

# Labour Affairs

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## Labour And Antisemitism

Antisemitism is being used by the right wing within the Parliamentary Labour Party to undermine Corbyn, while the Tories shelter behind the antisemitism allegations in order to cover up their Brexit divisions and their abysmal social policies which are having such a devastating effect on hundreds of thousands of families. In their eagerness to attack Corbyn at every opportunity, the Labour oppositionists and the Tories make ideal bedfellows.

The International Definition of Antisemitism, (IDA), agreed at a conference of the Berlin-based International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance in May 2016 states: "Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for "why things go wrong." It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits."

The generally held view that Labour under Corbyn's leadership is a hot bed of antisemitism is a hard pill to swallow. Corbyn himself has been attacked by the right-wing press and accused of being an antisemite, when even his severest critics in the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) admit there is not an antisemitic bone in his body. The press's 'evidence' is that he has met with Hamas and expressed support for the Palestinians. Ergo, he is an antisemite. It seems it is not possible to be opposed to Israel's actions against the Palestinian people without being labelled an antisemite. Although the IDA appears to contradict this. The IDA itself is a cumbersome, catch-all

definition which ought to be narrowed down to a simple message: antisemitism is a hatred of Jews simply because of their racial origin and religious practices.

Corbyn's PLP critics, while not accusing him directly of antisemitism, have pointed at what they see as his lack of leadership on the issue. This manifests itself in the slow progress made in dealing with the antisemitism they believe is endemic in the party. They argue that failure so far to carry out the recommendations in the Chakrabarti report, (an inquiry into antisemitism and other forms of racism in the Labour Party), published in June 2016, is evidence of this. The report, which made twenty recommendations, concluded that Labour is not overrun by antisemitism or other forms of racism, but there is an "occasionally toxic atmosphere." This is now being given top priority under the supervision of the newly appointed General Secretary.

The hate mail received by some Labour MPs is assumed to have originated from party members, specifically Corbyn supporters among Momentum. It is of course conceivable that most of those responsible are right-wing opponents of Corbyn and/or Labour, using social media, twitter in particular where one's identity can be concealed, to air their despicable views. Some may claim to be party members, examples of the "occasionally toxic atmosphere" within the party referred to in the Chakrabarti report. Those on the receiving end of hate mail, such as Labour members Luciana Berger and Ruth Smeeth should, if possible, check the origin and party affiliation, if any, of their abusers.

The Jewish Leadership Council and the Board of Deputies of British Jews, with some Labour backbenchers, have criticised Corbyn for not excluding Ken Livingstone from party membership for remarks made two years ago. Ignoring the fact that Livingstone's fate does not lie ultimately with the party leader, but with the party's National Executive Committee.

Livingstone's crime, in the eyes of his opponents, was

to associate Hitler with Zionism. He told LBC, a London local radio station, "When Hitler won his election in 1932, his policy then was that Jews should be moved to Israel. He was supporting Zionism before he went mad and ended up killing six million Jews."

Livingstone refused to apologise for his remarks and remains suspended from the party. His remarks should have sparked a debate within the party, rather than hysterical criticism. But it seems that the subject is a no-go area for Labour. Not one of his critics in the party has proved he was historically incorrect in what he said. He has simply been silenced and suspended at the behest of the Blairite remnants who fear one of Corbyn's most powerful supporters.

It's widely acknowledged that Labour has a proud record of opposing racism and antisemitism. In spite of the allegations there is less antisemitism and racism in the Labour party than there is in the Tory party, UKIP and society at large. Labour's socialist message of class and social solidarity, rejected by many mainstream Labour members, undermines racism of all kinds.

Before Corbyn became party leader the recipients of antisemitic abuse, allegedly from individual party members, were strangely silent. Even though they knew that some of the antisemitic remarks were made some time ago. Naz Shah, for example, Labour member for Bradford West, committed her offence before she was elected in 2015. Her Facebook page showed an image of the state of Israel superimposed on a map of the USA. At the time no one in the PLP pointed out that the originator of the image was Norman Finkelstein, a Jewish American Professor of Political Science, most of whose family died in the holocaust. Shah later apologised fulsomely to the House of Commons and yet was still held up as an example of Labour's antisemitism. So, why the outcry now? And why are the accusations

aimed specifically at a Corbyn-led Labour party? Is Labour unique in this? There are two possible reasons.

The first suggests that the accusers of antisemitism within Labour are grossly exaggerating the problem as a means of attacking Corbyn. Some Labour members expressed alarm when Corbyn commented that there were merely "pockets of antisemitism" within the party. A comment he was unwise to make as it conceded the argument to his critics. The second possible reason is that it is a diversionary tactic by the Tories. No amount of government spin about our new, tough Prime Minister, and slick media presentation can hide that fact.

Labour's in-fighting over antisemitism has handed a gift to the Tories. On 17 April the government initiated a debate on the subject, designed to embarrass Labour and ensure maximum negative media coverage for Corbyn. During a highly emotional debate some Labour MPs pointed the finger of guilt at Corbyn, as if he was personally responsible for the antisemitic abuse of the party's Jewish MPs, while the Tory benches looked on with glee. It appears that it is not only the Tories who used the occasion to drive a stake into the heart of Corbyn's leadership of Labour.

Antisemitism is abhorrent, but why has there been no outrage from Corbyn's leading critics about the killing, at the end of March, of thirty Palestinian demonstrators, with 1,700 injured, by the Israeli military at the heavily fenced Gaza border? There was not a word from them during the 17 April debate on antisemitism. Nor has there been a word from them since then.

Corbyn's opponents have played a despicable role in the antisemitism hysteria just before the May local government elections to be held in London and some other parts of the country. We have no doubt that the voters will give them their answer by voting Labour in spite of the accusations of antisemitism directed at the leadership.

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# What Should Labour's Foreign Policy Be?

Labour Affairs does not usually comment on foreign policy issues. However, we do have views on foreign policy. In this editorial we explain what these are for our readers' clarification. It should be clear why we do not take an active part in foreign policy discussions. We believe in non-interference in the internal affairs of other sovereign states and the promotion of peace. We reject the imperialist heritage of Britain's past that lives on in the foreign policy of all the major parties. Here we set out some basic principles for what a non-imperialist Labour foreign policy should look like.

Labour has not had a particularly distinguished record on foreign policy. Although it likes to think of itself as a non-imperial party, its conduct is stained with imperialism and, worse, assistance in the imperialism of other powers to the detriment of our own interests. The current behaviour of the PLP over Russia and Syria is yet another unhappy example of this. Jeremy Corbyn is remarkable in his refusal to bend the knee to the continuous artificial righteous indignation, emoting, warmongering talk. His insistence on looking at the evidence of Russian and Syrian wrongdoing or more probably, the lack of it, seems, amazingly, to provoke indignation even within the Parliamentary Labour Party. Things have come to a pass when a leader of the opposition can be criticised for asking for evidence before a course of war is embarked on.

Imperialist attitudes and reflexes are often disguised in the minds of Labour Party politicians as a concern for 'human rights' but they are in fact a cover for post-imperialist adventures, often in the interests of a couple of foreign powers. Despite the wisdom of Jeremy Corbyn who, on the whole, has sound instincts concerning non-interference, too often the Labour Party allows itself to follow the reckless adventurism that appears to be the dominant trend in the Tory Party. The fake outrage over alleged Russian actions on British soil are the latest example. The Labour left is not immune either: too often it allows itself to be conscripted into campaigns against other countries for alleged 'human rights abuses' where evidence is weak and where antagonism is deliberately stirred up through false flag incidents to exert pressure on countries which the United States wishes to intimidate.

Labour needs to return to the instincts of Corbyn and to promote them as the basis for a sensible foreign policy. At the same time it should be made clear that our efforts in foreign policy should be to promote the interests of Britain, but not some post-imperial illusion of Britain as a world power nor as some auxiliary power of other nations who do not have our interests at heart.

We suggest the following as a guiding maxim for a Labour foreign policy.

*We should keep our country safe and secure, respected for good government and above all we should keep our noses out of other people's business. We should certainly not act as the agent of the interests of any other foreign power.*

Relations between nation states are to a large extent governed by force or the threat of force. Where the interests of nations are perceived to coincide there is the possibility of alliance and co-operation. Where they conflict, it is often possible to seek a compromise so that the interest of all parties are addressed as far as possible. This is the task of a nation's diplomats.

How can nations trust one another? If you are a government, it helps if you know that a country with which you are dealing will promote its interests and defend its vital interests. This gives you a good element of predictability in its behaviour. It also helps if you know that this will be the primary aim of its foreign policy and that it will seek to promote these aims as far as possible by diplomacy and will use its armed forces and intelligence services strictly in pursuit of these aims. Finally, it helps if a nation state is perceived to abide by agreements made in international negotiations, rather than ignore them when they become inconvenient. The whole purpose of formal agreements is that they be kept even if national interests shift. These factors all mitigate the raw use of force in international relations and Britain should promote and live by such principles.

**What foreign policy is for: there are two main tasks.**

*To promote our country's interests and*

*to defend our vital interests.*

The main goal of any country's foreign policy should be to promote the interests of that country. This applies to the United Kingdom as much as to anywhere else. In addition, all countries should consider carefully what their vital interests are. Vital interests are those whose protection is necessary to the survival of the state and society. Those interests which a country reasonably deems to be vital are those which it is entitled to use force as well as diplomacy to secure. It has a right to promote and defend its vital interests. It is also reasonable to employ intelligence services to gauge the intentions of both allies and potential rivals, but not to engage in sabotage and false flag activities.

*These vital interests include:*

The threat of foreign invasion.

The dismantling of collective security arrangements (about which more below).

The protection of significant national minorities outside national boundaries.

The maintenance of economic trade routes and resources necessary to the economic viability of the state (about which more below).

These are the scope and limits of any foreign policy which claims to be fair to its own population and to its neighbours, be they allies or rivals. This is all that should be meant by an 'ethical' foreign policy.

Activities that do not promote a country's interest or seek to secure its vital interests or which undermine them should be stopped. It is as simple as that. This includes moralistic interventions in the affairs of other countries, which are usually designed to stir up hatred or to disrupt those countries. It also includes acting as the agents of foreign powers such as Israel and the US. This is particularly reprehensible as it threatens to damage the interests or even the vital interests of the country by promoting those of countries whose interests do not coincide with ours. In recent decades the UK has been assiduous in promoting the interests of the US and Israel at the expense of our own. The Labour Party needs to make it clear that

Editorials and older articles at our website,

<http://labouraffairsmagazine.com/>

This also has old issues of Problems magazine.

these activities will cease.

#### *Human Rights.*

If there are human rights, they relate to the vital interests of human beings. Humans are social animals who have developed practices and institutions over centuries to attend to those interests. Very different social arrangements have been developed in all parts of the world to ensure that life is bearable and for people to live contentedly. Stable social arrangements of this kind, especially those that include political arrangements that allow different communities to live together in harmony, are particularly important. Throughout the world, different groups have been thrown together through historical accident and it is one of the main tasks of governments to ensure that stable social arrangements are protected. Above all, educated liberals in the West should not assume that the arrangements that they currently favour should be promoted across or even enforced upon the rest of the world. This is a lesson that the Labour Party, with its post imperial heritage and liberal universalist mindset needs to especially take to heart. It is Labour's job to defend and expand democracy in the UK, it is none of its business to promote democracy elsewhere in the world.

It is also not our job to campaign for human rights. Many of these so-called rights are western obsessions: homosexual proselytization, the promotion of 'gender diversity', feminism. They are not rights in the sense described above, that is practices that address vital interests or are essential to promote peace in their own societies. They are all too often used to demonise countries with different traditions and values to our own. We should accept such countries and societies as they are and if for some exceptional reason we have to have a point of view on their internal affairs (for example where a British citizen is affected), we should express it privately or through diplomatic channels. We should also remember that the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* included rights to employment, health care and education. These are genuinely associated with human vital interests. They have been considered 'too expensive' since the 1980s and cut from the budget of poor countries when they need financial aid. The UK should refrain from supporting such activities.

These human rights initiatives, often supported both on the right and the left, are a post imperial reflex which assumes the superiority of Britain and its assumed

right to tell other countries how they should behave. One can expect such behaviour from the right but the left urgently needs to control its own post imperial illusions, such as imposing homosexual rights in Chechnya to take just one recent example.

#### *To maintain international security and peace.*

Our foreign policy should do this because it is in our country's interests to do so. We don't need an 'ethical' foreign policy that assumes a 'holier than thou' stance towards other countries. We have enough in our own country to be ashamed of without criticising the practices of other countries. The best way to promote our image abroad is to attend to the injustices that we inflict on our own citizens.

The promotion of international security and peace is the best way of securing a nation state's interests when it cannot impose its will by force on other nations. This is actually the situation of all nation states in the world at the moment, including those who are deluded enough to think otherwise. Going to war with significant powers (as opposed to beating up small and weak nations) is very risky and can lead to national catastrophe. Britain should know this after bungling two world wars within forty years of each other and losing an empire as a result. War is a last resort when all other means to defend a country's vital interests have failed. Because the UK has not been invaded and humiliated in its own territory it has not taken that important lesson to heart.

Much better is the promotion of collective security. Collective security means that a group of nation states consider their interests and how they can best be promoted as a group. Naturally this implies compromises, but if all are satisfied that their vital interests are protected and guaranteed by arrangement between trustworthy partners, such an outcome should be acceptable. The maintenance of an able diplomatic service which has signed up to such aims should be a priority. Labour needs to give some thought as to what it wants the UK's diplomatic service to do. This includes maintaining the expertise to understand other countries with which we have dealings and listening to that expertise.

An immediate priority is that we should refrain from adopting an aggressive approach to Russia and more generally to assisting American plans to dominate parts of the world and to intimidate countries seeking to chart their own course. Assisting a foreign power, the promotion of whose

interests are opposed to our own is not only bad foreign policy, it could be regarded as treason. The best way to ensure security within our own borders is to not give people in other countries grievances against us by attacking them or colluding with their attackers. Our own internal security services, who are certainly no angels in their own conduct, have pointed out the threats to our security that have arisen from our interference in the affairs of other states.

Britain is geographically located in Europe and should attend to its interests there. Russia is both a part of Europe and of Asia. Russia is an essential component of any European collective security arrangement. Russia has twice in the last two hundred years been subject to devastating invasions from Western Europe. It will not tolerate the threat of a third. At the same time there is no evidence whatsoever that it seeks to expand territorially beyond its current boundaries. It has repeatedly called for European collective security arrangements. We should press for such arrangement for Europe and Russia based on:

- non-aggression between signatories.

- non-interference in elections and arrangements for transfer of power in other countries within the agreement.

- respect for existing borders and respect for the rights of minorities within those borders.

Respect for the economic model and economic interests of the signatories as long as this does not imply predatory economic behaviour of some against the interests of the other signatories. Separate economic treaties should promote trade and economic intercourse between participants.

There should be some provision against external aggression against the signatories, but the evidence of such aggression should meet a high standard of proof.

When 2. is violated then the conditions for the fulfilment of 3. are threatened. It is a particularly important provision.

#### *Global threats to collective security.*

Where countries pose a threat to regional or world peace, such as Israel in the Middle East, it is proper to speak out and criticise their behaviour while working towards solutions that respect populations which are being oppressed such as the Palestinians. Israel is a particular concern for a number of reasons:

- It refuses to delimit its own borders, making a negotiated settlement of disputes

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# “Tunbridge Wells has a Drugs and Murder Problem”

by Gwydion M. Williams

Suppose my article title were a newspaper headline? But it turned out that both drug abuse and murder rates were lower in Tunbridge Wells than in the rest of Britain. Wouldn't you call that dishonest?

Exactly the same dishonesty – or perhaps confusion or ignorance – is shown by those who say that Labour has an anti-Semitism problem.

For those not familiar with Britain, Tunbridge Wells is famous as the archetype of respectable English identity:

“This respectable, attractive Kent town is surrounded by beautiful countryside and continues to have an air of exclusivity.”<sup>1</sup>

A 1963 BBC show had a comic episode called ‘*Tunbridge Wells Fargo*’:<sup>2</sup> the joke being that it was as far from the USA's Wild West as you could find among English-speakers.

But English ‘respectability’ is not what it was. It included a silly guilt-ridden view of sex, which needed to be scrapped. Sadly, the tricky task of defining an entire new social morality that accepts homosexuality and sex outside

of marriage has been slow and messy. Most people chose the quick-and-dirty option of saying that all morality was false, or at least should not be imposed against individual whims or wishes. This was a bad error. It left society way open to Thatcher's ignorant attack on British basics that she imagined she was rescuing. Britain's seaside towns were among those that slipped, particularly since most of the Working Mainstream can afford foreign holidays.

Being always ready to question my own assumptions, I checked whether inland Tunbridge Wells still merited its old reputation.<sup>3</sup> I found it was indeed low-crime compared with Kent as a whole. No separate figures for murder, but well below the Kent average for violent and sexual offences. Slightly below for drugs.

It was also easy enough to find a few shocking crimes if you Google ‘murder’ and ‘Tunbridge Wells’:

- *Rough sleeper ‘set on fire and murdered’ in Tunbridge Wells*<sup>4</sup>
- *A Tunbridge Wells man has been found guilty of murder following*

*‘batty boy’ argument*<sup>5</sup>

But you could get the same or worse, for any city or town you might wish to pick on.

It is just as untrue to say ‘**Labour has an anti-Semitism problem**’. It's an example of a common media trick: create a massively false *impression* by selective use of facts that are not in themselves false. Murders happen in Tunbridge Wells, but it has a mild outbreak of a general British problem. Britain's murder rate is also low globally: 183<sup>rd</sup> out of 219, 0.92 per 100,000. (Russia is 38<sup>th</sup>, 12 times the rate in Britain, so it is unreasonable to accuse its government when Russian citizens are murdered.)

Britain also has a steady decline in both murder and crime in general, quite different from the impression the media gives you.<sup>6</sup>

Deception by dishonest selection of facts is a clever method, and needs a special name to nail it. I'd suggest ‘**Bliaring**’, in honour of Tony Blair and his notorious claim that Iraq could launch ‘weapons of mass destruction’ in 15

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with the Palestinian people and neighbouring nation states nearly impossible.

It illegally occupies and settles territory that does not belong to it, promoting insecurity and conflict in a region in which Britain does have an interest through trade routes and raw material supply.

It consistently behaves in an aggressive way towards neighbouring states and advocates the use of force as a means of settling perceived threats to its interests. This has the potential to threaten the vital interests of the UK.

It to a large extent controls the foreign behaviour of the United States to promote its own unwillingness to define its borders, its illegal occupations and its aggression towards neighbours. This makes it a far greater threat to world peace than it would otherwise be.

We should work within the structure of the United Nations to reduce tensions and increase security, imperfect though the UN is. It is, potentially at least, a forum for the resolution of differences. But we should be realistic about the fact that it is dominated by great powers. We should also note that the human rights provisions within the UN Charter have the potential to destabilise world peace for reasons outlined above and we should refrain from promoting them or assisting countries who promote them to further their own interests.

Our diplomatic service should be oriented towards explaining to foreign powers what Britain's interests are and how they can be reconciled with those of our neighbours and other countries. It should have the expertise needed to promote collective security arrangements in our region and to ensure civilised relationships

with all countries with whom we have dealings. It and the foreign intelligence service should be firmly limited to gathering intelligence to promote these objectives.

### *Defence*

Our defence budget should serve our foreign policy aims. It should have nothing to do with projecting force around the world but be concerned with protecting the security and integrity of the country and its borders and littoral seas. There are no other major functions that our armed forces can or should usefully perform.

### *The Labour Party*

The Labour Party has been historically compromised by Britain's imperial history. We do not advocate feeling ‘guilty’ about this but would prefer to promote a realistic view of our place in the world based on respect for the interests of other nations. Since the Second World War British foreign policy has degenerated into subservience to the foreign policy of the United States in the mistaken belief that this is the most effective way to promote our own interests. There is no evidence whatsoever that this policy has succeeded in doing so.

The Labour Party should adopt a policy that refrains from assisting the interests of foreign powers. It should not seek for Britain to ‘punch above its weight’ in the world by interfering in matters that do not concern it. It should refrain from moralism when commenting on or dealing with foreign powers. The best way for Labour to promote the good name of Britain in the world would be to enact policies that serve the interests of our own people such as renationalisation, industrial democracy, regional policy, good public services and fair taxation. This is why Labour Affairs makes the promotion of these policies a priority.

minutes. He didn't mention that this was battlefield poison gas, which Saddam's Iraq had been using for years, with a deafening silence from Blair and others in the days when Saddam was a useful Cold War ally. George Galloway kept raising it and being ignored. He mended fences with Saddam to try to prevent the various Gulf Wars, from a sensible understanding that Saddam could not be removed without enormous suffering for ordinary Iraqis.

There is anti-Semitism throughout British society: but not high by global standard.

There is less of it on the left and in the Labour Party than on the right.

"A survey of anti-Semitic attitudes in Britain, published last September by the respected Institute for Jewish Policy Research — an organization with no ties to any political party — contains several findings that are worth considering amid this uproar. First: Levels of anti-Semitism in Britain are among the lowest in the world. Second: Supporters across the political spectrum manifest anti-Semitic ideas. Third: Far from this being an issue for the left, the prejudice gets worse the farther right you look. And yet, at the same time, British Jews now generally believe anti-Semitism to be a large and growing problem and have come to associate it with Labour in particular."<sup>7</sup>

Labour is of course much more inclined to be anti-Zionist. People intentionally confuse the two. They are easy enough to distinguish:

- **Anti-Zionism** is a rejection of the creation and expansion of a Jewish state in Palestine, either in principle or as now being carried out.
- **Anti-Semitism** is hostility to Jews living somewhere other than Palestine. Either not wanting them in your own country, or being suspicious of them wherever they are.

Jews up to 1914 were mostly against Zionism. But World War One led to much more hostility to Jews, as nationalism everywhere got more intense. Britain also boosted it by the ambiguous promises of the Balfour Declaration. This was naturally intensified by the mass killing of Jews by Nazi Germany, a racist aim pursued at the expense of the war effort. But there were always some Jews who doubted it.

Isaac Bashevis Singer was of Polish-Jewish origin but moved to the USA in 1935, correctly fearing the rise of Nazism even though he lived in Poland. But he also noted that Polish Christians were becoming more hostile to Jews. That this was actually getting worse as people got more educated and prosperous. He wrote in Yiddish, but his works have been translated extensively into English. His 1967 work *The Estate* is an historic novel about late 19th Century Polish Jews. A young man wants to settle in Palestine, then part of the Ottoman Empire. His father disagrees.

"The Turks are no better than the Poles or Russians. Don't be fooled."

"I know, Papa. But it's our country, our earth"

"How is it ours? Because Jews lived there two thousand years ago. Do you know how many nations have perished and assimilated since that time? If we changed the map to what it was two thousand years ago, three-quarters of mankind would have to be moved. And how does it follow that we actually come from these Israelites? The ancient Hebrews were all dark..."

"Take American, for example, a thousand nationalities. You can become an American too. All you need is boat ticket."

"All Jews cannot become Americans?"

"Why worry about all Jews?"

Jews found that in practice they *did* need to worry about all Jews, because rising nationalism caused them to be lumped together. A publicity campaign putting more emphasis on the difference would have been useful, and still is useful. As a man of purely Welsh and West Country, and also a left-wing thinker, I found a lot of common interests with many Jews, though certainly not *all* Jews. Individual Jews are found in most forms of radicalism: science, art, culture, business and politics. This does not mean they are conspiring, or even particularly agree with each other. Jews in politics are mostly on the left in Continental Europe and the USA. Rather less so in Britain, where the Tory elite early on admitted some rich Jews, while prejudices lingered among the rank-and-file.

Since no one else was doing it, I've been writing to emphasize the differences. And how genocide was a 19<sup>th</sup> century pattern in which the British Empire was the main culprit, before it came home

to Europe and Jews became a major target. (See *Britain's Exterminating Sea Empire*.<sup>8</sup>) I'm now planning a work to be called *Jews Like Boris Pasternak, Isaac Asimov and Ayn Rand*: all three were of Russian-Jewish origin, but had very different outlooks.

The USA could and should have absorbed all displaced Jews. It gained in wealth, science and culture from those Jews it did let in. But it also diluted a US identity that was always an issue. The new USA began in the late 18th century with a population that was mostly of British origin, mostly Protestant and with non-whites largely excluded from citizenship. In the 1850s, there was a strong 'Know-Nothing' movement hostile to the arrival of large numbers of Irish and German Catholics. Kennedy as US President was the first and only Roman Catholic to occupy the office, and his religion was an issue.<sup>9</sup> Jews in the 1850s were not much of an issue: they became so when large numbers of East European and Russian Jews began arriving later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Quite a lot of them were shut out, and after World War Two the US helped create Israel as an alternative. Soviet Jews, whose right to emigrate had been demanded by the USA, were then shunted to Israel, encouraging more land to be taken from Palestinians. It is looking like a massive historic error, and a tragedy.

#### Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/focus-on-tunbridge-wells-vn8zqvhrq20>
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- 7 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/06/opinion/anti-semitism-britain-labour-party.html>. The study can be found at [http://www.jpr.org.uk/documents/JPR.2017.Antisemitism\\_in\\_contemporary\\_Great\\_Britain.pdf](http://www.jpr.org.uk/documents/JPR.2017.Antisemitism_in_contemporary_Great_Britain.pdf)
- 8 <https://gwydionwilliams.com/99-problems-magazine/jews-suffering-in-the-fall-of-the-british-empire/>
- 9 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-Catholicism\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States#1960\\_election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-Catholicism_in_the_United_States#1960_election)

# Parliament And World War One

by Dick Barry

## RAISING MILITARY AGE.

09 April 1918

**The PRIME MINISTER** I now turn to the new proposals embodied in the Bill which I beg leave to introduce to-day. Our first proposal is to raise the military age up to fifty, and in certain specified cases we ask for powers to raise it to fifty-five; but that is only where men with special qualifications are needed. For instance, it may be necessary to do it in the case of medical men, in order to secure their services. It may be necessary in certain special classes, with special training and special experience, to secure their services for the Army. When you come to the question of raising the age up to fifty, it does not mean that men between forty-two and fifty are necessarily to be taken, in order to put them into the fighting line. It may be that there are men of that age who are just as fit as men of twenty-five, but I am sorry to say they are the exception, and we cannot therefore depend upon men of that age altogether to make the finest fighting material. There are a good many services in the Army which do not require the very best physical material, and it would be very helpful to get men of this age to fill those services, in order to release younger and fitter men to enter into the fighting line. There is also to be borne in mind the fact that we have to prepare for Home defence, so as to be able to release men from this country, and to fill their places by men between forty-two and fifty, who, I have no doubt, will fight very tenaciously for their own homes should there be such a thing as an invasion. The proportion of men from forty-two to fifty whom we expect will be available is not very high—something like 7 per cent., that is, only 7 per cent. of the men from forty-two to fifty will be available for the Army. I hope I have made that clear.

**Sir C. HENRY** Can you give us the number?

**The PRIME MINISTER** I cannot do that.

**Mr. HOGGE** You have already given us the number up to forty-five.

**The PRIME MINISTER** I have given the numbers of men raised up to the present time, but I do hope the House will not press me further. After all, we must not assist the intelligence branch of the enemy.

**Mr. SNOWDEN** Before the right hon. Gentleman passes—

**The PRIME MINISTER** I only wanted to reassure the people between forty-two and fifty that all the men of that age are not going to be called to the fighting line. I gave a sort of rough estimate, that it would be only a small percentage of the men of that age who would be likely to come under the provisions of the Bill.

Now I come to the question of exemptions from military service. It is known to everyone who has experience of the difficulty of obtaining man-power that one of the many obstacles to success is the number of exemptions which have been granted, often for reasons which at the time appeared sufficient, but which should no longer be effective at the present time of crisis. The Minister of National Service already has power, under an Act passed this year, to cancel certificates granted on occupational grounds. It is proposed to make free use of this power by means of a Proclamation, and there will be several of those exemptions which will be cancelled under a power which has already been conferred on the Minister of National Service. But when the existing powers have been used to the utmost, it may be necessary to go further, and to deal with exemptions granted on other grounds. Accordingly, it is provided by the Bill that His Majesty may, by Proclamation declaring that a national emergency has arisen, direct that any certificate of exemption from military service of a nature specified in that Proclamation shall cease to have effect, and that while any such Proclamation remain in force no exemption shall be granted which would fall within the terms of the

Proclamation. It will be obvious that under this provision it will be open to the Government to cancel exemptions in respect of men under an age to be specified in the Proclamation. This is another means of arriving at the “clean cut,” so as to secure men of military age, fit young men, for the purpose of the Army, under an age to be specified in the Proclamation. Any existing exemptions granted to such men will be superseded, and the men will be taken or left on medical grounds only. [An Hon. Member: “Tear up every pledge”] The hon. Gentleman takes a different view of the War from the one which I take. We have to choose between either submitting to defeat, or taking the necessary measures to avert it. We will never submit to defeat.

**Mr. KING** Why not resign?

**The PRIME MINISTER** I need hardly say that this provision will not be used to set aside pledges given to discharged soldiers; they will be carefully observed. It is proposed, further, to make a change in the constitution of the Appeal Tribunals in dealing with exemptions, and to speed up their procedure. I want again to emphasise the fact that time is of the very essence of this emergency. The existing tribunals have done very admirable work, but they will be the first to admit that their work has been hampered by a number of circumstances—the number of tribunals themselves, the facilities for unnecessary and repeated applications, opportunities for delay under recurring rights of appeal, and so on. In these circumstances, it is proposed to take power by Order in Council both to reconstitute the tribunals and to regulate the areas in which they shall work; to standardise the grounds of exemption, and limit the rights of appeal. It is impossible now to specify the precise nature of the changes to be made, but I may indicate the nature of the changes we have in mind. Firstly, the areas within which tribunals may act will be reconsidered, and, in some cases, adjusted; secondly, local

tribunals, like the Appeal Tribunals, will become nominated bodies, and will be reduced in size. This does not mean that use will not be made of the assistance of the existing members of tribunals who have rendered admirable service and will be willing, I hope, to continue to work under the new conditions. Further, the continuity of these tribunals staff, and officers will, of course, be preserved. We propose to make an attempt to standardise more accurately than is now done the grounds of exemption, and to prevent conflicting decisions on these matters—different decisions in different localities—which is one of the great grievances felt in the country. Changes will also be made in the procedure, but upon these I do not intend to dwell at the moment. There is also, as I am reminded, the question of the extension of the Act to ministers of religion for non-combatant purposes.

**Mr. STANTON** Why not also to the conscientious objectors?

**The PRIME MINISTER** There is a shortage of fit men very largely for the service of the sick and wounded, and I am perfectly certain that ministers of religion would not care to feel that they were exempted from the obligation to serve, and especially to render service of this kind on the battle field. We have consulted several authorities on the subject, and some of them with whom it has been my privilege to communicate seem to feel that ministers of religion would be the last men in the world to claim exemption from an obligation of that kind. It is obvious if this change be made, care must be taken not to put an end to religious ministrations in the country, and it has been arranged for this purpose that the Minister of National Service shall endeavour to act in concert with the authorities of the different denominations, so that in every denomination an adequate staff shall be reserved.

**Sir C. KINLOCH-COOKE** Why not also deal with the conscientious objector?

#### CONSCRIPTION IN IRELAND. 09 April 1918

**The PRIME MINISTER** I now

come to the question of Ireland. When an emergency has arisen, which makes it necessary to put men of fifty and boys of eighteen into the Army in the fight for liberty and independence—

**Mr. DEVLIN** And small nationalities.

**The PRIME MINISTER** And especially, as my hon. Friend reminds me, to fight for the liberty and independence of small nationalities—

**Mr. BYRNE** What about Ireland?

**The PRIME MINISTER**—I am perfectly certain it is not possible to justify any longer the exclusion of Ireland.

**An HON. MEMBER** What about Wales?

**Mr. DILLON** You will not get any men from Ireland by compulsion—not a man.

**The PRIME MINISTER** As to Wales, may I just say that before the Act came into operation, Wales showed the highest recruiting record in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. PRINGLE** No.

**The PRIME MINISTER** What is the position? I hope hon. Members will allow me to state my case. No Home Rule proposal ever submitted to this House proposed to deprive the Imperial Parliament of the power of dealing with all questions relating to the Army and Navy. These have invariably, in every Home Rule proposal I have ever seen, been purely questions for the Imperial Parliament, so that it is no more a derogation of any national right ever claimed in this House than was the Defence of the Realm Act, which was also extended to Ireland. The character of the quarrel in which we are engaged is just as much Irish as it is English. May I say it is more so—it is more Irish and Scottish and Welsh than it is even English. Ireland, through its representatives at the beginning of this War, assented to it—

**Mr. DEVLIN** Because it was a war for small nationalities.

**An HON. MEMBER** Why would not you fight for small nationalities?

**The PRIME MINISTER** Ireland, through its representatives, assented to the War, voted for the War, supported the War. The Irish representatives, and

Ireland, through its representatives, without a dissentient voice, committed the Empire to this War. They are fully as responsible for it as any part of the United Kingdom. May I just read the declaration issued by the Irish party on the 17th December, 1914, shortly after the War began?

**Mr. BYRNE** We have had a revolution since then.

**The PRIME MINISTER** This is the declaration of the Irish party: A test to search men's souls has arisen. The Empire is engaged in the most serious War in history. It is a just War, provoked by the intolerable military despotism of Germany. It is a war for the defence of the sacred rights and liberties of small nations, and the respect and enlargement of the great principle of nationality. Involved in it is the fate of France, our kindred country, the chief nation of that powerful Celtic race to which we belong; the fate of Belgium, to whom we are attached by the same great ties of race, and by the common desire of a small nation to assert its freedom; and the fate of Poland, whose sufferings and whose struggles bear so marked a resemblance to our own. It is a war for high ideals of human government and international relations, and Ireland would be false to her history, and to every consideration of honour, good faith and self-interest, did she not willingly bear her share in its burdens and its sacrifices." [Interruption.]

**Captain REDMOND** "Willingly!"

**The PRIME MINISTER** May I also refer to a speech delivered by the late Mr. Redmond at the Mansion House, Dublin, when my right hon. Friend was addressing a recruiting meeting there: The heart of Ireland has been profoundly moved by the spectacle of the heroism and the sufferings of Belgium. The other day, in London, I met the Cardinal Archbishop of Melines-Cardinal Mercier—and I took the liberty of promising him then that Ireland would bring her arms and her strength to avenge Louvain and to uphold the integrity and independence of Belgium—aye, yes, Belgium, Poland, Alsace-Lorraine, France—those are words to conjure with by

the Irish people. There never was—this is, I believe the universal sentiment of Ireland—there never was a war in which higher and nobler issues were at stake....I have heard some people speaking of this War as an English and not an Irish war. That is absolutely and definitely untrue. Ireland's highest national interests are at stake. The fact that America is in this War is the best proof of that. There are more Irishmen in the United States of America than there are in Ireland. They are all subject to Conscription.

**Captain REDMOND** Not by England.

**The PRIME MINISTER** Irishmen in Great Britain and in Canada are subject to Conscription.

**Mr. DEVLIN** Are Irishmen in Australia?

**Mr. BYRNE** We would not have it in Ireland!

**The PRIME MINISTER** Mr. Redmond, in addressing this House on the Military Service Bill, 1916, said: Let me state what is my personal view on this matter of compulsion. I am content to take the phrase used by the Prime Minister in his last speech. I am prepared to say I will stick at nothing, nothing which is necessary, nothing which is calculated to effect the purpose, in order to win this War, and this is the view, I am certain, of the people of Ireland. Then he was opposed to that particular Bill. But he said that with him Conscription was not a question of principle; it was purely a question of the necessity for the raising of men. I think my hon. Friend the Member for Mayo (Mr. Dillon) took substantially the same view in a speech which he delivered at the same time: We are now engaged." he said, "in discussing an important political proposal for this country. Like the hon. member for Waterford, I view the thing from the point of view of necessity and expediency in the particular circumstances. I would not hesitate to support Conscription tomorrow if I thought it was necessary to maintain liberty, and if there was no Conscription, we ran the risk of losing the War.

**Mr. DILLON** That was conditional on Ireland having the liberty to decide her own fate, and if Irish liberty were

at stake I certainly would not hesitate to support Conscription.

**The PRIME MINISTER** I do not want to enter into a controversy as to what my hon. Friend meant, but that is what he conveyed to the House, and if he will take the trouble to read that speech, he will see that that is the case. Mr. Redmond himself, on the Third Reading, in delivering his speech put it on the ground that we were fighting for small nationalities.

**Mr. DEVLIN** We found that that was not true.

**The PRIME MINISTER** My hon. Friend never challenged the justice of the War. On the contrary, he supported it, he voted for it—

**Mr. DEVLIN** Who?

**The PRIME MINISTER** I am referring to my hon. Friend the Member for Mayo. He voted for the War, supported supplies, voted for the declaration of war.

**Mr. DILLON** The hon. Gentleman is going too far. I never challenged the justice of the War. I believed in the justice of the War, and said so. I never voted for supplies, nor did anyone else in this House, for a vote was never taken. I never challenged the justice of the War, and I do not now challenge it. The right hon. Gentleman is going too far when he says that. Most certainly I did not vote for the War. I hold very strong opinions about the origin of the War.

**The PRIME MINISTER** I am satisfied with the statements made by my hon. Friend that he supported the justice of the War. If he believed that it was an unjust War, he would never have voted for it?

**Mr. DILLON** Certainly not.

**The PRIME MINISTER** Well, that's settled. May I say, quite respectfully, and after a good deal of reflection and hesitation, because after all one does not want to propose anything to raise controversy and trouble when Heaven knows we have as much trouble as we can possibly deal with **Mr. FLAVIN** You will get more of it.

**The PRIME MINISTER** I would not do it unless I felt, after great reflection, that it is indefensible that you should ask young men of eighteen and a-half years of age, married men of thirty-five and forty with families, and even up to fifty,

in England, Scotland, and Wales—that you should compel them to fight for the freedom and independence of a small Catholic nationality in Europe, whilst young men of twenty to twenty-five in Ireland are under no obligation to take up arms for a cause which is just as much theirs as ours. It is not merely illogical, it is unjust.

**Mr. BYRNE** You will have another battle front in Ireland.

**The PRIME MINISTER** There is such a thing as justice for England and Scotland and Wales, and the emergency which Mr. Redmond contemplated—and which I still respectfully suggest my hon. Friend the Member for Mayo also contemplated—that we shall not win the War without taking this measure, has arisen. President Wilson's dramatic decision in the last few days is the best proof.

And there is a special emergency with regard to Ireland. Irish battalions and divisions, according to all testimony, have maintained the high honour and repute of their native land. But those battalions are sadly depleted, and they are now filled, or half filled, with Englishmen. If it were merely England's battle, the young men of Ireland might regard that fact with indifference. But it is not. They are just as much concerned as the young men of England. Therefore, we propose to extend the Military Service Act to Ireland under the same conditions as in Great Britain. As there is no machinery in existence, and no register has yet been completed in Ireland, it may take some weeks before actual enrolment begins.

**Mr. FLAVIN** It will never begin. Ireland will not have it at any price.

**The PRIME MINISTER** But there must be no delay.

**Mr. FLAVIN** You come across, and try to take them.

**The PRIME MINISTER** As soon as arrangements are complete, the Government will, by Order in Council, put the Act into immediate operation—

**Mr. WILLIAM O'BRIEN** That is a declaration of war against Ireland.

**Mr. FLAVIN** And against Irishmen all over the world.

# BRIAN BEHAN

by W.J. Haire

Brian Behan was born in Dublin on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, 1926 (died 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2002) the son of Stephan Behan and Kathleen Behan (nee Kearney), nephew of Peadar Kearney (author of *Amhrain na bhFiann*, the Irish National Anthem), the younger brother of Brendan, a world-renowned playwright, and older brother of Dominic, a folksinger, author of some popular satirical Irish songs and a couple of theatre plays. Brian is the father of Janet Behan, an actress and playwright. He was, as a teenager, caught stealing from a neighbour's gas meter and was sent to Artane Industrial School, Dublin. It was there, he was later to claim, he was emotionally, physically and sexually abused. He applied for and was posthumously awarded damages for abuse.

After release from Artane he joined the construction corps of the Irish Army.

In 1950 he moved to London to work as a building labourer. Having long considered himself an anarcho-syndicalist, he now became a prominent trade union activist and joined the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). During the construction of the Festival of Britain site in 1951 he was arrested and imprisoned in Brixton Prison for leading a go-slow. But this was only the start of his trade-union activities as he shot up the ranks of the party.

Walbrook, a street in the financial City of London, now Walbrook Square was the site of Buckersbury House, a vast 1950s office campus. It was the first building to exceed the City of London height limit of 30.5m (100 feet), coming in at 164m (538 feet).

This ban was lifted after WW2, which had seen the City demolished by a third through German bombs. During the bombing a building on this site was destroyed to reveal the Roman site of the Temple of Mithras, in honour of an Iranian god said to have killed a mythical bull. With the requirements of rebuilding the Roman site was ignored and almost destroyed but saved for an archaeological search in 1952. It was said to be the most blood splattered Temple due to daily animal sacrifices back in 240 AD.

Building started on Buckersbury House in 1954 and Brian Behan, then an unskilled building labourer, managed to bluff his way through a management

screening to get a start despite his militancy form on such sites as the South Bank Festival of Britain, which had taken place a couple of years previously. When management did discover who he was it was too late. The federation steward called a meeting and it was decided if Behan was sacked there would be a strike. So Behan remained. The site was 100% trade union as far as the skilled trades and their backup labourers were concerned. The management might give you a job but the steward representing your union had to have a look at your union card. Having no card you were turned away. There were no instant sign-ups then. You had to go through a weekly branch of a union, whether it was the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers or the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers or the various other unions belonging to steel fixers or bricklayers, where you might be nominated and seconded. A union card was a precious thing. Be more than six weeks in arrears and the militant sites would reject you. It was felt you didn't have enough interest in the union to keep your card clear.

The first trade to act, after the footings had been dug, was the steel erectors (known then as spider-men) who put up the steel frame of the building. Scaffolders then erected the platforms so as the carpenters could follow with concrete shuttering.

(wooden moulds for the concrete). The spider-men had a morbid sense of humour

about falling from a height and being turned into a bag of bones at the bottom. They didn't wear safety harness because they said that being on piecework they couldn't make even their full wages. There were always dangers with men working a couple of hundred feet above your head. They walked six inch girders carrying heavy spanners and other tools to fit the heavy bolts to connect the steel, A shout of: Below! when a bolt or tool was dropped had you dodging and wondering if it was you who would be hit. The steel erectors and scaffolders were outside contractors and not part of the main building company Humphries, and therefore not controlled by the unionised site personnel.

Behan, as one of the labourers, had

to supply the carpenters with timber, acrows [temporary supports] and steel clamps, and help move heavy shutters. As a member of the CPGB I was aware of his position on the executive committee of the party. He had met Stalin on a visit to Moscow and other leading communists from China and Eastern Europe. He was a charismatic speaker at the onsite union meetings. The site also had other leading communists working as carpenters. Behan was the acknowledged leader of this militant site.

A works committee controlled the site. There was a secretary, chairman, and someone in what would later be called public relations, and a small inner committee comprising of non-CPGB people. The site was evenly divided between English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh plus a small group of West Indian carpenters. Full-time union reps did visit the site but were looked on with suspicion. They seemed to spend too much time with the management and barely anytime with us. If a strike was looming they would go up to the site trying to negotiate a settlement. But the management was tough. The entire group of them had come back from South Africa post-war and we were their new blacks. The real blacks, our West Indian workers, they wanted a separate lavatory block built for. We couldn't believe it and knocked that on the head very quickly with the threat of strike action.

Then Behan was called into the office one day. When he came out he began to pick up matchsticks throughout the site. Most men smoked then and lit their cigarettes with matches. At one break he said he had been ordered to pick up every matchstick he could see. When that was finished he would have to start on collecting the smallest stones. When living beside Palace British Army Barracks in Holywood, County Down, I had seen national service young soldiers having to do the same as a punishment while being followed by a corporal or sergeant-major. Behan was being followed by a ganger-man. We wanted to call a lightning strike but Behan said no because he couldn't be demoralised to such an extent that he would pack in the job. He would just keep on picking. And he did that for a week. Then he was back to normal duties.

There were the usual casualties – nails through shoes, crushed fingers, a broken arm, head injuries requiring stitches. No ambulance was ever called. A workmate would be instructed to go with the injured person to the nearest hospital. If there was no sign of blood the person would be allowed to sit in the canteen hut for half an hour to recover from a bang on the head. The management exploited the machismo of the workers. Even the bold Behan was knocked down once by someone suddenly swinging around with a baulk of heavy timber on his shoulder. Behan got up, shook himself out of his daze and carried on working. It was biting-the-bullet sort of stuff.

Then a man fell down an unfenced-off lift shaft and broke his back. We had wanted it fenced-off, but this was dismissed by the management as 'catering for toddlers.' When the gravely injured man was accused of carelessness with a failure of the company to take responsibility the works committee called a strike. Being the City of London, the erection of a prestigious high-rise building on a historically important site drew a lot of attention from within the City itself. Our public relations drew large placard-type cartoons of Romans exploiting slaves and nailed them to the site hoardings, along with one from Sherlock Holmes: 'Elementary rights, my dear Humphries.' There were also appropriate quotes from Shakespeare where thievery and exploitation was mentioned in his works. A police raid saw them tear down the cartoons. So we drew some more and had the pickets hold them. The police then began wrestling the pickets so there was a mass sit down until they went away. Behan was continually thinking up anti-police methods for the site. He was personally under surveillance by the state apparatus. A local public phone he used he felt was bugged. His letters were being opened and at times he was followed either furtively or openly as a means to intimidate him. Despite our membership of the CPGB the immediate task was fighting a rapacious management and getting better conditions on site. In order to combat us our importance was ratcheted up

to the level of state security.

Then the scaffolders, who were working for contractors, refused to stop work and support the strike. Scaffolders rarely were ever union-minded and always carried an air of over-the-top narcissistic machismo. We thought we would ask anyway. The answer was no. They then armed themselves by carrying their scaffolding spanners in

their belts when coming and going through the picket line. Behan had thought they should be disarmed and kicked off the site but decided it would give the City of London police an excuse for closing down the site to investigate assault.

Odd conversations took place on picket duty. It being 1956 the Suez Crisis had broken out with a number of the English strikers supporting Britain, France and Israel in the invasion of the Canal Zone and Alexandria in Egypt, whilst at the same time pledging loyalty to Brian Behan, communist and member of the Executive Committee of the party. That they knew for he didn't try to hide it. He even invited some of the site workers along to meetings in the Daily Worker building and at 16 King Street, Covent Gardens, Communist Party headquarters. They came along but didn't join, but neither were they hostile.

I don't remember Behan being bothered by the USSR intervention in Hungary during that period of 1956. Hungary had been on the side of the Nazis during WW2 and previous to that the totalitarian Admiral Horthy was in charge after the nine month communist period of Bela Kun in 1919. The USSR had sacrificed in invading Hungary and somehow they had rights there now. The idea was that the middle-class, at the first sight of blood, would run screaming, much like Peter Fryer, a Daily Worker journalist did. Hungary could also be the excuse for leaving the party. That was the consensus there among the communist workers on this site. It was *run the tanks over them*. I don't remember Behan ever contradicting this notion back then. He couldn't be called a gentle soul. In full revolutionary mode he scared more than the management at times.

One Friday morning it was noticed that a City of London newspaper had for its headlines: 'Englishman stands alone.' Reading it we found it referred to our site.

We tracked down this *Lone Englishman* and found he was a scaffolder. A carpenter recognised him from another site as a member of Mosley's Union of British Fascists.

We got a delegation up consisting mostly of English, Scots and Welsh workers with a few Irish thrown in and visited the newspaper offices. We stormed it right through to the editor's office. The editor's first reaction was not to threaten us with the police but to hand round the cigarettes. We refused them. A pity, they were the best Dunhill. He spoke to each one of us to establish our nationality. After a lengthy discussion he promised to print an apology in the next edition of the paper. Earlier he

had tried to raise the wrath of the few Irish there by mentioning the Black & Tans and 'how that must have upset you.' But we weren't taking the bait. Surely he couldn't have wanted his office wrecked with him and his staff duffed up. The apology was printed with the acknowledgement that it was a mixed site of UK workers, the Irish and a few West Indians. (The West Indians did the right thing by their fellow workers but at the same making it clear they were over here to make money and not to strike)

We proceed to demonstrate through the streets of the mostly wealthy, demonstrated outside the Ritz and any other top hotel we could find like the Waldorf. Banged our way through the City of London and shouted into the corridors of the Stock Exchange and Lloyds the Insurers.

There was a lot of media interest with cameras flashing everywhere but very little of it appeared in the London daily papers or mentioned on radio or on the then black-and-white TV. We sent speakers to various other building sites, to industrial complexes and as far away as Vauxhall, the car makers, in Luton. The old BBC at Shepherd's Bush had its workshops infiltrated by just mentioning the word *union* to the security men, who seemed pleased to see us.

During that time in 1956 we had no industrial clothing, boots or helmets. Our working conditions were atrocious with dry lavatories and damp huts to hang our clothes up in, when there should have been heated drying huts. The works canteen had rough benches and no tables. A contract caterer and his wife produced nothing but cheap meat sausages and rolls and weak tea for heavy manual workers. A half hour lunch break wasn't paid for by the company. There were two strict 10 minute tea breaks during the day. But with the long queues you rarely had the chance to eat or drink properly, especially if this was your 10 am break and also your breakfast break you had missed because you had slept in.

This was the City of London and full of well-dressed office workers. We were generally a rag-a-muffin crowd with dirty overalls, concrete encrusted hair, broken down shoes and stinking of shutter oil with mostly blackened nails and dirty paws.

There were no proper washing facilities on site except a few buckets of cold water for hundreds of men for hand-washing. You bought your own donkey coats which weren't cheap considering the wages. The English lads seemed more put out by the conditions. They usually liked to dress up when going home so as not to be recognised

as manual workers. But it was no place to bring in a decent overcoat or raincoat, good shoes or trousers. We were young single men mostly and at lunch time we would stand outside to watch the girls pass. But what girl was going to be bothered with us.

The strike was over after 13 weeks. We had won, won for the man with the broken back who was now waiting for compensation and a wheelchair. But our wretched conditions continued. It was the norm on all building sites. The idea was this was a tough job so what did you expect, gloves? Now there was overtime to do in order to catch up with the work missed through the strike- an extra two hours at night and all day Saturday.

During the strike young single men, not entitled to National Assistance (long before Universal Credits) had lost their bedsits and had landed in homeless hostels or in *the spike* at Covent Gardens, a shared dormitory of mostly *jake* drinkers. (white spirit and milk). The married men with children were entitled to something from the National Assistance Board (NAB) though that didn't amount to much. It was a case of selling some furniture and trying to borrow from relatives, who had very little. Halfway through the week the food would run out and it was then flour mixed with water and fried. Money had to be put aside for dried milk if there was a baby in the family. The 1950s was a decade of little money with simple things like oil heaters having to be purchased on hire purchase (one shilling and sixpence a week). There was no money for tube or bus fares during the strike. We walked to the picket line from all over London. That trip to the Vauxhall car factory in Luton to explain our case was hitchhiking job.

When the site settled down to routine work, and being still in my early twenties I decided to take a few days off with the overtime money I had saved and take my wife and baby daughter down to Southend for the sea air. On returning to the site I was instantly dismissed. The works committee called a meeting for possible strike action.

We had just been back working for six weeks so I decided to leave. Ever afterwards I heard that the sniping was still going on in trying to pick off the more militant workers.

I then lost personal touch with Brian, having moved into a different industry, the electrical trade in the film industry at Shepperton. A lot more glamorous than a building site. Then the MIGs struck (Militant Industrial Group) a Trotskyites outfit who usually called strikes without

a vote. Andy O'Neill, from Dublin, an Electrical Trade Union rep then got instructions from the CPGB industrial dept to cross the MIG picket line across one of the studios. That we did along with a number of others and broke the strike. It wasn't a good feeling but on the building sites nothing moved without an out and out vote.

I read a few things about Brian as he become more and more left. He was now out of the CPGB and was a member of the Trotskyite group The Club who were active in the Labour Party. He quickly became the group's secretary, and in 1958 wrote his first work *Socialists and the Trade Unions*. He was now working on the site of the Shell Centre, a 27 storey building being built for the oil company by McAlpine. It was on the South Bank in London, on part of the site once used by the Festival of Britain in 1951. It was to be the highest building in the UK and had more office space than any building in Europe.

He was soon fired for his trade union activities at which the shop stewards' committee called a strike. He was given the full support of The Club. His brother Brendan, who had a play in production in London at the time, joined him on the picket line. Brian was arrested during a scuffle and jailed once more. The official union, the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers opposed the strike. This, combined with Behan's opposition to the Labour Party, convinced The Club to leave and reconstitute the organisation as the Socialist Labour League (SLL). Behan then became uneasy about the SLL leader Gerry Healy's control of the organisation. He was concerned that Healy was reluctant to cut ties with the Labour Party. In May 1960 he was expelled from the group with a few supporters. Behan then formed a short-lived *Workers Party*, which published the equally short-lived *Worker's Voice*. That journal was so far to the left it read like a fantasy on the then social democratic society.

By 1964 he had been forced to give up building work because of an arm injury. He moved out of London to live on a boat in Shoreham-by-Sea. In 1972 he took part in a swearing match at the British Museum to mark the publication of Robert Graves' *Lars Porsena, or the Future of Swearing and Improper Language*. He was now at Sussex University studying history and English. Later he studied teaching, before, in 1973, becoming a lecturer in media studies at the London College of Printing.

He published *Breast Expanded*, about the life of his family. Productions of a couple of plays followed at the Tricycle Theatre, Kilburn, London, in which he savages the country of his birth. This makes for a sharp protest by the Irish community. His reaction is: 'Frig them, the rosary-bead-chewing Neanderthals!'

Next he turns up in Brighton and is now into nudism. I watch him on TV being introduced to an interviewer by a local race-track bookmaker as the brother of Brendan Behan. Brian gives a disappointed nod. A newspaper later gives him an interview in which he says he drinks seawater. He recommends it *for cancer of the arse*. It's unclear if this is what he has as an ailment.

But he seems to be surviving okay when he says, a few years later on TV he would marry Margaret Thatcher if he were free. Then on daytime TV, during an Esther Rantzen programme, he is talking in support of his Anti-Marriage group, while his wife looks on.

I read in 2010 that Buckersbury House, we had sacrificed so much over, was to be demolished. Eventually, after months, I got the tube to Cannon Street and walked to Walbrook a short distance away. The 14 storey building was already demolished to its foundations. Archaeologists were having another look to find some more Roman artefacts from the Temple of Mithras in the Londonium days of 240 AD. And I believe they did find many more.

The demolition workers, in the meantime clothed in protective clothing, helmets, gloves and reflective jackets, were still clearing up. Later the £1 billion European headquarters □ twin buildings for Bloomberg, the US media group for Information and Technology, was built on the site. It opened on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October, 2017. Bloomberg's slogan is: 'We Are The Central Nervous System of Global Finance.'

Shamefully we now learn that Saddam's torture chambers reopened under new management, U.S. management.

Edward Kennedy

Saddam Hussein's trial would not be public since he could name countries and persons whom he gave money.

Iyad Allawi

## And So To War

by Martin Dolphin

British foreign policy, including military intervention in the world, is based on Britain's understanding of its own strategic interests and is rarely if ever affected by any humanitarian considerations. The idea that is being put to the British public, that Theresa May bombed Syrian chemical weapon production facilities because she had to assert humanitarian values, is nonsensical. A British Prime Minister will not base her foreign policy on the death of a few Arab women and children. The idea is naïve at best. If Theresa May cared about women and children, she would have done something a long time ago about The Yemen and Israel.

So if Theresa May is not concerned with dead women and children why then did she advocate and participate in a missile strike against Syria. Certainly any explanation must be in terms of Britain's strategic interests.

Two explanations come to mind.

The first concerns itself with the British desire to show unity with their main ally in foreign policy ventures, the US. Donald Trump had announced in a tweet that he was going to bomb Assad's forces in retaliation for a supposed chemical weapon attack. Once tweeted it had to happen otherwise the US lost face. Britain and France, as US allies, therefore dutifully claimed that the chemical attack had occurred and stated that a red line had been crossed and so a missile attack was justified and required. Britain and France did all this because they felt that their main ally, the US, had to be supported. But actually Britain and France would have preferred if Trump had not tweeted his determination to attack and had instead waited for the emergence of any evidence through an OPCHEMICAL WEAPON investigation.

It is not impossible that this is the explanation. Did Trump consult with anyone else before he sent his tweet? Who knows?

However a second and possibly more likely explanation comes to mind. As the war of the Assad government against those attempting to overthrow the Syrian government comes to an end with victory for Assad, Britain is desperately searching for ways to prevent that outcome.

In Ghouta, Assad was about to rid

Damascus of the last opponents of the Syrian government and effectively establish control over all Syrian towns and the vast majority of the Syrian population. Britain decided that one last attempt was worth pursuing to prevent that happening. Reports of a chemical weapons attack in Ghouta presented an opportunity. (Subsequent reports by Report Fisk, among others, support the view that this attack never occurred but was staged by anti-Assad groups.)

Trump is then made aware of this alleged attack and takes the bait. He tweets his determination to address this crossing of a red line – in the form of the supposed use of chemical weapon s.

The initial response to the supposed attack in Ghouta was that Assad was a monster and that Russia and Iran were almost as bad. The ground was being laid for an attack on Syrian, Russian and Iranian military assets in Syria. Initially the plan was to attack not merely Assad's potential chemical weapon production facilities but also Assad's military assets in the form of airfields and army. Essentially the situation was being set up for a Libyan type intervention with the final aim of regime change.

This understanding of events is supported by a reading of the foreign policy recommendations made by Dr Lina Khatib, Head of the Middle East and North Africa Programme at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (more commonly referred to as Chatham House). In an article in the Guardian on 15<sup>th</sup> April Dr Khatib stated:

*“What works in favour of the US is that its key allies – the UK, France and Saudi Arabia – are all aligned. This gives it a unique opportunity to engage in a sustained, targeted campaign against Assad's military assets that has wide international endorsement.”*

A crucial assumption in this line of reasoning is that Russia would not dare to oppose the combined weight of a US, French and British alliance. Who would dare oppose such a strong military alliance?

If this was the plan, the US, France and Britain miscalculated on the Russian reaction. Russia did not back down. They sent a very clear message to the West that an attack on Assad's military

assets would be met with an attack on the military equipment launching those attacks whether they were ships or airfields. Russia warned that this represented a significant escalation in the level of the war being fought and it was not clear how this would develop. The clear implication was that a nuclear war might not be avoided.

And the West blinked. Or perhaps it would be more correct to say that Western politicians blinked. I say Western politicians because I suspect the Western military would have been very wary of backing Russia into this impasse and would have also been very clear that there would have been no winners in a nuclear war with Russia.

It is likely that it was made very clear to Theresa May that if she did what she was initially proposing – to degrade Assad's military assets – she was going down a path that could result in a full scale confrontation with Russia.

But the West had painted itself into a corner by so rapidly committing to a military response and needed some sort of attack on Assad however pointless to avoid losing face. A very limited and ineffective attack was made and we had the bizarre situation of seeing May having to announce that the attacks were emphatically not an attempt at regime change, were emphatically not an attempt to influence the war in Syria but were simply a statement by the international community that you were not allowed to kill people with chemical weapons.

In the past the West had announced 'Red Lines'. If a 'Red Line' was crossed then the West claimed for itself the right to intervene without UN approval. The main red line was the use of chemical weapons. Now, post Ghouta, Russia has very clearly announced its own red lines. Any missile attack by a foreign power on Syria that damages Russian, Syrian or Iranian military assets will likely be met with a Russian military response.

So the West managed to save a little face. But Russia has made it clear it is prepared to go into a full confrontation with a combined US, British and French military force. That is surely a change in the game.

# Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

## Policeless policing?

“A shift in Britain’s drugs market [is] one cause of a nationwide increase in violent crime.

“Local dealers once controlled the drugs market in most towns. They would go to a city about once a month to buy drugs from wholesalers. In the early 2000s, London’s kingpins spotted an opportunity to cut out these dealers by recruiting their own couriers to sell crack cocaine and heroin directly to provincial consumers. Coppers call this new business model ‘county lines’, after the mobile numbers that faraway clients use to place orders. Crime bosses in Liverpool and Manchester began to copy their London peers...

“A new report by the Home Office links this shift to big rises in some types of violence. Crime has been falling for years but homicide, gun crime and, in particular, knife crime have gone up since 2014. Although knife offences are still most common in cities, above all London, the biggest rises have been in nearby counties... The share of murders where the victim or suspect was linked to drugs rose from 50% to 57% in the latest two years for which figures are available. Two-thirds of police forces say county-lines dealers in their area carry knives; others point to related acid attacks. Turf wars fuel violence, as does the need to enforce discipline over couriers.”<sup>1</sup>

But it does not help that the Tories stick to their anti-state obsession even as it visibly fails globally. They don’t just cut welfare and the NHS: they also cut the military and police. The military no longer do anything I see as useful. But less police obviously makes life easier for criminals,

There is skepticism about Amber Rudd’s claim that she never saw a leaked Home Office violent crime report.<sup>2</sup> See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil: do nothing at all about evil? The lady is fully occupied by the urgent matter of flying pigs?

1 <https://www.economist.com/news/britain/21740415-city-gangs-have-expanded-nearby-counties-leading-turf-wars-unexpected-places-shift>

2 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/apr/09/amber-rudd-home-office-violent-crime-report-leaked>

This same lady somehow managed to overlook that her department *first* destroyed documents that could prove the legal status of 1950s West Indian arrivals,<sup>3</sup> and *then* harassed them for no longer having proof of their legal status.

*[This was written before Rudd’s resignation.]*

Meantime Labour has shed its former distaste for law enforcement. And could go further: “Social engineering has a terrible reputation... Nevertheless, it can have positive results. Consider Iceland.

“In the early 1990s, the country had a problem: its young people were abusing drugs and alcohol, and becoming a social menace. When the authorities consulted addiction expert Harvey Milkman at the Metropolitan State University of Denver, Colorado, he proposed a seemingly simple solution. They should give teens the high they craved in a healthier form – sports.

“It sounded promising, on paper. The challenge was to get the kids to comply. A night-time curfew was imposed on 13 to 16-year-olds, and the state invested in sports, dance and arts programmes. Meanwhile, teachers, parents, journalists and politicians all took part in a concerted campaign to enforce a new social norm: excessive use of drugs and alcohol was no longer acceptable, and participation in sport and arts programmes was the expected standard.

“It worked. By 1998, substance abuse was in decline, and today the campaign is regarded as an unqualified success. The curfew is still in place. ‘Everybody’s proud of it,’ says Milkman. Icelanders even credit the new norm with contributing to their victory over England in the 2016 European football championship.”<sup>4</sup>

## Windrush Generation –

### “We Don’t Take Truth for an Answer”

Everyone who arrived from the West Indies in the 1950s came at the specific invitation of the British government. Including Enoch Powell, who was not at

3 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/apr/17/home-office-destroyed-windrush-landing-cards-says-ex-staffer>

4 <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg23731720-500-culture-clash-why-are-some-societies-strict-and-others-lax/>

all bothered by large numbers of black nurses arriving later on when he was Health Minister (1960–63).

But when trouble arose in the 1960s, it was the Tories who toyed with the idea of driving out these troublesome non-whites. It was officially ‘voluntary repatriation’ – but since no one had ever been *prevented* from leaving, it made no sense except as a cover for harassment.

“Smethwick’s Conservative MP, Peter Griffiths, had been elected in the previous year’s general election on the slogan ‘If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour.’

“The slogan helped buck national voting trends in 1964. Griffiths refused to disown it: ‘I would not condemn any man who said that,’ he told the *Times* during his election campaign. ‘I regard it as a manifestation of popular feeling.’”<sup>5</sup>

Labour did limit Commonwealth immigration, which might otherwise have brought tens of millions more seeking a better life. Would have caused a general breakdown. But Labour also made real and serious efforts to root out racism against non-whites already settled here. This distinction has been missed by many black people, who often decide it is not worth voting.

Fast-forward to the 2010s. Theresa May as Home Secretary pushed what was functionally a White Racist campaign, though technically it was against Illegal Immigrants, some of them East European. We don’t of course know what she knew or what she intended. But if she’s not capable of finding out what’s going on in her own department, that makes her even less fit than if she’s a covert White Racist. There are always people who report oddities to senior management, sometimes idealistically and sometimes maliciously, but very reliably. Harassment had been happening for years.<sup>6</sup>

And then, remarkably enough, the

5 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/15/britains-most-racist-election-smethwick-50-years-on>

6 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/apr/20/its-inhumane-the-windrush-victims-who-have-lost-jobs-homes-and-loved-ones>

scandal goes public just when the Commonwealth is debating if Prince Charles will succeed as its head when the Queen dies. The Queen broke protocol by arguing for it. She may think of it as part of a royal legacy she inherited from her much-loved father, and hopes to pass on to her heirs. Regardless, it was agreed. And an end to the harassment of elderly non-whites who arrived in the Windrush generation was promised.

Promised. Whether it will be delivered remains to be seen. I'd expect calls for compensation to mostly fail.

But Labour should start targeting non-whites, who seldom vote Tory but often fail to vote. Tell them of the Tory MP who backed the slogan '**If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour.**' Say yes, this is indeed the case. Or harmoniously mixed-race neighbourhoods, rather – that has mostly been the reality, despite Tory nihilism.

### **Is This the Facebook that Shipped A Thousand Lies?**

I joined Facebook, because my brother and his family were already on it. And found many other useful things, including intelligent political comment from a US site called Vox.<sup>7</sup> And never used it for anything that I'd mind the whole world knowing about – it was obviously open to anyone.

For anything private, I would use e-mail. For anything secret, I would not use the internet at all. Nor computers. I don't personally have any significant secrets, but back in 2000 I tried to warn others: "Just you, your trusted friends and a whole gaggle of police spies. That's how 'libertarian' the new technology of the Internet actually is."<sup>8</sup>

Many who once forecast Liberation by Internet now admit that they were wrong. People are also noticing how the idealistic notion of Free Data is corrupted when it depends on advertising. If you are not the customer, you are the product.

My solution? Make Facebook a paid service. Or make it two-tier, as some sites including the photo-sharing *Flickr* choose to be. You can join for free, but get more power if you pay. For customers, rock-solid guarantees of privacy. An end to harassment by advertisers:

"Every time you open your phone or your computer, your brain is walking onto a battleground. The aggressors are the architects of your digital world, and their  
7 <https://www.facebook.com/pg/Vox/posts/>  
8 <https://gwydionwilliams.com/46-globalisation/the-web-is-always-insecure/>

weapons are the apps, news feeds, and notifications in your field of view every time you look at a screen.

"They are all attempting to capture your most scarce resource—your attention—and take it hostage for money. Your captive attention is worth billions to them in advertising and subscription revenue."<sup>9</sup>

1960s radicals had issues with the state. Believed the fantasy that the state was not needed. Delivered themselves into the hands of greedy amoral commercial outfits. Are baffled that their nice little idealistic schemes get taken over or swept aside by the power of money.

### **From Technocrat to Cashocrats**

Many younger people blame the world's imperfections on the Baby Boomer generation, rather than a greedy amoral More-than-Millionaire class. I can't prove it, but I suspect they've been fed this line, along with many other diversions. But it's true that a lot of Baby Boomers became hostile to the Welfare State system that had given them the good life. Most voted Tory in 2017, when Labour under Corbyn wanted to give the next generation the same benefits that the Baby Boomers had grown up with.<sup>10</sup> Only 27%, including myself, voted Labour.

The Baby Boomers also had things to rebel against. The system they grew up within was technocratic – it wanted the world run by a bunch of remote experts. And wanted everyone to be conformists, with harassment of those who chose to be harmlessly different. Naturally there was a strong counter-reaction that created freedoms that young people fail now to recognise as major gains.

But the ideology of the radicals was incomplete. They had the nice notion that children could gently 'unfold themselves' rather than needing to be moulded. Sadly, this was not true. What was true was that the moulding could be done gently and with the child's cooperation, if done cleverly and with love.

Britain's Eleven-plus – abolished 1976 – was an evil in the old system. It selected the one-quarter of the population that would get a superior education and might go on to university. My father once called it a system that assumed that the working class did not need to be educated. And Chris Winch has written about the failure to provide Technical Education to teach  
9 <https://medium.com/@tobiasrose/the-enemy-in-our-feeds-e86511488de>  
10 <https://gwydionmw.quora.com/British-Tories-rely-on-the-Old-and-the-Uneducated>

visibly useful skills, rather than giving the discards an inferior version of academic education.

I have personal feeling on this: I failed and should have been shunted off as a discard. My IQ showed I was at the top levels: I later became a Mensan. Members qualify with a measured IQ of at least 131,<sup>11</sup> though above 120 it may not mean much. Richard Feynman, genius and Nobel Prize winner, liked to tell of how he only scored 125 on one test.<sup>12</sup>

Why was I judged unsuitable? Exam results showed I was not letting myself be processed into a High-Level Standardised Individualist. I would have been denied a conventional education, except my father could afford private education and my elder brother did brilliantly in his exams. I was let into the grammar-school system. Eventually to university. It takes a very rare combination of events to make anyone a serious thinker without at least some time at University.

Thanks to fee-paying education, many other Eleven-plus failures avoided being discarded. Some then achieved the highest academic distinctions. Myself, I didn't get good exam results at any level. But I reckon I've done some good thinking.

To loop back to the earlier matter of internet data. I've had some personal e-mail harassment, along with generic junk like a recent offer from 'Miss Zenab Warlord Ibrahim'. I find this positive: I am being noticed. But some curious messages denounced me for wasting the money my father paid getting me round the Eleven-plus roadblock. *I never bothered to put my time at a fee-paying school on Facebook*, or any other electronic source. And when I googled for myself, I found nothing much about myself. So how did they know?

The person or persons identified my education as 'Public School' – a curious British term that arises from a long-abolished sector of Private Schools not subject to any outside scrutiny. Parliament in the 1860s successfully asserted its right to oversee of Eton, Harrow, and other noted fee-paying schools.<sup>13</sup> For a time there were three sectors for educating teenagers – Public, Private and State. But there was also a distinct growth of 'Prep Schools', mostly for 8-to

11 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mensa\\_International#Membership\\_requirement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mensa_International#Membership_requirement)

12 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/quora/2016/11/08/richard-feynmans-iq-score-was-only-125-and-he-loved-joking-about-it/#18d6e8162c42>

13 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public\\_school\\_\(United\\_Kingdom\)#Origins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_school_(United_Kingdom)#Origins)

13-year-olds and intended to feed into the Public Schools. A Briton should know the difference – definitely anyone in MI5, who are *actually* political police despite pretending to be just about illegal and terrorist activities. It might have been US intelligence. None of it bothers me much.

To round off, Manus O’Riordan kindly agreed that I could publicise things that happened to him and to his father, a noted Irish Communist who fought in the Spanish Civil War:

“My views are already an open book. My phone was tapped on an ongoing basis from the 70s, whether as a B&ICO or DSP. I also took that for granted from childhood re my CPI parents. On one occasion, when a magazine called ‘*Bulgaria Today*’ arrived for my father, inside the SEALED envelope there was also a copy of ‘*The Garda Review*’!”

‘Garda’ is the official name of the police in the Irish Republic, where police of any sort have a low reputation.

### China – Trade Insults, Not Goods?

“The US ‘blame game’ with China is misplaced. Instead it should re-examine its reliance on a laissez faire economy with neither plan nor reason. Its resort to tariffs will increase costs without raising income and improving innovation.

“Current US protectionism began ‘still born’. The White House has already downgraded its tariff which targeted competitors. Moreover its \$60-billion-dollar tariff on China affects less than 3% of its exports.

“Instead of seeking to blame outside competitors like China it would be wiser to learn from its experience and absorb its technological advances and its strategic investments in infrastructure and domestic consumption. Until the US reduces its military spending by two thirds, and subordinates its finance sector to industry and domestic households it will continue to fall behind China.”<sup>14</sup>

China meantime seems ready to fight.<sup>15</sup> And may have figured that Trump is a blusterer with very little ‘True Grit’. China strengthens itself, and works to remove inequalities:

“China’s manufacturing hubs of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Guangdong will work with the rust belt northeast provinces of Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang to help rejuvenate their economies, the country’s state planner said on Friday.

“In detailed implementation plans published on its website, the National Development and Reform Commission called on eastern China’s Jiangsu in the prosperous Yangtze River Delta to boost cooperation and share resources with struggling Liaoning as part of China’s latest efforts to revive the struggling ‘old industrial bases’ of the northeast.

“Meanwhile, Zhejiang will take on Jilin province as an economic partner and Guangdong will provide support to Heilongjiang.”<sup>16</sup>

The provinces are in Northeast China. What the West calls Manchuria, but Chinese official documents always avoid this name. Understandably: Manchuria was a puppet state under Japanese occupation in the 1930s and it is not forgotten. It was also industrialised by Japan, and had a lot more growth under Mao. Has slid, but has a lot of potential.

As the Arctic melts, the sea-route over the top of Asia becomes a useful link from China to Europe and the eastern USA. A boost

14 <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/49130.htm>. Or as a PDF at <https://petras.lahaine.org/trumps-protectionism-a-great-leap-backward/>

15 <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2138763/china-has-more-weapons-use-against-us-trade-war>

16 <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/economy/article/2139610/china-gets-richer-provinces-help-revive-rust-belt-economies>

for ports and regional production in the north-east.

### Snippets

#### Korea

I don’t think it an accident that the Korean War never technically ended. It leaves the USA free to resume the war if a good opportunity should ever occur.

Chiang Kai-shek’s threats to retake Mainland China from his exile in Taiwan are nowadays seen as ridiculous, if they are remembered at all. But with US backing, it would not have been ridiculous. In the end Nixon, having worked up much of the original hysteria against Red China, had the good sense to make peace in the early 1970s. Ended the absurdity of Taiwan’s tiny government having China’s seat at the United Nations.

Now we have a South Korean president who would like to make peace. Trump seems ready to allow it. Like Nixon, Trump has no significant enemies to the right of him. He can make concessions that would be denounced as treason and betrayal if made by Obama, or even Bush Junior.

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#### Wasteful Wars

Trump recently claimed that the USA had wasted \$7 trillion in the Middle Eastern wars.

The liberal *Washington Post* reassured its readers that the waste was a mere \$3,600,000,000,000 dollars.<sup>17</sup> Plus millions of Arab and Muslim lives, but who in the USA would care?

The same money might easily have been wasted on free medical care for every single US citizen, and many foreigners also. Or if given to Russia in the 1990s, Russia would not have suffered drastic poverty. Would not have turned against the West.

Of course, Trump would give it to the rich as further tax cuts. A big cut for those best able to pay is the only solid achievement of his Presidency so far.

But don’t be surprised that US liberals are increasingly despised.

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#### As Honest as a Fox

“I’m a former reality TV star who almost became a conservative pundit. I couldn’t stomach it...”

“I was asked to read a script in which I said I was from a “small town in Pennsylvania.” It wasn’t true — I’m from Pittsburgh. When I mentioned that this description was inaccurate, they told me it didn’t matter as long as people thought I was from a small town. They wanted me to be more ‘relatable.’

“The blonde, naive, virginal Christian character they had cast couldn’t be from a city like Pittsburgh, and MTV wasn’t about to let facts get in the way of a stereotype. So I held my nose and read the script.”<sup>18</sup>

But later regained her personal integrity by refusing to pundit for Fox News. Meantime the BBC is increasingly biased. It is weird that Britons need to watch Russian television to learn about things their government does not wish them to know: but it is so. The BBC was once a national asset, respected for its fairness. With typical short-termism, the Tories wasted this to give themselves a little boost.

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#### Websites

Previous *Newsnotes* at the Labour Affairs website, <http://labouraffairsmagazine.com/past-issues/>. Also <https://longrevolution.wordpress.com/newsnotes-historic/>. I blog occasionally at <https://gwydionmw.quora.com/>.

17 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/02/12/trump-claims-the-u-s-has-spent-7-trillion-in-the-middle-east-it-hasnt/>

18 <https://www.vox.com/first-person/2018/4/17/17247314/conservative-pundit-reality-tv-tomi-lahren-ann-coulter>

# Diary of a Corbyn foot soldier

by Michael Murray

Michael Murray London- a commentary/digest of political and general interest news for busy people.

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

In this issue:

(1) Separating the Lions from the Donkeys in the run-up to the local elections

(2) Some thoughts on the importance of local elections

(1) The Lions and the Donkeys

The May entry in the diary of a Corbyn foot soldier is being written on the eve of the local elections. These are mere days away now as I write. So, this Labour Affairs version of the diary will be brief, in line with Marx's exhortation, in "The Theses on Feuerbach," that: "the point is not to philosophise about the world: the point is to change it."

At the commencement of this campaign the general opinion, backed by the now continuous polling and straw-polling of political opinion, was that Labour was going to build on, and exceed, the achievements of the 2017 General Election. And now? Owen Jones, journalist and Labour activist describes "a determined effort in both the British media and the wider political elite to delegitimise the Labour leadership in particular and the wider left as a whole." Guardian, 19 April, 2018.

The two main thrusts of this attack at the moment are: defence policy issues, Russiaphobia, the related "humanitarian crisis" in Syria (they don't see the humanitarian crises in Yemen or Gaza, of course) - and anti-Semitism. The latter is the more invidious. The leader of the trade union Unite, Len McCluskey, a major financial backer of the Labour Party, called out the use of anti-Semitism within Labour to undermine the Corbynist leadership recently, and the role of an organised anti-Corbyn campaign amongst a body of PLP members.

Not that he denies the existence of anti-Semitism, or that doesn't think it appropriate the party should ignore it, on the contrary. He, like me, just questions the purpose, and timing, of their well-publicised antics. What a time they chose to mount their biggest campaign against Corbyn - ostensibly against anti-Semitism? On the eve of crucial local elections! The last time they made such a big move was on the eve of the 2017 General Election, and it probably cost us the election. And, in the aftermath of the General Election, they tried, unsuccessfully, to hijack the leadership of Labour's Brexit

policy and strategy. But they've been more successful sowing discord with the anti-Semitism issue.

What is likely to be the consequences of their recklessness this time? And will they be held accountable? Not in the foreseeable future, is the answer to the last question: they seem to be on a roll. One thing we know with certainty: if the results are below the expected, Jeremy Corbyn will be blamed. And if they're better than expected he won't be given the credit - at least for long. The pattern has been well and truly established. There's that feeling, again, that many MPs would rather lose the battle than see Corbyn crowned King. This is not how things should be on the eve of a battle as important as next week's elections.

## (2) Some thoughts on the importance of local elections

Ingrid Koehler of the Local Government Information Unit said some time ago: "It's important to remember that many people, including those who don't vote, have regular interactions with local government - far more than with central government. For too long, local government has been treated as the delivery arm of national government. As local devolution progresses, hopefully people will see more reason to make the effort to decide who represents them locally." That was from a BBC report of a couple of years ago.

Things are changing fast. Hackney's 2018 Manifesto is entitled "Building a Fairer, Safer and more Sustainable Hackney." It covers the areas of Health, Education and Training, Housing, Private and Social Enterprise, Employment, Environment, Urban Planning, Policing - even Climate Change. These are presented not as sound bites or slogans, but as spelt out qualitative and quantitatively verifiable commitments. They are driven by central Tory government policies detrimentally affecting all social areas. Phil Glanville, Hackney's Labour Mayor, in a recent update captures this: "One week to go until we show that London has had enough - enough of Brexit. Enough of cruel immigration policies and enough of austerity."

Phil this year has declared as a joint Cooperative Party/Labour Party candidate in his bid for a second term as Mayor of Hackney. There are, in fact, 543 Coop candidates in the forthcoming local elections. An impressive Local Government Conference for the new councillors has been arranged for June 9<sup>th</sup> in the iconic Coin Street Community Centre on London's

Southbank. It includes informational and training sessions in cooperative private and social housing, community based energy coops, and local procurement for building a cooperative social economy from the bottom up. The programme describes this as a "post Carillion" policy direction. Those who remember Carillion will grasp the significance of this major strategic leap in the evolving vision of the future of local government. I should add that Corbyn and McDonnell both have endorsed this development and included it into the Labour Party Manifesto, with the commitment to make it a central plank in their economic programme for a future government.

So, while the Tory strategy is to starve local councils of resources and strip them of power, an equal and opposite reaction has been generated: the realisation of the necessity for greater devolved control and ownership of social and economic resources. And, thus, greater responsibility for the role of locally elected representatives. In the meantime, we live with an ongoing perceived "democratic deficit" at the local political level.

While national turnout in the 2017 General Election was in excess of 66% a good turnout in the forthcoming local elections won't be much more than half that - unless it bucks the established trends. For example, more EU citizens take part in what looks like being their last chance to tell the Government what they think of it. Or the youth vote holds up, which would surprise me. In his study "Do local elections predict the outcome of the next general election?" Prosser wrote: "Although local elections are notionally 'local' the evidence suggests that they at least mirror national electoral fortunes." (University of Manchester, 2016)

So, if asked to predict the result I'd say, the relentless attacks on the Labour leaderships will take its toll on the turnout, in the Tory marginals - and in the hitherto Labour strongholds. I hope I'm proven wrong. In the meantime, under the leadership of journalist Owen Jones, quoted above, and Hackney mayor Phil Glanville, I'll be in Kensington Chelsea borough in this last weekend of the campaign, helping the local Labour candidates oust those responsible for the Grenfell Tower disaster.

One of the many intrinsic values of electioneering is that the foot soldier has the opportunity of getting even, not just being in a permanent state of anger at the inequities of this ill-divided society.

# Paradise Lost

## by Michael Robinson

Each year seems to bring new revelations about off-shore finance and rampant tax avoidance/evasion, by amongst others, multinational companies, celebrities and what are charmingly termed “high net-worth individuals.” These revelations are now so common that they get named for easy identification, much in the manner of annual hurricanes.

In 2016 we had the ‘**Panama Papers**’, involving the leaking of data amounting to millions of documents detailing the dubious tax affairs of the Great and the Good. The sterling work was done by the German newspaper *Suddeutsche Zeitung* in collaboration with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ). A flurry of media activity followed the leaking, with over 100 media groups joining the forensic examination of the papers.

We are often told that Journalism “speaks truth to power”, a phrase appropriated from the American Quaker movement. But to paraphrase Noam Chomsky, ‘you may speak truth to Power, but Power doesn’t have to care.’

And so at the end of 2017 fresh revelations emerged with the publication of the “**Paradise Papers**”, again through investigation by *Suddeutsche Zeitung* and the ICIJ. This leak involved the release of more than 1,400GB of data, containing around 13.4 million documents. The leaked data covers a period of seven decades, from 1950 to 2016, giving a comprehensive picture of the abusive tax practices that have characterised the use of “Offshore Financial Centres” (tax havens).

About 6.8 million of the documents come from Appleby—a law firm founded in Bermuda that helps corporations, financial institutions and ‘high net-worth’ individuals to set up and register companies in offshore jurisdictions. It is the largest player in this market with a register of more than 31,000 US clients, 14,000 UK clients and 12,000 clients in Bermuda (which has a total population of around 60,000).

Gerald Ryle, a journalist with the ICIJ stated – “*This leak is important because it’s the high end of town. People may have dismissed the Mossack Fonseca leaks as they were rogue players who would take any client. Most of the offshore world is not like that at all. Here you have the gold-plated company.*”

### For the few not the many.

Among those reported on by the media were—Prince Charles, who had advocated for climate change agreements that would benefit an offshore financial interest,

Lewis Hamilton who avoided UK import tax on his £16.5m luxury jet, by entering the UK via a short detour and touch down in the nearest tax haven, the Isle of Man.

Apple (again) maintaining its ‘lowest tax possible’ operating model, using the Channel Island of Jersey.

UK millionaires who sold their assets to

offshore companies, and then became “investment advisors” to those companies, charging themselves for their own services and thereby avoiding tax.

Three “stars” (sic) from Mrs Brown’s Boys who diverted more than £2m into an offshore ‘avoidance’ scheme, (“evasion” being illegal).

Somewhat embarrassingly, even the Queen was not immune from scrutiny, with the Duchy of Lancaster, her private estate, having been found to have invested millions offshore in the Cayman Islands and Bermuda between 2004 and 2005. (Nothing illegal Ma’am and no suggestion of it from me. Phew.)

### You too!

Also present amongst the dodgers (my phrase, don’t sue), was the serial dodger Bono, who had invested in a Lithuanian Shopping centre, now under investigation for tax “evasion” (illegal). Amusingly, Ian Anderson, front man for the band Jethro Tull, who partially retired to run a fish farm, was quoted in the Daily Telegraph as saying –

*“Bonio, or whatever his name is, said stashing his cash overseas was just down to smart people he has working for him trying to be sensible. So I take it I’m not smart and sensible. Ah well, nobody’s perfect. I paid tax at 83% in the 70s, and although I was advised to move to Switzerland, I stayed here. I don’t regret it. I’m proud to pay tax at 50%. I think of it as half for me and half for the NHS, schools and all the other things we need to function as a society.”*

### The naming of the ‘shrewd’.

Notwithstanding the public naming of such people, there is something in the carefully contrived use of the euphemistic language that is used to describe such ‘tax practices’ by those in power, which sanitises it and calms the mind. Somehow the ‘sophistication’ of it and the high social standing of those engaged in it, elevates it above things like “corruption” and “cronyism”. Words which are readily understood to provoke the right moral reaction against those so accused. But those strong and emotive words are often reserved only for those Kipling referred to as “lesser breeds without the law” – people like Russian Oligarchs and African leaders like Jacob Zuma.

But the actual **effect** of tax avoidance/evasion/dodging is often just as morally and economically corrosive. Indeed it is estimated that the equivalent of 10% of global GDP is held offshore, with the UK alone losing up to €12.7bn a year to the Exchequer, (or the common weal).

### ‘Balancing the Budget’ – the “conventional wisdom”.

A particular vulnerability and additional problem we have is the slavish attachment to avoiding a government deficit by “balancing the budget”. This presumes that public expenditure must always be in equilibrium with the tax

revenue received. This “conventional wisdom” is actually a discredited dogma from another age, but it was re-introduced under Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, who sought to overthrow the post war consensus that had emerged in favour of a mixed economy. By any measure of economic analysis, the mixed economy in the UK, had been reasonably successful in delivering social and economic progress in the post war years. It worked by utilising, in various proportions according to whether the government was Labour or Conservative – active and confident state intervention, with public borrowing, regulation of the economy and direct provision of public services, operating alongside the role of the market.

The “conventional wisdom” behind the ‘balanced budget’ was best described by **JK Galbraith in his classic work - The Affluent Society (1958)** in the following extracts -

Chapter 2. The concept of the conventional wisdom.

*“In some measure the articulation of the conventional wisdom is a religious rite. It is an act of affirmation, like reading aloud from the Scriptures or going to church.” ....*

*“Through the nineteenth century, liberalism in its classical meaning having become the conventional wisdom, there were solemn warnings of the irreparable damage that would be done by Factory Acts, trade unions, social insurance, and other social legislation.”*

*“The conventional wisdom had never emphasised anything more strongly than the importance of an annually balanced budget.”*

The ‘balanced budget’ was a dogma held in common between Liberals and Conservatives in the USA. In his Presidential acceptance speech in 1932, Roosevelt said – “*Revenue must cover expenditures by one means or another. Any government, like any family, can for a year spend a little more than it earns. But you and I know that a continuation of that habit means the poor-house.*”

Those of us old enough to remember, will know that Margaret Thatcher entered office explaining that “*we can’t spend money we don’t have,*” comparing the running of the economy of a state with that of a household, even appearing on camera washing her dishes in a basin with her marigold gloves on, to reinforce the imagery!

### The Great Depression.

But, returning to the 1930s and Galbraith. The ‘balanced budget’ dogma was about to be challenged by actual events.

*“The shattering circumstance was the Great Depression. This led to a severe reduction in the revenues of the federal government; it also brought increased pressure for a variety of relief and welfare expenditures. A balanced budget meant increasing tax rates and reducing public expenditure.”*

**“Viewed in retrospect, it would be hard to imagine a better design for reducing both the private and public demand for goods, aggravating deflation, increasing unemployment and adding to the general suffering.”** (My emphasis).

One of the US administration’s first steps was to slash public sector pay. But as Galbraith notes, *“circumstances had already triumphed over the conventional wisdom. By the second year of the Hoover Administration the budget was irretrievably out of balance. In the fiscal year ending in 1932, receipts were much less than half of spending. The budget was never balanced during the depression.”*

#### **John Maynard Keynes – to the rescue.**

The explanation for the reason that the heavens did not fall, even though the government were running with an ongoing “deficit” using public borrowing to finance its affairs, and the economy eventually recovered, was outlined in 1936 by **John Maynard Keynes** with the launch of his **General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money**. His understanding that in such moments of crisis, governments **should actively intervene**, by borrowing to invest in the re-growth of the economy and to shore up its fundamental institutions, was then counter-intuitive, but became acknowledged as an empirical fact.

In time “Keynesian principles” started to be implemented and were reflected in the ‘Bretton Woods’ institutions; the World Bank and IMF, established after the second world war. That consensus in the West endured for some time, with President Nixon, an arch Conservative, stating during an economic crisis in 1971, *“I am now a Keynesian in economics.”*

#### **Reverting to Liberalism.**

But the Keynesian consensus didn’t endure and in 2002, not that long after the Thatcher revolution, one of the architects of New Labour, Peter (now Lord) Mandelson wrote an article in the Times declaring *“we are all Thatcherites now.”*

Chasing down the deficit to balance the budget had become re-established as the conventional wisdom. Latterly, the concept of **“deficit denial”** has even been laid against Labour by the right wing press, because Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell, Shadow Chancellor, have started to challenge the conventional wisdom of ongoing austerity budgets.

Thatcher’s massive programme of deregulation and privatisation had been launched so that the free market could work its magic and deliver public services for less. The Private Finance Initiative formally moved the provision of public services off the balance sheet and as an additional benefit, placed the responsibility for service delivery outside of democratic scrutiny and parliamentary accountability. Questions about the cost and quality of services could be answered with the politically useful phrase - “commercial in confidence”. New Labour embraced it with zeal under John Prescott, who even got PFI written into the party’s manifesto in 1992.

#### **An Eye to the truth**

But that which could go wrong, did go wrong, with virtually only Private Eye magazine having the courage and diligence to tirelessly speak up for the public interest. In January this year, the National Audit Office issued (another) scathing report on the private financing of public services, noting that the financing of schools, hospitals etc. had cost billions of pounds more in funding than in using conventional procurement and delivery. This wasn’t much of a revelation to those of us in the trade union movement.

It is worth refreshing the memory as to what New Labour had become, by sharing the following extract from Simon Jenkins’ Guardian column of 21 January 2014, in which he observed -

*“Eight years ago, David Craig’s, Plundering the Public Sector, calculated that 10 years of New Labour had seen £70bn vanish from taxes into management consultancy, PFI and IT fees, to no noticeable public gain. Most Whitehall IT projects had been fiascos, and there is a new one each week. The beneficiaries have been the rich: firms such as KPMG, Deloitte, PwC, Capita, Serco, McKinsey and others. Today’s public accounts committee may howl about waste, but the stable is bare and the horses are over the horizon, laden with gold.”*

#### **Labour’s resurgence?**

The Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership has recently made enemies of such people, but as we might observe, that is no bad thing. Indeed, John McDonnell is to be congratulated for pointing out that private companies have paid out £37bn in dividends to shareholders since 2010. According to research conducted in consultation with the House of Commons Library, in 2017 privatised firms paid out a total of £4.8bn in dividends. The analysis shows that, since 2010 more than £10bn has been received by National Grid shareholders, £6.3bn by BT shareholders, and £5.2bn by investors in Centrica, which owns British Gas.

Commenting on this, John McDonnell said - *“These figures show what could have gone into investment in these public services in order to expand and improve them or keep their charges down.”*

In the House of Commons debate on the **Carillion** crisis on 24 January 2018, Jon Trickett MP, member of Labour’s Shadow Cabinet, referred to a letter issued by the government citing the names of six companies that would take over the public sector contracts that Carillion had been administering, stating -

*“What a catalogue of failure. One of the six companies donated money directly to the Tory party. Two of the firms are known for blacklisting workers. Amazingly, one of the firms is currently under investigation by the Serious Fraud Office for suspected offences of bribery and corruption. Another has previously been caught red-handed mispricing contracts, underestimating their eventual cost. As a consequence, £130 million was wiped*

*off its share value. Another of the companies operates in the Cayman Islands and has been shown to use that location as a way of avoiding tax. Another of the firms is part of a group that has reportedly abused and exploited migrant workers in Qatar. My reaction to all that - I do not know whether it is un-parliamentary - is to use three letters: WTF?*

The Conservative members tried to deflect, stating that (New) Labour had been responsible for such contracts in the past, but Jon Trickett continued -

*“Thirteen of the 20 largest Government contractors have subsidiaries in tax havens. Those companies are happy to take taxpayers’ money and make a profit, but it seems that they are not prepared to pay tax back, which is morally incorrect and should not be happening. In fact, it is a scandal.”*

In an interview in the Independent on 10 November 2017, John McDonnell said - *“The last seven years of austerity has seen working families suffer from stagnant wages, not being able to keep up with prices of items like electricity bills, and underfunded public services - yet billions has gone into the hands of shareholders.”*

**“The next Labour government will call an end to the privatisation of our public sector, and we will look to bring back into public ownership many of the vital services sold off by the Tories, which are undermining the living standards of millions of working households.”**

**“We’re not Cuba, we’re Northern Ireland.”**

The right wing newspapers immediately charged him with “extremism” and even “socialism”. But later in November, on a little off-shore island, radical plans were afoot.

On Wednesday, 29 November 2017 a media statement announced - **“NI Water acquires Kelda Water Services interests in Northern Ireland for £28m.** The following extracts explain why.

*“In a strategic move which brings back into NI Water ownership, all clean water production in Northern Ireland, the company has announced the acquisition of Kelda Water Services’ holdings in four treatment plants that provide almost half of the treated water in the province.”*

**Len O’ Hagan, Chairman of NI Water said:-**

*“This represents a strong fit with NI Water’s strategy to provide clean safe drinking water to our customers and to do so in a way that secures efficiencies for our customers and for the public purse.”*

*“NI Water has paid £28 million to acquire all of the equity in the project from Kelda Water Services’ and will also assume responsibility for associated debt finance. NI Water said the acquisition will allow it to generate value from the project that will feed through to customers by way of reduced water tariffs,*

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# Parliament Notes



Dick Barry

*Sajid Javid, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, opened a debate on anti-Semitism on 17 April. We publish below the speech of his opposite number Andrew Gynne, who spoke on behalf of the Labour party, and those of Labour members Luciana Berger, John Mann and Ruth Smeeth, with a brief comment from Labour's Ian Austin.*

## **Andrew Gynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab)**

I want to begin by addressing the comments made by the Secretary of State. As politicians, we all—and I mean all—have a duty to root out anti-Semitism, but recent events have shown that we in the Labour party need to be better at policing our own borders. The Labour party was formed to change society and to give a voice to the oppressed. Reflecting the existing defects of society can never be enough. It is our responsibility to show that we have zero tolerance of anti-Semitism in the Labour party. There is no place for anti-Semitism in the Labour party, on the left of British politics or in British society at all. End of.

As the Secretary of State said, the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party has adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of anti-Semitism, and we have written our outright opposition to

anti-Semitism into our own party rules. In the light of recent events, however, I acknowledge that much, much more work needs to be done. That includes, among other things, the overdue full implementation of the recommendations of the Chakrabarti report, including a programme of political education to increase awareness and understanding of all forms of anti-Semitism.

No political party has a monopoly on vice or virtue, but we will put our house in order. Let me be clear today that if anyone is denying the reality of anti-Semitism on the left, they are not doing so with the endorsement of the Labour party or its leader. Prejudice against and hatred of Jewish people have no place whatsoever in society, and every one of us has a responsibility to ensure that they are never allowed to fester again.

I welcome the opportunity to debate this important issue today. It is sadly long overdue. My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (John Mann) has sought support from the Government to bring this issue to the House for several years, and I pay tribute to the work he has done in this House over a long time. I also pay tribute to the work of Rabbi Herschel Gluck and the Shomrim volunteers in London. Rarely do those men and women receive the recognition that they deserve for the commitment that they give to

their communities. I also want to pay tribute to the Community Security Trust for its defending of our synagogues and our schools and for its continued work in shining a light on anti-Semitism in the United Kingdom.

## **Ian Austin (Dudley North) (Lab)**

Let me be clear about this: Ken Livingstone claimed that Hitler was a Zionist. That is anti-Semitism, pure and simple. It happened more than two years ago, and there has been ample time to deal with it, so it is a disgrace that it has not been dealt with. Kick him out immediately. It should have been enough when the Community Security Trust, the Holocaust Educational Trust, the Jewish Labour Movement and the Jewish Leadership Council all said that it was enough, but we even had the Chief Rabbi speaking out and still nothing has happened. It is a disgrace. My hon. Friend should stand at the Dispatch Box and tell the leader of the Labour party that Livingstone must be booted out. Boot him out!

## **Andrew Gwynne**

My hon. Friend makes his views very clear. I do not share Mr Livingstone's views, which are abhorrent, and the Labour party will go through the processes that are well applied to each and every member of the Labour party. That needs to be done far more quickly, but it needs to happen as it would for any member.

As we have heard, this year's CST report found that hate incidents have reached a record level in the UK, including a 34% increase in the number of violent anti-Semitic assaults.

In last year's statistics, where it could be determined, 63% of incidents were described as being far right in motivation, 6% were described as being Islamist in motivation, and 30% showed anti-Israel motivation.

The CST reports that 88 incidents targeted Jewish schools, schoolchildren or staff, with 50% of those incidents taking place as Jewish schoolchildren made their journeys to or from school. In one incident, fireworks were thrown at visibly Jewish people in public in November; in another, Jewish schoolchildren were hit, kicked

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*reduce resource DEL budgetary requirements and enable it to consider further efficiencies as to how the project will operate going forward." (My emphasis).*

**NI Water CEO Sara Venning, said:**

*"A strong dedicated local team of approximately 30 staff operates project Alpha and we look forward to working with them even more closely as part of the NI Water group.*

**Welcoming the announcement Mr Peter May Permanent Secretary at the Department for Infrastructure said:-**

*"When the opportunity arose to bring the contract back into Government, the Department, in consultation with NI Water and DoF, carefully considered the value for money against the benefits to be gained. The outgoing Minister indicated that where affordability and value for money were proven, purchase of the contract could proceed. **The completion by NI Water of this transaction will allow them to secure further value to the public purse and will also create an opportunity to free up significant additional operating resource.** (My emphasis). We welcome the initiative taken by the Board at NI Water in pursuing the opportunities created by the acquisition".*

Who knew we could be in the vanguard for a resurgence of Labour values and the rescue of the economy from Neo-liberal dogmatists?

and punched on the bus home, but were ignored by the driver when they tried to get help—the children fled the bus at the next stop but were followed, and found safety only after they entered a kosher shop and asked for help. It is a mark of shame on our society that our Jewish schools need security guards to protect their children.

On social media, as we have heard, anti-Semitism is in plain sight on the most heavily used sites. In January 2018, the World Jewish Congress found a 30% increase in anti-Semitic posts since 2016 and almost twice as many posts denying the holocaust.

But anti-Semitism not only appears as swastikas, brown shirts and jackboots; it also haunts our society as coded language and dog-whistle euphemisms. In the 1930s, the terms “usury”, “money power”, “alien” and “cosmopolitan” were used as coded references to Jewish people. Today, Jewish people in the public eye are marked out as “globalists”, “rootless cosmopolitans” and the “metropolitan London elite”. It runs through conspiracy theories, as holocaust inversion and holocaust denial, in anti-Zionism and in claims of secret plots against our country that are little different from those seen in “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion.”

In 2011, my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich East (Tom Watson), who is now deputy leader of the Labour party, spoke in this House about Fox News propagating disturbing anti-Semitic conspiracy theories about secret plots involving holocaust survivor and businessman George Soros. Those views continue to be broadcast. Only last week, the use of anti-Semitic imagery featuring Soros led to the electoral success of the Fidesz party in Hungary. Thankfully, the importing of those conspiracy theories on to the front pages of UK newspapers generated the outrage that it frankly deserves.

We have seen the debate change since 2016, with triple parentheses to identify individuals being employed as an online dog whistle to single out targets by white nationalists, neo-Nazis, anti-Semites and those who share their views. Each of the three parenthesis represents anti-Semitic claims of Jewish involvement in mass media, mass immigration and global Zionism. These people even developed an app to help them to better co-ordinate and target individuals. Earlier this year, the CST reported that online abuse had fallen slightly from last year, in part due to improvements in the policies adopted by social media companies and better

reporting, but anyone who uses social media can see that this remains a very serious problem.

So I do want the Government to act more strenuously with social media platforms to ensure that these abhorrent views are removed, and removed quickly. As the Secretary of State has rightly said, we need to ensure that rightful critique of Israeli Government policy, which is legitimate—as it is against the Government of any nation state—is distinct from spreading the demonisation of Zionism and of the right of existence of the state of Israel itself—that is not legitimate.

But criticism of the Israeli Government, just like criticism of the British Government, is absolutely crucial, because that is part of our democratic process. Those who cross this distinction have no role to play in the struggle to put an end to anti-Jewish oppression within the United Kingdom, and they have no role to play in the process to establish peace and reconciliation in the middle east.

That peace will only come through engagement and deep mutual recognition between the two peoples—a recognition of Palestinians’ struggle for freedom and human dignity; and of the centuries of attempts by the Jewish people to flee forced conversion, violence and expulsion. Jewish oppression affects all Jews, in all economic classes, and the oppression of Jewish people cannot be ended without transforming social injustice as a whole.

I want to make this clear in my closing remarks: Zionism is not an insult. It is not a catchphrase, a code word for racism or imperialism, or a name for unpleasant things done by Jews. It stands for a huge range of beliefs and believers. When we fail to recognise this, we assist those on the extremes as they use anti-Semitism to cover up the roots of injustice and shift the blame on to those who are most oppressed. On Yom HaShoah last week, families across Britain lit candles for loved ones who were lost in one of the most evil acts in modern memory. Families remembered how almost one third of all Jewish people were targeted and murdered because of their faith. This day is a reminder that we all have a duty to ensure that such an event can never happen again. Words never seem able to capture the bureaucratic and calculated way in which such a raw and hideous act was allowed to happen.

We know that monsters exist in our world, but they are too few to be dangerous on their own. More dangerous are those who are prepared to act without asking

questions. It is our job—the job of all of us in this place—to ensure that questions are asked, that anti-Semitism is called out, and that anti-Semitism is rooted out wherever it exists. There is no place in British society, and in British politics, left or right, for anti-Semitic views—end of.

**Luciana Berger (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op)**

I beg the indulgence of the House to tell my story, which I hope will go some way to explain how anti-Semitism can manifest itself in our country.

I come from a family that is drawn from many corners of the Jewish diaspora: I am of Dutch, Polish, Russian, Lithuanian and Turkish heritage, and I am a mix of both the Ashkenazi and Sephardic traditions. My Dutch family was traced back to the Jews who were expelled from Spain in the 15th century, and in Britain we found our home. While we are small in number, the Jewish community has proudly been a part of British society and has made many great contributions to all aspects of civic life for hundreds of years.

I grew up in multicultural north-west London and went to a Christian school. I had friends of all faiths and none. I had never seen anti-Semitism as a child, but I knew from my own family history what anti-Semitism was. During a debate in 1938, Commander Robert Tatton Bower MP told my great uncle, the hon. Member for Seaham, across the Floor of the House to “go back to Poland”. The most pernicious and haunting examples came from the holocaust. On my mum’s side alone, we know that more than 100 members of her family, aged from four to 83, were sent by the Nazis to their death in the gas chambers of Treblinka, Sobibór, Mauthausen, Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz, for no other reason than that they were Jewish.

I was 19 when I received my first piece of hate mail—it described me as a dirty Zionist pig—and so started my 18-year experience of contending with anti-Semitism. As a university student and activist, I was attacked from all quarters from the far right to the far left. I had members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, an anti-Semitic and homophobic organisation follow me and camp outside my house. I received countless anti-Semitic emails and letters condemning my work as the convenor of the National Union of Students anti-racism campaign. When I was selected as a Labour council candidate in 2009, people publicly challenged how I could possibly represent anyone from the Bengali community because of my faith, and since my selection

and election as the Member of Parliament for Liverpool, Wavertree, I have received a torrent of anti-Semitic abuse.

In total, four people have been convicted since 2013 for the anti-Semitic abuse and harassment they have directed towards me. Three of those were imprisoned; they were of a far right persuasion, including a member of the now proscribed National Action organisation. In the wake of one of those convictions, a far right website in the United States initiated the #filthyjewbitch campaign, which the police said resulted in me receiving over 2,500 violent, pornographic and extreme anti-Semitic messages in just one day alone. There is currently one more person on remand, having made threats to my life because of my faith.

I am fortunate—I have said it publicly, and I will say it in this House—that I have a platform, as an MP, that affords me the opportunity to speak out, and I happen to be pretty resilient. I say that I have spoken out, but it is important to say that I have been able to speak out because I am resilient, but at a later moment my mental health may mean I am not in a place where I have the opportunity to speak out. I am grateful to my family, friends and team of staff, and my constituents and supporters, who serve as a welcome antidote to the bile that gets hurled in my direction. I will not be cowed in using the full force of the law that we have in this country to hold people to account. Having heard victim impact statements read out in court of people who have not been able to speak out—people so negatively impacted that they are now unable to work or to maintain relationships, and who have had their mental health affected—I know that just one instance of racism can have a devastating impact on an individual's life.

I make no apology for holding my own party to a higher standard. Anti-racism is one of our central values, and there was a time not long ago when the left actively confronted anti-Semitism. The work done by the previous Labour Government to move the equality goalposts in this country was one of the reasons why I joined the Labour party in the first place. One anti-Semitic member of the Labour party is one member too many.

Yet, as I said in Parliament Square outside this place—it pains me to say this as the proud parliamentary chair of the Jewish Labour Movement—in 2018, anti-Semitism is now more commonplace, more conspicuous and more corrosive within the Labour party. That is why I

have no words for the people purporting to be both members and supporters of our party and using the hashtag JCforPM who have attacked me in recent weeks for my comments, for speaking at the rally against anti-Semitism, and for questioning the remarks of those endorsing the anti-Semitic mural. They say I should be de-selected, and they have called it all a smear.

There are people who have accused me of having two masters. They have said that I am Tel Aviv's servant, and called me a paid-up Israeli operative. Essentially, this is anti-Semitism of the worst kind, suggesting that I am a traitor to our country. They have called me Judas, a Zionazi and an absolute parasite, and they have told me to get out of this country and go back to Israel.

I am grateful to the Community Security Trust and to the police for their work to keep me and my family safe, and for all that they do for the British Jewish community to keep our Jewish schools and our places of worship safe, but they should not have to do that. When it comes to what needs to be done about it, I know that many colleagues will be putting forward very practical suggestions of what can be done to contend with this very serious issue, but the hurt and anguish of the Jewish community must be understood and must be taken seriously. This is not the time for games or divisive engagement.

For the Government, there is a massive priority to conclude their work urgently, better to protect everyone in this country online from the comments that are made on a daily basis, and just in response to this debate. I urge the Secretary of State to see some of the comments that are already on Twitter, since we have started this engagement.

And my party. My party urgently needs to address this issue publicly and consistently, and we need to expel from our ranks those people who hold these views, including Ken Livingstone.

We have a duty to the next generation. Denial is not an option. Prevarication is not an option. Being a bystander who turns the other way is not an option. The time for action is now. Enough really is enough.

I want to conclude with the eloquent words of the former Chief Rabbi, Dr Jonathan Sacks, who said that “an assault upon Jews is an assault upon difference, and a world that has no room for difference has no room for humanity itself”. [Applause.]

**John Mann (Bassetlaw) (Lab)**

When my family helped to form the

Labour party in Leeds in 1906, they suffered terribly because of that. The Jewish community in Leeds stood alongside them and supported them. That is why 13 years ago I took on the role of chairing the all-party group against anti-Semitism. I did not expect today, when Labour Members stand in solidarity with our Jewish colleagues and with the Jewish community, not just no solidarity but to be targeted by an organisation called Momentum, which has happened to all of us who stood in solidarity. But worse than that, there is explicit targeting of Jewish members of the parliamentary Labour party because they are Jewish. That is what is going on at the moment.

When I took on this voluntary cross-party role, I did not expect my wife to be sent, by a Labour Marxist anti-Semite, a dead bird through the post. I did not expect my son, after an Islamist death threat, to open the door, when he was in the house on his own as a schoolboy, to the bomb squad. I did not expect my wife, in the last few weeks, from a leftist anti-Semite in response to the demonstration, to be threatened with rape. I did not expect my daughter similarly to have to be rung up in the last few weeks by special branch to check out her movements in this country. No, I did not expect any of that.

I will tell you the principles we have operated on, from the very first speech I made on this 13 years ago in this Chamber: every party in this House should look after its own backyard first. I have said that repeatedly on hundreds of occasions since. I have specifically, in private letters to every party in this House, repeatedly challenged anti-Semitism. For years, action was taken, and it was painful action. I am not sure that people in all parties welcomed getting the letters and the discussions that they had with me, but that was the principle that we have operated on, and we have worked cross-party.

I recall that Jewish people used to say when I held meetings, “Is it true that there is a growth in anti-Semitism?” We identified 13 years ago the three forms of anti-Semitism: Islamist anti-Semitism, traditional right anti-Semitism, and the anti-Semitism of the new left. That was all documented and has all been discussed in here. It is not new, and those who say that it is a smear to raise this issue need to publicly apologise and to publicly understand what they are doing, what they are saying and the dangers. It does not end with me and my family. It does not end with Jewish Members of Parliament here.

Where this stuff ends is with what happened in Copenhagen, in Brussels and in France repeatedly, including four weeks ago: people murdered because they are Jewish. That is where this ends, and we know where history takes that. That is the reality now.

It is constant. This weekend in my constituency and last night in my constituency—it is constant. There is explicit anti-Semitism, and then there is the bigger group—the excusers of anti-Semitism, the people who say, “This is something to do with who the leader of the Labour party is and challenging him.” No, it is not—in the 13 years I have been doing this—and what Jewish people say to me now is different from what they said 13 years ago, when they asked, “Is it true that there is growth in anti-Semitism?” Five years ago, Jewish people would come up to me and say, “We are concerned that there is a rise in anti-Semitism.” I am stopped in the street everywhere I go now by Jewish people saying to me, very discreetly, “I am scared.” Young people and old people say, “I am scared.” We see what happened in France, in Belgium and in Copenhagen and we understand why people are scared.

People—young Jewish members—are scared to go to a Labour party meeting with me, because they are fearful that they will be intimidated and threatened and that their identity will be challenged. Any Jewish person is entitled to say that they are, to define themselves as, an anti-Zionist, or a non-Zionist, and I have no right to challenge them. Any Jewish person, as the vast majority do, is entitled to say, “I am a Zionist,” and I have no right to deny them that. Those that do are racists. Just a change in language—in the use of the word “Zionist” as a pejorative insult—by the Labour party would alter the dialogue in this country in a very big way.

We all have a choice in what we do. Stand in solidarity with the Jewish Members of Parliament under attack today. That is the role of parliamentarians.

#### **Ruth Smeeth (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Lab)**

I am devastated that we are discussing this issue in this place. We should never have had to reach a point at which we are discussing one of the oldest hatreds and how it is back in our political discourse as a norm. However, I am proud to be supported by so many of my friends and colleagues on both sides of the House. Specifically, I stand here in awe of the bravery and strength of my hon. Friends the Members for Liverpool, Wavertree (Luciana Berger) and for Liverpool, Riverside (Mrs Ellman). It is their dedication and commitment that inspire and ensure that we stand united against the politics of hate and scapegoating. Today I find myself in the bizarre position of feeling obliged to state for the record that my entry in the Register of Members’ Financial Interests is in fact accurate and that I have not failed to report any additional employment. Specifically, Madam Deputy Speaker, I feel I must inform you that I am not a CIA spy. I am not a Mossad agent, nor am I an MI5 operative.

I can assure people who are occasionally foolish enough to google me—although I would urge Members not to; it can be unpleasant reading—that I work not for the people of Tel Aviv, but for the people of Tunstall. Those are just some of the regular anti-Semitic tropes that have become normal in my world. Let me also make clear—just in case I need to say it—that I am not, and nor have I ever been, a lizard, trans-dimensional or otherwise.

What I am, Madam Deputy Speaker, is a proud trade unionist, a Labour party activist for over 30 years, and a lifelong anti-racist. I also happen to be a British Jew. In three decades of political activism, there has never come a time when those four parts of my identity have produced any form of conflict—until now.

I used to run HOPE not hate, with the wonderful Nick Lowles. I was the Jewish community’s anti-British National party campaign co-ordinator. I first stood at a demo against the National Front when I was 12. I have spent my life campaigning against the politics of hate and extremism. I have witnessed anti-Semitism and racism from the far right—after all, that is what those people do—and, honestly, I had become desensitised to it.

Over the past two years, however, I have experienced something genuinely painful: attacks on my identity from within my own Labour family. I have been the target of a campaign of abuse, attempted bullying and intimidation from people who would dare to tell me that people like me have no place in the party of which I have been a member for over 20 years, and which I am proud to represent on these Benches. My mum was a senior trade union official; my grandad was a blacklisted steelworker who became a miner. I was born into our movement as surely as I was born into my faith. It is a movement that I have worked for, campaigned for and fought for during my entire adult life, so it was truly heart-breaking to find myself in Parliament Square just over three weeks ago, standing shoulder to shoulder with the Jewish community against the poison of anti-Semitism that is engulfing parts of my own party and wider political discourse.

If the House will indulge me, I would like to read out a small sample of what I have received on social media, but before doing so, I have to thank the dedicated team at the CST who have protected me, shielded me from as much of this abuse as possible, and worked with the police on the occasions when abuse became threats. As others have said, they should not be necessary, but personally I would be lost without them. They have also worked their way through the thousands of pieces of anti-Semitic abuse I have received to provide the following greatest hits, although I must warn the House that my fan-base has shown scant regard for appropriate parliamentary language, so I apologise in advance:

“Hang yourself you vile treacherous Zionist Tory filth. You are a cancer of humanity.” “Ruth Smeeth is a Zionist—she has no shame—and trades on the murder of Jews by Hitler—whom the Zionists betrayed.” “Ruth Smeeth must

surely be travelling 1st class to Tel Aviv with all that slush. After all, she’s complicit in trying to bring Corbyn down.” “First job for Jeremy Corbyn tomorrow—expel the Zionist BICOM smear hag bitch Ruth Smeeth from the Party.” “This Ruth Smeeth bitch is Britainophobic, we need to cleanse our nation of these types.” “#JC4PM Deselect Ruth Smeeth ASAP. Poke the pig—get all Zionist child killer scum out of Labour.”

“You are a spy! You are evil, satanic! Leave! #Labour #Corbyn.” “Ruth you are a Zionist plant, I’m ashamed you are in Labour. Better suited to the murderous Knesset! #I Support Ken.” “Your fellow traitor Tony Blair abolished hanging for treason. Your kind need to leave before we bring it back #Smeeth Is Filth.” “The gallows would be a fine and fitting place for this dyke piece of Yid shit to swing from.”

This is merely a snapshot, and the comments are those that I would feel comfortable—if that is the right word—to say in this place. It is a glimpse into the abuse that now seems par for the course for any Jew who has the audacity to participate in this political world.

But this is not the worst of it. There have always been racists and anti-Semites in our country, lurking on the fringes of our society—both left and right—and I dare say there always will be. What is so heartbreaking is the concerted effort in some quarters to downplay the problem. For every comment like those we have just heard, we can find 10 people ready to dismiss it—to cry “Smear”; to say that we are “weaponising” anti-Semitism.

Weaponising anti-Semitism! My family came to this country fleeing the pogroms in the 19th century. Of our relatives who stayed in Europe, none survived. We know what anti-Semitism is; we know where it leads. How dare these people suggest that we would trifle with something so dangerous, so toxic and so formative to our lives and those of our families. How dare they seek to dismiss something so heinous and reduce it to the realm of political point scoring. How dare they, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I am speaking not just for me, but for the young Jewish people I meet across the country who are beginning to fear they do not have a place. These are young people who are braver, tougher and better than I could ever be—the kind of young people who make us feel that our future is in safe hands, but right now they do not feel safe.

There is something more fundamental at stake here than any party’s policy platform or electoral performance: the right of Jewish people to participate in the politics of our country as equals. Last month we heard a plea: enough is enough. I stand here today to say that we will not be bullied out of political engagement, that we are going nowhere, and that we will stand and keep fighting until the evils of anti-Semitism are removed from our society. [Applause.]

# Listening to Italy

by Orecchiette

## Battle Of The Egos

The Italian General Election of 4 March was inconclusive as no single party or group had sufficient seats to form a government.

*M5S* (Five Star Movement) under Luigi De Maio were the largest single party. The Centre Right Coalition was the next group in size and they included *Fi* (*Forza Italia*) led by Silvio Berlusconi and Matteo Salvini's *La Lega*, previously *The Northern League*. The Centre Left Coalition's votes slumped. Matteo Renzi the *Pd* (*Partito Democratico*) leader resigned, and his deputy Maurizio Martina became the leader 'regent' and Party Secretary. Two elements stand out. The collapse of the *Pd*'s vote has resulted in paralysis within the party and Martina stated that he would opt out of responsibility for helping form a government and instead choose the position of opposition. Silvio Berlusconi's vote also slumped so that Salvini became the nominal Centre Right leader.

On 26 April, the time of writing, the parties and groups are still unable to agree a way forward. Italy has two elected houses but remains without a Prime Minister and working government. President Mattarella and the newly elected Presidents of the Lower and Upper Houses have all held talks and mediated, but to no result. The groups and parties are more polarised now than in the post-election period when there was hope that a solution could be found.

President Mattarella held two series of meetings starting with the small party leaders and ending with *M5S*'s Di Maio. Di Maio and the *M5S* refuse to work with Berlusconi because of his conviction for tax fraud; they espouse honesty. Berlusconi is equally sure that he couldn't possibly be number 2 or even 3 to Di Maio, a man 50 years his junior. In a recent quote, sanitised somewhat, he said that he would only employ *M5S* to clean his toilets. But, Salvini as nominal leader of the group should be the person to do business with.

Italy was scandalised by the press conference that the Centre Right gave

after the second round of talks with President Mattarella. Salvini stood between Berlusconi and the other small right-wing party leader Georgia Meloni and delivered his speech. Meloni looked upwards and to the side with obvious extreme dramatic disdain and detachment. Berlusconi marked every Salvini point that he approved of with a loud smack of his finger into his palm. He looked upwards, nodded, shook his head, sighed and visually undermined. Salvini delivered, concluded, gathered his papers and led the way out. Berlusconi then grabbed the microphone and proceeded to contradict Salvini. And this is a coalition.

Di Maio has had discussions with Salvini and initially was optimistic. Finally, Di Maio had to give Salvini an ultimatum to separate himself from Berlusconi so that they could work away from his obvious suffocating pressure. They would have made an odd couple, Di Maio, the younger man, should have been the Prime Minister. How would they have shared power? In spite of Salvini desperately wanting to have a higher level of national leadership, (his campaign slogan was *Salvini Premier*), it failed. Six weeks of talks had resolved nothing.

The *Pd*, the second largest national party, remained resolute about their position as the opposition group. Very latterly, temporary leader Martina has appeared more interested in working with Di Maio. Matteo Renzi, the ex-leader remains opposed and continues, like Berlusconi, to wield influence. The *Pd* have been criticised for withdrawing from active participation when they could have helped at a time of crisis for Italy.

Any resolution rests in the hands of President Mattarella and two events could act as watersheds.

The first was the presidential election of 22 April in mid-Italy's Molise. A small Region, which has been compared to Ohio, USA, as it usually predicts or is a pointer to explain the result of an election. It was a warm holiday weekend and the turn-out was low.

The *Pd* continued their freefall and lost the Presidency to the Centre Right. Berlusconi's *Fi* leaked support but remained the largest party of the Centre Right. Salvini lost a mere fraction of points. Berlusconi was quoted as saying that his presence on the Italian political scene was important for the salvation of democracy in the country.

There was a significant drop in support for *M5S*. Di Maio doesn't have the bombast of the Berlusconi type of leadership and it is necessary to compete loudly. He seems unable to force his way onto the stage with a dramatic presence to indicate that he is doing things and this does appear to be counting against him.

The second is the Presidential election in Friuli-Venezia Giulia on 29 April. The *Pd*'s incumbent Debora Serracchiani is not standing again and the polls suggest that she would have lost her seat to the Centre Right. The last opinion polls (which finish two weeks before all Italian elections) indicated that the Centre Left would lose with 22% to 28% while the Centre Right would win with between 45% and 51%. The *M5S* may poll between 21% and 27% with the votes of 20% of the undecided still to play for, if they bothered to vote.

Clearly President Mattarella can not leave the country in limbo for much longer. The parliamentarian, economist and author Francesco Boccia writing in *Il Fatto Quotidiano* predicted that he would organise a short-term government to take the country into new elections next year. A period of space has been suggested to avoid an identical election result.

Who will he choose? Berlusconi perhaps? On 25 April Berlusconi spoke at Porzûs in Northern Italy during the commemoration of a massacre and the liberation from the Nazis. *Il Fatto Quotidiano* reported him as saying: "All political forces have a duty to be responsible, in language and behaviour." With intended irony *Il Fatto* placed this next to the following headline from the same speech. "People in front of the *M5S* feel like Jews in front of Hitler."