

# Labour Affairs

Incorporating the Labour and Trade Union Review

No. 289 - July / August 2018

Price £2.00 (€ 3.00)

## The NHS's Magic Money Tree

The NHS was set up on 5 July 1948 under the Attlee Labour government, with Aneurin Bevan as Minister for Health. It was strongly opposed by most doctors at the time. The Conservative party voted against the National Health Service Bill 1946 on 21 occasions, including the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Readings. However, it is now firmly established as the archetypal British institution.

Historically, the Conservatives in government and opposition have paid mere lip service to what is widely regarded as the jewel in the crown of Britain's public services. A 'national treasure' is how the NHS is perceived by the British public and echoed by politicians of the left and right. Former Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson once said the NHS was 'the closest thing the English people have to a religion.' But the fine words of Conservative ministers have not, until now, been reflected in concrete action.

The announcement by Theresa May, in a speech at London's Royal Free hospital on 18 June, that the NHS in England will receive an extra £20bn by 2023/24 came like a bolt out the blue. And was a promised timed for a year after the next general election is due, please note. It was just over a year ago during the 2017 general election that she told a nurse, angry at the cap on nurses' wages, "There isn't a magic money tree that we can shake that suddenly provides everything that people want". But with austerity still broadly in place, albeit with some relief for certain sections of workers, including some NHS staff, money has been found to increase NHS funding over the next five years, including the windfall by 2023/24. So what has happened?

With the government in trouble with its rebel Remainers and with progress on the Brexit talks

stalled, Theresa May needed to offer a positive sign to her critics in the Conservative party. Consequently, on 17 June, Downing Street tweeted 'Our long-term plan for the NHS. Funded by the Brexit dividend, with us as a country contributing a bit more.'

Theresa May claimed that once Britain leaves the EU there will be a surplus of money to spend on the NHS; the so-called Brexit dividend. But independent 'Think Tanks' like the Institute for Fiscal Studies, IFS, seriously question this. The IFS argue that "Brexit has reduced rather than increased the funds available for the NHS (and other public services) both in the short and long term." And, in a pre-emptive tweet, Anita Charlesworth, director of research and economics at The Health Foundation, said, "In case talk of Brexit dividend comes up in discussion of NHS funding thought I'd retweet excellent @PJTheEconomist piece explaining in his wonderfully clear way why there is NO Brexit dividend. NHS needs extra funds but it's taxes not Brexit that will have to pay for it."

Britain leaves the EU at the end of March 2019, but there will be a transition period of at least two years during which it will continue to pay £9bn a year to Brussels. During the EU referendum the Leave campaign claimed, falsely, that the £350m a week contribution to the EU could be spent on the NHS. May's boast of a Brexit dividend to help fund the £20bn, equivalent to a little under £400m a week, carries as much conviction as the message on the Leave campaign's bus. To complicate matters further, Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt has said that the planned increase is conditional on the NHS showing it can make more efficiency savings. This seems to suggest that the disastrous reorganisation which took place under the Coalition government of 2010-2016 will have to be at least partially dismantled.

Assuming there will be no Brexit dividend there are only three ways in which extra funds for the NHS can be found: through further cuts in public spending, higher borrowing, or tax increases. All three present the government with a problem. Most departmental budgets have already been cut to the bone, leaving little room for further savings. Borrowing is at a record high and the government's fiscal rules prevent it from taking on more debt. This leaves tax increases, an anathema to Conservative politicians unless they can be introduced under the radar screen in the form of so-called stealth taxes, such as National Insurance contributions. Or if planned increases in income tax allowances and reductions in Corporation tax are deferred.

Tax changes, whatever form they take, will mean the breaking of promises in the Conservative's 2017 general election manifesto.

Since the inception of the NHS in 1948 the average growth in government funding has been 3.7%. This includes average growth of 5.9% under the 13 years of the Blair/Brown government. Over the last eight years of a predominately Conservative government average growth has been 3.3%, which the NHS needs just to stand still. The planned increase in spending in England alone will increase that by a mere 0.1% to 3.4%, lower than the historic average for the UK as a whole. The IFS have said that a 5% real-terms increase is needed to effect real change in the NHS. Furthermore, the planned increase leaves out funding for social care which the Local Government Association has said is essential if the NHS is to work effectively.

The government have recognised the vital link between health and social care. Jeremy Hunt is now the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. What is missing is adequate funding of social care.

An increasing ageing population has heaped pressure on the NHS. Many elderly people are cared for in hospital, when they could be looked after in the community by specialist nurses and even by their families. This would release beds for emergency patients. But extra funding, not forthcoming so far, is needed for this.

Jeremy Corbyn has raised funding of the NHS and social care repeatedly in the House of Commons at Prime Minister's Questions, with Theresa May refusing to provide direct answers. Consequently, Labour was outflanked by her promise of a £20bn increase in NHS funds. Within hours of the announcement Labour quickly revised its plans for the NHS and claimed it would match the Conservative's £20bn and add it to what it had already promised. Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell said a Labour government would increase spending by 5% a year. Labour has set out its costings for funding the spending increase, but nevertheless is under fire for its optimistic forecasts of revenue from savings and taxes.

Theresa May's plans for extra funding for the NHS suggests she understands that the NHS is her party's Achilles heel. In wrongfooting Labour, by pledging extra money for the NHS, she hopes that voters will believe her when she says, as she often does, that the NHS is safe in the hands of a Conservative government. In opposition Labour must continue to challenge this and set out a detailed plan, realistically funded, for the future of the NHS and social care.

Religion is about turning untested belief into unshakable truth through the power of institutions and the passage of time.

*Richard Dawkins*

# Labour Affairs

## Contents

No. 289 - July / Aug 2018 ISSN 2050-6031  
ISSN 0953-3494

The NHS's Magic Money Tree Editorial	1
Review of Stephen Pinker's book 'Enlightenment Now' by Gwydion M. Williams	3
Poems by Wilson John Haire <i>The Sad Sands of Rafah (a sonnet)</i>	8
<i>Another Death Another Shekel</i>	12
<i>Fear</i>	23

## Regular Features

Parliament and World War One by Dick Barry	3
Views from across the Channel by Froggy	7
Diary of a Corbyn foot soldier by Michael Murray	13
Letter from New Zealand. by Fergus O'Raghallaigh	14
Notes on the News by Gwydion M. Williams	9
Parliament Notes by Dick Barry	18
Orecchiette	24

Labour Affairs  
Published by the Ernest Bevin Society  
Editorial Board  
Dick Barry Christopher Winch  
Jack Lane Gwydion Williams

LabourAffairs@virginmedia.com  
Website: <http://labouraffairsmagazine.com/>

Subscription: £20 for one year (10 issues)

Distribution: Dave Fennell  
Editorial Address  
No. 2 Newington Green Mansions  
Green Lanes  
London N16 9BT

# Parliament And World War One

by Dick Barry

## **EMPEROR OF AUSTRIA'S LETTER. 15 April 1918**

**Mr. OUTHWAITE** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether, at the time, a year ago, of the refusal of the British Government to consider peace negotiations, and in particular the proposals of the Kerensky Government, he was aware that President Poincaré was in possession of a letter from the Emperor Karl of Austria stating that he would support, by every means and use all his personal influence with his Allies, the French just claims regarding Alsace-Lorraine, and affirming that the sovereignty of Belgium should be restored, as also that of Serbia with an outlet to the sea provided?

**The SECRETARY of STATE for FOREIGN AFFAIRS (Mr. Balfour)** We have given the most careful consideration in our power to this question and to others on the same subject which appear on the Paper, and have come to the deliberate conclusion that, for the present at least, the public interests would not be served by discussion in this House, whether by way of question and answer or otherwise. I hope, therefore, that hon. Members will not press me further on the matter.

## **EMPEROR OF AUSTRIA. 02 May 1918**

**Mr. PONSONBY** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether the letter from the Emperor of Austria making suggestions for a peace settlement in March, 1917, and the correspondence which followed were submitted to the Prime Minister; whether the Prime Minister informed his colleagues; whether all information as to the negotiations which were being carried on with Austria was withheld from the Governments of Russia, Belgium, and the United States; whether an investigation into these secret negotiations is now being conducted by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the French Chamber; and what opportunity will be afforded to this House to

elicit the facts?

**Mr. HARRIS** I would refer the hon. Member to the reply returned on this subject to the hon. Member for Hanley on 15th April, and to that which the Secretary of State gave yesterday to the hon. Member for the Hexham Division, to which, I am afraid, I can add nothing.

**Mr. PONSONBY** Would the right hon. Gentleman ask the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether, in addition to the declaration of the French Chamber, which he informed the House yesterday would be communicated to this House, he would also give a report of the action of His Majesty's Government towards the negotiations initiated by the Emperor Karl, all of which were communicated to the Prime Minister?

**Mr. HARRIS** I will certainly ask my right hon. Friend.

**Mr. LEES-SMITH** Would the right hon. Gentleman also ask the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether he intends to adhere to the reply to the hon. Member for Hanley, that he will make no statement on this subject, in view of the fact that the letter of the Emperor Charles is only the latest indication that a year ago the Government had the basis of a just and an honourable peace, and that millions of men are dying?

**Mr. OUTHWAITE** Will the right hon. Gentleman ask the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether the Prime Minister settled the matter of peace or war without reference to him, at the cost of a million of lives?

## **EMPEROR OF AUSTRIA'S LETTER. 13 May 1918**

**Mr. LEES-SMITH** asked the Secretary for Foreign Affairs (1) whether the letter of the Emperor

Charles of Austria of 21st March, 1917, containing proposals for peace on the basis of the restoration and compensation of Belgium, the re-establishment of Serbia with an outlet on the Adriatic, and the support of the just claims of France in Alsace-Lorraine, was communicated by the Allies to the Governments of the United States or Belgium or Russia before it was rejected; (2) whether he will make a statement as to the reports that the Emperor Charles of Austria followed up his letter of 31st March, 1917, with a second letter in which he stated that he was convinced that he could induce Germany to make peace provided that the territorial demands of the Allies were restricted to Alsace-Lorraine, and that the Prime Minister of this country was favourably inclined to further negotiations, but that these were rejected on account of the opposition of Italy and France?

**Mr. OUTHWAITE** asked the Secretary for Foreign Affairs (1) whether his attention has been called to the fact that the documents submitted by M. Clemenceau to the committees of the French Parliament in connection with the rejection of the peace proposals made by the Emperor Karl included a letter from M. Poincaré to Prince Sixte in which the President demanded that France should not only have Alsace-Lorraine, but the frontier of 1814, and a guarantee in regard to the left bank of the Rhine; in view of the fact that he has stigmatised as a mare's nest the suggestion that France was making these annexationist claims, will he make a statement on the subject; (2) whether his attention has been called to the fact that the documents communicated to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the

Editorials and older articles at our website,

<http://labouraffairsmagazine.com/>

This also has old issues of Problems magazine.

French Parliament disclose that the Prime Minister at the time of the peace proposals made by the Emperor Karl contended that they should be considered; why, under the circumstances, the Government has sought to create the belief in the public mind that no opportunity for the opening up of negotiations in conformity with British war aims has yet been presented; (3) whether he can state the annexationist claims made by Baron Sonnino which were the main cause of the rejection of the proposal for the opening up of negotiations made by the Emperor Karl; (4) asked the Prime Minister whether his attention has been drawn to the fact that M. Clemenceau has submitted to the Foreign Affairs Committee and to the Army and Navy Committee of the French Parliament the documents relating to the proposals for peace negotiations made by the Emperor Karl of Austria; and will he immediately submit these documents to the House of Commons in open or secret Session?

**Mr. BALFOUR** I have already stated that, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, it is inconsistent with the public interest to discuss this subject by question and answer; but I have also promised to put the House in immediate possession of any official statement issued by the French Government, which is now considering the whole matter, and which is the Government primarily concerned.

**Mr. LEES-SMITH** Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that any official statement issued by the French Government will in any case be published in the newspapers?

**Mr. BALFOUR** If that is so, perhaps the hon. Member will be content.

**Mr. LEES-SMITH** In regard to the first part of the right hon. Gentleman's answer, does he mean to say that the people of this country have no right to any information as to the reasons for a decision which is leading to the loss of millions of lives?

**Mr. BALFOUR** No. What I said was that in my opinion it was inconsistent with the public interest to discuss the subject by question and answer.

**Mr. OUTHWAITE** Can the right hon. Gentleman affirm or deny the statement in the French Press, published in this country, that the Prime Minister supported the proposals made by the Emperor Karl giving a prospect of the opening of peace negotiations?

**Mr. BALFOUR** I say it is inconsistent with the public interest to discuss this by question and answer.

**Mr. OUTHWAITE** Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that this statement has appeared in the French Press on the authority of M. Ribot, the late Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and why should not this country be informed, as the French public are, as to the attitude of the Prime Minister?

**Mr. BALFOUR** The hon. Member says it has appeared in the Press. If it appeared in the public Press that was all that was required.

**Mr. PRINGLE** Can the right hon. Gentleman not make a statement as to this intimation which has appeared also in British newspapers?

**Mr. BALFOUR** I cannot lay down what on some future occasion may be discussed in Debate; but I do say, and say quite distinctly, that I do not think the public interest is served by dealing with this very difficult and delicate matter by question and answer.

**Mr. OUTHWAITE** In regard to Question 20, has the right hon. Gentleman's attention been drawn to the statement made in the French Press and repeated here that the Prime Minister supported the proposal made by the Emperor Karl, and that M. Sonnino opposed it on the ground of not fulfilling the annexationist claims of Italy? Can he say what are these claims which stand in the way of making peace?

**Mr. SPEAKER** That question is covered by the right hon. Gentleman's original answer.

#### EMPEROR OF AUSTRIA'S LETTER. 14 May 1918

**Mr. HOLT** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs if he will communicate the information regarding the Emperor of Austria's letter and the proceedings consequent thereto which was laid before the Foreign Affairs Committee of

the French Chamber, or so much thereof as can be made public, to the House in time for debate on Thursday next?

**Mr. BALFOUR** I have already informed the House that I shall be glad to put the House in possession of anything which the French Government may think it proper to publish on this subject. I cannot, I fear, go further.

**Mr. OUTHWAITE** Has the right hon. Gentleman seen that the French Government has thought it proper to refer these documents to the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Navy and Army Committee, and is he just hushing it up because these documents reveal that the Prime Minister was contending for the making of peace at this juncture whilst this Government is attacking those who say the opportunity has arisen?

**Mr. BALFOUR** The hon. Gentleman is entering into argument on this question. The documents to which he refers were laid, as I understand it, by the French Government before a secret committee. I do not even know what the documents were.

**Mr. OUTHWAITE** Has the right hon. Gentleman not been informed by the French Government that documents relating to the making of peace were submitted to the Foreign Affairs Committee?

**Mr. BALFOUR** It is not the practice of the French Government to tell us what documents they choose to lay before a secret committee of their own Chamber.

**Mr. SNOWDEN** Was not the Foreign Office or the British Foreign Secretary made aware of the negotiations which are now the subject of inquiry in the French Foreign Affairs Committee?

**Mr. D. MASON** Does the right hon. Gentleman not think that it would allay a considerable amount of unrest in this country if he would lay Papers?

**Mr. SNOWDEN** May I have an answer to my question? Is not the British Foreign Office as fully aware of the circumstances connected with these peace offers as the French Government; and, if so, why cannot this House be informed as the French Parliament has been

informed?

**Mr. BALFOUR** I am asked whether I can lay certain documents. I do not know what the documents referred to were.

### HOME SITUATION.

16 May 1918

*Herbert Samuel (6/11/1870-5/2/1963). Elected as Liberal MP for Cleveland in 1902 by-election. Appointed to cabinet by Prime Minister Asquith in 1909, eventually becoming Home Secretary from January to December 1916. Resigned as Home Secretary when Lloyd George replaced Asquith as Prime Minister.*

**Mr SAMUEL** There are some observations which I wish to make on the present political situation in this country, and in this House, and in its bearing to the war position. It is contended that the criticisms which have been directed against certain authorities in the Government indicates a weakening of the determination of those who are responsible for those criticisms to carry the War to a successful issue. It has been suggested in many quarters that the controversy of last Thursday was really an issue for or against the vigorous prosecution of the War. One would be inclined to ignore assertion of that kind, if they did not come from authoritative quarters, and have recently apparently received, at all events, to some extent, the endorsement of so distinguished a statesman as Lord Curzon. There have been criticisms of the Government. They have been mainly on three lines. In the first place, it has been said there have been several defects in their administration of domestic affairs; that the problem of man-power was, in effect, neglected all through the critical year 1917; that there has been a comparative failure, which still continues, in the shipbuilding programme—a most vital matter; that there is frequently conflict and competition between the various Departments of the State; that our expenditure has increased from £2,000,000,000 to £3,000,000,000 per year within a period of eighteen months; that there are prolonged delays in dealing with many of the

problems relating to food control, and other matters.

Those of us who have made these criticisms have gone on to point out what we regard as their cause, and the possible remedy for these defects. We consider that the War Cabinet has assumed a burden of work that is beyond the capacity of any so small a group of men to carry, not through any lack of capacity or application on the part of those Members, but because they have undertaken a burden which is in itself too heavy to bear. Engaged as they are in supervising the whole operations of the War by sea and land, our relations with our Allies and our Dominions, with India, with neutrals, attending, as many of them have to do frequently, international conferences, busy with the immense volume of work that attaches to these large matters that come before them, they have, nevertheless, undertaken to deal with all domestic problems as well—labour problems, Ireland, food, manpower, domestic legislation of every kind. Is it to be wondered at that there is a continual and extreme congestion of business? Only last week we were told, in answer to a question in this House, that there had been submitted to this body the question of whether or not a limited amount of flour should be released for the purpose of making dog biscuits, and, on the same day, we were told that the War Cabinet had not yet given its decision on the matter of whether or not horse-racing should be discontinued. Of course they have not. How could they be expected to divert their attention from these large matters of vital importance to read the papers and come to their conclusions on horse racing or dog biscuits? We have urged that the machinery of government is working badly because it is not complete, that in addition to the War Cabinet you ought to have something in the nature of a Home Cabinet to deal with these comparatively minor matters. Having come to that conclusion, whether right or wrong, I submit it is our duty to state those views to the House, because good administration at home, frugal finance, an effective management

of such problems as shipbuilding and man-power, are essential to the effective prosecution of the War.

The second line of criticism which has developed in recent weeks has relation to Conscription in Ireland. I do not propose to argue that subject now. I have dealt with it before, and I dare say I may have an opportunity of speaking on it again when it comes in concrete and immediate form before the House. We believe the Government, in dealing with this matter, are on the wrong lines, that the course they have taken is not likely to add to the number of our Armies available for service at the front, but is calculated, so far as one can at present foresee, to reduce the numbers available. We hold, more important than that, that it injures profoundly our moral position in the face of the world, and that if the Government adopt in Ireland Austrian methods they will find our moral international position tends to be reduced to something approaching the Austrian level. Above all, the action which they seem likely to take in Ireland does run directly counter to the supreme principle on behalf of which we are waging this War, the necessity that people should be governed according to their own desires. Again we may be right, again we may be wrong; but I submit to hon. Members of all shades of political opinion that if we hold sincerely this view we should be doing less than our duty if we did not take such opportunities as are offered to impress it on this House.

The third line of criticism relates to the relations of the Government to their military and naval advisers. There have been a series of controversies, misunderstandings, explanations, resignations, dismissals, which have given rise to a widespread uneasiness in very many quarters, and not least among military men. On each of these occasions it may well be that the action of the Government was fully justified, and I should be very far indeed from saying that any distinguished general or admiral has a freehold of his office. Of course changes

may often be necessary, and may frequently be very salutary. The fact remains that the way in which these questions have been handled one by one has done something to sap confidence. The matter came prominently before this House a week ago, in consequence of the letter written to the Press by General Maurice. I cannot conceal my own opinion that that letter ought never to have been written, but, having been written, the House of Commons was, I think, bound to take cognisance of it. It is exceedingly unfair and unjust to suggest that in bringing the matter before this House those who did so were actuated by any irresolution with regard to the conduct of the War or any desire to weaken its prosecution. The "Times," which will not be suspected of tendencies of that kind, speaking of this matter, said: That is a challenge, coming from such a quarter, which no Government can afford to ignore or merely to rebut. Unless and until it is impartially investigated and disproved it will profoundly shake the public confidence in every statement made from the Treasury Bench. What is more, it will revive for that period all those mischievous controversies of last winter, which, whatever their merits, were themselves the greatest stumbling-block in our preparations for the German offensive.

The same article further down went on: Least of all can they be settled finally by any ex-parte statement, however apparently convincing, from the Prime Minister himself. Mr. Lloyd George should be under no illusions whatever on that point. He has, we believe, an unanswerable case in his instinctive zeal and pressure for what we have called the Allied point of view. For all we know, he may have an equally unanswerable case against General Maurice's specific charges. But the inevitable restrictions of a speech on military dispositions, the growing public distrust of all official statements (whether by generals or by Ministers).

I will omit some words which are perhaps unduly critical of the Prime Minister— all this makes it hopeless that there should be any end of

this controversy except through an entirely disinterested inquiry.

What occurred? On Tuesday the Government came to the House and declared that an inquiry was desirable. On Thursday they held that any question of an inquiry was something in the nature of treason to the vigorous prosecution of the War. On Tuesday my right hon. Friend told us all that the matter could only be decided by a reference to documents so secret that they could not be disclosed even to a Select Committee of this House. Two days later the House as a whole was asked to judge the matter without any documents before them at all. [HON. MEMBERS: "No!"] We had no opportunity of seeing documents. We were told that there could not be found in this House five righteous men—worse even than the City of Sodom—and yet the whole House was asked to judge the issue in open Debate on a Motion which was declared, although its movers did not intend it, to be a vote of censure, the Government Whips telling in the Lobby.

**The CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER (Mr. Bonar Law)** And the Opposition Whips.

**Mr. SAMUEL** The Opposition Whips told also, but we should have been very glad to have taken them off if you had done the same and left it open to the House. Not only that, but one very large section of the House met in conference on the day previous to the Debate, and decided to support the Government, not only without probing the charges that had been made, but without even waiting to hear what the Government answer might be, and the newspapers on the morning of the Debate declared, quite truly, that the Government majority was assured before any answer had been offered. I have never known a case in which a matter of this gravity and importance has been more unsatisfactorily handled. Those are the three main lines of criticism which have been addressed against the Government in recent weeks. It has been suggested that the Division on Thursday was intended to secure, or might have the effect of securing, the installation in power of a

Government less resolute than the present Government in the prosecution of the War, who would hasten to make peace on such terms as the Germans and Austrians might now be likely to offer us. If that had been the outcome of that Debate or Division, or if that had been likely to become the outcome of that Debate or Division, I can assure the House that not one of us would have made one step towards the Lobby in order to secure such a result. If the outcome of it should be that we should make peace with our present enemies on such lines that they who have been guilty of this great aggression against the peace of the world, which has resulted in deluging Europe with blood and bringing agonies of sorrow to millions of homes—if the outcome of it should be that those powers should not be penalised for this aggression, but should be aggrandised and regarded—if the outcome should be that militarism could claim to be justified by its proofs, then, I say, those who were responsible for such as that would be guilty of the greatest crime. For my own part, I am profoundly convinced that no Government of that kind could be formed in this country at the present time, and, if it could be formed, this House would eject it from office in a week, and, if this House neglected to perform that clear duty, an indignant public opinion would sweep it aside. Is it a service to the country to represent that my right hon. Friend the Member for East Fife and his colleagues and the great central body of Liberalism are careless in these matters, and are willing to make a peace of that character? The Germans are carefully watching what we say and do, and I think it is a grave disservice to our State to give their propaganda material of that character and quite falsely to represent that the only unity which has prevailed and, I say, still prevails, in the country on the essential purposes is now essential purposes is now in danger of disappearing.

# Froggy

## News From Across The Channel



### Railways

Parliament voted the railway reform finally on 14 June. The so-called reformist unions, CFDT and Unsa, called on their members to suspend the strike during the exam period (800,000 young people sat the *baccalauréat* between 18 and 25 June), and they seem to accept the ending of the strike on 28<sup>th</sup> June as programmed. On the other hand, the CGT wants to continue the strike into July and Sud talks on continuing in August.

Macron seems to have won. This was more an ideological fight than one that will reap benefits for business. The opening of the freight service to competition has led to losses and a decrease in the use of rail for goods transport; it remains to be seen if passenger transport will improve.

The union fight will continue anyway, in order to negotiate the new pay and conditions after the civil servant statute is abolished.

### Clemenceau

Macron visited the birthplace and on a separate occasion the grave of George Clemenceau (1841-1929). This is fitting since Clemenceau, as minister of the interior, and ‘first cop of France’ (*premier flic de France*) made his name as a strike-breaker. He earned the nickname of Tiger for his vigour in organising the police service, then he earned the nickname ‘*Père la Victoire*’ (Father Victory) for keeping the war going in 1917, but he was seconded in that endeavour by Pétain. And then he was the one

who wanted punitive measures against Germany after the war. These are three reasons why he has not up to now been adopted as a hero. He said in his last book, while deploring England’s ‘old policy of strife on the Continent’ (aka ‘balance of power policy’):

‘The leader who can fight his corner best is the one who, without empty talk, shows the strongest and most tenacious will.’ This would appeal to Macron.

### Eyes Teeth and Ears

Clemenceau was strongly anti-socialist, but he passed laws limiting work in the mining industry to 8 hours a day. Macron is also concerned with the welfare of the disadvantaged, and he is pushing a law designed to benefit the less well off. Macron as candidate promised that glasses, dental crowns etc. and hearing aids would be 100% refunded, with nothing left for the patient to pay, ‘zero remainder to pay’.

Thanks to the new law, the state health system plus personal insurance will refund 100% of dental and eye care costs (deaf aids in 2021). The directive is that contributions to contributory insurance will not go up as a result of this change in the law.

The reform of the SNCF was not in Macron’s election programme. What was in the programme was a reform of the system of refunds for eye, teeth and hearing, which is now getting under way. Many people did not get their teeth replaced, or buy glasses or hearing aids, because

of the cost involved, say 2000 euros for hearing aids. Macron said in a speech to the *Mutualité* congress on 13 June, talking about the 4,7 million people in France thought to forego dental treatment, and the 2.1 million not seeking hearing aids: “Many of our fellow citizens with simple pathologies are forced to give up the thought of seeking care. That means that our fellow citizens are deprived of the possibility of smiling, seeing, hearing, eating normally sometimes, because of this ‘remainder to pay’ which stops access to treatment.”

This is not a simple reform. The Health system pays for a proportion of health costs; 95% of the population contribute, often through their place of work, to a ‘contributory insurance’, which makes a further refund. These supplementary insurance schemes are administered by ‘mutual’ or other groups, for example there is a teacher’s health insurance mutual. These groups belong to a national association called the *Mutualité française* (to whom Macron was making the speech quoted above). There are a large number of such groups, with varying levels of cover and prices. The government is promising that contributions to contributory insurance will not go up.

So the government negotiated with the insurances companies, to get assurances from them that contributions will not increase, even though insurances schemes will have to pay out more. Macron says the answer will be competition between insurances

companies to bring costs down.

The reform also means that the three professions involved will have to give up, partially, their freedom to charge as they like.

So there is negotiation with dentists, to decide which treatments will be refunded 100%; it seems there will be a three-tier system, with the top tier, top of the range, entirely paid by the patient. The government promises that the two lower tiers will be 'good quality'. Dentists have had directives (e.g., crowns in the back of the mouth will be metal, not ceramic) to keep prices down. In compensation, some operations will cost more (e.g. root canal treatment will go up 20% but still be refunded 100%) so the dentist gets more income.

There was negotiation with opticians and ophthalmologists. Opticians have been invited to provide glasses, thin, anti-scratch and anti-glare, with 17 different frames below 30 Euros.

Negotiations with hearing aid specialists were difficult, and the lowering of costs to patients will be gradual; the price hearing specialists will be allowed to charge will go down, and the refunds will go up over three years.

There will be a mixture of obligations and incentives for these specialists to induce them to meet this new legislation.

Macron pointed out that the market for these treatments will now open wide, with hundreds of thousands of new customers who were previously excluded because of cost now able to seek treatment; this will bring income for dentists etc and also for insurance companies, because members will buy new contracts to extend the cover they previously had. Some people have a supplementary insurance that covers only the eventuality of a hospital stay (which can be 1000 euro a day in the Paris region, excluding cost of any operation), these contracts are the cheapest. The idea is that people will be encouraged to take up new contracts e.g. for dental treatment, confident that now they will no longer have to make up a payment to the dentist themselves.

Until now the public spent 4 billion euro from their own pocket in 'remains to pay' for these treatments, and that sum will now be paid by social security plus supplementary insurance. This will happen gradually, and some people will continue to pay for top of the range equipment.

These new refunds will not be means tested, but open only to people with complementary health insurance.

Next year, Macron promises a reform of pensions and a reform of care for the aged. He is taking advantage of the absence of real opposition either in the country or in parliament to push through outstanding reforms. The parties have fallen apart, both the right and the socialists. A quasi non-parliamentary regime can get a lot done.

## THE SAD SANDS OF RAFAH

Why doesn't the name of Iman al-Hams ring out as loudly as that of Anne Frank.  
Shot twice, then automatic fire point-blank,  
a schoolgirl, 13, dies on Rafah Sands,  
back October 5, 2004.

Anne, throughout the decades, is loved world-wide.  
Iman? For fifteen seconds the world cried.  
There was compassion but who closed the door.  
The EU and the US have sanctions  
against the oppressed Palestinians,  
while Israel adds land to its dimensions.  
Joshua calls from the millenniums,  
sending in settlers for multiple theft.  
No equality in life, less in death.

An Israeli army euphemism:  
'Quickly approach and confirm the kill.'  
Any wounded enemy fits the bill.  
Dreaming, the watchtower looms into vision  
Does she hear?: 'Don't shoot, it's a little girl!'  
A soldier doesn't recognise the foe.  
But his commander knows the status quo  
and shatters this Palestinian pearl.  
Southern Gaza, Rafah Refugee Camp:  
Another day, another burial,  
one more Israeli media revamp,  
another life cast as ethereal.  
First found a nation on biblical tomes  
then ethnic cleanse and know that God condones.

The First Internal Investigation:  
'Captain 'R' didn't act unethically.'  
(Truth, also shot, lies flat on its belly)  
His wounded heart receives embrocation.  
Second Internal Investigation:  
'Captain 'R', a Druze, is a gun for hire!'  
His unit loathes him, drags him through the mire.  
But Death sings in any congregation.  
'So, Captain 'R' killed a young teenager?'  
'Yes, the girl died but it wasn't murder.'  
Compensation, promotion to Major,  
with a good view of the Gaza border.  
Iman's dad listens to the legal gen:  
'Keep dying, Palestinian children?'

Wilson John Haire.

# Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

## The Mid-Atlantic Sinks Beneath the Waves

“If Theresa May thought her favoured weapon – delay – would somehow ensure Donald Trump’s visit to the UK next month would be less controversial than if it had occurred last year, she appears to have miscalculated. Six months ago the president was plausibly an unpredictable nationalist constrained by the senior Republicans surrounding him. He had quit the UN’s climate change agreement but otherwise his foreign policy was largely a complaint that America had to pick up Europe’s tab...

“The two latest episodes – the US withdrawal from the UN human rights council and the sight of child immigrants in cages on the US border – are connected only by timing and the outrage they engender.

“The withdrawal from the rights council was long planned, and the US dislike of its perceived anti-Israeli bias is shared by the UK. Aware of the imminent US decision, Johnson travelled to Geneva on Monday to voice his concern to the council directly, not endorsing the US move but showing some sympathy. The predominant UK diplomatic view is that the council, for all its faults, is one of the few institutions where tyrants and authoritarians are held to account. The true beneficiary of a US withdrawal is not Israel but the Gulf kingdoms.”<sup>1</sup>

The startling sight of children in cages was probably *not* an accident:

“Crying. Screaming. Shouts of ‘Mami!’ and ‘Papa!’ This is what President Donald Trump’s policies sound like on the ground as asylum-seeking families are split apart. In the audio published by ProPublica, though, Border Patrol agents do not

appear to show empathy, with one agent hearing the sobbing children and joking that ‘we have an orchestra here’ and that ‘what’s missing is a conductor.’

“In just five weeks, US officials separated more than 2,300 children from their parents at the US-Mexico border. While the Trump administration has been deliberately obtuse about its intents, the ‘zero tolerance’ approach appears to be part of a strategy to scare people from illegally crossing the border — by, essentially, using the possibility of parents losing their kids as a threat.”<sup>2</sup>

Before he backed down, I’d been going to suggest his visit to Britain be greeted with displays of children in cages. I’m sure plenty of kids would have volunteered, from social concern or just to show off. Plus a little notice saying *These Kids Are Regularly Given Food, Water and Exercise*, like they do with animals at exhibitions.

Trump is sticking to his basic agenda. If immigrants are the main cause of the USA’s economic woes, then **do something about it**. The USA is in decline. He thinks he can stop it. Or failing that, look good in history as a man who tried to stop it.

The real problem is the bloated rewards given to the rich by the New Right. The lessons of the 1930s have been forgotten: Labour’s ‘Timid Tendency’ don’t question the dogma that state spending wastes wealth. Accepts that only money guided by narrow profit-based rules can possibly generate wealth. Britain has followed the USA’s lead, despite its failure:

“After eight years of budget cutting, Britain is looking less like the rest of Europe and more like the United States, with a shrinking welfare state

and spreading poverty.”<sup>3</sup>

Continental Europe has also cut money for the needy – we should call it that, since big words like ‘austerity’ confuse some people. The European Union also chose to spend money bailing out rich speculators, accepting the claim that the economy could not work without them. Bad, but Britain has been worse. And may get worse again if the Tories get the Brexit they want.

But Trump may be ‘breaking ranks’ on this as well:

“Behind the scenes, Trump astonished Nancy Pelosi, the Democrat’s leader in the House of Representatives, by approving every single social program that she asked of him. As a result, the federal government is running the largest budget deficit in America’s history when the rate of unemployment is less than 4%.

“Whatever one thinks of this president, he is giving money away not only to the richest, who of course get the most, but also to many poor people. With demonstrably strong employment, especially among African American workers, inflation under control and the stock market still buoyant, Donald Trump has his home front covered as he travels to foreign lands to confront friends and foes.”<sup>4</sup>

Ever since Nixon, the US Republicans have massaged the prejudices of right-wing voters, while privately regarding them as ignorant trash. While making sure they got nothing. Then along comes Trump, actually believing in these things. Embarrassing the liars.

Trump is abolishing the Mid-Atlantic position that May pinned her hopes on. After divorcing Europe,

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/jun/20/mays-delay-over-trump-visit-backfires-as-us-eu-divide-grows>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.vox.com/identities/2018/6/19/17478970/trump-family-separation-immigration-policy-racism>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/28/world/europe/uk-austerity-poverty.html>  
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jun/11/trump-world-order-who-will-stop-him>

we find that ‘old sweetheart’ America has alien values. That they do not much want us.

**Blame It On the Boomers?**

“The gulf between the earnings of younger and older people has increased by 50% in the last 20 years, leaving young workers struggling to survive, the TUC has warned in a report...

“We’re creating a lost generation of younger workers. Too many young people are stuck in low-paid, insecure jobs, with little opportunity to get on in life,” said Frances O’Grady, general secretary of the TUC. ‘But unions need to reach out to the young workers in workplaces where there isn’t a union.’”<sup>5</sup>

Vital, because some young people have been persuaded that it was the fault of the Baby Boomers. Others think that it is just Fate and beyond human power to fix. And many of them – not just the young – feel increasing despair:

“Inequality creates greater social competition and divisions, which in turn foster increased social anxiety and higher stress, and thus greater incidence of mental illness, dissatisfaction and resentment. And that leads to coping strategies – drugs, alcohol, and addictive behaviours like shopping and gambling – which themselves generate further stress and anxiety.”<sup>6</sup>

The ‘do your own thing’ viewpoint of 1960s radicals has come to the end of its tether. We did have a real commitment to human freedom. But wrongly hoped that everything would become free quite naturally and without the need for the Big Bad State.

When the Baby Boomers rose through the ranks and got control of the ‘Big Bad State’, they found it very useful. But never really changed their habits of thinking. A majority believed the anti-tax and anti-regulation arguments of the New Right. Thought the economy would do much better if left alone.

The *economy* did not do better. Growth rates were slightly worse for Britain and the USA, even before the 2008 crisis. *Much* worse for Continental Europe and Japan. But a more-than-millionaire elite within each of those societies did very nicely indeed. Got a Japanese-style Economic Miracle *for themselves* – but whatever they thought they were doing, they were actually taking from the Working Mainstream of the society.

And it is a matter of conscious policy. The new elite have got control of the things they care about. They can keep on grabbing more:

“Thousands of small businesses based in railway arches across the UK are facing ‘extermination’ as Network Rail seeks to push through a billion-pound asset sale.

“From bakers to bike shops, mechanics to restaurants, many of the 5,500 arches across the UK’s major cities are home to traders and shop owners.

“But since announcing they would be selling their

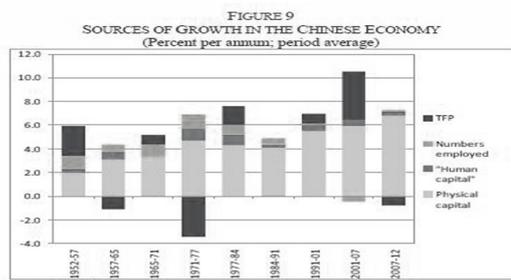
5 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/jun/04/growing-gulf-between-pay-of-younger-and-older-people-says-tuc>  
 6 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/jun/03/is-rising-inequality-responsible-for-greater-stress-anxiety-and-mental-illness-the-inner-level>

commercial property business, Network Rail has been accused of trying to strong-arm many of them out of their arches with threats of eviction if rent increases of between 300% and 500% are not met.

“There are also fears about what will happen to the businesses when the sale goes through, with a number of private equity firms interested in acquiring the vast block of real estate.”<sup>7</sup>

**In Praise of Authoritarian State Capitalism**

For years, I have been insisting that China wasn’t actually capitalist. That after Mao, it borrowed heavily from the Mixed Economy systems of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore. That it sensibly ignored the highly deregulated example of Hong Kong, whose prosperity owed quite a lot to opium and heroin.



Source: Table 13.

Economic Program Working Paper Series  
 China's Economic and Productivity Performance Debate Revisited - Accounting for New Sources of Growth with a New Data Set  
 Authors: ...  
 2018

Hong Kong also gained by being Mao’s main outlet to the wider world, after he closed off the Chinese economy. A source of high-tech goods that the USA was stopping China buying openly. A front for Chinese goods that would have been hampered by the USA’s relentless hostility up to the late 1960s.

TABLE 9  
 IMPACT OF THE ALTERNATIVE ESTIMATES OF CHINA'S INDUSTRIAL VALUE-ADDED ON THE OFFICIALLY ESTIMATED GDP GROWTH (Annual compound growth rate in percent)

Year	Growth of Industrial Gross Value Added		Total GDP Growth		Difference in percentage points
	Official Estimates	Alternative Estimates	Official Estimates	After industry Adjusted	
1952-57	19.85	16.97	6.68	7.74	1.07
1957-65	8.98	6.42	2.45	2.78	0.34
1965-71	11.76	10.42	5.31	6.02	0.72
1971-77	7.23	5.29	3.97	3.81	-0.17
1977-84	11.31	9.14	4.33	4.78	0.45
1984-91	9.87	7.23	9.17	8.14	-1.03
1991-01	11.19	4.05	8.59	5.93	-2.66
1991-01	13.30	7.26	10.36	7.78	-2.57
2001-07	12.25	13.00	11.38	11.27	-0.01
2007-12	9.75	4.75	9.32	7.32	-2.00
1977-12	11.49	9.29	9.77	8.00	-1.77

Source: Calculated based on data from Tables F-6 and F-7.

Economic Program Working Paper Series  
 China's Economic and Productivity Performance Debate Revisited - Accounting for New Sources of Growth with a New Data Set  
 Authors: ...  
 2018

Non-Communist East Asia was allowed to be protectionist, because ‘Red China’ was a real menace. Current Western books *imply* that China was one long disaster under Mao. They stop short of giving hard facts, presumably because they know the real position.<sup>8</sup> For though the Great Leap Forward failed, almost everything else succeeded brilliantly. China matched the world’s average growth when the world was growing rather faster than it does now.<sup>9</sup>

7 <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/jun/02/small-firms-face-extermination-due-to-network-rail-asset-sale>  
 8 <https://gwydionwilliams.com/99-problems-magazine/mao-and-china/>  
 9 I recently found another source besides *The World Economy*:

Post-Mao China was a Mixed Economy, and much more regulatory than was ever the case in the USA or Europe. I said this and was ignored, even by people on the left who had good reason to take note. But without me having anything to do with it, something similar is breaking through to the mainstream media. Consider this from *Prospect*, which actually merits its claim to be *Britain's Intelligent Conversation*:

“On one side is China’s model of authoritarian state capitalism in a Leninist structure with the Communist Party at its heart. On the other, a western model still not fully recovered from the financial crisis, but one based on liberty, individual freedom, and the rule of law.”<sup>10</sup>

The Western model used to include free education and cheap or free health care. A job for anyone who arrived on time and put in a normal amount of effort.

In the name of ‘Freedom’, these things have been stripped from us from the 1980s. People are miserable, and might look well at an alternative system. But they do not yet realise that China *is* that. Or rather, it is a variant on their own system, which they were conned into abandoning by smooth-talking right-wingers and cynical ex-hippies.

The West from the 1980s has damaged itself by trying to return to the Classical Capitalism that fell apart at the end of the 1920s. It was inferior to China even before the 2008 crisis.

China is authoritarian, yes. Most of its citizens think that executing rapists and drug traffickers makes them safer. Some Westerners would agree with them. It is also not relevant to economics. Harsh attitudes are typical of East Asia, including Japan, which has seldom had socialists even as junior partners in its government. Also Singapore, where the ruling party started out close to the Labour Party. Leader and long-time autocrat Lee Kuan Yew tells in his autobiography how he as *Historical Statistics* by Angus Maddison.

This was <https://www.conference-board.org/publications/publicationdetail.cfm?publicationid=2690>, page 65 of a downloadable pdf

10 <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/china-hasnt-won-yet>

an oppositionist had illicit meetings with Malaya’s outlawed Communist Party. As leader, he entirely crushed Communism in Singapore – clearly he learned a lot from Leninism!

### Rights of Humans Just Like Me

The USA quit for the wrong reasons, but I’ve always been suspicious of ‘Human Rights’ as applied by the UN. The 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* included rights to work, to Trade Union membership, to health care, education and leisure.<sup>11</sup> In practice, the needs of ordinary people not at odds with their government get ignored. It is all about protecting Poor Little Individuals from the Big Bad Government. And while many sincerely believe this, it can also be used to undermine governments that dare take taxes from the rich to look after the Working Mainstream.

On specific individual rights, the demand is that the rest of the world match the current mix of liberty and social control currently favoured in Europe and the USA. The notion of Gay Marriage was eccentric a generation back. No substantial force called it a Human Right. But since Europe and the USA have made it their new norm, it is deemed wicked for the rest of the world not to copy them. Required that they be ‘Dedicated Followers of (Western) Fashion’.

That such demands are risky for gays outside of Europe is beyond the understanding of the Human Rights Industry. Putin has probably prevented a worse backlash against all Western values than might have happened. A backlash that began when it became clear in the late 1990s that Western ‘help’ had made Russians poorer, sicker and low-status. But the main response is whines that he is not a ‘Dedicated Followers of Fashion’.

Hard for Westerners to grasp? Imagine that superior Space Aliens had turned up in the 1950s. Promised all sorts of material benefits, but really delivered very little. Kept telling us that our failure to benefit was our own fault. And meantime

11 <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>,

articles 22 to 26

kept nagging us to adopt the views on sex and marriage that we’ve freely adopted *now*. Values which would have seemed very alien *then*. How do you think people would have reacted?

Incidentally, superior Space Aliens are the theme of a 1953 work of Science Fiction, *Childhood's End*. Author Arthur. C. Clarke was privately bisexual, undeclared till much later. He never openly challenged 1950s views on sex. Clarke’s famous 1956 novel *The City and the Stars* was probably meant to imply a homosexual relationship between the two main characters. But it is very understated, and I certainly missed it when I read back then. Most people let others do the risky pioneering work, including pro-Soviet left-winger Naomi Mitchison. Her 1962 novel *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* was well ahead of the much-hyped New Wave.<sup>12</sup>

Having left it to the Hard Left to do much of the hard work, fashionable left-liberals now write them out of history.

### Support Israel, Hasten Armageddon

If Israel’s leaders and their foreign friends are not familiar with the *Book of Revelation*<sup>13</sup> from the Christian New Testament, they urgently need to study it. Because it really does count in US foreign policy. Makes sense of what would otherwise seem senseless.

Many scholars believe that *Revelations* is a crude rewrite for early Christians of a text from an extinct branch of Judaism preparing to revolt against Roman domination. The main Jewish Revolt ended with the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple: and it so happens that *Revelations* says nothing about this. It is amazing gibberish that should long ago have been filed away as Abnormal Psychology. But it was accepted as part of Holy Writ when the early Christian Church was defining itself. And while many moderate Christians would see it as nonsense, it has a particular influence

12 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Wave\\_science\\_fiction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Wave_science_fiction)

13 Often mis-named as ‘*Book of Revelations*’

on the more extreme Protestant sects in the USA. People who mostly vote Republican, but Democrats are keen to lure them.

Four generations back, some of my own ancestors would have taken *Revelations* quite literally. Later generations pushed it to one side. My own parents ignored the Bible and never attended services, though they were buried as Anglicans. *Everyone* in England and Wales is buried as an Anglican, unless they specify something else. And very few would be bothered by what the Bible says about the End of the World. Such matters are a joke for most Britons – but much of the USA thinks otherwise.

The USA has always felt that it merited More-Than-Human Rights, and likewise countries it approves of. Israel is getting a US nod as it carries on seizing Palestinian land.<sup>14</sup> But *reasons* are very different from the Zionist ambition for a place where Jews can assert their own identity and have a safe haven.

One motive for creating Israel was Britain and the USA not wanting any more Jews, and perhaps hoping to be rid of those who had not assimilated well. That's the secular side – but the Christian Bible has resonance even with those from a Latin-Christian background who cease to be overtly religious. And in the USA, there are a mass of ordinary voters who see it as true. Their support for Israel is based on a belief that this is part of God's Plan. But their vision is not Israel as a permanent Jewish state.

If the US shifted more to Isolationism, which may be beginning under Trump, Israel could find itself abandoned. For devout voters, the script could include cutting ties and letting God's Plan unfold with the Jewish state destroyed.

The Oslo Peace Agreement failed, because Israel wanted more land. Had a sentimental attachment to what it called 'Judea and Samaria', even though it was overwhelmingly non-Jewish. Have undermined secular Palestinian nationalism, and now face religious extremists who would never make peace.

I've said before, I am expecting it to end with something pretty nasty. Israel using its undeclared nuclear weapons on foes who are sincere fanatics and do not fear mass slaughter. I have little hope of doing any good on the matter, but feel obliged to try.

## Snippets

### An Impossible Diet?

"While some kinds of meat and dairy production are more damaging than others, all are more harmful to the living world than growing plant protein. It shows that animal farming takes up 83% of the world's agricultural land, but delivers only 18% of our calories. A plant-based diet cuts the use of land by 76% and halves the greenhouse gases and other pollution that are caused by food production."<sup>15</sup>

I've never seen meat-eating as morally wrong. But the survival of the planet may mean much less of it.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/us-donald-trump-deal-of-century-middle-east-peace-plan-already-happening-israel-palestine-1066744202>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jun/08/save-planet-meat-dairy-livestock-food-free-range-steak>

## ANOTHER DEATH ANOTHER SHEKEL

Razan Al-Najjar, aged twenty-one  
a Gazan paramedic  
lies in bloodied sand  
killed by an Israeli sniper-gun.  
Barely covered by the Western media  
yet Nurse Cavel runs and runs  
in the British military encyclopaedia.  
Razan Al-Najjar  
tends to the field of broken bodies  
beneath the gas clouds in this abattoir,  
wired in as a chicken-run vassalage,  
wings clipped, fed on scraps,  
can their politics be tea-at-the-vicarage.  
Razan Al-Najjar,  
already forgotten by the West.  
Razan Al-Najjar,  
for those who care  
in our hearts a permanent guest.

W. J. Haire.

## Going To Pot

Canada has legalised cannabis without medical need.<sup>16</sup> And William Hague, now safely untouchable in the House of Lords, wants Britain to do the same.<sup>17</sup>

When he was leader, I did wonder why Hague looked unhealthy and prematurely aged. Even compared him to Hagen from Wagner's Ring Cycle. Could pot-smoking do that?

Alcohol has its dangers, certainly. I'd like to see drinks advertising banned. But anyone who drinks heavily enough to damage themselves is probably trying to ease existing woes.

Heroin and cocaine definitely hook some of their users. Pot? Harmless for most users, but not all.

\*\*\*

## 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/>.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-44543286>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/jun/19/william-hague-theresa-may-legalise-cannabis>

# Diary of a Corbyn foot soldier

by Michael Murray

*murraymicha@gmail.com*;  
*Facebook: 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:

## **"Russia-phobia and the World Cup"**

As I write, England is a couple of games away from a World Cup Final – and a dilemma for the Conservative government: whether to keep or rescind the boycott of the competition, introduced at a high-point of Russia-phobia, fed by the dubious events surrounding the alleged Russian State instigated poisonings in Salisbury. The boycott prevented Government Ministers attending the competition. Prince William, President of the English FA for the past 12 years, found himself being ordered to Israel for the duration (coinciding with the worst of the Gazan atrocities, but we'll pass over that). All sorts of pressure was exerted on entertainers, like Robbie Williams, sports personalities, like Man U's manager, Morinho, not to attend, or work for RT (Russian Television). There was also considerable pressure exerted on England football fans not to attend, backed up to an obedient media replete with colourful scare stories. And it seems to have worked. The official England fan club reported a smaller than usual travelling membership, and many of the 40,000 fans who did travel can be accounted for by foreign nationals living and working here.

But, already, there has been a small, discreet, official breach in the boycott. The British

Ambassador to Russia, Laurie Bristow, it turned out, attended the Columbia v England game. When the news of his attendance at the game emerged, the spin put on it was that he was there in case any English fans required "consular assistance." The "top-spin" to the latter narrative was that the ban didn't technically extend to the Ambassador. You have to give it the English ruling class, necks like a jockey's bollocks – to mix sporting metaphors. So, if England progress this coming Saturday (July 7th), the shit will hit the fan big time. Already, the English in Russia, enjoying Russian hospitality and friendship, have been widely reported in the media, questioning the information they were fed about what to expect in Russia and what precautions to take to protect life and limb. The "left behind" will feel cheated also by not being there to share in a potential on-going sporting success story. They will, inevitably, ask the question, also the title of Robert Peston's latest book: "WTF?"

I am reminded of Liverpool manager, Bill Shankly's immortal words: "Some people believe football is a matter of life and death. ... I can assure you it is much, much more important than that."<sup>1</sup> English failure on Saturday to progress will get the Russia-demonising Tories off the hook. I earnestly hope they do succeed and go all the way in a competition now more open since most of the stellar teams have been eliminated. And I will enjoy their reaching the final – in itself an achievement - all the more because, having begun to open the eyes of some football supporters, the games and machinations of

<sup>1</sup> Bill Shankly quotes are from the *Liverpool Echo*, Bill Shankly anniversary edition, 29/9/2015

May's pathetic "team" will have become more exposed.

Those who watched the Columbia game had their attention drawn to the overwhelming presence of Columbian supporters in the stadium, compared to English supporters. That degree of disparity in support is constantly compared to having an extra man playing. It's important for the outcome of a game. How "the team" does is also important for the morale of the host parish, county, city or nation, as we all know. Ask anyone in Liverpool, or Leicester. Shankley, when asked what he'd like to be remembered for replied: "'as a man who was selfless, who strove and worried so that others could share the glory, and who built up a family of people who could hold their heads up high and say "We're Liverpool'." The Tories will pay for their opportunistic and disgraceful using "the beautiful game" as a political football. And sadly, the Labour Party, from the top down has been sucked into the Russia-phobia to such an extent that they are at risk of missing an open Tory goal yet again.

Am I pushing my luck here if I admit I see a bit of Shankly in Gareth Southgate, the England manager? Famously, when Shankly was told by a key player in a critical game that he (the player) was worried about his knee, Shankly told him that was Liverpool's knee, not his, and to get back out there and do his duty. Another Shankly gem, on the referee's role, which has already come in for some heated studio discussion in this World Cup, was: "Referees understand the rules. They don't always understand the game." I don't think Gareth is

Continued On Page 14

# A Letter From Our New Zealand Correspondent

Feergus O'Raghallaigh

## Sustainability

Recently I read a George Monbiot piece in the Guardian Weekly (15 – 21 June) on the theme of the unsustainability of pastoral farming and animal-based food production in the context of climate change (The best way to save the planet? Drop meat and dairy). Monbiot's essential point was "All the evidence now points in one direction: the crucial shift is from animal- to a plant-based diet." It was based on a paper published recently in Science, the monthly journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

According to Monbiot, the study "shows that animal farming takes up 83% of the world's agricultural land, but delivers only 18% of our calories. A plant-based diet cuts the use of land by 76% and halves the greenhouse gases and other pollution that are caused by food production."

If there is one country in which such thinking has taken a firm hold it is, strangely, New Zealand. This is a country that lives by butter and beef production on a vast scale, cheaply produced and then exports of most of this production, much of it these days to China.

The entire New Zealand economy is based on pastoral farming. One company, a cooperative, Fonterra is a business giant, a statutory monopoly in effect; its vast dairy processing factories are everywhere to be seen and its huge milk tankers clogging up even urban motorways never mind meeting you head-on on rural byways. The output is mostly exported to China.

It is much the same in beef and sheepmeat: huge production with processing now concentrated in a handful of businesses. The processing plants and freezing works are today much more concentrated than once they were – and are much bigger. Again China is today the big export outlet.

Beyond the farming there are other, important resource sectors.

There is commercial forestry and

logging, again large-scale and again for export (again China).

And there is the fishery: New Zealand's vast Exclusive Economic Zone, fifteen times the land area of NZ and today a gigantic commercial fishery.

Further, for more than a decade the focus of government policy has been on growth of primary production output and its export performance. Over the last nine years of National-led governments, farmers and foresters were given free rein and every encouragement to expand and ramp up output. In the case of dairy – by far the most important primary sector enterprise – industrial pastoralism was encouraged, based particularly on encouraging very large units and irrigation.

Over the last few years – and particularly in recent months – the environmental and societal costs of unfettered expansion have become more than clear to just about

everyone.

The irrigation needed to support the large-scale dairy conversions in the Canterbury Plains of South Island is lowering water tables, draining aquifers, damaging river basins and worst of all in the eyes of many people, the water feeding the irrigation systems is a natural resource effectively given for free to these commercial, intensive and increasingly big dairy units.

Behind the Plains sits the High Mackenzie Country of Central Otago and its Basin and overlooking it all, the snow-capped Southern Alps. This is high altitude, spectacular; a land of snowfields, glaciers, rushing rivers, creeks and great glacial lakes and the enormous hydro schemes that are the powerhouse of electricity supply through both islands.

The Mackenzie region is at a hard push no more than marginal from the point of view of dairying – without massive irrigation. As a result of

Continued From Page 13

that sort of manager. But I was impressed by his speech in Volgograd (Stalingrad), in the face of all the political negativity towards the host country.

"We are aware," Southgate said, "of the history of the city, and the importance of that battle (Stalingrad) in the Second World War. To see the statue (The Motherland Calls) reminds you that some things are bigger than football, and that's a good perspective for us all." (Henry Winter, Times sportswriter, twitter)

A good perspective, yes. I could see Shankly, in the same circumstances, making the same speech, even revising his most famous saying in the process. But even he would have been surprised at the London Times' headline in the middle of the World Cup competition: "FEARS GROW OVER PROSPECT OF TRUMP 'PEACE DEAL' WITH PUTIN." Yes, you read it correctly: FEARS over a PEACE deal! (Times, 29 June, 2018). It's a funny old game. How funny?

It's just been reported that Russian "novichok" has been poisoning people again in the quiet, sun-drenched English countryside. Emergency Cabinet meetings have been called, police and troops mobilized. And the Russians have been asked to explain themselves. Again. Am I the only one to smell a rodent?

Let this Corbyn foot soldier get back to the couch, the telly, the football – and some semblance of a civilized, peaceful world where people can enjoy the vicariousness of others' endeavours and the simple pleasures: like watching penalty shoot-outs.

the infrastructure created to harness hydro in the region that is technically an easy ask and so land conversion has been happening on a significant scale. There are growing protests – now getting militant and disruptive of pipeline construction.

Down on the Canterbury Plains there is now a wide acceptance that the expansions and conversions there have been overdone. Even farmers at this point are beginning to realise and accept this. It's not just the water take but also the polluting nutrients being added to riverine systems by animal effluent.

There has been a steady flow of reports, scientific studies and investigations, all going in one direction: the encouragement of uncontrolled expansion must be reversed.

There have been serious incidents – the most spectacular being the poisoning in 2016 of the local water supply in Havelock North (a town on North Island) with campylobacter. Effluent from sheep farming is believed to be the culprit. Some 5,000 people were affected with three deaths caused by the gastroenteritis outbreak.

Now the new Labour-led government has flagged caps – maybe not on herd size but of effluent volumes and regionally administered (which will in the end amount to the same thing). Whether the Mackenzie conversions can be stopped at this stage is another thing. That could prompt farmer litigation and compensation claims (a kind of national version of ISDS).

Forestry and logging is recently in the news. It has a long and notorious accident and safety record. The industry is based on large-scale planting of marginal land with pine on 20 to 25-year cycles leading to clear-felling mainly for export at maturity. Felling leaves millions of tonnes of waste log (known as 'slash') behind. A few weeks ago in the small coastal township of Tollaga Bay (North Island) a million tonnes of slash from large commercial forest clear-felled two years ago was washed down in a freak torrential rain storm. Homes and holdings were destroyed, farmlands buried under timber and silt. Estimated

damage and destruction? It's put at NZD100m and the forest companies are making every effort to avoid the liability: 'we did nothing illegal'.

And so it goes – almost daily another story. And more demands for controls and restrictions across a range of primary and resource-based sectors. All new offshore oil and gas exploration has been halted (existing exploration licenses will not be revoked). Similarly, no new coal exploration or mining will be allowed on vast tracts of Crown lands on the West Coast of South Island that are designated national parks and scenic areas. There will be restrictions on dairying: they are coming.

The West Coast is the original home of New Zealand coal mining and birth-place of the country's Labour Party. The heritage is also strongly Irish Catholic, descendants of the first miners and creators of the trade union and Labour movement.

There is in all of this huge problems.

First, New Zealand is an economy based on natural resources and primary production. Add up these sectors and add in the downstream and related business activities and that pretty much is the national economy. Think Ireland without FDI and you have an inkling.

Second, these businesses are all pretty much tight margin. They generally display extreme price volatility: producers are selling into highly competitive markets internationally and do not have any real market power (they are price-takers). International food markets also are highly tariff protected by importer governments. Think Ireland as a food producer with no access to the EU and its CAP.

Third, exchange rate movements add to this deeply difficult trading environment.

It is all pretty much a thankless task with little option but to expand and expand production and plead and push to international trade liberalisation and bilateral or plurilateral market access deals (such as the TPP).

Fourth, expansion has now had a decade and more of practice behind it with China still the only real gain to date and the social and environmental costs associated with the policy

becoming ever more obvious.

Here we come to the great contradiction. On the one hand Kiwis aspire to higher living standards and a better life. They live with creaking (road, rail, environmental) infrastructures and are trapped in a housing crisis. They strive to achieve yet also see the limits and futility of current economic policy although also I doubt that they see any alternative. They are trapped in free trade 'thinking' while the world and capitalism lives by onion-layers of protectionism and protective practices.

They are also perhaps the most environmentally aware and conscious people I think I know. Why? I don't know but maybe it has something to do with knowing they sit on the Ring of Fire, the Pacific earthquake zone. Maybe also it's the outdoor social culture of the place – the familiarity with country, with the bush, hunting and fishing, tramping and camping. There is also the continuing huge importance of farming and the rural economy. There is also what I can only think of as a plantationist, frontier culture – close to nature and the soil and all that goes with that – associated with a colonial history and being a colonising people (like the Americans and Canadians, the Boer and the East African whites).

There remains though the problem. Kiwis cannot achieve their life-goals without growth (and government borrowing and spending). Nor can they preserve and protect their environment with the current growth model (and without government control and regulation). And they will secure neither their life goals or environmental objectives through free trade in the Kiwi case in primary production and natural resources.

I think Brexit Britain will discover much the same – if it happens.

**Racist thought and action says far more about the person they come from than the person they are directed at.**

*Chris Crutcher*

# In the Dark About Enlightenment

by Gwydion M. Williams

A review of *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress* by Steven Pinker

If we stand on the shoulders of cannibal giants, it is embarrassing. But an embarrassment we need to face up to, to make a better future for ourselves.

And in recording past crimes, we always need to ask the question, was there a better way?

Both the European Enlightenment and the global dominance of the British Empire did things that we are now appalled by. As indeed did the Radical Democracy that the USA championed and a minority of Britons supported: it was often imperialist and racist. Generally hostile to equality for women. Obsessed by removing inherited titles and gentry, but blind to inequalities of wealth.

But having been appalled, we should also ask ‘*what would have happened without those brutal but effective powers?*’.

For the Enlightenment, the practical alternative was the Counter-Reformation. This successfully snuffed out the science that a more liberal version of Roman Catholicism had encouraged in the Renaissance. It has few admirers nowadays.

With Spain defeated, the candidates for European world empires were Britain, France and the Netherlands. The Netherlands had much the same faults and merits. The French did not have the rigid racism that came to dominate the British and Dutch empires. But before the Revolution they were dominated by a corrupt aristocracy. Triumphant, they might have frozen the world at an 18<sup>th</sup>-century level of development.

A triumph for Napoleon might have made a better world. Who knows? But Napoleon was an autocrat and a warmonger. He also supported the re-imposition of slavery that idealists like Robespierre had abolished.

For the 20<sup>th</sup> century, I have long since come to accept Brendan Clifford’s argument that a win for Imperial Germany with its developing Welfare State would have been better. And that the British Empire let Hitler rise in the hope he would destroy the Soviet Union for them. The rulers of Britain were after a much worse world, but I come from Britons who were on the

right side when it counted.

I’m happy to call the European Enlightenment a necessity for our present world. But I flatly deny that it ever intended the democracy and equality we now value. The European Enlightenment was a very different thing from its successors: the British Empire and the Radical Democracy that Britain’s rulers were often at odds with. It was only from the 1880s that a majority of men at the core of the Empire got the vote, and still only 60%. White colonies got their own elected governments: non-whites did not before the First World War. The Commonwealth was an attempt to create a democratised British Empire that might have succeeded if tried a few decades earlier. In practice it is a club for dozens of independent states. Many of which uphold Enlightenment values, but also Democratic and Egalitarian values that were no part of the beliefs of characters like Voltaire.

If you find it baffling that Enlighteners like John Locke were comfortable investing in the Atlantic Slave Trade, you are in the dark as to what the European Enlightenment actually was.

Seeing our current Western way of life as a continuation of the values of the European Enlightenment is simply *wrong*. Factually untrue, regardless of what you think *ought* to have existed.

Steven Pinker is good with numbers, hopeless with history. *The Better Angels of Our Nature* did a good job describing how violence has declined across the centuries. But to him those ‘Better Angels’ were all Anglos, plus the famous Enlightenment names that he supposes Anglo culture derives from. He discounts the input from the French Revolution, Russian Revolution and even Moderate Socialism.

Pinker is one of many who fail to understand how alien the European Enlightenment was to modern values. Wilfully ignores how far Europe and the world were transformed *first* by the Democratic Radicalism that pushed aside the Enlighteners. *Then* by a whole series of socialist movements that needed to fight hard for things we now see as normal.

It was a messy process. Denouncing

actual history for being imperfect is easy, and also futile. If there was one ideal social order that bad people perversely rejected, it would be fair enough. Some of the early Radicals and Enlighteners really did believe this – but no two of them had quite the same idea of what the ‘ideal social order’ actually is.

The European Enlightenment was anti-democratic, and comfortable with inherited inequality. Unlike later defenders of slavery, racist democrats like US Vice-President John C. Calhoun,<sup>1</sup> they sold Black Africans because selling poor Europeans was less convenient and less profitable. But in as far as they could sell their own lower classes into virtual slavery, they did so. Transportation and forced labour are well known from Australian history – but Australia was chosen only after Britain’s North American colonies successfully revolted. Also the bulk of the society had enough connection with enslaved white people to insist that they should be free after seven years. Sadly, they were willing for Native Americans and Black Africans to stay slaves for ever.

The Enlightenment ideal was the Enlightened Autocrat, who gave people what they would never be wise enough to choose for themselves. And such democratic movements as existed were largely Extremist Puritans. A few of these shared Enlightenment ideas such as more equality for women, but most felt the opposite.

The Radicals were the next wave. A functional union was achieved in the American War of Independence. Loosely speaking, New England was democratic and Virginia had an Enlightened Gentry indignant at being shut out of British politics. Who were also slave-owners: but the British government had been happy to allow slavery overseas. They continued it for decades afterwards in the Caribbean.

The European Enlightenment was heavily inspired by the rational Confucianism of Imperial China. It was mostly against democracy, and mostly comfortable with slavery. And in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, almost all of the

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_C.\\_Calhoun](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_C._Calhoun)

'heavy lifting' for the unfinished parts of the Enlightenment project has been done by socialists or communists.

Pinker, who shows no signs of deep cultural or historic knowledge, might be genuinely ignorant of some of this. He lists both slavery and despotism as things the Enlightenment thinkers were against.<sup>2</sup> Which is absurd: anyone should know that they praised and sometimes served Enlightened Despots, and that anti-slavery started later. With the honourable exception of the 1st Marquis of Pombal, none of the Enlighteners were concerned – and after all, slavery had been widespread in their beloved Classical Greece and Rome. Until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, most of the protests about slavery were Christian, even though the Bible is broadly accepting of slavery and merely urges kindness to slaves.

He also fails to make clear that the Enlightenment was covertly anti-Christian. Many of them believed in some sort of God, but definitely not the God of the Bible.

Pinker's refusal to mention socialism is obvious dishonesty. He doesn't even have socialism in the index.

Classical Liberals ceased to be an effective force in the 1920s, after playing a large role in the vast European self-wounding of the First World War. They liked the nice things that happened after 1945, but were offended by the very large role the state played, contrary to their ideals. Supported the New Right attacking state power. Were then astonished when the flow of nice things got disrupted.

Most of them remain astonished. Pinker is one such, saying:

"Who could be against reason, science, humanism, or progress?... Do these ideals really need a defence?"

"They absolutely do. Since the 1960s, trust in the institutions of modernity has sunk, and the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century saw the rise of populist movements that blatantly repudiate the ideals of the Enlightenment."<sup>3</sup>

What I see is a small rally by the defeated within Europe and its various settler-colonies, most notably the USA. One instance: the legalisation of male homosexuality has begun in the 1960s, and is now complete most places, including Russia with the exception of Chechnya. The much more radical notion of social equality for gays and

2 Enlightenment Now, page 11

3 Enlightenment Now, page 29.

lesbians is advancing, and the Illiberal Democrats seem not to want to make an issue of it. Likewise female equality, and the general availability of abortion. Abortion is an issue only in the USA, where it was legalised by judicial trickery. Where the public were never asked what they actually wanted. When asked, most populations in Europe and its offshoots have opted for tolerance.

Outside Europe, it is another matter. Where socialism has been defeated, there has mostly been a rise in ethnic hatreds and traditional religion. Mostly Islamic, but intolerant versions of Buddhism dominate Sri Lanka and Myanmar, and intolerant Hinduism in India. Things are better where there is a centre-right still committed to Welfare and Economic Planning, as in Japan and South Korea.

China, still confident about socialism, is a grand upholder of Enlightenment values. I'm sure Voltaire and the others would have been enthusiasts for President Xi. The high rate of executions would not bother them: it is all done as humanely as killings can be done, and it was crude mediaeval methods that the Enlighteners disliked. Dying by guillotine was a big improvement on being hung, and better than executions by axe that were often slow and botched. China shoots the more serious criminals, including rapists and drug dealers. Rape and drug abuse are indeed less common than in similar countries.

And then there's inequality. Surely that's the big thing undermining the confidence of ordinary people in the 'Enlightened' New World.

Pinker dodges the awkward matter of inequality generated by the New Right from the 1980s. And indeed their careful cultivation of fear and prejudice among the general population so as to defeat left-wing parties. This was worst in the USA, where the Republican Party skilfully attached the White Racist vote to itself, particularly in the US South which had always voted Democrat. And where racist Democrats were also all for Welfare and State Planning, whereas their Republican replacements are against. And before Trump with his hard-line against immigration, they gave very little to those racists. Reduced them to baffled poverty and increasing drug abuse and suicide.

In the USA, it is literally true that the bulk of the Working Mainstream have made no progress at all since the 1970s, with a more-than-millionaire

class getting almost the entire fruits of considerable economic growth. Less drastic elsewhere, but the current cuts in social spending would not have been needed had the rich paid their fair share. Sadly, Pinker has swallowed the New Right version of history.

Inequality in the world is indeed falling. But that has been mostly the rise of China and India, especially China. And China's rise began with Mao, who tripled a Chinese economy that had seen little net growth during the years it was open to capitalism and world trade. Pinker is one of many fooled by 'experts' who significantly fail ever to give hard numbers for *overall* economic growth under Mao.<sup>4</sup> Nor for *overall* death rates or infant mortality – the supposed Famine was a death-rate of 25 per thousand at its worst, which is lower than the norm for many poor countries at the time.<sup>6</sup>

Pinker rejects 'switching to socialism, or bringing back the 50s' as cures for inequality.<sup>7</sup> These are indeed the methods hated by the rich, because they actually work. The Mixed Economy borrowed a lot from socialism, even when it was not a socialist government. And the systems of total state control created by Stalin and Mao were very successful economically. Deng took the Mixed Economy systems of non-Communist East Asia as his model, and improved on Mao – though he was helped by free global access for cheap Chinese goods. Khrushchev and his heirs had a different model: total state ownership but regulated by a pseudo-market under state control.<sup>8</sup> It was *this* that failed, and has been used to smear socialism in general.

Much of the book is sensible: a good account of false fears. But he misses the central event in recent history: the rise of the New Right and all the damage it has done.

4 Enlightenment Now, page 90.

5 Angus Maddison's widely-admired *The World Economy: Historical Statistics* shows Mao's China growing faster than most of the rest of the world, despite the setbacks after the Great Leap Forward.

6 See <https://gwydionwilliams.com/99-problems-magazine/mao-and-china/>.

This includes life-expectancy figures from the UN database.

7 Enlightenment Now, page 120

8 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/the-soviet-past/>

[market-socialism-in-the-soviet-union/](https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/the-soviet-past/market-socialism-in-the-soviet-union/)

# Parliament Notes



Dick Barry

## NATO 20 June 2018.

The debate on NATO was extremely long. Consequently, in some cases, contributions have been cut to enable Labour Affairs to publish the bulk of the speeches from Gavin Williamson and Labour's Nia Griffith. It is clear from reading the speeches by Labour members that the Parliamentary Labour party is singing from the Conservative party's hymn sheet. They share enthusiastic support for NATO and have the same obsession about the 'threat' from Russia.

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Gavin Williamson)** I beg to move, That this House has considered NATO.

After the second world war, we still could not take peace and stability for granted, and it was then that we turned to NATO and the tens of thousands of British servicemen and women who stepped up to protect our nation from new threats. Had Ernest Bevin not set out his vision of a joint western military strategy and helped to sell the idea to the United States and other nation states, it is doubtful that NATO would have been born. And had it not been for the willingness of Clement Attlee's Government to support the idea and the continued backing of successive Conservative and Labour Governments, this great strategic military alliance would never have got off the ground, let alone grown and matured into the great military alliance that has protected us for almost 70 years.

It is well worth reminding

ourselves what NATO has achieved in the decades since its birth. It has consolidated the post-world war two transatlantic link. It has prevented the re-emergence of conflicts that had dogged Europe for centuries. It has led operations in the Balkans and Afghanistan. What would have happened if NATO had not held firm during the bitter chill of the cold war? Would the Berlin Wall still stand, casting its shadow over the west? Would millions still be living free, secure and prosperous lives? Even as we enter a new age of warfare, NATO continues to adapt to the times.

**James Gray (North Wiltshire) (Con)** Will he reconfirm the notion that our contribution of 2% of GDP is not a target but an absolute floor, and that if we are to stand true with our friends in NATO we must aim for 2.5% or 3%, because otherwise we will simply not be able to do what we are seeking to do in the world?

**Gavin Williamson** We have always seen 2% as a floor, and spending on defence has varied over the years. I think that when the Government came to office it was at a slightly higher level than 2%. Indeed, I think that when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor was Secretary of State for Defence it stood at 2.3% and 2.4%, but that took account of the operations in which we were involved in Afghanistan.

As we see it, 2% is very much a floor: a base on which to build. We can be very proud to be one of the few nations in NATO that meet the 2% commitment, and we can be exceptionally proud

of the work done under the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Sir Michael Fallon)—and, of course, that of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor before he moved to the Foreign Office—in establishing that all NATO members needed to spend more.

We must ensure that NATO is adapting—and continues to adapt—to the times, and also to the threats that it faces. Since its creation, we have always seen Britain leading from the front. Not only do we assign our independent nuclear deterrent to the defence of the alliance, as we have for the past 56 years, but our service personnel and defence civilians are on the ground in Eastern Europe at this very moment, providing a deterrence against Russian aggression.

It has been my privilege to see their dedication and devotion to duty in Estonia, where we are leading a multinational battlegroup, and in Poland where they are supporting the United States forces. And at the same time our sailors are commanding half of NATO's standing naval forces, and our pilots, ground crew, and aircraft have returned to the Black sea region, based in Romania, to police the skies of our south-eastern European allies. Just last year UK forces led the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force and we became the first ally to deliver cyber-capabilities in support of NATO operations.

Meanwhile, UK personnel form a critical part of NATO's command structure. So I am proud that the UK will be sending more

than 100 additional UK personnel to bolster that command structure, taking our total to well over 1,000. As we look at the emerging threats and the challenges our nation faces going forward, it is clear that we must make sure that NATO has the resources: that it has the capability and the people to man those command structures, in order for us to meet those threats.

NATO needs the extra support to deal with the growing threats. The dangers we face are multiplying all the time and come from every direction. We are confronting a host of new threats from extremism to cyber-warfare, dangers global in nature that require an international response and a global presence. We are witnessing the rise of rogue states conducting proxy wars and causing regional instability, while old threats are returning.

Russia is a case in point. Back in 2010 Russia was not clearly identified as a threat. The focus of our attention was ungoverned spaces such as Afghanistan and Iraq, but by 2015 the emergence of new threats was becoming apparent to everyone and this threat has accelerated and increased over the last three years.

In 2010 our Royal Navy was called on just once to respond to a Russian naval ship approaching UK territorial waters; last year it was called on 33 times. Russian submarine activity has increased tenfold in the north Atlantic, to a level not seen since the cold war. The Russians are also investing in new technology, through which they aim to outpace our capability. They are concentrating on our weaknesses and vulnerabilities, and we must be realistic and accept that we are going to have to invest in new capabilities to deal with these new threats.

Our Air Force planes have been scrambled 38 times since 2012 in response to Russian military

aircraft. Russia continues to use its cyber-bots and fake news to undermine democracies across the world; we have seen very clear examples of that in Montenegro, Estonia and elsewhere. And we ourselves have had the shocking attack in Salisbury—the first offensive nerve agent attack on European streets since the second world war.

So there is plenty to focus our minds as we head into the Brussels summit. That is why, earlier this month at the NATO Defence Ministers meetings, we took decisions alongside our allies to further strengthen NATO's command structure, enhancing its naval presence and putting in place the right capabilities to defend the Euro-Atlantic area as it is increasingly threatened. We also took that opportunity to clarify our three priorities for the pivotal summit meeting in July.

We have always been clear that the interests of European security are very much our interests. That was the case before we joined the European Union and it will certainly be the case after we leave. We are open to discussions about how we can continue to work with our European partners—working and leading, if and when that is appropriate. We must not underestimate our capability compared with that of other European nations. We are at the leading edge. We are one of the very few European nations that can lead operations and make a real difference. We recognise the fact that, as we leave the European Union, we want good strong relationships in terms not only of operations but of defence strategy, procurement and industrial strategy. We will continue to work closely with the European Union.

We must not forget that 90% of the defence industry relationships we have with other European nations are bilateral, rather

than being conducted through the European Union. That is something that we will look to continue to strengthen.

As we look forward to the NATO summit, we need to accept first and foremost that we have to invest more in defence. We need our allies to step up and spend a minimum of 2%. This is something that the United Kingdom has led on ever since the Wales NATO summit in 2014, and our efforts have encouraged all allies to increase their spending. More are meeting that target, and most have plans to reach it. As the NATO Secretary General said earlier this month, non-US spending has increased by \$87 billion between 2014 and 2018, but the US still accounts for more than 70% of the allies' combined defence expenditure. When the Britain leaves the European Union, 82% of NATO's contribution will come from non-EU countries. We have to be honest with ourselves, however. We cannot expect US taxpayers to keep picking up the tab for European defence indefinitely; nor can we expect US patience to last for ever. We as a continent have to step up to the responsibility of playing a pivotal role in defending ourselves and not to expect others to do it for us.

Today presents us with an opportunity to play a bigger role in defence. Our next priority will be about ensuring that the alliance is ready to act rapidly. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid Sussex (Sir Nicholas Soames) touched on at the start of the debate, we need to be able to act within weeks, days or hours, not months.

We can be proud of our investments in new technology, such as the new Poseidon aircraft that will operate over the north Atlantic or the Type 26 frigates that are currently being constructed in Glasgow. We are leading the world in the development of and

investment in technology. Nations such as the United States actually look to us to take that leadership, to point the way forward and to take responsibility for ensuring that the north Atlantic routes remain safe.

We need to look at how we ensure NATO is able to respond swiftly to changing threats not in months, not just in weeks but in days and hours, and not simply on land, sea and air but in the new grey danger zones of cyber-space and space itself. For that to happen, our alliance must keep changing and adapting to deal with new threats. NATO must reform itself structurally so there are far fewer barriers to action, and it must reform itself politically so nations can swiftly agree on measures to take and on how to use the power at their disposal decisively, particularly when it comes to cyber and hybrid attacks, which often occur beneath the normal threshold for a collective response.

Lastly, NATO must maintain the mass needed to assemble, reinforce and win a conflict in Europe at short notice. We need to look at how we can forward base more of our equipment, and possibly personnel. That is why today we are looking hard at our infrastructure in Germany, particularly our vehicle storage, heavy transport and training facilities. Along with our NATO allies, we are continually testing our agility and responsiveness through exercises in Europe.

We need to do more, and we need to look more closely at how we can have the forces we need to deal with the threats we face today. The threats today are so different from the threats in 2010, but we should not underestimate our adversaries' intent and willingness to use military force.

We must not look at this issue in isolation. We need to look at it as an issue that every NATO

member has to face and deal with. We have to work incredibly closely with our allies, whether it is Germany, Poland or Estonia, on how we can be more responsive and how we can ensure that we have the capability to react to those changing threats.

NATO is only as strong as its weakest link, so every NATO member must do what it needs to do to give its people the modern equipment, the skills and the support to cope with the challenges that lie ahead. We need a future force that is able to respond rapidly and globally, a force that can operate in the full range of combat environments and across all domains, and a force to provide leadership in NATO, European formations and coalitions.

We must never hesitate: sometimes we will have to lead others, and sometimes we will have to act alone. We have to have the capability and the armed forces to be able to do that. NATO must do more to up its spending, to speed up its response and to reinforce its capabilities, but to succeed in this darker and more dangerous age, it must show one quality above all—resolve.

As in the old days of the cold war, adversaries new and old are seeking to divide us, to undermine our values and to spread lies and misinformation. Our response must be unity. We must stand firm and we must stand together, speaking with one voice and holding fast to the vision that united us in the days of old against aggression, against totalitarianism and against those who wish to do us harm. And we must be ready to stand in defence of our security and our prosperity.

The UK should be immensely proud of the role it has played in the alliance since its inception and of the way it has helped lead the organisation during the most challenging period in its

modern history, but, as I told our allies the other day, we are not looking backwards. Our eyes are firmly fixed on the future and on how we can make sure NATO remains the world's greatest defensive alliance, the guardian of free people everywhere and the guarantor of the security of future generations.

In its great charter, NATO commits "to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law."

Those are British values. They are at the heart of our nation. For the past 70 years, brave British men and women have given their all to defend our nation. We are determined to do everything in our power to ensure the alliance continues to guard our great liberties for another 70 years and beyond.

**Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab)**  
I welcome this opportunity to debate the role of NATO. The timing is particularly appropriate, with the debate coming ahead of the NATO summit next month. The alliance is the cornerstone of our defence and our collective security, and Labour Members are proud of the role our party played in its founding. The leadership of Clement Attlee and his Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, was so instrumental in setting up the alliance in 1949. Bevin moved the motion "That this House approves the North Atlantic Treaty".

That established NATO. He spoke in that debate of the backdrop of growing global instability and the shared determination of the 12 founding members to avoid any return to conflict. The increasingly aggressive actions of the Soviet Union drove the Government to consider, as he put it,

"how like-minded, neighbourly peoples, whose institutions had been marked down for

destruction, could get together, not for the purpose of attack, but in sheer self-defence.”— [Official Report, 12 May 1949; Vol. 464, c. 2011-2013.]

Bevin was clear that the creation of the alliance was not an aggressive act but was instead about deterrence, a fundamental principle of NATO to this day. The Atlantic treaty was to send a message to potential adversaries that NATO’s members were not a number of weak, divided nations, but rather a united front bound together in the common cause of collective self-defence.

**James Heapey (Wells) (Con)**

Last year, the Labour party leader was asked about article 5 of the NATO treaty and he responded: “That doesn’t necessarily mean sending troops. It means diplomatic, it means economic, it means sanctions, it means a whole range of things.” Will the hon. Lady clarify from the Dispatch Box now that, if one of our NATO allies were attacked militarily and he were Prime Minister, he would respond with military action?

**Nia Griffith** I will confirm that Labour 100% supports NATO and, as the Leader of the Opposition has made absolutely clear, we want to work within it to promote democracy and to project stability. That is exactly what we would do if we were in government.

NATO’s founding was not meant in any way to undermine or detract from the primacy of the United Nations; rather, it was to work alongside the UN, in full conformity with the principles of the UN charter. The generation that established NATO, the one that endured the horror and destruction of two world wars, were keenly aware of the overriding need to achieve peace and stability wherever possible. When he outlined article 5’s implications and its guarantee of collective security, Bevin told the House: “This does not mean that every time we consult there will be military action. We hope to forestall attack... We have to seek to promote a peaceful settlement.”— [Official Report, 12 May 1949; Vol. 464, c. 2020-2021.]

Indeed, the principle of settling disputes by peaceful means is articulated clearly in article 1 of the NATO treaty.

Today, the alliance has grown to 29 members and, as well as its central role of ensuring the security of the north Atlantic area, NATO supports global security by working with partners around the world. NATO supported the African Union’s peacekeeping mission in Sudan and has worked alongside the European Union’s Operation Atalanta to combat piracy in the gulf of Aden off the horn of Africa. NATO offers training, advice and assistance to the Afghan national security forces through the Resolute Support mission. In addition, the NATO training mission in Iraq provides support and mentoring to Iraq’s armed forces personnel. The alliance has also assisted with humanitarian relief efforts, including those in Pakistan after the devastating 2005 earthquake and in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Russia’s recent actions, including its disgraceful and illegal annexation of Crimea and the Donbass in 2014, have led to renewed focus on the immediate security of the alliance area and, indeed, the need to secure NATO’s eastern border. At the 2016 Warsaw summit, the allies resolved to establish an enhanced forward presence in the Baltic states and Poland as a means of providing reassurance to those NATO members and a credible deterrent to potential adversaries. The tailored forward presence in the Black sea region makes an important contribution to regional security there.

I have had the privilege of visiting Estonia twice, and I have met our personnel serving there as part of Operation Cabrit. It was clear from our conversations with the Estonians that they truly value our presence there, particularly as they have worked so closely with our personnel in Afghanistan. The Estonians themselves have offered to help another NATO ally, France, with its mission in west Africa. For them, that is about offering reciprocity for the security that NATO allies give them to maintain

their freedom in Estonia. They know that the collective protection of NATO is what makes them different from Ukraine.

Although the provision of deterrence through conventional means in Estonia, Poland and Romania is of great importance, we must also be alive to the risk that adversaries, including non-state actors, will increasingly deploy hybrid and cyber-warfare and use destabilising tactics specifically designed not to trigger article 5. We have all heard the reports of how Russia has used cyber-warfare; indeed, when I visited the cyber centre in Estonia, I heard about how Estonia has had direct experience of a cyber-attack that affected major computer networks throughout the country, and about what the staff there did to combat it. That was a reminder that when we reflect on the state of our own defences—as the Government are currently doing with the modernising defence programme—we must bear in mind the need to invest in the whole range of conventional and cyber-capabilities, and not to view it as an either/or situation.

The Warsaw summit communiqué, which set out plans for the enhanced forward presence, also stated that “deterrence has to be complemented by meaningful dialogue and engagement with Russia, to seek reciprocal transparency and risk reduction.”

Of course, Russia’s aggressive stance, and her repeated assaults on our rules-based international system, have made any productive engagement nigh on impossible. The response to the recent poisonings in Salisbury, for which we hold Russia responsible, demonstrated the strength of the alliance in the face of Russian aggression, with a great number of our allies, and NATO itself, joining us in the expulsion of diplomats. It is none the less positive that the NATO-Russia Council has met recently, because we need to use any and all opportunities for dialogue. What is perhaps most worrying about the current state of affairs is that even at the height of the cold war we maintained lines of

communication, which are essential to avoid misunderstandings that can lead to very rapid escalations. There is currently far less engagement.

Our co-operation with allies in Estonia and Poland highlights the importance of the interoperability of our equipment in enabling us to work closely with other NATO members in a variety of settings. That is something that was raised with me when I visited NATO headquarters in Brussels shortly after I took up my post. It was clear that NATO wishes to see greater harmonisation in equipment. Although I recognise that decisions about defence procurement must of course be taken freely by sovereign states, it clearly does make sense to maximise the opportunities to work together and to avoid unnecessary duplication, wherever possible.

Of course the need to invest in the equipment necessary for NATO missions merely adds to the case for proper levels of defence spending. NATO allies are committed to the guideline of spending a minimum of 2% of their GDP on defence, with 20% of that total to be spent on major equipment, including research and development. Only a relatively small number of NATO members can even claim to be hitting the 2% figure at present, and it is right that we encourage all allies to meet the NATO guidelines, as the 2014 Wales summit communiqué made clear.

We must lead by example. The simple fact is that the UK is barely scraping over the line when it comes to our own levels of defence spending. The latest Treasury figures for the year 2015-16 show that the Government spent 1.9% of GDP on defence. The International Institute for Strategic Studies has also concluded that UK defence spending is not reaching 2% of GDP.

The reality is that the UK only appears to meet the 2% in its NATO return because it includes items such as pensions that do not contribute to our defence capabilities, which Labour did not include when we were in government. Whichever way we look at it, the truth is that

the deep cuts that were imposed in 2010 and the implementation by the Conservative party of those cuts in the years following mean that the defence budget is now worth far less than it was when Labour left office. Defence spending was cut by nearly £10 billion in real terms between 2010 and 2017, and our purchasing power has been cut dramatically owing to the sharp fall in the value of the pound.

I note that the Minister for defence people, the right hon. Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), who is no longer in his place, has said recently that he would like to see defence spending rise north of 2.5%. I would be grateful if the Secretary of State could clarify whether this is, in fact, now Government policy, or whether it is simply another plea, which will, doubtless, be rebuffed by the Chancellor.

I know that there is concern across the House about current levels of defence spending, as the hon. Gentleman has just indicated. The recent findings of the National Audit Office that the equipment plan is simply not affordable, with a funding gap of up to £20.8 billion, will have done nothing to assuage this. As I have said many times, the Government will have support from Labour Members if the modernising defence programme results in proper investment for our defences and our armed forces, but there will be deep disquiet if the review merely results in yet more cuts of the kind that have been briefed in the press in recent months.

The UK's decision to leave the European Union means that our NATO membership is more important than ever. Although we have always recognised NATO as the sole organisation for the collective defence of Europe, and defence has always been the sovereign responsibility of each EU member state, it is none the less the case that from March 2019 we will lose our voice and our vote in the EU Foreign Affairs Council and in many other important committees. We must therefore look at other ways of co-ordinating action with European partners where it is in our interests

to do so—for example, in defending the Iran nuclear deal, which was so painstakingly negotiated and risks being completely trashed by President Trump.

It is also very important that we retain the position of Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe once we have left the EU and that we resist any attempts to allocate that role to another European state. Ultimately, Labour believes very firmly that Brexit must not be an opportunity for the UK to turn inwards, or to shirk our international obligations.

**Mark Francois (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con)** I do not know whether the House is aware, but I was born in the constituency of the right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn), so I ask the hon. Lady: if the right hon. Gentleman were to become Prime Minister, would it be his intention to declare our nuclear deterrent to NATO as it is currently declared?

**Nia Griffith** We have made our position on the nuclear deterrent absolutely clear. We support the nuclear deterrent and we support NATO. That is our party policy.

It is all the more important for the UK to use our voice, through organisations such as NATO, to be a force for good in this world. It was the same internationalist outlook that inspired Ernest Bevin when he said: "In co-operation with like-minded peoples, we shall act as custodians of peace and as determined opponents of aggression, and shall combine our great resources and great scientific and organisational ability, and use them to raise the standard of life for the masses of the people all over the world."— [Official Report, 12 May 1949; Vol. 464, c. 2022.]

I sincerely believe that NATO can still be that stabilising influence in an ever-changing world, and a strong and resolute force for the values of democracy and freedom that we cherish.

Power in America today is control of the means of communication.

Theodore H. White

## Continued From Page 24

pledged to repeal, but this is being effected more quietly.

Salvini has been devastatingly effective in a few weeks. The Dublin Agreement whereby migrants are registered and held in the country of arrival has impacted on Italy. Migrants have been humanely treated and generally have been generously assimilated. But other EU countries, apart from Merkel's Germany, have refused to take migrants and borders have been sealed, despite the Schengen free movement of people. Italians are unhappy about this. Another contentious issue has been the fact that Turkey, a non-EU member, has been paid to receive and hold migrants. Salvini has capitalised on the unfairness of Italy's position and has orchestrated anti-migrant sentiments in Italy and Europe. But he has made the EU jump and listen to Italy. He has achieved the political celebrity status that he obviously needs. He is reported as saying that he would like to lead the far right in Europe who, he says, are the only ones willing to listen to those disenfranchised and disregarded by the current political class. Within or without the EU?

Current polls show Salvini personally running more or less level with Di Maio. At the election they were 18% and 32% respectively. Both parties scored well in the recent local elections. The left had a disastrous showing losing several red strongholds, while Silvio Berlusconi's popularity shrunk significantly. But polls show that between 60% and 70% of voters approve of Salvini's stance on migrants, while around 30% call him a racist.

Journalist Sciltian Gastaldi wrote an article in *Il Fatto Quotidiano* that had a sinister ring. The headline echoed Carlo Levi's book (*Christ stopped at Eboli*) and was: "*Christ stopped at Pontida*". He referred to the recent *Lega* rally in the northern town of Pontida (also used by Bossi and Maroni for *Lega Nord* rallies in the past). The sinister reference was to Benito Mussolini. Levi was exiled to the south by Mussolini's government because of his anti-fascist beliefs. In the book the locals say that *Christ stopped short of here, in Eboli*, meaning that they have been bypassed by Christianity and morality.

Gastaldi goes on to discuss his analysis of the position of migrants in Europe. There are several

other articles in the press that make similar points. But the writers are part of the educated 30%, those "*that read books*" while he says that the majority gullibly follow someone like Salvini. "*They are pleased with the "hard fist" of leaders*", without questioning their ethics.

Paolo Farinella, a priest, makes some interesting points in *Il Fatto Quotidiano*. Europe has always exploited Africa for valuable commodities and sold their people as slaves. Precious metals are still exploited to sustain the world's modern technology without ethical regard to the workers, their conditions and the local social unrest that is triggered (The Congo is mentioned). And now, he says, we close Europe to them and leave them to die in the Mediterranean. The title of the article makes a riveting point: *What happens when Africa closes their doors to us?*

Now Salvini is talking about arming Italian police with tasers. Does he foresee discontent?

### FEAR

If you go to the jihadi barber today  
you could get your throat cut  
they say.

Don't opt for a shave  
if you have to go there  
for an open razor can't always behave.  
While the electric clippers  
buzzes around your head  
you could keep thinking Jack-the-Ripper.

A car outside roars down the street,  
nervous glances backwards,  
no bodies yet for death to greet.

Here is a man from Iraq,  
keeps looking out of the window,  
one customer only this morning,  
his business is a wreck,  
his shop a reflection of Bagdad,  
leather settees, chromium chairs,  
the apprenticed barber sits sad,  
his perfumed oils, his butterfly touch,  
his charm of the souk

wasted by an emotional putsch.

W.J.Haire.

# Listening to Italy

by Orecchiette

## WHO IS THE REAL PRIME MINISTER?

The UK press has suddenly become interested in Italian politics because of its move to the right since the March elections. President Mattarella took more than two months to negotiate around a political stalemate and the result was an odd and unexpected coalition. The leader of the largest party, Movimento 5 Stelle's (M5S), Luigi Di Maio was joined in government by the leader of the centre right coalition's largest party, Matteo Salvini of *La Lega*. This is the first time that either party has held power nationally.

M5S are anti the political class, "the casta", anti-corruption and voter-centred. Many of the group's decisions are made by an on-line poll of voters. Many M5S members were opposed to Salvini's policies and therefore were against sharing government with him. An *Il Fatto Quotidiano* article of 4 July summed up the continuing alienation of many to their party in government: "Now I do not recognise you any more: where are you going? What are you becoming?". Although it must be said that M5S has actually gained a fraction of support in the polls at the start of July.

Matteo Salvini was once a communist but he ran on a right-wing manifesto in the election. He admires Donald Trump and also Tweets. Umberto Bossi and Roberto Maroni, the two founder members

of *Lega Nord*, think him an opportunist, do not support him and avoided appearing at a recent rally. *La Repubblica* reported them saying: "Just because you have taken votes doesn't mean you are right." But Salvini has taken *Lega Nord*, which worked for the separation and independence of the north of Italy, and changed it. He organised and won seats nationally. He changed the name to *La Lega* and rebranded its symbol to be blue rather than the previous green.

On 3 July Andrea Monaci wrote in *Urbanpost* that the "authoritative paper *The Guardian*" had reported that the former mayor of Reggio Calabria had helped Salvini win votes with 'Ndrangheta mafia help. The mayor's mafia link has never been proven, although he has been jailed for fraud. The article says, "The English newspaper tells us something well known, although not very highlighted by the Italian media".

Before the election Di Maio drew up a list of public figures who he said he would appoint to his government should he win. There was a famous football coach, who actually refused the future nomination. The new Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte's selection was proposed at this time. Unlike the UK, the Italian Prime Minister does not have to be a member of parliament and previous premiers Matteo Renzi and Mario Monte were not. The very important distinction here

is that both men were political figures with a manifesto and strong mission, while Conte is a civil and commercial lawyer with no political experience. His role is to work with the two Deputy Prime Ministers, Di Maio and Salvini, to lead the government, with no manifesto of his own. A powerful position with no actual power.

Renato Mannheimer a senior pollster and professor wrote in *Libero* saying that it was a disaster to have a Prime Minister who isn't one. And, predictably, in the short time since the election, Matteo Salvini has moved to occupy the political vacuum that is Prime Minister Conte. He has disregarded, indeed sidelined, Di Maio who lacks the presence, force and guile to counter him. He has now lost the rather innocent jubilant glow of the immediate post-election period.

In government Salvini immediately put his anti-migrant manifesto into effect. He was helped by a timely crisis in the Mediterranean but he grabbed the opportunity and used it to maximum effect, propelling himself into the role of apparent Prime Minister. Di Maio's role of Minister of Economic Development, Labour and Social Policies lacks the same controversial punch offered to Salvini, who is Minister of the Interior. There are several laws initiated by Matteo Renzi that he has

Continued On Page 23