

Labour Affairs

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Corbyn's Comeback

On the eve of the election campaign, the Tories held a lead over Labour of around 20 points. It began with Theresa May determined to focus the election on Brexit. The healthy lead in the polls and the voters perception of her as a strong leader had persuaded her to call a snap general election. But as Harold Wilson once said, "a week is a long time in politics." And so it proved. Within a few weeks the political landscape changed as Labour successfully switched the focus from Brexit to the bread and butter issues of falling living standards, the desperate housing shortage, and the crisis in the NHS and social care. This particular battle is being won by Corbyn and the new enthusiasts who rally behind him.

May had declared early on that she needed a large majority to ensure a good deal for Britain in the Brexit negotiations. This is a red herring. She needs a large majority to silence her critics on the Tory backbenchers, once the deal is done. But why should voters trust her with a large majority when her Brexit strategy boils down to simply saying she wants to get the best possible deal for Britain? Of course voters expect the best possible deal, but it isn't guaranteed. Anything else, a bad deal or no deal at all, would be disastrous for the British economy.

May clearly believed she was on to a winner in fighting a presidential style election, focused on herself as a "strong and stable" leader, presiding over a safe, secure Britain. Her strictly controlled campaign with few appearances by senior colleagues, is in sharp contrast with Corbyn's who has been on the hustings since the first day. She has rarely met members of the public, her appearances being almost exclusively among friends and supporters. On one of her few public outings she was confronted by an

angry voter who had had her disability benefit cut. May had no satisfactory explanation to offer her. In stark contrast, the more voters see of Corbyn in the flesh, as opposed to reading scare stories about him in the Tory-supporting press, the more they warm to him.

When Labour launched its election manifesto, with detailed costings, the Tories attacked it for its planned profligate spending. They ignored the fact that a large chunk of the spending is designated for capital projects. To the dismay of the Tories, the commitments to abolish tuition fees, to remove the 1% cap on public sector pay, and to provide extra funding for the NHS and social care, have resonated well with voters. This was quickly reflected in increased support for Labour in the opinion polls, creating panic in the Tory ranks and further personal attacks on Jeremy Corbyn.

In contrast to Labour's manifesto with its detailed costings, the Tories' programme offered a few un-costed policies: An ambition to bring immigration down, yet again, to the tens of thousands. Increased spending on the NHS. And reform of social care, including what Labour referred to as a "dementia tax." However, within a matter of days, following attacks by Labour and with the ink barely dry on the paper, the Tories announced an unprecedented U-turn on a Manifesto commitment. Their social care reform was in tatters. May blustered and stuttered, claiming nothing had changed, but her alleged strength was ebbing away. And when asked to explain how the commitments would be funded, May retorted that it would be all right on the night, as under her "strong and stable" leadership the Tories would continue to deliver a "strong economy."

Theresa May criticised Corbyn's speech on defence and foreign policy, accusing him of exploiting the tragic Manchester bombing for political reasons. Like many others seeking re-election she denies that terrorist attacks are in any way connected with Western foreign policy. May, the church attending Christian, rightly mourns the slaughter of children at the Ariana Grande concert. But May the politician sells weaponry to Saudi Arabia which are used in the war in Yemen, where thousands of civilians, including 900 children, have been killed. No May mourning for them. Ironically, it is Jeremy Corbyn who holds the Christian position on these matters, while the vicar's daughter is apparently indifferent to the multitude of deaths in foreign wars supported by her government.

The Tory attack on Corbyn quickly switched from defence and foreign policy to his alleged support for the IRA. In spite of repeated denials that he supported terrorism, May and Home Secretary Amber Rudd, outrageously suggested that Britain would be less safe from terrorist attacks under a Corbyn-led Labour government. (See David Morrison's article in this issue for a rebuttal of this). And on ITV's 'Peston On Sunday', (28 May), Defence Secretary Michael Fallon deliberately distorted Corbyn's views on terrorism.

The deliberate distortion and misrepresentation of Jeremy Corbyn's views on a range of issues has been a Tory tactic throughout the election campaign. Gutter politics at its worst. And yet no Labour member outside of the shadow cabinet has come to Corbyn's defence, or provided

any kind of support, whatever the Tories form of attack. Perhaps, like Lord (Peter) Mandelson, they are praying for a Tory victory.

The priority for the Tories has always been to gain power and hold onto it whatever it takes. This includes stealing the opposition's ideas, for example: They initially opposed the idea of a minimum wage in 1999. But then displayed wild enthusiasm for an increase in the minimum wage, rebranded as a national living wage, in 2015. Ed Miliband's energy price freeze proposal in 2015 attacked as "Marxist" and of bucking the market. By contrast May's price cap in 2017 using the State to buck the market is helping the "just about managing." The U-turn on the "dementia tax", while brazenly claiming nothing had changed and attacking Labour's proposals for improving social care. There is no limit to what the Tories will do to hold onto power.

Whatever May claims, it will be business as usual following a Tory victory. She will alienate Tory backbenchers, friends and financial supporters if she sullies the Tory brand with a form of left Conservatism to appease traditional Labour voters in government, as distinct from an election campaign. We can therefore expect a sharp reverse in her intended direction if the Tories win on 8 June.

A vote for a Corbyn-led Labour government on the other hand, is a vote for a clean break from the failed policies of the recent past. It is a vote for radical change that will address the unequal distribution of wealth and power in Britain. And that is why he is constantly attacked and misrepresented.

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No Parliament Notes - no Parliament till after the election on June 8th

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Parliament And World War One

By Dick Barry

GENERAL AMNESTY.

15 June 1917

The CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER (Mr. Bonar Law)

The Adjournment of the House has just been moved for the purpose which I indicated at Question Time to-day—in order that I might have an opportunity of reading the following statement to the House:

His Majesty's Government, after giving long and anxious consideration to the position of the Irish political prisoners, have arrived at the decision which it is now my duty to announce. They have felt that the governing consideration in the matter is the approaching session of a Convention, in which Irishmen themselves will meet to settle the difficult problem of the future administration of their country. This great experiment will mark a new era in the relations of Ireland with the United Kingdom and the Empire, and it is beyond measure desirable that the Convention should meet in an atmosphere of harmony and good will in which all parties can unreservedly join, and nothing would be more regrettable than that the work of the Convention should be prejudiced at the outset by embittered associations, which might even hinder the settlement to which we all look forward with hope.

In these circumstances, His Majesty's Government have decided that they cannot give a better earnest of the spirit in which they approach this great experiment than by removing one of the main causes of serious misunderstanding with which it is in their power at this stage to deal. They have decided, therefore, upon the release, without reservation, of

the prisoners now in confinement in connection with the rebellion of 1916. They have not, however, arrived at this decision without giving careful consideration to two aspects of the case which it is impossible to ignore. They have satisfied themselves, in the first place, that the public security will not be endangered by such an act of grace; and, secondly, that in none of the cases concerned is there evidence that participation in the rebellion was accompanied by individual acts which would render such a display of clemency impossible. In recommending to His Majesty the grant of a general amnesty to the persons in question, the Government are inspired by a sanguine hope that their action will be welcomed in a spirit of magnanimity, and that the Convention will enter upon its arduous undertaking in circumstances that will constitute a good augury for the reconciliation which is the desire of all parties in every part of the United Kingdom and the Empire.

Mr. DEVLIN I am sure that the House has listened with the deepest interest, as we have listened with the most profound gratification, to the statement which has been made by the right Hon. Gentleman. My only regret is that the Government did not take an earlier opportunity of deciding on the course which they have now adopted, as in my judgement that would have created

at an earlier period that good temper and freedom from internal rancour which are now so eminently desired, and which might have been secured at an earlier stage. Nevertheless, I am quite prepared to express a feeling of deep satisfaction that the Government have seen their way not only to grant a general amnesty to the Irish political prisoners, but to do it without the slightest reservation. I am well aware that there was in the mind of the Government, and I believe in that of many of their advisers, the feeling that there ought to be a discrimination made between these imprisoned men. We have pointed out repeatedly to the Government, in the representations which we have made to them, that any discrimination whatever would be regarded as a hostile act upon the part of the Government, and that it would be better to take no action at all if they were prepared to release some and not to release all. The Government have recognised the wisdom of the advice which the Irish party have given them, and they have now decided upon a complete release without any exception being made. To have retained any of them in prison would, in my judgement, have been a blunder of the greatest magnitude, and I am delighted that the Government have decided not to add that to the many other blunders that have been made. It is, I think, an earnest upon the part of the Government that they were

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This also has old issues of Problems magazine.

prepared to deal with this problem in a sincere and full-hearted fashion, and we recognise the spirit in which they have acted.

For my part, I am just as anxious as the right Hon. Gentleman or any Member of this House to see that this great Convention will be a success. We are anxious that it should be a success for many reasons. We want to see Irishmen, assembled on Irish soil, endeavouring, by the application of those high qualities which have enabled them to contribute so largely in other parts of the world, to create institutions of liberty; we want to see them apply themselves in a wholehearted and patriotic spirit to the great task of bringing peace and union and liberty to their country. We are anxious also that the Convention may evolve a Constitution which will bring satisfaction and contentment and peace to all Ireland, so that Ireland may work in a spirit of good will and partnership with this country. It was for that purpose that many of us have laboured for nearly twenty years in this House, in the English constituencies, and in Ireland.

We want to see good relationship, kindly feeling, mutual democratic operation between Great Britain and Ireland, and we are anxious to see that in the future and to destroy the rancours that have sprung up out of the incidents of the last twelve months, and to obliterate the bitter racial feelings that have been created by the unfortunate and tragic incidents, and that, instead of those feelings of racial hatred, we may have a spirit of understanding and good will and evolve a spirit that will make Ireland not a black mark upon a British Imperial system, but a great and bright example of good government and of successful democracy.

That is the purpose which we

hope to achieve by the holding of this Convention in Ireland, and that purpose will largely be served—it could be served in no higher manner than by the complete and unreserved way in which the Government has acted in this matter, and by their action in releasing these prisoners from British gaols and enabling them to return to their own country to do, what I trust they will do, lend a hand in the softening of racial acerbities and the creation of that better feeling which will bring peace and blessings to Ireland.

Mr. H. SAMUEL I may say that the whole House has heard with the deepest satisfaction that the Government, after a careful review of the whole situation, have come to the conclusion that it is consistent with order and security in Ireland to accept this measure of liberation, and I may say, also, that we all agree with the action they have taken as wise and politic action. We shall concur with the Government also in the opinion that if any are to be released, then it is right to release all, particularly since the review of individual sentences leads to the conclusion that none of the prisoners has individually committed offences which would make discrimination inevitable. The release will, I hope, be received in Ireland, as it is intended in this country, as an earnest of good will, and that it will strengthen the hope which prevails throughout this House, as it is the earnest desire of the whole House, that the Convention which is now set up may lead to some effective result—may have the result of ending this long and unhappy quarrel between the two peoples.

Sir H. DALZIEL As one of those who welcomed the action of the Government in calling an Irish Convention, I desire to say a word in support of the decision which they have announced. I think, if I

may say so, that the Government have acted wisely in what they have done, and I do not think that there will be one dissentient voice in any part of the House. It is not only the consideration of the Irish Convention, at which we hope all sections of the Irish community will be represented, which is the consideration in the decision at which they have arrived. I think the House ought to keep in mind that the men who are to be released are men who have been in prison for the greater part of the year without trial. I confess that my view of British justice always has been, no matter how serious the crime alleged against any man, that he ought always to have the right of placing his case before those appointed by the State to try him. We know that in this case there were considerations which made it advisable that probably that course should not be adopted; nevertheless, the fact remains that these men have never had an opportunity of replying to the charges made against them, and I think that fact ought to be kept in mind by some who are disposed to judge them harshly, and especially by the British public. There is another thing which we ought to keep in mind, and that is that there was really no criminal intention, so far as those men were concerned. I believe every one of them thought in what they did they were acting on behalf of the country which they loved. I have always thought that a distinction should be drawn between the deliberately criminal act and the act, however criminal, which was carried out from the point of view of patriotism, however ill-advised or unjust.

I think that everyone who understands the history of Ireland will understand the action of these men at the time of the rebellion. They had been brought up to believe that

England was the enemy of Ireland, and, Heaven knows, they have had reasons during the last few years to refuse to have confidence in British administration. They had seen the great Irish party coming here year after year for ten years and supporting a Government which had promised to give them self-government for Ireland. But for the support of the Irish party the Liberal Government could not have existed a single day or a single hour. They saw their representatives keeping that Government in office, and after all those long weary years they saw they were disappointed in their expectations.

I would say with regard to the offences for which these men were tried the late Liberal Government had a great responsibility. They allowed all this training to go on, they allowed them to have firearms, and they allowed them to prepare for the revolution under their very eyes. With all their secret service, with all their constabulary, and with all their representatives at Dublin Castle, when the revolution broke out they expressed surprise that it had taken place. I say that the late Government in allowing this condition of things to prevail, without taking any protection against them, were as responsible for the revolution as any man who has been in prison in Lewes or elsewhere. [HON. MEMBEES: "Oh, oh!"]

Therefore, the responsibility is to be divided in this case. I am glad that the Government have announced their decision. I agree with the right Hon. Friend who has just spoken that the Act comes a little late and lacks some of the graciousness which would otherwise have been associated with it. I could have hoped that this announcement would have been made at least two weeks or a month ago. I believe its effect would have been even more

far-reaching in its character than it can be at the present time. It is a case of better late than never. I rejoice that the Government have come to the decision which they have announced. I rejoice particularly that in deciding on this policy they have done it in no half-hearted fashion and that there is a general amnesty which will apply to all prisoners of war. I say, personally, I do not believe that any great country ever loses anything by being generous. We have seen in South Africa what the result of the policy was there. I do not believe that in the action we are taking to-day there is any danger, and I believe there is much reason for hope. I thank the Government for their announcement, and I hope it may give us even more solid reason than we had before that the Irish Convention will be successful.

Mr. WARDLE I am sorry not to have been present when this very interesting announcement was made, but I do not think there is any necessity for me to apologise to the House for my absence, because I have been working on Government business elsewhere and I have had to leave it for the purpose of coming here. I think the announcement which has been made now, and made so generously, is one that brings once more a new ray of hope in regard to the situation in Ireland. So far as the party with which I am associated is concerned, we have always from the very beginning expressed our sympathy with the Irish party, and, though I cannot go quite so far as the last speaker in attributing blame equally between the late Government and those who took part in this rebellion, I do feel that the circumstances of the time in which that rebellion broke out do mitigate to some extent the criminal nature of their offence. I would like to add that their sympathies and

their aspirations for freedom with the desire to bring about a real settlement between this country and Ireland must be taken into account in judging of the facts.

I am, however, much more concerned about the future than I am about the past. I wish more than ever to-day that it were possible that bygones should be bygones. I know we cannot wipe out the past entirely. Surely, however, this act of clemency on the part of the Government, in face of the proposals for the Convention, should, at any rate, do something to demonstrate that there is a large mass of opinion in this country favourable, and that even the Government of the country itself is desirous of seeing this Convention begin with a fair chance of success, with the past obliterated and wiped out so far as it can be wiped out, and that a real opportunity for reconciliation between the two peoples is afforded. So far as I am concerned, my whole heart's desire is that this Parliament, this Convention, and this Government may see this problem, which has been baffling us for so long, brought to a settlement. I am quite sure of this, that the action of the Government to-day will take us a long stride forward in that direction. My uttermost sympathies are with the Irish people in this matter, and I am glad the Government have taken the action they have taken.

Mr. E. WASON I have only risen to say how heartily glad I am that the Government have taken this course. I feel, in speaking here this afternoon, that I am not only speaking for myself, but as Chairman of the Scottish Liberal Members, every one of whom would, I believe, endorse what I am saying. Perhaps it may be of interest to the House to know that I do not think there is a single Member in the House now here, as I was in 1885-6, when I

supported Mr. Gladstone in his first endeavour to do justice to Ireland. From that time to the present I have laboured in season and out of season to try to get a settlement of this question. I was privileged to accompany the Prime Minister to Dublin when we had that great meeting. I shall never forget the magnificent reception he got when he spoke there, and we all hoped and believed that at last, after long, we were going to have a settlement of this question. People talk about Home Rule for Scotland, for Wales, and for other parts of the country. In Scotland we have practically got Home Rule. [HON. MEMBERS: "No, no !" and "Yes!"] We have got our own laws—

Colonel J. CRAIG What about the Treasury?

Mr. WASON Our laws are Scottish laws, our jury system is different to that in England—everything is different. Hon. Friends round me dissent, and I know there are things that need remedy; but one thing at a time. We in Scotland feel deeply the injuries which have been inflicted upon Ireland. With all my heart and soul I hope that the action of the Government will lead to us all seeing at last a happy and a contented Ireland.

Mr. ELLIS GRIFFITH As Chairman of the Welsh party, perhaps I may be allowed a word or two. I will not follow the right Hon. Gentleman who has just spoken into controversial matters of Scottish history, but I am sure, on behalf of my Welsh colleagues, who represent a Celtic people, that I may be allowed to say how glad I am that the Government has found itself able to come to this decision. Naturally I do not wish to strike anything but a concordant note, but we must all recognise that the Executive of the day has a very grave responsibility in this matter. We know perfectly well what happened

in the Rebellion, and, however anxious the Government might be to show mercy, yet they had other duties to consider and other obligations and considerations of law and order. No doubt the Leader of the House has taken all these matters into consideration and I am quite sure my Irish friends on the benches below the Gangway will recognise the spirit in which this has been done. It really does give this Convention a chance. After this sign and symbol of goodwill from Great Britain, it cannot be said that this Convention is not beginning under the very happiest auspices. Without saying there will be any responsibility in the future on anyone, I think we can say the House of Commons and the Government have done their full share to make this Convention a success, and, in thanking the Government for what they have done, we can all hope for good results in Ireland.

Mr. GINNELL The Government are to be congratulated on their prudence in this matter. They acknowledge quite candidly that it is for their own purpose of holding a Convention, rigged by themselves, and thereby placating American opinion that they have released these men. I repeat that they are to be congratulated on their rather belated wisdom. The Leader of the House did not omit to seize the opportunity to limit the scope of the Convention to the administration of Ireland. The Irish people will carefully mark that the purpose of the Convention is limited to—

Notice taken that forty Members were not present.

Mr. PRINGLE Very foolish!

An HON. MEMBER What a mean thing!

Mr. KING May I appeal to my Hon. Friend to withdraw his request for a count? There are only a few moments left. It has been allowed on previous occasions.

Mr. GINNELL This is English fair play!

Mr. DEPUTY-SPEAKER I am afraid that I am bound by the Rule to take notice that forty Members are not present.

Mr. GINNELL I have only to put a few practical questions to the Leader of the House, and if you allow me to do that, the forty Members need not be troubled, because I know the party Whips will take care not to let them enter.

Mr. KING I was appealed to just now out in the Lobby, and was told that a count had been arranged; and you can see behind the Chair a score of Members.

HON. MEMBERS Order, order!

Mr. DEPUTY-SPEAKER This is quite disorderly. I am bound by the Rules.

Mr. GINNELL On a point of Order. May I ask whether it is in order for Members to accost and solicit other Members of this House so as to prevent fellow Members from speaking?

Mr. KING Might I enforce that? Is it in order when we are here to do the business of the country for Whips and others to implore Members not to come into the House, so that there may be a count, and is it not altogether outside the usual courtesies, even if strictly in order?

Mr. DEPUTY-SPEAKER There is no point of Order arising there. Hon. Members of all parties have at times interested themselves in this matter.

Mr. GINNELL May I ask your permission to address—

Mr. DEPUTY-SPEAKER Order, order! I am about to count.

House counted, and forty Members not being present,

The House was adjourned at Ten minutes before Five o'clock, till Monday next.

Jeremy Corbyn's Speech on UK Foreign Policy

Chatham House 26 May 2017

Our whole nation has been united in shock and grief this week as a night out at a concert ended in horrific terror and the brutal slaughter of innocent people enjoying themselves. When I stood on Albert Square at the vigil in Manchester, there was a mood of unwavering defiance. The very act of thousands of people coming together sent a powerful message of solidarity and love. It was a profound human impulse to stand together, caring and strong. It was inspiring.

In the past few days, we have all perhaps thought a bit more about our country, our communities and our people. The people we have lost to atrocious violence or who have suffered grievous injury, so many of them heart-breakingly young.

The people who we ask to protect us and care for us in the emergency services, who yet again did our country proud: the police; firefighters and paramedics; the nurses and doctors; people who never let us down and deserve all the support we can give them. And the people who did their best to help on that dreadful Monday night – the homeless men who rushed towards the carnage to comfort the dying, the taxi drivers who took the stranded home for free, the local people who offered comfort, and even their homes, to the teenagers who couldn't find their parents.

They are the people of Manchester. But we know that attacks, such as the one at the Manchester Arena, could have happened anywhere and that the people in any city, town or village in Britain would have responded in the same way.

It is these people who are the strength and the heart of our society. They are the country we love and the country we seek to serve. That is the solidarity that defines our United Kingdom. That is the country I meet on the streets every day; the human warmth, the basic decency and kindness.

It is our compassion that defines the Britain I love. And it is compassion

that the bereaved families need most of all at this time. To them I say: the whole country reaches out its arms to you and will be here for you not just this week, but in the weeks and years to come. Terrorists and their atrocious acts of cruelty and depravity will never divide us and will never prevail.

They didn't in Westminster two months ago. They didn't when Jo Cox was murdered a year ago. They didn't in London on 7/7. The awe-inspiring response of the people of Manchester, and their inspirational acts of heroism and kindness, are a living demonstration that they will fail again.

But these vicious and contemptible acts do cause profound pain and suffering, and, among a tiny minority, they are used as an opportunity to try to turn communities against each other.

So let us all be clear, the man who unleashed carnage on Manchester, targeting the young and many young girls in particular, is no more representative of Muslims, than the murderer of Jo Cox spoke for anyone else. Young people and especially young women must and will be free to enjoy themselves in our society.

I have spent my political life working for peace and human rights and to bring an end to conflict and devastating wars. That will almost always mean talking to people you profoundly disagree with. That's what conflict resolution is all about. But do not doubt my determination to take whatever action is necessary to keep our country safe and to protect our people on our streets, in our towns and cities, at our borders.

There is no question about the seriousness of what we face. Over recent years, the threat of terrorism has continued to grow. You deserve to know what a Labour Government will do to keep you and your family safe. Our approach will involve change at home and change abroad.

At home, we will reverse the cuts to our emergency services and police. Once again in Manchester, they have

proved to be the best of us. Austerity has to stop at the A&E ward and at the police station door. We cannot be protected and cared for on the cheap. There will be more police on the streets under a Labour Government. And if the security services need more resources to keep track of those who wish to murder and maim, then they should get them.

We will also change what we do abroad. Many experts, including professionals in our intelligence and security services have pointed to the connections between wars our government has supported or fought in other countries, such as Libya, and terrorism here at home.

That assessment in no way reduces the guilt of those who attack our children. Those terrorists will forever be reviled and implacably held to account for their actions.

But an informed understanding of the causes of terrorism is an essential part of an effective response that will protect the security of our people, that fights rather than fuels terrorism.

Protecting this country requires us to be both strong against terrorism and strong against the causes of terrorism. The blame is with the terrorists, but if we are to protect our people we must be honest about what threatens our security.

Those causes certainly cannot be reduced to foreign policy decisions alone. Over the past fifteen years or so, a sub-culture of often suicidal violence has developed amongst a tiny minority of, mainly young, men, falsely drawing authority from Islamic beliefs and often nurtured in a prison system in urgent need of resources and reform. And no rationale based on the actions of any government can remotely excuse, or even adequately explain, outrages like this week's massacre. But we must be brave enough to admit the war on terror is simply not working. We need a smarter way to reduce the threat from countries that

nurture terrorists and generate terrorism.

That's why I set out Labour's approach to foreign policy earlier this month. It is focused on strengthening our national security in an increasingly dangerous world.

We must support our Armed Services, Foreign Office and International Development professionals, engaging with the world in a way that reduces conflict and builds peace and security.

Seeing the army on our own streets today is a stark reminder that the current approach has failed. So, I would like to take a moment to speak to our soldiers on the streets of Britain. You are doing your duty as you have done so many times before.

I want to assure you that, under my leadership, you will only be deployed abroad when there is a clear need and only when there is a plan and you have the resources to do your job to secure an outcome that delivers lasting peace.

That is my commitment to our armed services. This is my commitment to our country. I want the solidarity, humanity and compassion that we have seen on the streets of Manchester this week to be the values that guide our government. There can be no love of country if there is neglect or disregard for its people. No government can prevent every terrorist attack. If an individual is determined enough and callous enough, sometimes they will get through.

But the responsibility of government is to minimise that chance, to ensure the police have the resources they need, that our foreign policy reduces rather than increases the threat to this country, and that at home we never surrender the freedoms we have won, and that terrorists are so determined to take away. Too often government has got it wrong on all three counts and insecurity is growing as a result. Whoever you decide should lead the next government must do better.

Today, we must stand united. United in our communities, united in our values and united in our determination to not let triumph those who would seek to divide us. So for the rest of this election campaign, we must be out there demonstrating what they would take away: our freedom; our democracy; our support for one another. Democracy will prevail. We must defend our democratic process, win our arguments by discussion and debate, and stand united against those who would seek to take our rights away, or who would divide us.

Last week, I said that the Labour Party was about bringing our country together. Today I do not want to make a narrow party political point. Because all of us now need to stand together. Stand together in memory of those who have lost their lives. Stand together in solidarity with the city of Manchester. And – stand together for democracy.

Because when we talk about British values, including tolerance and mutual support, democracy is at the very heart of them. And our General Election campaigns are the centrepieces of our democracy – the moment all our people get to exercise their sovereign authority over their representatives.

Rallies, debates, campaigning in the marketplaces,

knocking on doors, listening to people on the streets, at their workplaces and in their homes – all the arts of peaceful persuasion and discussion – are the stuff of our campaigns.

They all remind us that our government is not chosen at an autocrats' whim or by religious decree and never cowed by a terrorist's bomb.

Indeed, carrying on as normal is an act of defiance – democratic defiance – of those who do reject our commitment to democratic freedoms.

But we cannot carry on as though nothing happened in Manchester this week.

So, let the quality of our debate, over the next fortnight, be worthy of the country we are proud to defend. Let's have our arguments without impugning anyone's patriotism and without diluting the unity with which we stand against terror.

Together, we will be stronger. Together we can build a Britain worthy of those who died and those who have inspired us all in Manchester this week. Thank you.

TAKING A RISE OUT OF HIM

He's the archbishop of social democracy
of the troublesome priest kind
media assassins scurry
in a country where heaven waits
while hell is in a
hurry
to wish him a last supper
hoping the many Judas
will fill their wallets
and destroy his vision
in a sham ballot
his disciples cover all
those treated with derision
the Muslim victim of a
slum landlord
compassion calls as a Hindu
suffers racial discord
anti-Semitism
so much unkindness
in a queue
class not race not faith
is the forgotten schism
tabloids make a papier mâché
cross
another one for the great
cosmos
to rise again
but this time it's up to you
when

Wilson John Haire

Britain would have been safer with Corbyn in charge

by David Morrison

In a tirade against Jeremy Corbyn in *The Sun* on 26 April 2017, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson asserted that the Labour leader's

"ardent anti-military stances actually mean 'the consequences would be calamitous' if he ever gets the keys to No 10".

And he went on to say that the Labour Party leader would pose "an enormous threat to our country if he gets into No 10". Likewise, Defence Secretary Michael Fallon told BBC Today listeners on 11 May 2017 that the Labour leader "would be a very dangerous leader of our country" if he became Prime Minister.

It is true that Jeremy Corbyn has a spotless record of opposition to British military intervention abroad in the 21st century – in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria – and he has consistently voted against these interventions in the House of Commons. By contrast, the Foreign Secretary has maintained, what might be called, an ardent pro-military stance and backed all of them – and so has Defence Secretary Fallon and Prime Minister May.

The consequences of these military interventions have been disastrous for the Greater Middle East. The region has been destabilised and an environment created in which al-Qaeda linked groups, such as ISIS, have flourished. Without the invasion and destruction of the Iraqi state, ISIS would not have come into existence. In an interview with Vice News in March 2015, President Obama said:

"ISIS is a direct outgrowth of al-Qaeda in Iraq that grew out of our invasion. Which is an example of unintended consequences. Which is why we should generally aim before we shoot."

In the appalling environment created by these interventions, hundreds of thousands of people have been killed and millions more have been made into refugees. In March 2015, *Physicians for Social Responsibility* published a review of the various estimates of

people killed in Afghanistan and Iraq in the 12 years after 9/11 during the so-called "war on terror". They estimate that "the war has, directly or indirectly, killed around 1 million people in Iraq" and "220,000 in Afghanistan" (p15).

Wars of choice

There was no compelling reason for Britain to participate in any of these military interventions. All of them were wars of choice. None of them was undertaken in self-defence in response to being attacked. None of them was undertaken to counter a credible threat to Britain. Indeed, as we will see, Britain's participation in the invasion of Iraq greatly increased the threat to Britain from al-Qaeda, as the intelligence services warned in advance it would.

Britain would have been safer if successive governments, beginning with Tony Blair's in 2001, had adopted Jeremy Corbyn's "ardent anti-military" stance and kept its troops at home. 179 British service personnel were killed in Iraq and 456 in Afghanistan and thousands more have been injured, many with injuries that will be with them for the rest of their lives. These casualties would have been avoided if successive UK governments had refused to participate in these interventions.

In his Chatham House speech on 12 May 2017, Jeremy Corbyn said:

"The approach to international security we have been using since the 1990s has simply not worked. Regime change wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria – and Western interventions in Afghanistan, Somalia and Yemen – have failed in their own terms, and made the world a more dangerous place.

"This is the fourth General Election in a row to be held while Britain is at war and our armed forces are in action in the Middle East and beyond. The fact is that the 'war on terror' which has driven these interventions has failed. They have not increased our

security at home – just the opposite. And they have caused destabilisation and devastation abroad."

It is difficult to disagree with any of that. As an MP, Jeremy Corbyn opposed all of these interventions. Prime Minister May, Foreign Secretary Johnson and Defence Secretary Fallon supported all of them and they haven't shown any sign of recognising the calamitous consequences that flowed from them. So, it would be unwise to bet against a government headed by them engaging in similar disastrous operations abroad, while it's a sure fire bet that a government headed by the "dangerous" Jeremy Corbyn would not.

A last resort - and only if authorised by the Security Council

Throughout his political life, Jeremy Corbyn has taken the view that Britain should engage in military intervention abroad only if the action is authorised by the Security Council under Chapter VII of the UN Charter and even then only as a last resort. His stance is hardly surprising since the use of force by a state in other circumstances (apart from in self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter) amounts to aggression, for which Nazi leaders were convicted and hanged at Nuremberg.

If asked, British governments would claim to apply the same principles but in practice they find ways of ignoring them or of stretching them unmercifully. A prime example of the latter was the Blair government's assertion that the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 (the purpose of which was supposed to be to disarm Iraq of its "weapons of mass destruction") was authorised by a Chapter VII Security Council resolution passed in November 1990 for the entirely different purpose of expelling Iraqi forces from Kuwait. As a veto-holding member of the Security Council, Britain can engage in this kind of creative interpretation of Council resolutions without fear of a

word of criticism by the Council, let alone of appropriate punishment for taking unauthorised military action.

Afghanistan

The US/UK invasion of Afghanistan, which began on 7 October 2001, wasn't explicitly authorised by the Security Council. How then did the Blair Government justify its participation? Believe it or believe it not, the Government claimed that the UK was exercising its right of self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter "following the terrorist outrage of 11 September, to avert the continuing threat of attacks from the same source" (see House of Commons Library briefing *The legal basis for the invasion of Afghanistan*, p4).

Since the UK hadn't been attacked by Afghanistan or even by al-Qaeda which had a base in Afghanistan at the time, it is difficult to see how it could claim to be acting in self-defence. Be that as it may, as required by Article 51, the UK notified the Security Council of its action, saying that it was directed "against targets we know to be involved in the operation of terror against the United States of America, the United Kingdom and other countries around the world" (ibid).

For what it's worth, this argument relied on the UK being an al-Qaida target prior to the attack – and Tony Blair went to great lengths to prove that it was.

On 4 October 2001, a few days before the bombing of Afghanistan began, the Government published a document entitled *Responsibility for the terrorist atrocities in the United States, 11 September 2001*. At the time, I remember being puzzled when I heard that the Government was about to publish a document about events which took place on American soil. What business was it of the British Government?

The answer became clear on reading the document. It has four conclusions. The first two are that bin Laden and al-Qaida were responsible for the attacks and that they are capable of mounting further attacks. The third is the reason why the document was published: it is

that "the United Kingdom, and United Kingdom nationals are potential targets" for al-Qaida.

This was based on two statements by bin Laden (see paragraph 22 of the document). First, the declaration of war against the US military presence in Saudi Arabia from August 1996, which talks about the "aggression, iniquity and injustice imposed" on the Muslim world "by the Zionist-Crusader alliance and their collaborators". Second, the fatwa issued in February 1998, which calls on Muslims "to launch the raid on Satan's US troops and the devil's supporters allying with them, and to displace those who are behind them".

On the basis of these, the document concluded from this that:

"Although US targets are Al Qaida's priority, it also explicitly threatens the United States' allies. References to 'Zionist-Crusader alliance and their collaborators', and to 'Satan's US troops and the devil's supporters allying with them' are references which unquestionably include the United Kingdom." (paragraph 24)

This was a doubtful conclusion since the UK wasn't mentioned explicitly in either of the two statements – or in any other statement – by bin Laden.

Sometime later when I looked up the document again, I discovered to my surprise that paragraph 24 had been extended to include the following:

"This is confirmed by more specific references in a broadcast of 13 October, during which Bin Laden's spokesman said: 'Al Qaida declares that Bush Sr, Bush Jr, Clinton, Blair and Sharon are the arch-criminals from among the Zionists and Crusaders . . . Al Qaida stresses that the blood of those killed will not go to waste, God willing, until we punish these criminals . . . We also say and advise the Muslims in the United States and Britain . . . not to travel by plane. We also advise them not to live in high-rise buildings and towers'" (see amended report here)

Readers were not told that the explicit threat to Britain in this amended paragraph was in response to Britain taking part in the bombing of Afghanistan (which began on 7

October 2001) and would not have been made if Britain had not taken part in the bombing of Afghanistan. Now, Britain certainly was on al-Qaida's target list – and the Blair government used this to justify the military intervention that put it on.

The proposition that the UK had a right to attack Afghanistan in self-defence is, to say the least of it, far fetched. But, in any case, there was no compelling reason for the UK to participate alongside the US. Tony Blair chose to do so.

Jeremy Corbyn was one of a handful of left wing Labour MPs, who along with nationalist MPs from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland opposed participation.

Tony Blair didn't allow the House of Commons a say in the initial decision to participate, nor in the major deployment of troops to Helmand province in 2006. The House of Commons was finally allowed a say by David Cameron on 9 September 2010, when it voted overwhelmingly (373 to 14) to "support the continued deployment of UK armed forces in Afghanistan". Jeremy Corbyn was one of only 14 MPs who voted against.

Nearly 16 years after the US/UK invasion and the overthrow of the Taliban regime there is no sign of political arrangements being established that might allow the Afghan people to live in something approaching peace. And, far from countering a threat to Britain from al-Qaida – which was the reason given at the outset by Tony Blair and repeated by later Prime Ministers – British participation helped generate a threat from al-Qaida, a process that was greatly accelerated by British participation in the invasion of Iraq.

Today, around 500 British troops remain in Afghanistan and their final withdrawal is not imminent. On 10 May 2017, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg met with Prime Minister May and asked for more troops for Afghanistan.

Iraq

The invasion of Iraq in March 2003 alongside the US was another "war of choice" for Tony Blair. Iraq had

not attacked the UK, nor did it pose a credible threat to the UK.

Ostensibly, the objective of the invasion was to disarm Iraq of its “weapons of mass destruction”. But the invasion on 19 March 2003 aborted a process of disarmament by inspection authorised by the Security Council at a time when a majority in the Council (and the inspectors themselves) wished the process to continue. As Sir John Chilcot said in his statement on 6 July 2016 when he launched his report:

“... the UK chose to join the invasion of Iraq before the peaceful options for disarmament had been exhausted. Military action at that time was not a last resort.”

Furthermore, despite heroic efforts by the Attorney General Lord Goldsmith to prove otherwise, the Security Council never authorised the use of force to disarm Iraq of “weapons of mass destruction”. So, Britain’s military action against Iraq constituted aggression contrary to Article 2.4 of the UN Charter.

Jeremy Corbyn was one of the 149 MPs (mainly Labour and Liberal Democrat) who voted against the invasion of Iraq on 18 March 2003. 412 MPs, including Boris Johnson (and Michael Fallon and Theresa May) and most other Conservative MPs voted for it. In the debate prior to the vote, Conservative leader Ian Duncan Smith gave Tony Blair completely uncritical support in his determination to overthrow Saddam Hussein, as he had done for the previous year and more.

Boris Johnson spoke in the debate and said that his main reason for supporting the invasion was that

“... the removal of Saddam Hussein will make the world a better place, but, above all, it will make the world better for the millions of Iraqis whom he oppresses”.

The future Foreign Secretary could hardly have been more wrong: the human cost of the invasion and occupation for the Iraqi people has been calamitous.

President Bush justified the invasion of Iraq on the basis of two false premises (1) that Iraq possessed “weapons of mass destruction” and (2)

that Saddam Hussein had connections with al-Qaeda and had a hand in 9/11. The awful irony is that the US/UK invasion and occupation transformed Iraq from an al-Qaeda free zone into an area where al-Qaeda flourished, so much so that a year after the invasion began George Bush described it as “the central front in the war on terror”. You couldn’t make it up.

Britain less safe

The British intelligence services warned in advance that military action by Britain against Iraq “would increase the threat from Al Qaida to the UK and to UK interests” (see Sir John Chilcot’s statement at the launch of his report on 6 July 2016). That warning, which Tony Blair kept from the British parliament and people, came true in the years following the invasion – al-Qaeda activity in Britain increased “substantially” because of the invasion of Iraq, so much so that Tony Blair was persuaded to double the budget of MI5, the UK’s domestic intelligence agency, in 2003.

Irrefutable evidence to that effect was given to the Chilcot inquiry on 20 July 2010 by Baroness Eliza Manningham-Buller, who was the Director General of MI5 from October 2002 until April 2007.

Asked by one of the inquiry team “to what extent did the conflict in Iraq exacerbate the overall threat that your Service and your fellow services were having to deal with from international terrorism?” in the years after the conflict began in 2003. She replied: “Substantially” (p24-5).

She said there was hard evidence for this, for instance “numerical evidence of the number of plots, the number of leads, the number of people identified, and the correlation of that to Iraq and statements of people as to why they were involved, the discussions between them as to what they were doing” (p34).

She added: “The fact is that the threat increased, was exacerbated by Iraq, and caused not only my Service but many other services round the world to have to have a major increase in resources to deal with it. In 2003, having had an

upgrade in resources after 9/11, which my predecessor agreed, and ... another one ... in 2002, by 2003 I found it necessary to ask the Prime Minister for a doubling of our budget. This is unheard of, it’s certainly unheard of today, but he and the Treasury and the Chancellor accepted that because I was able to demonstrate the scale of the problem that we were confronted by.” (p26-7)

So, there is no doubt that al-Qaeda related activity in Britain increased “substantially” because of Britain’s participation in the invasion of Iraq. This activity included the London bombings of 7 July 2005, in which 52 people were killed and more than 700 were injured.

If Britain had not participated in that invasion, it is almost certain that such an upsurge in al-Qaeda related activity in Britain, including the London bombings, would not have occurred. Stating that is not a justification for the London bombings or other al-Qaeda attacks. It is simply a statement of fact.

Had Jeremy Corbyn’s “ardent anti-military” stance been adopted by the House of Commons on 18 March 2003, there would have been no British military casualties in Iraq and, most likely, no civilian casualties in London on 7 July 2005.

Libya

Had Britain opted out of the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, the US would probably have invaded, and destabilised, these states without Britain’s help. However, had David Cameron refused to back President Sarkozy in his ambition to overthrow Colonel Gaddafi, the intervention in Libya wouldn’t have happened. David Cameron backed President Sarkozy enthusiastically, so Britain bears a heavy responsibility for the destabilisation of Libya and the other consequences of the intervention.

The Security Council did authorise military action in this case. On 17 March 2011, it passed resolution 1973 by 10 votes to 0, with Brazil, China, Germany, India and Russia abstaining. This resolution authorised military action “to protect civilians and civilian

populated areas” and banned flights by the Libyan air force over Libya. It did not authorise military action to overthrow Colonel Gaddafi, but that is how it was interpreted by Britain and France, the key players in the intervention.

On 21 March 2011, two days after military action began, Prime Minister David Cameron allowed the House of Commons to have a say in the matter. In the debate, he assured MPs that the object of the intervention was not regime change and MPs voted overwhelmingly (557 to 13) in favour. Jeremy Corbyn was one of the 13 who voted against.

A few weeks later on 15 April 2011, David Cameron signed a joint letter with President Obama and President Sarkozy demanding that “Colonel Gaddafi must go, and go for good”.

With NATO air support, the armed opposition achieved that goal six months later and Colonel Gaddafi was killed. The consequences for Libya and its people have been dire: plagued with factional warfare, Libya quickly ceased to be a functional state. ISIS and other terrorist groups have freedom to operate. Weapons belonging to the Gaddafi regime have fuelled terrorism and instability in other parts of North and West Africa.

38 tourists (30 of them British) were killed on a beach at Sousse in Tunisia on 26 June 2015. Seifeddine Rezgui, the individual responsible for the Sousse attack, was trained in Libya. That would not have occurred had Colonel Gaddafi been left in power. The Tunisian Prime Minister, Habib Essid, told *The Independent* on 5 August 2015 that “the UK is partly to blame for creating the violent chaos that allowed the extreme Islamist movement to flourish in neighbouring Libya”. That cannot be denied.

(For a comprehensive, and critical, appraisal of the UK’s role in the intervention, see the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee report *Libya: Examination of intervention and collapse and the UK’s future policy options* published in September 2016).

RUSI

In April 2014, the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) published a study, *Wars in Peace*, on Britain’s military interventions since the end of the Cold War. It concluded that these interventions have cost an extra £34.7 billion in defence spending. It suggests that a further £30 billion may have to be spent on long-term veteran care.

Of the extra £34.7 billion, almost £10 billion was spent on operations in Iraq from 2003 to 2009 and almost £20 billion in Afghanistan from 2006 (when British ground forces were deployed to Helmand province) to 2013.

The study concludes that these were “largely discretionary” operations, that is, wars of choice that Britain could have refrained from taking part in. Furthermore, RUSI judges these operations, and the air operation in Libya in 2011, to be “strategic failures”.

For example, on the Iraqi intervention, it says “there is no longer any serious disagreement” over how the UK’s role in the Iraq war helped to increase the radicalisation

of young Muslims in Britain and that “far from reducing international terrorism the 2003 invasion [of Iraq] had the effect of promoting it”.

THE SACRIFICIAL

Suicide bombing the great fertilizer
of political careers
in hit-spots you lift the visor
and with your narrow view
cast a tear
while looking only at your
world
denying the reason for this yet again
you now get your union jack
unfurled
whilst knowing there will be new
dead
as you continue to kill nations
something has to be paid
anybody will do except you
no min/max age
no particular race/faith in the
terminal queue
all will be engaged.

Wilson John Haire.

A NEW LOW

His family came from a failed state
he said
this Manchester suicide bomber
who once wore football red
so calm
the journalist sits in his wheelchair
his body still suffers lead
the TV camera pans
to a bloody scene
he doesn’t say who failed it
and is it Libya he means
you don’t see the wheelchair
for he has been here before
with his propaganda
gunned down in the Middle East
did they see him less than candour
hasn’t he learnt anything
you might wonder
before the BBC made him
an expert
now he can binge
while I hope you ponder

Wilson John Haire.

Froggy

News From Across The Channel



Macron: new package for old programme?

Macron has undeniable elements of novelty; the main one is that he does not belong to an established party. (He gets 12 minutes airtime for his candidates for the forthcoming general election, as opposed to 120 minutes for the traditional parties. He is appealing against this application of the rules.) Then he did various novelty things, like fielding 50% women candidates and having 50% women ministers in his cabinet.

He made pronouncements that go against the prevailing winds: ‘colonisation was a crime against humanity’, ‘anti-homosexual marriage campaigners were humiliated’. He said in his investiture speech, paying homage to past presidents, that Jacques Chirac ‘knew how to say ‘no’ to the warmongers’. Another original phrase was “There is no such thing as French culture, but there is culture in France”. His programme has original proposals: only 12 pupils per class in some poor areas, no mobile phones in the classroom.

On the other hand, his first action at home is to fight for three points of the Labour Law that were not included when it was passed last year by decree. That is, establish the right for employers to sack workers more easily and cheaply by putting a cap on the amount paid out to unfairly sacked employees, secondly, allow in-house plant based agreements instead of sector wide branch agreements, thirdly, reduce the number of groups that represent employees within companies.

These measures if passed would make the life of ordinary people harder, by removing security of employment and making possible longer hours and more unpleasant conditions. It would make employment law more similar to that in England. So we might finally get the ‘modernisation’ that France has been urged to make all these years, thanks to a new packaging of the old liberal goal.

Macron and the EU.

Maybe there is something new here. Macron wants deeper fiscal integration, a Eurozone budget and finance minister, parliamentary oversight of the EZ, and to complete the banking union. He has proposed a form of European protectionism: procurement for local authorities would be reserved to European firms.

An article in the Financial Times reproduced in the Irish Times (<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/uk/uk-set-to-suffer-as-macron-revives-franco-german-relations-1.3084044#.WRq6BpkdF9c.mailto>) by FT political columnist Janan Ganesh, says that Macron has the strength to return Europe to its European roots, away from Anglo-Saxon domination. Now is the time, according to Ganesh, that the divide and rule policy of Britain against Europe for centuries has come to an end. Ganesh says:

“A lifetime since the second World War, the British in particular still overrate German ambition and under-rate French strength. Nothing can change these views, not the

German chancellor’s obvious reluctance as a hegemon, not France’s tenacity in defence of its own interests. It is as though a nation’s performance circa 1940 defines its true self forever.

This complacency about one continental power and paranoia about another leaves Britain unprepared for Macron’s ultimate project: the restoration of Franco-German leadership of the EU. We assume it cannot happen because France is too weak and [Germany](#) too keen to dominate, but the first need not always be true and the second has not been true for 70 years.

Macron envisages a grand bargain in which [Berlin](#) secures the euro with a fiscal union while Paris agrees to structural reform at home. Such a trade would revive an old relationship that has atrophied through the weakness of his predecessors and the economy they oversaw. If it happens – and the freshness of his electoral mandate gives him a shot – then Britain enters an invidious position.

It has worked for centuries to avoid a concentration of power in mainland Europe.

A coherent, decisively led Europe will always be a problem for Britain. It cannot *not* be. It has the power to set the terms of access to the continental market and exclude Britain from any influence over events that nevertheless affect it. London’s way around the problem was always to divide and conquer, and it paid handsome returns in recent decades. With its French-style commitment to national powers and Germanic enthusiasm for

commerce, it played each country off against the other, alternating alliances between them to craft an EU more to its liking. Hence the single market, the eastward expansion, the bespoke opt-outs.”

Can we really conclude with J. Ganesh that, thanks to Macron, Europe will be harder to divide and rule? Is this just a warning that this political columnist of the FT is sending out, for it to be acted on?

He points out twice that Germany does not want to take the lead politically in Europe; he could also point out that Macron is imitating England in his pursuit of a flexible, i.e. cowed and powerless workforce. He cannot be sure that Macron is really determined to renew Europe. He is just showing a perspective of what might be, to send a shiver down some spines. Other articles by Ganesh show him to revel in paradoxical and original views.

He does sketch out a view of a renewed Europe that would be good for Europe, especially if it led to a renewed Commission with a Europe-centred mission instead of a globalized one. Unfortunately, the price to pay is a reform of the Labour Code, and forcing French workers towards flexibility, which will be hard to do. It is not impossible; it is why it was so important for Macron to appear to be something entirely new, so that the longstanding effort to liberalise Labour Law should appear as something somewhat new too, or part of something entirely new, so it gets a chance to be implemented.

Macron can't be European at the same time as a supporter of the United States to the point of putting the US first; and he has in the past put the interests of the US before French interests. He says he does not support TTIP for now, although he supports the similar treaty with Canada, CETA. When he was finance minister he could have saved the great French firm Alstom and avoid its takeover by General Electrics, but he did not do so, even though there is a law of

protection of French firms which he could have used.

The General Election

We are in a new situation because the party system has broken down. The main parties are no longer the main parties. As mentioned above, this has led to the strange allocation of airtime for candidates: 12 minutes for la République en Marche (Macron's party) against 2 hours for the Socialists and the Republicans. The Socialist Party was reduced to very little in the presidential elections: its candidate came 5th, with 6% of the vote on 7th May. Many socialist candidates have offered their support to Macron, the most prominent being the Prime Minister Emmanuel Valls. Many candidates standing for the Socialist party say they will support Macron.

The Party 'The Republicans' was also humiliated in the presidential election; its candidate spent the entire campaign trying to defend himself against accusations of corruptions which everybody thought were well founded. Republicans are also defecting and joining Macron's party.

Macron has nominated his ministers from both of the main parties, as well as from no party. His prime minister is a member of the Republicans. As for the National Front, the same coalition that worked to keep it out of the presidency will work to keep it from having Members of Parliament. Like every other party, it gets air time according to the number of deputies it has in the Lower Chamber. It has two MPs (*députés*) at the moment and is not likely to get many more. Their defeat has put them in turmoil, and at the same time the media have stopped giving them prominence.

The influence of England

J. Ganesh says that England regards France and Germany as if they were still the same as in 1940, and this is a mistake. But it is not a mistake. It is an attitude which serves marvellously to keep these two countries in a situation

of inferiority, and Britain in a situation of superiority. Moreover the two countries embrace this inferiority with self-abasing masochism.

It was not always like that. The necessity of waging the Cold War against the USSR as soon as Germany was defeated meant that France was allowed to uphold the myth that she fought against Germany from the 18th June 1940 with De Gaulle's appeal to the French, and that she was one of the victors. The instrumentalisation of the Holocaust for the defence of Israel did not start straightaway.

Since the fall of the USSR, the need to smooth the sensitivities of the two countries has disappeared. They have been made the willing instrument of their own abasement. As yet another example, during his campaign Macron spent time in front of Holocaust monuments and spoke of France's 'shameful' past.

Yet England bears a heavy responsibility in the wars of the twentieth century. She turned a continental war into a world war in 1914, after actively preparing for it. After the war, England was careful that France did not get the guarantees against Germany that she wanted. The Treaty of Versailles could have been designed to foment the next war. England encouraged Hitler to break it, and then suddenly stopped this encouragement and declared war without this time making any preparations for it. This dropped the ally France into defeat and occupation; the occupation, and the inevitable accommodations that go with it, has served ever since as a lever against France.

This aspect of history is hidden, Germany and France seemingly not knowing the part of responsibility borne by England. This is an enormous handicap, and one that will survive Brexit. It seems that Macron is not going to shrug it off but will go into battle still carrying this burden, if he does indeed intend to rebuild Europe.

Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

Manchester – Reaping the Whirlwind!

Evil losers, yes. I agree with what President Trump said about the Manchester bomber. But why should a young man be desperate enough for suicidal mass murder, when there is enough for a decent life for everyone?

Maybe because of a culture that only cares about the lucky and rich. And an economy that denies a decent life to many.

In the 1940s, the West was scared of both Fascism and Leninism. So they made sure there would be a decent life for everyone. But the War Babies and Baby Boomers who'd grown up in this secure life failed to understand it. Correctly, they demanded sexual freedom. Also illegal drugs, which I'd see as wrong. For certain, they were massively wrong in their fear of the interventionist state that had made their comfortable lives possible.

Hippies became Yuppies, and then got worse. Most of them failed to learn, voting for Thatcher. Cheering when she took an axe to the roots of the way of life they had enjoyed. Switching to Blair since he was anti-tax and anti-state, but championed the sexual and social freedoms they now saw as normal.

War Babies and Baby Boomers are now elderly. Most vote Tory. People under 50 – people born after 1967 – have been wiser and are enthused by Corbyn. But it will take a lot of work to restore the good jobs that we once had. Meantime there are a lot of losers.

I'm no apologist for evil or hatred. Normal people can live with suffering. A handful of admirable people gain inner strength. A weak minority become evil, but might have stayed OK in better times. So an evil loser blows up girls playing at being 'Dangerous Women'¹. Other evil losers threaten or

attack Muslims whose world-vision is very different from the terrorists.

Of course there are many sorts of evil. London houses a section of the Russian Mafia, and other criminal nasties who prefer Tories to Labour. At first sight, the Manchester bombing did come at an amazingly convenient time for anyone worried by the prospect of a Labour victory, or a messy election with no clear winner. Who knows what they could fix?

Or maybe Daesh had a clear understanding of the issues. They want a polarised world in which the Sunni Islamic majority accept their version of Wahhabism, an extremist 18th century creed. Idiots like UKIP feed this very nicely, obviously: but have repelled most voters.

For really bad community relations, you need bigotry and injustice packaged with the appearance of niceness, which has always been the Tory game. As in 1964, when local Tories won a safe Labour seat with the slogan '*if you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour*'². It has always been left to Labour to root out such attitudes. The Tories cast a slur upon all immigrants, while also letting in more and even adopting a few non-white candidates who are securely part of the elite.

Starting with Operation Desert Storm in 1991, the West has been humiliating secular Arab regimes. Causing vast numbers of Arab and Muslim deaths, mostly of innocents. Probably Daesh as sectarian Sunni are not bothered by a dozen or more Shia Yemenis including children dying every day.³ But most Muslims are appalled by the Western government's preference for continuing chaos and death, not tolerating governments they can't push around.

Thankfully, Labour's opinion-poll rise has continued. The 'Post-Boomers' show wisdom and compassion.

It's Wahhabism, Stupid

Saudi Arabia's Wahhabist brand of Islam ought to be at war with the West. Its elite are notoriously hypocrites. But even hypocrites believe in something, however weakly and corruptly.

In ten or twenty years' time, when veterans of the Western intelligence find it safe to speak freely, we may learn some amazing truths. (Just as everything the left said about the Vietnam War was later confirmed.) But we already know that the Saudis have pushed a version of Islam which would lead any spirited believer to either irregular warfare or to outright terrorism against non-military targets. (Or both, which may have been true of the Manchester Bomber.)

The Saudi regime needed Western protection when socialism was making the running in the Arab world. When Saddam invaded Kuwait in 1990, they could have negotiated him out by paying off the gigantic debts from his war against Iran. But Thatcher and Bush Senior saw it as a wonderful opportunity to 'normalise' the Arab World. The Saudi regime had a clear choice: trust to 'the God of their Fathers' or to the visible power of the USA. And we all know what they chose. But meantime they had pushed a world-wide doctrine that suggested that all such compromises were Hateful to God.

"Abd al-Wahhab [18th century founder of Wahhabism], despised 'the decorous, arty, tobacco smoking, hashish imbibing, drum pounding Egyptian and Ottoman nobility who travelled across Arabia to pray at Mecca.'

"In Abd al-Wahhab's view, these were not Muslims; they were imposters masquerading as Muslims. Nor, indeed, did he find the behaviour of local Bedouin Arabs much better. They aggravated Abd al-Wahhab by their honouring of saints, by their erecting of tombstones, and their 'superstition'

(e.g. revering graves or places that were deemed particularly imbued with the divine)...

“Abd al-Wahhab demanded conformity — a conformity that was to be demonstrated in physical and tangible ways. He argued that all Muslims must individually pledge their allegiance to a single Muslim leader (a Caliph, if there were one). **Those who would not conform to this view should be killed, their wives and daughters violated, and their possessions confiscated, he wrote. The list of apostates meriting death included the Shiite, Sufis and other Muslim denominations**, whom Abd al-Wahhab did not consider to be Muslim at all...

“In 1815, Wahhabi forces were crushed by the Egyptians (acting on the Ottoman’s behalf) in a decisive battle. In 1818, the Ottomans captured and destroyed the Wahhabi capital of Daryah. The first Saudi state was no more. The few remaining Wahhabis withdrew into the desert to regroup, and there they remained, quiescent for most of the 19th century.

“It is not hard to understand how the founding of the Islamic State by ISIS in contemporary Iraq might resonate amongst those who recall this history. Indeed, the ethos of 18th century Wahhabism did not just wither in Nejd, but it roared back into life when the Ottoman Empire collapsed amongst the chaos of World War I.”⁴

The West think it clever to cultivate this reactionary version of Islam, which sells them cheap oil and buys expensive weapons. Their peculiar version of Islam was labelled ‘Fundamentalist’ and viewed as being as docile and timid as the right-wing and highly inaccurate ‘Fundamentalist’ Christians ‘in the USA.

The West’s hatred is reserved for a rival vision of ‘Real Islam’: that of Iran. Which has regular elections in which genuine rivals fight for popular approval. Which favours irregular warfare against Israel rather than attacks on Soft Targets in the West.

As I said, sow the wind, reap the whirlwind.

Bitcoins Bite Back!

The hacker attack on vital NHS services might not have happened without Tory cuts:

“How did it get so far? In the case of the NHS, the answer is chronic underfunding. The service runs elderly versions of Windows not only in some desktop systems, which are relatively easy to patch, but also embedded in unwieldy equipment like MRI machines... Health secretary Jeremy Hunt looks unlikely to emerge with much credit, having reportedly axed the NHS’s Windows service contract in 2015 and gone AWOL during the crisis.”⁵

But that’s only half of it. The web — which until recently was controlled at root by the US government - has been allowed to flourish with minimum supervision or protection against crime. War Babies and Baby Boomers mostly had a naïve view: the less regulation, the better.

Dangerous software can be a bigger threat than dangerous drivers. But though no one questions the need for Driver Licences, a ‘Web Passport’ is seen as oppressive. And there was wide approval of bitcoins spreading as a supposedly untraceable currency outside state control.

‘Bitcoins’ are unique software entities. A complex system of decentralised file-sharing ensures that each individual bitcoin has a single owner at any one time. They can be bought, sold, or used in payment without revealing who’s involved. The details are complex, but my general knowledge of computing⁶ and past ‘uncrackable’ secret codes makes me think that they are not as secure as advertised. With certainty, I would not use them for anything I thought the CIA would be serious about suppressing, supposing I were doing any such thing. But they have been convenient for all sorts of low-level criminality that the CIA tolerates. Maybe allows it so as to be able to trace bitcoin use by more serious targets.

Low-level criminality includes ‘Ransomware’: encoding a user’s files and then demanding a payment to free

them. But as with all blackmail, getting the payment safely is tricky:

“Ransomware schemes have become a lot more effective since the invention of Bitcoin in 2009. Conventional payment networks like Visa and MasterCard make it difficult to accept payments without revealing your identity. Bitcoin makes that a lot easier. So the past four years have seen a surge in ransomware schemes striking unsuspecting PC users.”⁷

Time for a few more regulations?

Facebook – Sheep Don’t Pay the Shepherd!

“Facebook’s profits have jumped in the first three months of the year, as the social network closes in on two billion users, according to its latest results.

“The number of people using Facebook each month increased to 1.94 billion, of which nearly 1.3 billion use it daily, the company said.

“The US tech giant reported profits of just over \$3bn (£2.4bn) in the first quarter, a 76% rise year-on-year.

“However, it warned that growth in ad revenues would slow down.

“The company has also come under sustained pressure in recent weeks over its handling of hate speech, child abuse and self-harm on the social network.

“On Wednesday, Facebook chief executive Mark Zuckerberg announced it was hiring 3,000 extra people to moderate content on the site.”⁸

And they pay hardly any taxes, benefiting from the various legal loopholes that the Tories find it mysteriously impossible to close.⁹ But that’s not the main issue. What people don’t understand is that a free service is less nice than it seems:

“People need to understand that **they are the product of Facebook and not the customer**, according to media theorist and writer Douglas Rushkoff.

“Speaking at the inaugural Hello Etsy conference in Berlin, the author of Program or Be Programmed said: ‘Ask a kid what Facebook is for and they’ll answer ‘it’s there to help me make friends’.

“Facebook’s boardroom isn’t talking

about how to make Johnny more friends. It's talking about how to monetise Johnny's social graph.'

"He added: 'Ask yourself who is paying for Facebook. Usually the people who are paying are the customers. Advertisers are the ones who are paying. If you don't know who the customer of the product you are using is, you don't know what the product is for. **We are not the customers of Facebook, we are the product. Facebook is selling us to advertisers.**'"¹⁰

Which is not going to stop me using Facebook. I don't see the New Right as plotting to create a new fascism: Libertarian notions are not wholly phony. And most commercial outfits have no very large aims. Very little understanding of the social and political forces at work outside of their immediate experience. At worst they are banal and greedy, not malignant.

But something like Facebook should be made a public utility, not run for profit. A notion that will be resisted by those who have been convinced that the state is their enemy, and that there is an 'invisible hand' that will stop commercial outfits doing anything too bad. Slow to learn.

May's Toryism: 'Feed the Rich' Corporatism

"In Britain, the state is back

"The three main parties are proposing very different policies. Yet they have a common thread: a more intrusive role for government...

"Theresa May's manifesto ... is most interesting, and not just because she is on course for victory on June 8th. For it reveals a Tory leader whose instincts are more interventionist than any predecessor since Edward Heath in 1965-75. To deal with complaints about energy prices, she joins Labour in proposing price caps. She promises a new generation of council houses, although she is cagey about how to finance it. She also backs a higher minimum wage, albeit smaller than Labour's.

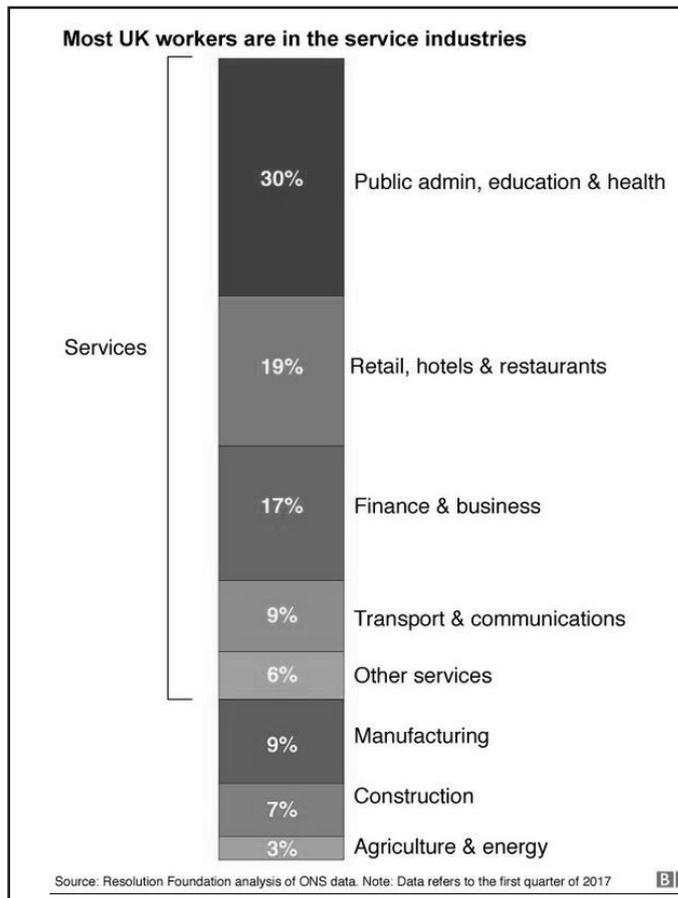
"Mrs May is promising not just to retain all EU rights for workers after Brexit, but to add to them. Her manifesto includes several digs at business, including demands for more transparency on executive pay and some form of worker representation on boards... The biggest example of her interference in the market concerns immigration (see next story). She restates the target of cutting the net figure below 100,000, from almost three times that today, and she makes clear that the cost of policing lower EU migration must fall on employers."¹¹

That's from *The Economist*, and I'd suppose that Tory promises to normal people will once again turn out to mean little. But it is true that New Right ideology is less and less credible.

But Britain is also not what it was. Parasitic finance has become increasingly important, and now overshadows manufacturing in what was once 'the workshop of the world'.

"Four out of five people work in service industries.

"This covers everything from bank workers to plumbers



and restaurant staff - the businesses that provide work for customers, but which don't manufacture things.

"These service sector jobs have grown over time: 20 years ago they made up less than three-quarters of employment."¹²

A World Without Bolsheviks?

A century ago, Tsarist Russia fell into a chaos from which Global Leninism later emerged. Western writers are using this centenary to say foolish things about it.

The Establishment Consensus is that while the mainstream world was peacefully engaged in Trench Warfare and Great War massacres (including Russian pogroms against Jews), the vicious Bolsheviks grabbed power from the new Western-style Russian Republic. Don't mention the war, which the Western-style Republic was still fighting. Don't mention that one of Lenin's first acts, later reversed, was to confirm an idealistic left-wing abolition of the Death Penalty. Or that they casually released rebellious right-wing officers who later became vicious and deadly enemies. Instead, call them wasteful fanatics who inflicted needless suffering on Russia and the rest of the world for decades after 1917.

I've not seen anyone ask what was likely to happen if the Bolsheviks hadn't won. If they'd lost the Civil War, they might still have been blamed for the vicious anti-Semitic White Guard regime that was the only serious alternative. But they also might have chosen to accept the moderate February Revolution of 1917 as the last word. Might have remained a Loyal Opposition to the largely-socialist government led by Kerensky.

(This was, incidentally, the line of Zinoviev and Kamenev, the two most notable Jews among the Old Bolsheviks. Bronstein, hidden behind his Slavonic pen-name Trotsky, was at that time a very new Bolshevik.¹³ One of the idiocies of anti-Semites is that they rant about Jewish involvement: fail to note that left-wingers of Jewish origin acted as individuals and were mostly moderates.)

Without the Bolshevik Revolution, could Kerensky have produced a stable and democratic Russia? By 1933, most independent countries between Berlin and Moscow had dictatorial right-wing regimes:

Italy's Constitutional Monarchy made Mussolini dictator in 1922

Germany's well-intentioned Weimar Republic failed. Their parliament freely made Hitler dictator. Legally speaking, he was the 13th Chancellor.¹⁴

Pilsudski, liberator of Poland, later made himself dictator. His regime was hostile to Jews, though they remained citizens.

Spain polarised, had a civil war and Fascism won.

Portugal had something similar to Fascism even before World War One.

Beyond this, a lot of the freedoms the West now see as natural were strongly opposed before World War Two. The Soviet victory did a lot to make them the 'new normal'.¹⁵

Snippets

Take From the Poor, Give To the Rich

"The UK's richest 1,000 people 'kept calm and carried on making billions' amid the Brexit vote of 2016, according to the Sunday Times Rich List.

"Their wealth rose by 14% over the past year to a record £658bn, it shows."¹⁶

Tell Me Lies About British History

As part of the massively pro-Tory coverage of the election, the BBC present history that is not so much biased as untrue:

"Guide to the parties: Conservatives

"Formed in the 1830s as a right-of-centre party, in favour of capitalism, free enterprise and minimal intervention by government."¹⁷

Toryism went back to the 1680s. It was traditionalist, mostly Church of England and represented landed interests. They defended the protectionist Corn Laws against demands for Free Trade: under Peel they split on the issue and his supporters became Liberals. Tories passed various Factory Acts against strong Liberal opposition.

I made a formal complaint. Nothing is fixed, as of 31st May.

Cost-Cutting Throat-Cutting

I found it baffling that the failure of British Airways' administrative system caused all flights to be stopped, even though the aircraft themselves were fine.

On that, the whole security scare resulting from Western aggression against Arabs since 1991 means that without

careful computer-run checks, no one is allowed to fly.

And why was the system so vulnerable? Cuts based on New Right ideology:

"BA chief executive Alex Cruz ... said the IT failure was not due to technical staff being outsourced from the UK to India...

"Mick Rix from the GMB union ... told BBC Radio 4: 'Why didn't the back-up kick in? Basically because there's been an absolute brain drain out of the company.'"¹⁸

Websites

Previous *Newsnotes* can be found at the Labour Affairs website, <http://labouraffairsmagazine.com/past-issues/>. And at my own website, <https://longrevolution.wordpress.com/newsnotes-historic/>.

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Diary of a Corbyn foot soldier (No 11)

By Michael Murray murraymicha@gmail.com

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London - a commentary/digest of political news for busy people.

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

In this entry:

1) A month is a long time in politics

2) Up the polls

3) The Young Vote

(1) A month is a long time in politics

A month ago, just after Theresa May called for a 'snap' general election, immediately welcomed enthusiastically by Jeremy Corbyn in full "bring it on" mode, the diary entry read: "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?"

A month later? Newspaper headlines saying: "Poll firm predicts shock losses for Theresa May's Tories at General Election," by the Political Editor of The Times, no less. The Tory lead in the polls cut day by day almost until YouGov came up with their most recent findings: the Tory lead could be down to as low as 3 points. From a 24 point gap to 3 – within a month? To top it all, Jeremy Corbyn's preference for Prime Minister polled higher than Theresa May's for the first time in London with a 37 to 34 margin for Corbyn compared to 38 to 32 margin favouring Theresa May last month. A second YouGov survey (2nd June: Evening Standard) gives Labour a 17 point lead over Tories in the capital. So, in a month, we've moved from an

impossibly high Tory lead in the polls to predictions that the Tories will fall short of what seemed to be a cast iron guaranteed overall majority. Now the real possibility of a "hung parliament" looms and the threat of the emergence of what May called a "coalition of chaos" to represent the UK in the Brexit negotiations, the preliminaries of which are scheduled for a fortnight after the election. Whatever the outcome, Theresa May is in deep trouble. She has gone "from being the Tories greatest asset to being its greatest liability," Nigel Farage said today (2nd June) Ergo: the Tories are no longer the "Strong and Stable" party but on the verge of another heave.

(1) Up the polls

Do I believe the polls? How do they tally with my electioneering experience in the last month? On the polls: taken together there is a wide range of results being reported. And then there are the arguments among the pollsters on methodology, which raise doubts about the accuracy of the predictions. One aspect of this I find particularly intriguing, and that is: there is a consensus that a line drawn through 45 year old voters gives a majority to Labour below the line and to the Tories above it. Associated with this, older voters polled are more likely to actually vote on election day than the youngest cohort (18-25 years old) or the next cohort (25-35 years old). Factoring, or not factoring in that weighting makes all the difference in predicting Labour's chances. it seems.

At the beginning of this election campaign, we focused on our own ward. I was struck by the number

of under 35s, on our sheets based, as they are, on the electoral register, and in previous election canvassing identifying themselves as Labour Party supporters, who said they were voting for the Lib Dems this time. The reason? The Lib Dem position on Brexit, compared to Labour's. I ask them how they felt about the Lib Dem's role in the Tory coalition government. Some half-hearted arguments would be offered, such as: the Tory cuts would have been much worse without the Lib Dems in the coalition. And the tuition fees issue? Shoe shuffling and averted glances. Okay. "Well, thanks for your time." As for the wider constituency of voters: either you met the core Labour supporters, or people with blank stares.

That was then. Less than a month ago. Now the Lib Dems are not in the reckoning. Labour's policy on Brexit is the only game in town: accept the referendum result and fight the threatened Hard Brexit. And, anyway, much to my surprise, I readily admit, immediate social policy issues, not Brexit, but the state of the NHS, nationalisation of the railways, pensions, education have dominated the conversations on the doorsteps and in the media. The Labour Manifesto has been powerful ammunition for canvassers: hegemonic, John McDonnell, the chief mover of this comprehensive political and economic programme, would say. I have no doubt that many of those wavering Labour supporters will do the right thing come polling day. And the recent polls support that gut feeling. Beyond that, the election took what seemed like an interminable time to ignite, but in real time that was only a couple of weeks.

In those moments you get irritated

with the frustrations of actually making contact with your constituents, in every sense. Not least, the multi-occupancy houses with a dozen bells mostly not working. No intercom, or a non-functioning intercom with spiders' webs all over it. Large blocks of gated flats with neither intercoms nor outside letter boxes. And the "churn" – the big turnover of private flat dwellers typical of our constituency of Hackney North. You rang the bell, or walked up the stairs to canvass the occupants of a flat who had moved out months before. The present occupants didn't know how long they might be staying there. Then on to the next house. A fellow canvasser, with whom I often had a drink after a bout of canvassing, decided in the first week she was, in future, going to spend her weekends canvassing in Birmingham, where her parents lived, rather than endure the central London scene. She yearned for streets with single family occupancy of terraced houses. In that first week, I met another canvasser, a tall, handsome polite and friendly young man who introduced himself as Jermaine Jackman. Son of Nigerian parents, about 22 years of age. I was told after the canvass this was the 2014 winner of the Voice UK. Now at University and living up the country, he'd joined our local branch at 16. At the time of meeting him I was disappointed he'd not experienced canvassing at its liveliest and most engaged. I needn't have worried. Today I see him on YouTube, plugging Labour and Corbyn. Committed.

And then. Soon we were all drafted to help out in marginals in the greater London area, looking after our own safe seat a lower priority. We were working with other comrades from other constituencies, in my case, in Croydon at one geographical extreme and Kilburn

at the other, plus yet still unfamiliar parts of Hackney. The pace had picked up. The tide began to turn. I rang the bell of a multi-occupancy flat in my own ward. It turned out that the person on my electoral list had moved. No change there. Before I could get a word out he said: "*How do I join the Labour Party? How can I help out?*" This wasn't atypical. Lots of people in the streets were asking how they might help. Suddenly, it was great to feel part of a movement that was going to make an effort to make a difference.

It's not all about winning, I think, not this time. Too much self damage has been done to the Labour Party. They haven't gone away, the Blairites and their followers. A study just a few months ago, when the Tory lead in the polls was still way up there, estimated that at least 5% of the Tory-Labour gap in the polls was accounted for by people's perception of the internal goings on in the Labour Party. That surely is an underestimate? No. It's about pegging back the arrogance and the rapacity of the Tories as far as we can. It's about bringing about durable, meaningful change in the political culture. "*Just bate before you,*" an old Irish proverb says, "*The future will take care of itself.*"

(3) *The young vote*

If a higher number of 18-24s vote than has been the case historically then there is the possibility of a close run election. Most seem agreed on that. And that's what gives me great hope. Young people who support Labour like to communicate this almost compulsively, when approached. Look at YouTube over this last month. Let's start with the music group Captain SKA's protest video "Liar, Liar." At 18.19 this evening (the *Labour Affairs* editor's deadline is 18.00)

"Views" on one site alone exceed one and three quarter million. Now apply the multiplier effect as it's shared on line. (Have a listen, it's quality – as music and "agitprop." Though produced by an unlisted band, has hit Number One spot on a whole number of charts, including iTunes.) Or, look and New Musical Express JME interview with Jeremy Corbyn the other week. Over a quarter of a million views on the I-D site alone. Now apply the "share" multiplier to get a fuller sense of Jeremy's impact on young people. Or, the YouTube video of Jeremy speaking at a music concert in the Tranmere Rovers' ground in Liverpool about music and creating greater access within the educational system. About taxing Premiership teams' media income to fund youth participation in football countrywide. The Guardian told us (May 31st) that Labour dominates the political discourse on Twitter. According to a recent survey a whopping 84% of the 18-24 age group get their news online, not the mainly biased main stream media. And, it's good to hear, according to the Oxford Internet Institute, the majority (53%) of the content is sourced from quality professional news sources from a politically radical perspective.

The youth of the country has the opportunity, and the means, to make a difference. If that happens, I'm prepared to revise my usual curmudgeonly response to seeing a bunch of young people in a pub or restaurant grinning into their smart phones rather than talk to each other. I can begin to believe they're actually phone-banking for some just cause.

Awed by the Amazing Twentieth?

Gwydion M. Williams

Following the British election on Facebook, I saw a posting quoting someone called Katie Hopkins, who had tweeted:

“People earning £80k for working damn hard, have no wish to subsidise those who couldn't give a damn about work.”

This Kate Hopkins is apparently famous in the centre-right media, and also cost the *Daily Mail* £150,000 after falsely accusing a Muslim family of extremist links.¹

Speaking personally, I have a strong wish to pay no tax at all, and also to get £80,000 a year or even more. But I never felt that the rest of the society should be blamed for not giving me those things. Nor that my wishes should take priority over the needy. And I'm also aware of the universal pattern of a tax-funded state getting bigger and bigger as societies grow richer and more secure.

The New Right claimed the state was vastly too big and that they would help us all by reducing it. Now if they'd promised us a rose garden, they could have delivered. A government obsessed with roses might plant rose gardens all over the place. But a whole slew of governments who promised us small cheap government and low taxes have entirely failed to deliver. The 'tax burden' has been shifted away from the rich and onto the working mainstream, with many enormously rich corporations paying little or no tax thanks to various strange but entirely legal accounting tricks. The size of the state remains about the same.

And what about 'those who couldn't give a damn about work'?

At the very most, one penny out

of every £10 you pay in tax might go to the *undeserving*. And since they are clever tricksters, this tiny residuum are very hard to deal with without also harming the honestly needy. It has in fact been the honestly needy who have been hit. The supposed campaign against 'benefit cheats' was almost 100% aimed at people with severe needs. People with major illnesses or injuries have been targeted in a mean-spirited manner.

Sadly, pity for the poor hard-working people on a mere £80,000 and burdened by the rest of us is not confined to *Daily Mail* journalists. The *Daily Mail* was very fond of Adolph Hitler until he became an open enemy of the British Empire, which deeply surprised them. But Sadiq Khan, Labour Mayor of London, also seems to think that salaries nearly three times the average for someone in full-time employment is barely adequate for people living in London.¹ Of course he gets £143,911 as mayor, and may well move on to something much better. But the average yearly wage for Londoners isn't even half that. Even the average for the City of London is only £48,023,¹ and that would have been pulled up by small numbers of people with enormous salaries.

As the Labour Manifesto explained, 95% of the population get less than £80,000. To the working mainstream it is a gigantic salary that they could never hope to get no matter how hard they work. It is more than £1500 a week. (Also £6666:66 a month, which might worry those Christians superstitious about the Work of the Devil.)

The view of the New Right and also of New Labour seems to be that those on more than £80,000 and sometimes gigantically more

are an 'Amazing Twentieth' that we lesser mortals are dependent upon. It seems that most of the 'Amazing Twentieth' really do believe that they are the brilliant hard-working people who support the rest of us. This is the doctrine of Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*, but I'm surprised to find Britons believing this nonsense.¹

What is not explained is how Britain had a fast-growing and much more secure society from the 1950s to 1970s with the 'Amazing Twentieth' getting much more normal incomes. And in fact most of the gains since the 1980s went to a more-than-millionaire class; the richest 1%: a class so privileged that you could be an actual millionaire and yet not quite a part of it. But maybe the 'Amazing Twentieth' are close enough to identify with this dominant Overclass.

In the past, I have contrasted this richest 1% with the 'Next Nine', people in the richest 10% but not the more-than-millionaire stratum. Since the 1980s, a hugely unfair share has gone to the richest 1%, with 90% of the population getting less than they'd be getting without the 'reforms' of the 1980s. And I noticed also that the 'Next Nine' had more or less broken even.¹ Yet in terms of cleverness, qualifications, talents or hard work, it was hard to see that the average member of the Next Nine was inferior to those in the more-than-millionaire stratum. It might even be that this stratum are inferior in everything apart from a knack of grabbing cash. The amazing nonsense that was written by the late Sir James Goldsmith would certainly suggest this.¹

Goldsmith himself explained how he had escaped bankruptcy thanks to a wholly unexpected bank strike in France, in an era when he would

have been unlikely to recover. But the fact that his vast fortune owes quite a lot to luck did not stop him resenting any portion of it going to the wider society that had made his wealth possible.

I tried thinking about it like this:

“Supposing that one were to persuade a large group of men to play ‘Russian roulette’ as many as six times each, each time using a fresh gun. All of them would have been foolish, but some of them would end up as survivors. Looking at it in individual terms, each man might count his survival as miraculous. But statistics predict that there would be survivors, a surprisingly large number of survivors, fully one third of the original group.”¹

Luck and greedy self-centred attitudes have a lot to do with the wealth of the ‘Amazing Twentieth’. But they are conceited enough to think that the vast income they receive within a complex state-dominated system is wealth that they personally have created. Ignore the awkward fact that GDP growth in Britain and the USA had showed no signs of speeding up since 1980. And that the breakdown of a stable state-regulated Western global order damaged the former Economic Miracle economies of West Germany, Italy and Japan.

The new Economic Miracle economies – Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and China after Mao – all followed the Mixed Economy pattern that Thatcher and Reagan were so keen to cure us of. These two very different approaches get lumped together as ‘capitalism’, but they need to be distinguished.¹

For Britain, the top earners getting three times the average income for someone in full-time work would be quite enough. Pragmatically it might not be possible to impose such a ceiling, but it would be social justice

The high wages also go to the

wrong people. Myself, I never got much more than the average for full time workers, but I found that quite reasonable. I used my brain for unconventional thinking, and such thinking seldom gets well rewarded. Is indeed quite often wrong, but I rather think I’ve got quite a lot right and that in the long run this will be recognised. Meantime what I got for my paid work was fair enough, since it did not indeed consume the whole of my attention. But what I don’t see is why some of the top people should be getting 10, 20 or 100 times the ordinary wage.

Nor do I see the top incomes going mostly to people doing anything useful. Most of the gigantic ‘financial industry’ is parasitic. Banks to hold stored money are fair enough. Commercial lending for productive industry is a skilled task and also deserves reward. But most of the ‘financial industry’ is juggling money with no useful outcome. It is just like gambling, except that there was intentional deregulation that undid the sensible separation of banking for ordinary people and banking for rich gambling. When the gambling created a financial crisis in 2008, governments were persuaded that it was the duty of the state to pump in money that saved the very rich from financial losses that would have left them slightly less rich.

“The UK’s richest 1,000 people ‘kept calm and carried on making billions’ amid the Brexit vote of 2016, according to the Sunday Times Rich List.

“Their wealth rose by 14% over the past year to a record £658bn, it shows.”¹

Similar people – mostly not British citizens – own the bulk of Britain’s newspapers and other news media. They pushed a right-wing line that well-paid journalists, mostly part of the ‘Amazing Twentieth’, were happy to propagate. And they shrieked ‘left-wing bias at the BBC

when it failed to play the game. The BBC now does play the game, and is losing the grand global reputation it once had.

To pay for all this, the useful parts of state spending are being attacked. If anyone deserves bigger salaries than the rest of us, it is doctors and nurses. Most of us do not have to deal on a daily basis with all sorts of disgusting wounds and injuries. We do not face the possibility of being strangled by someone driven insane by the stresses of an increasingly uncertain life. We do not have to deal with those suffering the most terrible fears or losses: things like knowing you have only a few months to live. Or consoling the parents of a dead baby. But it has also been shown that there are always enough good people who will do it for ordinary salaries and even low salaries. It is a disgusting exploitation of the higher human feelings – those that allow us to survive as a species, those that make us superior to the other apes, who are all less social, more violent and more prone to selfishness. Yet the doctors and nurses are among those being targeted so that even more money can be given through tax cuts to the ‘Amazing Twentieth’. And there is also a deep-down hatred of anything not driven by profit.

The privatised Health Industry of the USA consumes twice as big a chunk of the national wealth as does ours. But people at my level and well above it have real worries of not being able to afford the treatment we might need. Yet the Tories are determined to dismantle the simple principle of the NHS: free care on the basis of need. It is mad and an obscenity.

So you know who you should be voting for on June 8th. Sadly, the media have given the Tories an undeserved reputation for competence. The outcome remains uncertain.

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process by arriving without paperwork to identify either themselves or country of origin.

Figures for migration to Italy are climbing annually. Arrivals in the first part of 2017 have increased by 46% to 50,039. There have been 1,500 deaths in the whole Mediterranean area with 1,400 from the Libya/Italy crossing. There were 25,846 unaccompanied minors in 2016 and 6,642 in the first part of 2017. The main declared nationalities at the time of landing were: Nigeria (6,577), Bangladesh (5,702) Guinea (4,736), Ivory Coast (4,498), Gambia (3,341), Senegal (3,173) and Morocco (3,058). (Figures: Italian Ministry of Interior)

There have been two recent marches organised by the left in Milan and Bologna following the example of a similar one in Barcelona. Called “*Together without Walls*” the aim was anti-racist suggesting that more integration would actually enhance security. An important consideration following recent terrorist attacks in Europe and the UK. This brave initiative does fit with the generally inspiring humane approach of Italians towards migrants. Refugees are dispersed and shared throughout the country. The expectation is that all areas will accept migrants and this is done as widely as communes allow. The Government supports this financially but there is resentment and some disagreement and

there are protests about accepting yet more.

Matteo Renzi has pressed, unsuccessfully, for the resolution of Italy’s refugee difficulties with the EU. Other European countries largely hide behind an adherence to the Dublin agreements which place the responsibility with the migrant’s country of arrival, i.e. Italy. He has tried to resolve the lack of dispersal of migrants. By autumn 2016 an insignificant number of refugees, less than 1%, had been accepted by other countries. Renzi had spectacular heated exchanges with Hungary’s Viktor Orbán who stated that his country’s national identities and social cohesion would be threatened by taking refugees.

Pier Carlo Padoan the Minister of Finance estimated that Italy would need to spend 3.8 euros on supporting migrants in 2017 if numbers remained static. This amount and any increases will inflate the unacceptably high budget deficit and put it in breach of EU fiscal rules. Renzi has repeatedly questioned the glaring unfairness of financial support being given to Turkey in return for its reception of Syrian refugees, while nothing comes to Italy. He has threatened to stall on the acceptance of Euro budget-setting. He hears accusations that he is trying to manipulate the refugee crisis in order to get away with higher levels of debt. Euro Sympathy is limited. This stance is fostering and increasing Euroscepticism within Italy which is a clear threat to European unity.

Two developments colour

resolution of Italy’s coping strategies. Carmelo Zuccaro, a Prosecutor from Catania in Sicily, has been investigating links between humanitarian NGOs (such as *Moas*) that rescue migrants at sea and Libya-based people smugglers. He said that he had a hypothesis that there was a connection although he had no proof that would stand in law. He questioned the sources of the large amounts of funding available to the NGOs and used this to point to what he believes might be clandestine alliances.

In theory European countries support the Libyan Government taking control. But on 10 May Libyan coastguards intervened in a rescue. They took charge, brutalising some of the migrants and returned with them to Libya. In 2012 Italy lost a case taken to the European Court of Human Rights whereby migrants and asylum seekers were intercepted at sea and returned to Libya. (*Hirsi Jamaa and Others v Italy*). “*The Court found that Italy had violated the European Convention of Human Rights by exposing the migrants to the risk of ill-treatment in Libya...*”. The detention centres are “*hell*” according to *La Repubblica* (24 May) “*migrants and refugees... are sent to detention centres where they remain indefinitely under torture, exploitation and sexual assault by staff of government-controlled centres and militia members who are out of control.*”

Appalling. But what is Italy supposed to do?

Listening to Italy

by Orecchiette

THE LIBYAN EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

Ancient Rome colonised that part of northern Africa that is now Libya. The expansionist Italian governments of the first part of the 20th Century reinvaded and attempted, unsuccessfully and brutally, to recolonise the area. Now the invasion is working in reverse.

The UK press gives scant attention to the large numbers of migrants that continue to arrive in Italy across the *Canale di Sicilia*, from Libya. The Daily Express of 3 January actually used it to help its own anti-migrant stance. The headlines ran predictably: “ ‘ *Time to Act*’ *Italy calls for mass migrant deportations ...Paolo Gentiloni wants to get tough....*”.

On 23/4 May a boat overloaded with 500 migrants capsized. 34 were drowned when apparently its cargo of refugees moved en masse and destabilised the boat. Many children died and rescuers had to batter down the door to the hold which was tightly locked. Rescuers included two British naval vessels, a Spanish boat, and ships belonging to *Moas* (*Migrant Offshore Aid Station*) an NGO (non-governmental organisation). *Moas*’s “Phoenix” estimated the number on board to be as high as 750.

Moas was set up by Americans Christopher and Regina Caltrabone in 2013 following a large loss of life from two boats in this

area. The *Moas* Foundation’s primary focus is “*dedicated to mitigating the loss of life at sea*” by providing professional search and rescue assistance. They work not only in the seaway between Libya and Italy but in other parts of the Mediterranean and further afield.

The EU has attempted to recognise, and thence stabilise, the Libyan Government of al-Sarraj as a strategy to curtail the refugees. The EU initiated a Memorandum of Understanding in January 2017 that was designed to increase cooperation against “*irregular immigration*”. The Italians supplied four boats to the Libyan coast guards in May with a further six to be delivered in June. Apparently about 90 officials have also received training although *La Repubblica* (23.05.2017) doesn’t detail what this involved.

Immigration is a recent phenomenon in Italy because until the 1980s the country was accustomed to emigration and depopulation. Migrants started to arrive after this time and they were generally welcomed and given parity of employment rights. By 1990 the migration of non-Europeans into wider Europe, possible under the Schengen system of free movement, started to cause concern outside Italy. In 1990 Italy passed the *Legge* (Law) *Martelli* to set quotas for its immigrants, pinpointing skills shortages, or humane reasons

such as joining family members. Deportations were planned for illegal migrants.

The 1998 *Legge Turco-Napolitano* modified that, to be superseded in 2002 by the *Legge Bossi-Fini*. Umberto Bossi led the *Lega Nord* (Northern League) until he was exposed for dishonestly using funds. Bossi and Gianfranco Fini are both far-right Northern politicians. This was followed by the *Security Package* of 2008 and 2009 and both include measures that are not only profoundly anti-humanitarian but almost impossible to enforce. *Bossi-Fini* includes the measure that migrant boats in international water can be sent back. This is contrary to Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that “*Every man is free to leave his land*”. The Geneva Convention also states that people in difficulties must be offered protection.

Other *Bossi-Fini* clauses state that no boat with visa-less passengers can dock at an Italian port. Another stipulated that the terms for employment be tightened so that employers were discouraged to employ migrants. All illegal migrants are to be repatriated. Repatriation of the unwilling becomes forced removal and it becomes brutal and brutalising to all parties involved. It has led to migrants deliberately frustrating the

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