meant cooperation with Hitler. For a time the Nazi program of making Germany Judenrein [free of Jews] and the Zionist policy of seeking olim coincided.”²

You get complaints that non-Jews don't take the Holocaust seriously enough. Myself, I take very seriously any slaughter of humans by other humans. One incident that stuck in my memory concerned some Jews who had been shipped to Siberia during the first Soviet occupation of Estonia. They thought they had been through a tough time, but then discovered that being removed from a future war zone and sent to Siberia was a lucky break:

“When we stopped in a small Hungarian town a group of local Jews came to the train to welcome us. When the

women saw our children they could not believe their eyes. They all said ‘You still have children! Ours have all been killed by the Nazis.’ This was the first time we had come face to face with evidence of Nazi atrocities. We felt numb and all we could do was comfort these poor mothers. When the Soviet troops had told us about the Nazi atrocities and how the Nazis were exterminating Jews and other groups, we were certain it was Soviet propaganda and did not believe any of it. It seemed too horrific to be possible. Now we knew that something awful had happened.”³

Stalin had shipped about a million Jews out of the territories he occupied between the fall of Poland and the Nazi invasion. This gets left out of standard histories, following the standard rule that nothing good may be said about Stalin, even if it happens to be undeniably true.

There was also nothing accidental in Anna Frank and her sister dying while her father survived. They were in Auschwitz, but mass exterminations had stopped and the evidence was being hidden when the Soviet army came close. But they were among 8,000 Jewish women shipped at the expense of Germany's war effort to Bergen-Belsen far to the west, which had previously been intended for Jews who might be exchanged for German prisoners of war.⁴ As it happened, the Allies had no wish to exchange enemy soldiers for sickly Jews, so it became a place where natural deaths (partly from starvation diets) could be expected. That was what killed them.

You might think it would have been easier just to shoot Anna Frank and the other potential mothers of another generation of Jews. But real life is not like a Quentin Tarantino movie. Even the Nazis could not find many people ready to shoot a 15-year-old girl who was a prisoner and obviously helpless. Methods like gas chambers were used so that the guards did not have to see the eyes of the dying.

All of this is horrible stuff. But I refuse to see the Holocaust in isolation. I will not treat the slaughter of Jews with a high status in Europe's 1930s racial hierarchy as different in kind from the slaughter of Serbs, Gypsies, and homosexuals of all ethnic backgrounds by the same Nazi death-machine. Or earlier of Native Americans and Australian Aboriginals.

Aboriginal Tasmanians were all shot or rounded up and they left behind no descendants. Thomas Huxley, noted biologist, aggressive publicist for Darwinism and inventor of the term 'agnosticism, would have wished the same done to all Aboriginals:

"[Huxley] had fewer kind thoughts about Australia's 'hopelessly irreclaimable savages'... Australia's nomads were blind to the Victorian ideas of private property, free-trade and Piccadilly fashion. His squatter's morality was evidence; his final solution smugly horrifying. Their 'elimination... from the earth's surface can be viewed only with satisfaction, as the removal of a great blot from the escutcheon of our common humanity, by all those who know them as they are, and are not to be misled by the maudlin philanthropy of 'aborigines' friends."⁵

Reworded to apply to Jews, this could pass as one of Hitler's more extreme remarks.

The death of at least one million Irish in the 1840s Potato Famine was also just as much a moral offence as Hitler's genocide. At the time, the global hegemony of the British Empire was not remotely under threat. British domination of global manufacturing had reached its peak, but very few saw prospects of a decline. (Friedrich Engels was one, noting that British manufacturers never bothered to learn foreign tastes, expecting them to share English tastes).

Even more shockingly, and unlike Hitler's Germany where the Allied sea blockade threatened the same sort of starvation that defeated them in World War One, *Ireland produced more than it needed to feed itself*. But the surplus was exported for profit, and not all Britons regretted the decline even of a population that

was racially acceptable. Irish were classed as slightly inferior to Scots, themselves 'a little lower than the English' in the mainstream English view. But Catholic Irish in Ireland had also been resistant to the 'Victorian ideas of private property, free-trade'. Out in the wider Empire, they apparently became part of an English-dominated white community.

The Irish have perhaps been too forgiving: there was no outcry when a 1993 history of *The Economist* magazine endorsed the magazine's decision back then to support the painful death of unwanted Irish in the interests of Free Trade.⁶

Though Concentration Camps were foreshadowed by Spain's failed bid to prevent Cuban independence, they first shocked the world and then became normalised in the shape of the mass imprisonment of non-combatant South Africans that helped Britain win the Boer War. There was no deliberate killing, but there was a very high death rate.

And what of conspiracies? Anyone can get suspected. In my book *Adam Smith: Wealth Without Nations*,⁷ I made the unexpected discovery that modern Conspiracy Theories were begun by a man close to both Adam Smith and James Watt, though Smith and his friends thought that the poor man had gone insane:

"Watt was influenced in his efforts to improve the steam engine by a fellow called John Robison. And Robison was also the originator and inventor of the modern conspiracy theory. Robison wrote a book full of paranoid fears, identifying a conspiracy of Illuminati within Freemasonry as the cause of the French Revolution.

"Robison's notion of an Illuminati / Masonic conspiracy was later reworked to include Jews. He himself was quite unconcerned by Europe's Jewish minority, saying nothing either for or against them. He probably saw it as a matter of no importance, there were few Jews in Scotland. Nor have Jews ever gained much prominence in Britain's Celtic Fringes, where there are a lots of energetic and well-educated Welsh, Scots or Irish to fill the

social roles that Jews often share in the prosperous Metropolitan centres.

"Jews and Scots had a rather similar position within the rich and rising English society, except that the Scots as Protestants had a very definite advantage. They had their own state institutions and they could also sit in Parliament and take government jobs."⁸

Elsewhere I had written about how genocide and ideas of 'race cleansing' were widespread in Britain and the USA, though Jews were normally tolerated as an eccentric and sometimes disliked minority within the White Master Race. There is a lot of this in Science Fiction.⁹ John Wyndham's SF novels have been described as 'Cosy Catastrophes':¹⁰ what gets overlooked is the '*Cosy Genocide*' in several of them. I was particularly struck by the ending of *The Chrysalids*, in which we follow a group of persecuted telepaths born among normal humans. A community of telepaths with superior technology rescue them: splendid. But then we learn that they have casually slaughtered the pursuing 'normals', and in the long run plan to exterminate every last one of them.

I don't think Wyndham had anything against Jews. In *The Midwich Cuckoos*, the suicide-bomber hero who wipes out the New Humans and saves 'normals' is called Zellaby, which sounds Jewish. He was a typical British racist of the era. Meantime Edgar Rice Burroughs as a typical US racist seemed to dislike Jews and has a lot of them as villains, but shows no signs of wishing them all dead. Burroughs' mediocre Venus series includes a parody of the Nazis, with whom he had quarrelled over his gross misrepresentation in one of his *Tarzan* books of the achievements of General Lettow-Vorbeck in East Africa. But it also has another Venusian culture who have carried through a brutal extermination of the inferior elements in their own race, and are seen as very admirable.

Then there is Jack London's *The Unparalleled Invasion*,¹¹ in which an expansionist China is attacked with germ warfare and all Chinese exterminated. You also find a certain sympathy

for fascism in Olaf Stapleton's *Star Maker*. In another fantasy called *Odd John*, the superior humans hypnotise an island population into committing suicide so as to have their island without disturbance. They also contemplate exterminating the 'normals' of the rest of the world, but decide not after concluding that it would ruin their 'spiritual development'.

For some reason my original study left out *The Marching Morons* by Cyril Kornbluth.¹² Written in 1951 and set several hundred years in Earth's future, it follows Burroughs and others in approving of superior humans exterminating inferiors. An unscrupulous individual revived from suspended animation in our time copies Nazi tactics by persuading the 'morons' they will be resettled, in this case on Venus. What makes this particularly bizarre is that Kornbluth himself was of Polish-Jewish descent. And it was highly popular, winning an award in 1965.

The point I am making is that the mass killing of several million defenceless Jews by Hitler was an extreme within a much wider process. It was only the big shift leftwards after World War Two that shifted global attitudes on race and many other matters.¹³ The New Right would like to pretend it never happened. Their bitter enemies in the Trotskyist and pro-Moscow Communist movement unintentionally helped them by saying as little as possible about the very real advances made by the West in the 1950s and 1960s. They also vigorously sabotaged a possible further socialist advance via incomes policy and workers control in the 1970s, believing that this would allow them to advance to 'real socialism'.

Sadly, the New Right were the main gainers. And a New Right / Zionist hybrid emerged that includes significant numbers of Jews. A minority of Jews strongly oppose this monstrosity, but many more accept it as some sort of grim necessity. A caricature of Nazism and a pretence that World War Two was an heroic anglosphere crusade against Nazi evils is part of the propaganda.

The different stages in Nazi hostility to Jews get mixed up. They had the fixed racist notion that both Jews and Gypsies did not belong in Europe and were a threat just by existing. This was not different in principle from the White Racist notion of racial segregation against non-whites, but only a few places like Imperial Spain had classed Jews among the Inferior Races. Nazi rules against Jews were modelled on those applied against Afro-Americans in the US South. Many Southern Whites wanted blacks returned to Africa: this had also been Abraham Lincoln's policy. After World War Two it was applied very extensively as *Apartheid* in South Africa, which did not stop Britain and the USA being friendly to them. South Africa tried to push its entire non-white population into Bantustans. Nazi Germany before the war made life as tough as possible for German Jews, trying to persuade them to emigrate.

It was only after the British Empire and French Empire chose to declare war after Hitler's invasion of Poland that the Nazis switched to forced deportation of Jews. The idea of mass extermination was also floated during the early years of the war. Extermination only became a covert official policy after the Wannsee Conference of 20 January 1942. Significantly, this was *after* Hitler had declared war on the USA and there were no neutrals he would have cared about.

Roosevelt could not declare war without a majority in Congress, and many in Congress wanted no war against Germany until they found that Hitler had unwisely declared it. But Roosevelt had provoked him by doing everything he legally could to support the British Empire's continuing war.

Would there have been mass extermination of Jews and other Nazi targets, if Britain had not continued the war after the Fall of France? Most historians like to say yes, to keep the guilt entirely Nazi. But there is plenty of scope for doubt.

If the Nazi policy of resettling Jews in Eastern Poland was sincere and would have been continued had the war ended in 1940, then the allied cause does not

look so virtuous. Obviously the main guilt was Nazi: they chose to practice mass killing even at the expense of their war effort. But the mass killing mostly happened when the Nazis knew they might lose the war. The Soviet Union had not fallen quickly, as both the Nazi leadership and Germany's generals had expected. In December 1941 there was a Soviet counter-offensive that pushed them back and removed the immediate threat to Moscow.

The Nazis must have realised that if Germany lost, any Jews they had resettled in the East would return to their old homes. Some survivors did do just that. But because there had been mass killings, those still alive usually moved on, mostly to Israel.

An offer by the Allies for a negotiated peace if the Old Right threw out the Nazis might have saved millions of lives, many of them Jewish. But the Allied war was basically against Germany. Churchill was one of many on the Centre-Right who had approved of Italian Fascism.¹⁴

Jews and other minorities (including Gypsies and homosexuals) were victims of a global struggle in which the British Empire and the USA showed a complete lack of interest in the fate of Jews who were not their citizens. Technically all of us were only 'British subjects' until much later: but Jews in English-speaking countries were accepted as part of the White Race and had far more rights than Afro-Americans or non-white British subjects. The entire Anglosphere would not then accept non-white officers even to command non-white troops: Jews could and did become normal commissioned officers. But the dominant centre-right attitude was that while *some* Jews were OK, a majority were bad news. No more foreign Jews were wanted:

"[Air Minister Lord] Londonderry's evident belief in the international power of Jewry as compounded by what followed: 'As I told you, I have no great affection for the Jews. It is possible to trace their participation in most of those international disturbances which have created so much havoc in different countries,' though

he added that it was possible to ‘find many Jews strongly ranged on the other side who have done their best with the wealth at their disposal, and also by their influence to counteract those malevolent and mischievous activities of fellow Jews.

“Londonderry was certainly not a racial anti-Semite in the Nazi sense. There is no inkling in his extensive papers and correspondence of obsessive or pervasive hatred of Jews. Lord and Lady Londonderry had numerous Jewish friends and colleagues.”¹⁵

These were not marginal cranks: “A pillar of the Conservative Party, Londonderry, socially and politically, could scarcely have been better connected. The King called him ‘Charley’. Members of the royal family were frequently guests in his London mansion. The political establishment dined regularly at his table... Londonderry was on first-name terms with all the major political figures of the day.”¹⁶

Cooperation by what was then a very weak Zionist movement should be seen in the context of massive collaboration of people who were much stronger than Hitler until they let him arm and expand. Ken Livingstone might say this, as a gesture of reconciliation now we have a General Election imminent. But the fact of Nazi-Zionist cooperation remains a fact, and must be insisted upon.

1 <http://kenlivingstone.net/2017/04/statement-5-five-jewish-labour-party-members-gave-evidence-support-ken-livingstone/>

2 <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/haavara>. ‘Olim’ is the Jewish term for settlement in Palestine.

3 Sekules, Edith. *Surviving the Nazis, Exile and Siberia*. Vallentine Mitchell, London. Page 120.

4 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bergen-Belsen_concentration_camp#Concentration_camp

5 Desmond, Allen. *Huxley: From Devil’s Disciple to Evolution’s High Priest*. Penguin Books 1997. Page 144.

6 <https://gwydionwilliams.com/50-new-right-ideas/430-2/>

7 No longer stocked by Amazon, but available from Athol Books, <http://www.atholbooks.org/>.

8 Available online, <https://gwydionwilliams.com/40-britain/the-original-conspiracy-theory/>.

9 https://gwydionwilliams.com/44-fascism-and-world-war-2/british-and-us-genocide/#_Toc61184877

10 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/jul/05/jane-rogers-top-10-cosy-catastrophes>

11 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Unparalleled_Invasion & <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1075/1075-h/1075-h.htm#page60>

12 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Marching_Moons

13 <https://gwydionwilliams.com/history-and-philosophy/the-left-redefined-the-normal/>

14 <https://gwydionwilliams.com/44-fascism-and-world-war-2/why-churchill-admired-mussolini/>

15 Kershaw, Ian. *Making Friends With Hitler*. Allen Lane (Penguin Books) 2004. *Ibid.*, Page 146.

16 *Ibid.*, Page xv.

WHAT A SPIFFING GAME!

Take cricket
with its many rules
take war without
the wicket
pronounce war as
cricket-for-fools
without
the analysis the appeal
the average
the bail the ball
the no-ball
the bat the batsman
batting
the block the boundary
bowling
the bowled the break
the leg-break
the off-break the bye
the catch
the caught-and-bowled
the century
the cover-point the crease
the bowling-crease
the popping-crease
the declaration
the drive the extras the follow-on
the full-pitch
the googlie the half-volley
the hit-wicket
the innings the leg-before-wicket
the leg-break
the leg-glance the maiden-over
the no-ball
the off-break the over the run
the stump
the crease the wide the wicket-keeper
the yorker

without all that isn’t war
a corker

but they must know cricket
before they make war
or they we shall abhor
beware the judge a spin-bowler
the prosecution a batsman
the enemy in the dock
with broken molars

Wilson John Haire.

Listening to Italy

by Orecchiette

Elections

2016 and 2017 have been electoral bonanza years and more follow in 2018. The Italian press deliberate about Brexit but with so many other electoral issues of immediate relevance, the UK election is an insignificance. Currently the two most important political figures in Italy are Matteo Renzi, ex-Premier, ex-Secretary of the centre-left Partito Democratico (*Pd*) and Beppe Grillo, comedian and party leader of the 5 Star Movement (*M5S*). The *Pd* and *M5S* have been level in the polls for some time.

Renzi (42) identifies with France's Emmanuel Macron (39), as he also did with Tony Blair. All have had early political success and present as having a charismatic and dynamic media presence. Indeed, as long ago as January Renzi, and his old, right-wing ally Silvio Berlusconi, were reported to have resurrected their earlier secret plotting in order to "*construct an Italian Macron*". Angela Mauro of *huffpost.italia* (24.04.17) defined the two as: "*Macron says he is not right or left. Renzi moves between left and right*". Matteo Salvini of the fascist-leaning Lega Nord was as unenthusiastic about Macron as he is about Renzi: "*Macron is the new fake.*".

Renzi is currently in political transit. He resigned (from both posts noted above) after losing a national referendum on constitutional changes. Both he and Cameron shared a strong feeling of disbelief at their respective defeats. In Renzi's case he had clearly misjudged his lack of public esteem - the result of his forcing of policies through parliament with the help of Berlusconi and his right-wing Forza Italia (*Fi*) Party. Following his referendum defeat Renzi took time out from politics and President Mattarella selected Paolo Gentiloni to head the government.

The undistinguished Gentiloni is widely portrayed as Renzi's puppet. The essayist and logician Piergiorgio

Odifreddi recently expressed his disillusionment with Gentiloni because of his enthusiastic attitude towards Donald Trump. To Odifreddi he had displayed an ignorance of the subtleties of European solidarity by not treating Trump as Merkel had. Instead he had shamed Italy by being warm while Merkel had been demonstrably cold. In his opinion, this diminished Italy internationally to the status of "*a banana republic*"

Gentiloni has several serious impending crises to resolve. One of these demands strong leadership for its immediate resolution: Ludicrously, the bankrupt Italian state is heavily subsidising the loss-making airline Alitalia. Alitalia's staff recently voted in a referendum not to accept job and salary cuts as a prelude to recapitalisation. Other airlines have expressed interest in buying Alitalia.

The EU's demand for tangible resolution to the Italian budget deficit is also imminent. In the last week of April President Mattarella called for very swift parliamentary action to complete the final draft and obtain parliamentary approval to the constitutional and electoral laws. Italy must have an active constitution and a valid election cannot be run without them. Technically a general election must be held by 2018 but Mattarella became justifiably impatient that the pace to resolve matters had dithered to a halt. Perceptions of the country's stability within the EU also had to be maintained and a credible position of financial probity had to be provided to the credit rating agencies.

Renzi sees that this is a second chance for him to lead both the *Pd* and Italy. He can not resist grasping the role of making a decisive stance nationally and internationally. He is unafraid of reawakening the unpopularity that he courted by making alliances with Berlusconi. He aims to confront the EU over the deficit in the head-on way that he ran the party and country.

According to Marco Damilano in *Espresso* (05.04.17) Renzi has already decided that it is better "*to open a political confrontation to pave the way for radical change in the rules of the game...preparing to bombard the old European institutions from outside in the coming months.*"

Renzi envisages that he will start this come-back after he wins the elections to lead the *Pd* on 30 April. (This article went to press before this date). Renzi has bags of confidence. During the long run up to these primaries *Pd* members discussed different tactics, including running the poll in the autumn of 2017. This would work in favour of the emergence of fresh candidates and a choice of someone other than Renzi. But Renzi's choice of a Spring poll won and left wingers split to form another party, the *Movimento Democratico e Progressista (MDP)*. Renzi then declared himself as a leadership candidate for the remaining part of the *Pd*

Two unlikely winners lined up to oppose him: Andrea Orlando, Minister of Justice (opinion polls gave him a maximum 23% of votes), and Michele Emiliano, President of Apulia (max 31%). Emiliano's pitch criticised Renzi's centrist, right-leaning stance and this view is widely supported within and without the party. Ezio Mauro, the respected *La Repubblica* editor wrote despairingly about the Italian political scene, where "*there are no great figures with personality and leadership, (to provide) a battle of ideas that can give a cultural horizon to political confrontation.*" (25.04.17). Emiliano's election program said that Renzi, and his cabinet appointee Orlando, had drastically changed the party, abandoning people on low incomes. He wanted the party to get closer to the people, especially the poorest.

But Renzi is likely to win and it is predictable that, as the Italian judge and

constitutionalist Gustavo Zagrebelski wrote in *La Stampa* (09.03.17), a return to Renzi's slogans and empty words "will bring pitfalls to the Party", which he contends will lose it its identity. He cites an example of a typical Renzi rallying call, (Trump, Farage etc. use similar phrases) "We Democrats love Italy". Ezio Mauro's *La Repubblica* editorial written to commemorate Italy's 25 April Liberation Day concluded by saying that to follow the path of "republican democracy" the country needs to continually remember "the choice of "resistance" to dictatorship".

The *M5S* is the only other group that can mount a challenge to the *Pd* in a national election. As Orecchiette has said before, it is a Movement and a private company, run by the unelected Beppe Grillo and Davide Casaleggio, IT expert and son of the previous owner. It is not a democratic party, it might appear (unjustifiably) to have democratic elements but it is run as a dictatorship.

Evidence of this illusion of democracy was seen earlier this year in Genova. Marika Cassimatis was selected by the customary on-line members' poll to be the mayoral candidate for elections in June. She won with 362 votes to 338. She has a doctorate in Geographical Sciences and had been a member since 2012. However, Grillo believed that she hadn't followed the principles of *M5S* "before, during and after the selection" and he would not ratify her candidature. He said that he couldn't support someone that he wasn't 100% sure about and it had been "an impartial selection, strongly meritocratic". Because she had signed the candidates' form agreeing that *M5S* reserved the right to exclude people from the candidature, she was unable to mount a legal challenge. Whatever her suitability, the unavoidable point is that Grillo, rather than a selective group or elected party hierarchy, made the decision himself.

Exercising firm control over intelligent adults with elected responsibilities is an unrealistic organisational method in a western democracy. "North Korean," said Luca Ciarrocca (*Il Fatto Quotidiano*. 08.03.17). If *M5S* does win a General Election Grillo has suggested that the likely Premier will be the current 30 year old Vice President of the Chamber of Deputies, Luigi Di Maio. He is pushy, but oddly school-boyish and is always dressed slightly uncomfortably in a suit that lacks Italian poise. He has also, within the *M5S* that abhors corruption, been able to get away with avoiding the truth on a couple of notable occasions. Ciarrocca is scathing in his assessment of Di Maio's suitability for such a role, "Zero political and work experience". He continues to say that the Movement needs to stop being "the secret project of the invisible" and become a "grown-up party.... to stop the absolute absence of internal democracy".... In fact as the headline emphasised: It must convene for the very first time a *First National Congress*, and move to a non-authoritarian structure or it will have a heavy handicap in the face of forthcoming elections.

The choice between the two Parties – *Pd* and *M5S* seems as impossible an electoral choice as those facing many other western countries. Ezio Mauro is equally despairing: "the fever of a diseased democracy infects the whole West".

OUR DAY

It's a simmering pot
 not quite on the boil
 though still ever so hot
 once it ate high centigrades
 for nigh on thirty years
 and helped redden the soil
 while those trying to turn it down
 jeered
 before burning their fingers
 how those memories linger
 when decades ago it was all
 very cold
 and consolation came mainly
 from song and bar
 until the first taper was lit
 by the bold
 now you wonder how long can
 can it last
 before the contents evaporate
 and the pot melts
 to be recast
 slowly
 it will all wear away with time
 slowly
 don't let impatience
 ruin your day
 our day

Wilson John Haire.

The object of Parliament is to substitute
 argument for fisticuffs. *Churchill*

The merciful do not engage in war, and the
 righteous do not engage in finances
Chinese proverb

The man who never alters his opinions is
 like standing water, and breeds reptiles of
 the mind. *William Blake*

The Lord himself prefers common looking
 people. That is why he makes so many of
 them. *Abraham Lincoln*

Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

The Unexplained Election

Theresa May easily won the key Brexit votes in the House of Commons. She needed to get on with negotiations. Instead she has called a snap election, saying she needed more power. And risking losing it.

Several of us immediately remembered the under-reported story of some 30 Tory MPs under suspicion of having been invalidly elected in 2015. Britain has strict limits on election spending, and they seemed to have broken them. She faced major embarrassment and loss of her majority.¹ But a new election will largely wipe that out. I assume that an MP convicted of having spent more than the legal limits campaigning 2015, but validly elected in 2017, would keep their seat. Especially if the election agents said that they alone had strayed into 'grey areas'

Another possibility is that she hopes to sabotage Brexit, which she had opposed. If Labour holds most of their seats and if the Liberal-Democrats recover, she would lose her majority. Politics would then become very tricky.

I couldn't see her getting away with forming a new coalition with the Liberal-Democrats and dropping Brexit: Tory MPs would instantly rebel. But nor could she expect the Liberal-Democrats to join her to carry through Brexit. A coalition with minor parties would be tricky, if it were even possible.

But what about a mass defection of the anti-Corbyn Labour MPs? Labour's 'Timid Tendency' have largely kept their grip on the party

machine, but could have expected to lose it by 2020. Will definitely lose it by 2022, the next expected election, since even those members who were there before Corbyn's unexpected elevation are solidly against them.

It has long been established that British MPs can switch parties or go Independent and still keep their seats. Some of them could call themselves New Labour and go into coalition with the Tories. Others could be Independents, but abstain on the vital Votes of No Confidence. It would be a repeat of Ramsey Macdonald's 'National Labour', which vanished without trace into the Tory Party but did keep Tory power solid for a few vital years.

Such defectors would probably be wiped out in 2022, but perhaps are too vain to realise it. Unaware that their era is over and had ended in failure. Or alternatively, after being part of a basically Tory government for five years, they could expect to go on to some very nice jobs.

Tory election agents who confessed to wrong-doing but protected their MP could also be expected to be looked after.

What Can Britain Choose?

The type of globalisation we've had since the 1980s had meant a lot of losers. Now they are revolting, but mostly revolting in a revolting manner. Only a minority look to left alternatives.

We need to convince everyone that the 1980s were a wrong turn economically. From a left-wing viewpoint it was rather better

socially, though many on the left and not modest enough or realistic enough to see that the gains made were not inevitable. Most of them think that the West's social values are 'normal' and the rest of the world mysteriously out of tune.

The decades since the rise of the New Right have seen the complete demolition of traditional family values in the West, under the supposed care of Center-Right parties. A majority of voters and above all the very rich would not pay the taxes needed for maintaining the family values they officially believed in. Myself, I see the change as an improvement. The old system depended on most women being kept down and confined to family matters: but it was capitalists who chose to take them out of the home as cheap labour

The New Right / New Labour / Clinton Democrat bungling has also destroyed the cause of Westernisation in the Arab World. They failed to understand that the Western systems had been created by Enlightened Autocrats. That the secular dictators they targeted were playing the same role. So we get the rise of hard-line Islam, and in parallel Hindu Extremism in India. Violent Buddhism against a Muslim minority in Myanmar (Burma) and a whole lot else that had seemed moribund in the 1960s.

The New Right are now reverting to being more like the Old Right. No longer pretending to be Cosmopolitan. Meantime the New Labour / Clinton Democrat option is collapsing, but remains powerful and disruptive.

I trust that Corbyn will carry on even if Labour do as badly as the worst of the polls now forecast. **The ‘Timid Tendency’ within Labour can no longer win elections.** The humiliating fading of similar people in France shows that: first the Socialist Party ruled out seeking election for their President, and then their candidate was overtaken by a former Trotskyist who was at least saying that Austerity was wrong. The winner of the second round is now certain to be Macron, a pro-business pro-European-Union candidate who makes no pretence of still being a socialist.

A new world is dawning, but it could be a worse world. The New Right want to globalise but neglected social care. Believed that economics would do it all. Having sewn the wind, they now reap the whirlwind.

Sadly, ordinary people mostly ‘revolt in a revolting manner’. The working mainstream are far too ready to blame the unemployed and immigrants. Reluctant to reject a super-rich more-than-millionaire class that now likes to pretend it isn’t so different from normal people:

“At the beginning of the 20th century, our political lords and masters dressed like they’d just come off a grouse moor. By the end of the century, they looked like they worked in an international hedge fund.

“The left has sometimes been confused by this change. When the grouse moor lot were in power, the battle lines were clear. The class war had its recognisable uniforms, from tweeds to cloth caps. But this old war was made irrelevant by the forward march of modern capitalism, with power leaking to those who were able to manipulate the workings of the market, leaving a few harmless toffs deadheading their

roses. Financial deregulation – the liberalisation of the rules governing the City – was a coup against the traditional vested interests of the pinstriped suits brigade. As the Essex boys took over, the public school traders were left chuntering into their golf club gins.

“The liberal right of Keith Joseph and Margaret Thatcher was able to represent this change as one of democratisation. Money didn’t have any sort of accent. Even the working class could own their own shares and thus stick their fingers in the cherry pie of economic growth – and they could buy their own council house. As some on the left remained obsessed with fighting old battles against beaten enemies, power was being reconcentrated in the hands of the few. As Jeremy Corbyn has rightly put it, the system was being rigged. But tragically, under New Labour the progressive left decided that the best thing it could do was cheer along. Tony Blair differed from Thatcher only by a slightly more redistributive nudge of the tiller. The left had effectively surrendered.”²

Anyone can join the more-than-millionaire class from any background, and need not pretend to be something else. Even a few Australian Aboriginals have ‘made it’, while ordinary Aboriginals remain badly treated. It is not what the left got used to opposing. A shift in our thinking is needed.

We still live with the remains of 1960s radicalism. The New Right tapped into the Hippy attitude of ‘*we can all do what we like and nothing very bad will happen*’. This was not realistic, though it was liberating. People got ‘free love’, and marihuana seems on the road to being legalised. Sex and sexual equality were needed and might not have happened – societies in crisis can jump almost any

way. The West and China have got more tolerant, but the Islamic world has got less so. China is now tightening up politically, while remaining highly tolerant of purely personal behaviour. China could end up being the last best hope of Enlightenment values.

The aim should have been to make the state follow what you see as the best rules, not to be against state power in general. Only state power can stop the rich taking an obscenely high chunk of the wealth.

One thing I’ve suggested is that we contrast the super-rich 1% with the Next Nine – those in the top 10% of incomes but not the top 1%. All of the qualities claimed to justify the super-rich – intelligence, qualifications, hard work and dedication – are showed at least as well by the *average* member of the Next Nine, as well as by many in the remaining 90%. But the Next Nine do their jobs without obscene incomes and privileges.

Labour and ‘Fear of Corbyn’

The British media keep reporting the wrong messages. A modest attempt to return to methods that worked well is presented as dangerous left extremism.

Journalists speak glibly of Press Freedom, and perhaps even believe in it. But someone has bought their souls, and got their money’s worth.

Labour needs to take on these cash-controlled mass media. Maybe something like:

* Tories Feed the Rich.

* The Rich Own the News Services.

* The News Services feed you lies about Labour, knowing that a majority like Labour policies.

* Are you dumb enough to give them another five years of ‘Feed the Rich’?

* Not bothering to register or not voting 'because they are all the same' would do fine, in their eyes.

* They despise you, but don't make it obvious to you.

* Will you stay fooled?

This could be done with a cartoon of Theresa May as mother-bird feeding fat cats, with the needy lying neglected around. And, importantly, make BOTH groups multi-racial. Some voters are racist: remind them that the Tories are mostly about class hatred by the rich against the rest of us for not letting them be as privileged as they'd like.

They hope that enough of the electorate will be moved by prejudice rather than facts.

Emphasise that both racists and genuine conservatives have been fooled by the New Right, since Cameron if not before.

Terrorism – Not an Accidental Evil.

Acts like recent Paris terrorist killings are evil, certainly. But not disconnected from the lesser misdeeds of ordinary citizens.

Evil flourishes where there is neglect, greed and dishonesty from people who cannot be classed as evil, but are definitely in the wrong.

Each bad act contributes a little. Each good act makes evil slightly less likely.

Since 1980, the rich have been bolder and more greedy. And were given false reassurance about the likely consequences.

Are some people evil? Maybe. Born so, possibly. But social neglect counts. Some children of the rich, indulged but not loved, get very bad indeed.

Past a certain point, there is unlikely to be any return. Unlike the liberal-left, I have no problems being harsh with such people. On a pragmatic basis, I dislike torture as

something that degrades the society and yields little useful information. Bribery is much better. I also note that historically, when two global alliances clashed, the victor was the one least willing to use torture. No one has a clean record, but the Counter-Reformation, the Nazis and the post-1945 Soviet Union ended up losing their global struggles.

The Soviet decline began when they stopped having a decent cause to fight for, with the issues of colonialism and racial and sexual equality largely conceded by the West.³

The rich and the louts share responsibility for widespread criminality. Each prefers to look to a single cause, the one that shifts blame.

Some people are prone to evil: they have below-average honesty, below-average sympathy, or an above-average tendency to violence. A descent society can still contain most of them: hence the very variable levels of crime across the globe.

Airlines: 'Free Competition' Fails.

The shocking case of a man brutally dragged off of a flight on which he had a valid seat has correctly caused outrage. Misbehaving passengers must be dealt with, but this man had done nothing wrong. He just objected to being thrown out because the airline wanted to send some of its own people on the flight, but was too stingy to offer a large enough prize to get enough volunteers.

This particular offence has now been stopped. But it is part of a bigger failing:

"Anyone who flies regularly [in the USA] has experienced the endless indignities of modern air travel — the security theater, the cramped seats, the delays, the missed flights,

and all the rest. Making it particularly egregious is the reality that the crucial ingredient of consumer choice seems to be missing. Most of us have at one time or another sworn to ourselves that we will 'never' again fly on one airline or another, only to discover that there are very few airlines one can switch to and that they all seem dismal in their own way.

"The airline industry, unfortunately, suffers from some serious business model flaws — most notably very high fixed costs in the form of buying and maintaining aircraft, and the problem that a half-empty flight is almost as expensive to operate as a full one."⁴

Airlines in the USA routinely sell more tickets than they have seats, assuming not everyone will turn up.⁵ Occasionally they do. They can offer a bribe for some passengers to leave. But weirdly, the small print of the ticket sales contract gives them the right to just throw people off, no matter how much this harms them.

There is also the decay of business ethics since the 1980. They were nothing wonderful even then, but they have definitely got worse. Mature managers would have been young radicals once. Their understanding of what capitalism should be is based on hippy caricatures.

Snippets

North Korea – Shadow Boxing

During the last big round of posturing, I was confident that Trump knew the risks and would not do anything too bad.

I hadn't known that the supposedly threatening US fleet was thousands of miles from Korea. But not vastly surprised when this came out.⁶

I was also suspicious of the unexpected failure of North Korea's

latest test. Is a deal being negotiated behind the scenes?

The Russians insist that North Korea only wants a guarantee that it will not be invaded. The 1950s war was frozen, not ended. "No peace treaty has been signed, and the two Koreas are technically still at war."⁷ This leaves South Korea and the USA free to resume it, if they thought it could be done at acceptable cost.

Iraq gave up its weak collection of 'weapons of mass destruction' and was invaded anyway. Gaddafi thought he had made peace with the West, and found he had not. Iran is fairly safe, because the elected government of Iraq is pro-Iranian, and only lets the USA posture as if victorious for as long as Iran is left alone.

North Korea is the third member of the 'Axis of Evil'. It has atomic weapons, and missiles that could hit Japan. No US president would risk being held responsible, so no war is likely.

It would also not be World War Three. Neither China nor Russia would take military action, if the USA did launch some pre-emptive strike. Nations act on their own best interests, whatever they claim. They would expect to reap political benefits, especially if Japan got mauled.

Gas and Gas

Gassing defenceless prisoners is not the same as using chemical weapons. Morally worse, clearly, but not the same. The White House spokesman was wrong only because he claimed that Assad was worse than Hitler because of a gas attack that was not independently witnessed. That was probably staged by Islamists, or might have been conventional bombs hitting a gas stockpile.

The man could have defended himself by saying that he was talking about war, not genocide. That it would be like saying that the Boston Strangler was not an axe murderer: factually true, though questionable if said without good reason. Yet he might have said that he was only talking about war. But it seems Mr Trump has chosen a bunch of incompetents to serve him.

What's been missed is that the statement was a pack of lies. It should have been unacceptable even if the normal ritual obeisance to Jewish victims of Hitler had been made. (Millions of non-Jewish victims can be safely ignored, and usually are ignored.) Hitler did not use chemical weapons, but he feared retaliation. The Allies always had stocks of poison gas near the front line ready to be used. And it was

only after the war that the Allies learned that the Germans had possessed some much deadlier nerve gases. The Germans had not known that the Allies lacked such gases.

Saddam Hussein used gas for years against Kurdish rebels, and in his war against Iraq. Everyone knew this: it did not stop the West selling him arms. During the Cold War, they wanted him on their side. George Galloway, later denounced for opposing the invasion of Iraq, spent years trying to get British MPs interested. Very few of them were.

Feed the Rich, Let the Poor Die

"Researchers exploring why there has been a substantial increase in mortality in England and Wales in 2015 conclude that failures in the health and social care system linked to disinvestment are likely to be the main cause.

"There were 30,000 excess deaths in 2015, representing the largest increase in deaths in the post-war period. The excess deaths, which included a large spike in January that year, were largely in the older population who are most dependent on health and social care."

This is supposed to cure of us of our affection for the National Health Service. The USA pays twice as big a slice of its national income on health care, and 90% of the population worry about being able to afford necessary treatment, or else know they won't get it. But the Tories are determined to impose something similar on us.

Previous *Newsnotes* can be found at <http://labouraffair-smagazine.com/past-issues/> and <https://longrevolution.wordpress.com/newsnotes-historic/>.

References

- 1 <https://www.channel4.com/news/exclusive-cps-considering-charges-against-over-30-people-including-tory-mps-over-expenses>
- 2 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2017/apr/20/liberal-capitalism-has-rotted-our-souls-but-its-days-might-be-numbered>
- 3 <https://gwydionwilliams.com/history-and-philosophy/the-left-redefined-the-normal/>
- 4 <http://www.vox.com/new-money/2017/4/12/15247172/why-airlines-are-terrible>
- 5 <http://www.vox.com/culture/2017/4/11/15246632/united-airlines-drag-man-off-plane>
- 6 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-39638012>
- 7 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_War

The kind of politician who would cut down a redwood tree and then mount the stump to make a speech for conservation
Adlai Stevenson on Richard Nixon

The important thing to remember with the Internet is that there are large companies that have an interest in controlling how information flows in it. They're very effective at lobbying Congress, and that pattern has locked down other communication media in the past. And it will happen again unless we do something about it.
Eli Pariser

Diary of a Corbyn foot soldier (No 10)

By Michael Murray

murraymicha@gmail.com,

Facebook: Michael Murray London - a commentary/digest of political news for busy people.

Dictionary definition of "foot soldier" "...a dedicated low level follower."

In this issue:

A foot soldier's feelings about the forthcoming General Election

Last week our Hackney North and Stoke Newington Constituency Labour Party circulated notice of the suspension of all Branch and Constituency meetings during the remainder of April, all May and most of June. We were put on a General Election footing. My first reaction was a sinking feeling: we're not ready for this. It's been hard enough to maintain morale in the context of building up to a 2020 election: but a General Election within 2 months? And there was Jeremy on YouTube – on fire at the prospect! I confess my first reaction, posted on my Facebook page, was to ask Jeremy: "Please tell me why you are smiling at the prospect of a General Election which is going to be dominated by Brexit - a major fault-line right through the Labour Party, criss-crossing the other fault-line of a totally divided Parliamentary Party?" It was not a question asked out of defeatism, just perplexity.

But I've been encouraged somewhat by the realization that, on second thoughts, if the die was cast, so to speak, that's the way a leader should behave in the face of adversity. As Gramsci held: be an optimist in action even if you are a pessimist in thought. Impressed with the way Jeremy hit the ground running – and gaining in the process 2,500 new members in the first 24 hours, plus £250,000 in member donations (a week later, that figure is over a million) – I find myself back in the thick of things as a foot soldier, and, yes, optimistic in action, because that's what is required.

To say Theresa May's announcement of a General Election caught everybody by surprise would be the understatement of the century, though many of her supporters had suggested the Tories should put the boot in while Labour was in disarray and before it had time to cobble together

some semblance of party unity. The speculation about her motives has included: the potential weakening of her majority if a number of Tory MPs were to be charged with electoral financial irregularities; the threat, perceived as blackmail, of another Scottish Independence Referendum; Tory backbench and Tory "grandees" bucking the "hard Brexit" traces.

The main Brexit EU negotiator, Guy Verhofstadt, surprisingly, chose to publish the European "read" on it. The Brexit Referendum was always seen in Europe, he said, as the result of an internal Tory party "cat fight." The calling of the "Snap" election is seen as merely "a continuation of internal Tory party machinations." (22 April, 2017, Guardian) "An attempted power grab...to secure another 5 years in power before the reality of Brexit hits," was William Keegan's verdict in the same paper.

There is another explanation prompted by Paul Johnson of the IFS (Institute of Fiscal Studies): that the pressures on public services, coupled with the reduction of the tax take due to diminishing access to the EU will call for drastic measures. The debacle over the Budget issue of NIP contribution increases for the self-employed alone would have marked her card and warned her of trouble ahead with other "reforms" likely to generate more incidences of backlash, notably, the Pensions Treble Lock, with its implications for the level of loyalty of the "Grey" vote, currently enjoyed by the Tories.

Nor ought we be surprised if sorting out Boris Johnson with the benefit of an increased majority and tighter control might have crossed her mind. But just wait for the first Budget to follow a May victory – if that is the outcome of the election. Six weeks is an extremely long time in politics these story days. And as the old conservative MacMillan once said, identifying the existential joker in the pack of political

destiny, and that is: "Events, dear boy. Events." If I, a humble foot soldier in the army of Labour, was asked this question, I'd reply: Hubris. Because I can see buckets of it in the Tory party's present position, and Theresa May's in particular.

It's the neo-liberal Tory way to vilify and personalize political discourse. For example at the last session of PMQs: "Every vote for Jeremy Corbyn is a vote for a chaotic Brexit. Every vote for me is a vote to strengthen my hand in negotiating Brexit," trumpeted May. I was reminded of a comment by an anonymous source in Facebook: "Truly Brexit is Suez all over again run by the same idiots who ran Suez, the entitled British Tory elite."

Andrew Glynn, Labour Party National Elections Chair succinctly clarifies what is at stake in this election: "Theresa May is going to extraordinary lengths to blinker the British public and make this election about anything other than her record in government. Under the Tories working people have picked up the bill while those at the top have received tens of billions of tax breaks. Wages have stagnated, public services have suffered huge cuts while our NHS is in crisis. It is clearer than ever that the Tories are for the few, not the many. Rather than uniting the country and tackling the challenges we face, their policies are divisive and are taking us backwards." (Guardian on line, 27 April)

In a recent poll Jeremy lost by a large margin in a comparison of leadership and character traits, Theresa May scores highest as a "strong" leader, while Corbyn scores highest as a principled leader. (22 April, 2017, The Guardian). I believe if the General Election was to be in two years, not 6 weeks, Corbyn's core values would have begun to count for something in the peoples' choice of PM. And maybe it still can. It's the foot soldier's job to attempt to make it so.

Parliament Notes



Dick Barry

Early Parliamentary General Election

On 19 April Theresa May announced that a General Election would be held on 8 June. Her speech and that of Jeremy Corbyn is published below.

The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May)

I beg to move, That there shall be an early parliamentary general election.

I rise to speak to the motion on the Order Paper in my name and those of my right hon. Friends. The motion confronts every member of this House with a clear and simple opportunity—a chance to vote for a general election that will secure the strong and stable leadership the country needs to see us through Brexit and beyond. It invites each one of us to do the right thing for Britain and to vote for an election that is in our country's national interest.

My priority when I became Prime Minister was to provide the country with economic certainty, a clear vision and strong leadership after the long and passionately fought referendum campaign. This Government have delivered on those priorities.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con) In the time-honoured fashion, my right hon. Friend has called this election in what she considers, and I consider, to be the national interest at this moment. It would be a brave man or woman who voted against this motion. The Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011 is therefore seen to be an

emperor without clothes—it serves no purpose, and many of us have questioned it for many years. Will the first line of our manifesto be to scrap it?

The Prime Minister My hon. Friend tries to tempt me down that road. What is clear is that the Fixed-term Parliaments Act gives us an opportunity, notwithstanding the fixed-term element of it, to have elections at another time, but it is of course for this House to vote for such an election. Like him, I think it is very clear that every Member of this House should be voting for this election.

Paul Farrelly (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Lab) The Prime Minister pledged time and again not to call an early election. In her Easter message, she talked greatly of her Christian values, so will she explain why she has such a loose and complicated relationship with telling the truth?

Mr Speaker Order. The Prime Minister is perfectly well able to fend for herself, but what the hon. Gentleman has said is a breach of order and I must ask him to withdraw it. He is versatile in the use of language—he used to pen articles for newspapers; he is a journalist—so withdraw, man, and use some other formulation if you must. At the very least, however, withdraw it.

Paul Farrelly I am very happy to withdraw and reformulate what I said. Why does the Prime Minister have such a complicated and loose relationship with giving the country a clear indication of her

intentions?

The Prime Minister I say to the hon. Gentleman that yesterday I gave the country a very clear indication of my intentions. If he has a little patience, he will hear the reasons why I did that. As I was saying, the Government have delivered on the priorities that I set out last year. Despite predictions of immediate financial and economic danger, since the referendum we have seen consumer confidence remain high, record numbers of jobs and economic growth that has exceeded all expectations. At the same time, we have delivered on the mandate we were handed by the referendum result by triggering article 50 before the end of March, as we pledged to do. As a result, Britain is leaving the EU and there can be no turning back.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP) Does it not take some brass neck to call a general election when you are facing allegations of buying the last one?

The Prime Minister That intervention was not worthy of the hon. Gentleman.

Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab) Will the Prime Minister just clarify for us whether she supports fixed-term Parliaments?

The Prime Minister We have a Fixed-term Parliaments Act that enables us to have fixed-term Parliaments. I believe that at this point in time, it is right for us to have this debate and this vote in this House, and I believe that it is right for Members of this House to vote—I

shall explain why—for us to have a general election at this stage. Today we face a new question: how best to secure the stability and certainty we need over the long term in order to get the right deal for Britain in the Brexit negotiations and make the most of the opportunities ahead. I have come to the conclusion that the answer to that question is to hold a general election now in this window of opportunity before the negotiations begin.

I believe it is in Britain's national interest to hold an election now. A general election is the best way to strengthen Britain's hand in the negotiations ahead. Securing the right deal for Britain is my priority and I am confident that we have the plan to do it. We have set out our ambition: a deep and special partnership between a strong and successful European Union and a United Kingdom that is free to chart its own way in the world. That means we will regain control of our own money, our own laws and our own borders, and we will be free to strike trade deals with old friends and new partners all around the world.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP) I am very grateful to the Prime Minister for giving way. I can understand that she wants to give the House the opportunity to determine whether there should be an election, but if the House determines that now is the time, why is it that the Prime Minister stands in the face of the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government, which have voted for a referendum on Scotland's future? If it is right that the people here have a voice and a vote on the future of this country, why should not the Scottish people be given a vote as well?

The Prime Minister Now is the time for a general election because

it will strengthen our hand in the negotiations on Brexit. Now is not the time for a second Scottish independence referendum because it would weaken our hand in the negotiations on Brexit. Strength and unity with the Conservatives; division and weakness with the Scottish nationalists. I believe that our plan for Brexit delivers on the will of the British people. It is the right approach for Britain and it will deliver a more secure future for our country and a better deal for all our people. But it is clear that other parties in this House have a different view about the right future for our country, while Members of the other place have vowed to fight the Government every step of the way.

Jake Berry (Rossendale and Darwen) (Con) In the referendum, the people of Rossendale and Darwen gave my right hon. Friend and the Government a mandate to exercise article 50. She has done that and we are now grateful to have the opportunity to strengthen the Prime Minister's hand so that she can go out there and get the best possible deal for people who live in Rossendale and Darwen, manufacturers in Rossendale and Darwen, and every family in Rossendale and Darwen.

The Prime Minister My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We should be united in this Parliament in wanting to get the best possible deal not just for the country as a whole, but for everybody across the whole of this country. I commend him for the work that he has done in Rossendale and Darwen to support his constituents on this matter.

Andy Burnham I can see how it suits the Prime Minister's purposes to make this election all about Brexit, but does she accept the possibility that it may just become a referendum on her brutal

cuts, which have left older people without care, schools sending begging letters to parents and a record number of homeless people on the streets of Greater Manchester?

The Prime Minister Of course when we come into the general election campaign, people will look at a wide range of issues. They will look at the fact that pensioners are £1,250 a year better off because of the actions of the Conservative Government. They will look at the fact that 1.8 million more children are in good or outstanding schools. If the right hon. Gentleman wants to talk about impact on the economy, I suggest he searches his memory for the time he spent as Chief Secretary to the Treasury, when Labour were trashing the economy of this country and leading us to virtual bankruptcy.

I have set out the divisions that have become clear on this issue. They can and will be used against us, weakening our hand in the negotiations to come, and we must not let that happen. I believe that at this moment of enormous national significance, there should be unity here in Westminster, not division. That is why it is the right and responsible thing for all of us here today to vote for a general election, to make our respective cases to the country, and then to respect the result and the mandate it provides to give Britain the strongest possible hand in the negotiations to come.

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op) In the last election, the Conservatives made a manifesto commitment to stay in the single market. Will the Prime Minister withdraw that commitment from the new manifesto and, if she does, will that not weaken her negotiating position, as well as removing two months from the negotiation window?

The Prime Minister We gave a

commitment in the last manifesto to provide the people of the United Kingdom with a vote on whether or not to leave the European Union. We gave them that vote, with the support of Parliament, and they gave a clear message that they want the United Kingdom to leave the European Union. That is exactly what we are going to do.

Mr Nigel Evans (Ribbles Valley) (Con) I fully support the fact that the Prime Minister needs a stronger hand going into the negotiations as we leave the European Union. Does she not think it perverse that some people who did not want a referendum in the first place now want a second referendum at the very end of the procedure, just in case the British Government do not get a good deal from Brussels? Does she not believe that if we were to have that second referendum, it would deeply weaken her position in the negotiations she will have with the European Union?

The Prime Minister My hon. Friend is absolutely right in his description of what would happen. Those who say that they want a second referendum would actually be denying the will of the people, because people voted for us to leave the European Union. We are going to go out there and get the best possible deal. Waiting to hold the next election in 2020, as scheduled, would mean that the negotiations would reach their most difficult and sensitive stage just as an election was looming on the horizon. A general election will provide the country with five years of strong and stable leadership to see us through the negotiations and ensure we are able to go on to make a success of the result. That is crucial. That is the test. It is not solely about how we leave the European Union; it is what we do with the opportunity that Brexit provides that counts.

Leaving the EU offers us a unique, once-in-a-generation opportunity to shape a brighter future for Britain. We need the leadership provided by a strong and stable Government to seize it: a Government who have a plan for a stronger Britain, a Government with the determination to see it through,

and a Government who will take the right long-term decisions to deliver a more secure future for Britain. The Conservative party I lead is determined to be that Government.

Mr David Winnick (Walsall North) (Lab) Is the Prime Minister at all concerned that, having tried her best to build a reputation for political integrity both as Home Secretary and Prime Minister, she is now seen, after all the denials that there would be a snap election, simply as a political opportunist?

The Prime Minister I have not denied the fact that when I came into this role as Prime Minister, I was clear that what the country needed was stability and a Government who would show that they would deliver on the vote people had made in the referendum on leaving the EU. We have provided that over the last nine months. Now it is clear to me that if we are to have the strongest possible hand in the negotiation, we should have an election now. As I have just said, leaving the election to 2020 would mean that we would be coming to the most sensitive and critical part of the negotiations in the run-up to a general election. That would be in nobody's interests.

I have said that the Conservative party I lead is determined to be that Government who have the determination to see through our plan for a stronger Britain. We are determined to provide that leadership, and determined to bring stability to the United Kingdom for the long term. That is what the election will be about: leadership and stability.

Nigel Huddleston (Mid Worcestershire) (Con) Does the Prime Minister, like me, appreciate decisiveness? Does she agree that voting yes to the motion signifies strength, whereas abstaining is a symbol of weakness?

The Prime Minister Absolutely: voting yes is a sign of strength, but I would say a little more about abstaining. Anybody who abstains and thinks we should not have a general election is presumably endorsing the record of the Conservative Government, so we are happy both ways.

Nadhim Zahawi (Stratford-on-

Avon) (Con) Does the Prime Minister agree with Lord Hill, who was a European Commissioner? When asked by the Foreign Affairs Committee what was the best strategy for negotiation, his response was that we have to come together, because our interlocutors will be watching this place and will exploit any weakness in our political system.

The Prime Minister My hon. Friend is absolutely right and I am grateful to him for reminding us what Lord Hill, with his experience, said. It is important that we come together, that we do not show the divisions that have been suggested in the past, and that we are able to show a strong mandate for a plan for Brexit and for making a success of it.

We are determined to bring stability to the United Kingdom for the long term. That is what this election will be about: leadership and stability. The decision facing the country will be clear. I will be campaigning for strong and stable leadership in the national interest with me as Prime Minister. I will be asking for the public's support to continue to deliver my plan for a stronger Britain, to lead the country through the next five years, and to give the country the certainty and stability that we need.

Dawn Butler (Brent Central) (Lab) On the timetable before yesterday, the Prime Minister would have concluded her negotiation by 2019. We would have gone into the general election in 2020, a year later, talking about her deal. That would have given the country an outlook as to what it would be voting for. She is asking the country to strengthen her hand, but does she agree that she is asking the country to vote for a blank cheque?

The Prime Minister No, I am not asking the country to write a blank cheque. We have been very clear about what we intend in terms of the outcome of the negotiations. I set that out in my Lancaster House speech in January, it has been set out in the White Paper, and it was set out in the letter we submitted to the President of the European Council to trigger article 50.

The choice before the House today

is clear. I have made my choice to do something that runs through the veins of my party more than any other. It is a choice to trust the people, so let us vote to do that today; let us lay out our plans for Brexit; let us put forth our plans for the future of this great country; let us put our fate in the hands of the people; and then let the people decide.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab) We welcome the opportunity of a general election because it gives the British people the chance to vote for a Labour Government who will put the interests of the majority first. The Prime Minister says she has only recently and reluctantly decided to go for a snap election. Just four weeks ago, her spokesperson said “there isn’t going to be an early general election”. How can any voter trust what the Prime Minister says?

Britain is being held back by the Prime Minister’s Government. She talks about a strong economy, but the truth is that most people are worse off than they were when the Conservatives came to power seven years ago. The election gives the British people the chance to change direction. This election is about her Government’s failure to rebuild the economy and living standards for the majority; it is about the crisis into which her Government have plunged our national health service; and it is about the cuts to our children’s schools, which will limit the chances of every child in Britain, 4 million of whom now live in poverty. It is a chance of an alternative to raise living standards. More and more people do not have security in their work or their housing.

Gareth Snell (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op) I try not to take it personally that, having arrived so recently, the Prime Minister is that desperate to get rid of me that she is calling an election. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Prime Minister, in calling this election, has essentially said that she does not have confidence in her own Government to deliver a Brexit deal for Britain? One way in which she could secure my vote and the votes of my hon. Friends is to

table a motion of no confidence in her Government, which I would happily vote for.

Jeremy Corbyn I congratulate my Friend on his election to the House and on his work. I agree with him: I have no confidence in this Government either.

Robert Flelo (Stoke-on-Trent ??) My right hon. Friend highlighted the fact that the Prime Minister for 12 months dithered over whether she wanted an election, and all the time said that she did not want one, but is not the reality that her mind was focused by the fact that she may well lose some of her Back Benchers if the Crown Prosecution Service has its way?

Jeremy Corbyn The timing of the election and the role of the CPS is extremely interesting, and it is interesting that the Prime Minister did not mention it in her contribution.

Mr Shailesh Vara (North West Cambridgeshire) (Con) The Leader of the Opposition talks about trust in leaders. What trust can the public put in a leader who has no confidence from his parliamentary colleagues, and who is put in place not by people inside Parliament, but people outside?

Jeremy Corbyn I was elected leader of my party by 300,000 votes. I do not know how many people voted for the Prime Minister to be leader of her party. I suspect it was none whatsoever.

To the 6 million people working in jobs that pay less than the living wage, I simply say this: it does not have to be like this. Labour believes that every job should pay a wage people can live on, and that every worker should have decent rights at work. To the millions of people who cannot afford a home of their own, or who have spent years waiting for a council home, I say that this is their chance to vote for the home their family deserves. Labour Members believe that a housing policy should provide homes for all, and not investment opportunities for a few. To the millions of small businesses fed up with the red tape of quarterly reporting, hikes in business rates and broken promises on national insurance, I say that this is their chance to vote for a Government who invest and who

support wealth creators, not just the wealth extractors.

The Prime Minister says that she has called the election so that the Government can negotiate Brexit. We had a referendum that established that mandate. Parliament has voted to accept that result. There is no obstacle to the Government negotiating, but instead of getting on with the job, she is painting herself as the prisoner of the Lib Dems, who have apparently threatened to grind government to a standstill. There are nine of them and they managed to vote three different ways on article 50, so it is obviously a very serious threat. The Tories want to use Brexit to turn us into a low-wage tax haven. Labour will use Brexit to invest in every part of this country to create a high-wage, high-skill economy in which everyone shares the rewards.

The Prime Minister says this campaign will be about leadership, so let us have a head-to-head TV debate about the future of our country. Why has she rejected that request? Labour offers a better future. We want richer lives for all, not a country run for the rich.

The House divided:

Ayes: 522 Noes: 13

Question accordingly agreed to.

The 13 Members who voted against holding a General Election were: Ronnie Campbell (Lab, Blyth Valley), Ann Clwyd (Lab, Cynon Valley), Jim Fitzpatrick (Lab, Poplar & Limehouse), Clive Lewis (Lab, Norwich South), Fiona MacTaggart (Lab, Slough), Liz McInnes (Lab, Heywood & Middleton), Dennis Skinner (Lab, Bolsover), Graham Stringer (Lab, Blackley & Broughton), Sylvia Hermon (Ind, North Down), Natalie McGarry (Ind, Glasgow East), Michelle Thompson (Ind, Edinburgh West), Alasdair McDonnell (SDLP, Belfast South).

Note: Natalie McGarry and Michelle Thompson are suspended members of the SNP.