

Labour Affairs

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The Troublesome 5%

On 22 October Theresa May told MPs that 95% of the withdrawal agreement had been settled. That may be so, although she wasn't wholly forthcoming about what has actually been agreed. The problem is the remaining 5%, which she admitted is largely the thorny problem of the Irish border. The UK and EU have proposed a backstop in Northern Ireland which avoids a hard border if a trade deal cannot be signed before the end of the transition period.

The potentially insuperable obstacle concerns the timing. The UK insists on a time limit to the backstop, until the end of 2021 when the transition period terminates. The EU however is adamant that there should be no time limit. This will effectively keep Northern Ireland in the customs union under single market regulations for an indefinite period, to be determined by the EU. The hard Brexiteers will not tolerate this. And Theresa May's red lines do not allow for it. So what is to be done?

May's proposal, outlined in her speech on 22 October, is for a legally binding temporary UK-EU joint customs union so that a Northern Ireland-only solution is no longer needed, but only if a free trade deal is not agreed. This means that the UK will live under EU rules beyond the 21 months transition period so far agreed. An all-UK 'backstop' has to be part of the withdrawal agreement that must be signed before the end of March next year. Naturally, there is concern among the Brexiteers that this could keep the UK in the customs union permanently; a measure of their lack of trust in Theresa May.

The hard Brexiteers insist that a hard border can be avoided by the use of technology. Boris Johnson is on record as saying that as technology solved the problem of road congestion in London, so technology can overcome what he refers to as

the irritant of the Irish border. But technology for border control is untried in the UK and experts say that nowhere in the world has it operated successfully.

Without a majority in Parliament for the past 18 months May has been dependent on the support of the ten DUP members who insist that Northern Ireland must not be treated separately from the rest of the UK. At present, without knowing which way a number of MPs will vote it is difficult to know what will happen when May presents the final deal to Parliament. Although it is predicted she will need the support of a number of Labour members to get the deal through. Someone has done the maths and estimates that at least 14 will be required.

It's widely assumed that her offer to MPs will be My deal or No deal. A binary choice that will be welcomed by the hard Brexiteers. But a no-deal Brexit could have serious negative consequences for the UK. The Director General of the International Monetary Fund has said that it would be a poor outcome for the UK, involving a lot of pain. On the other hand, Theresa May believes that a no-deal Brexit would be preferable to a Canada-style free trade agreement, the preferred choice of the hard Brexiteers.

A number of MPs however believe a final deal should be put to the people in a further referendum. But this presents problems. What form would the question take? A final deal with its complex detail could result in voter confusion resulting in widespread dissatisfaction. And it would be seen as an attempt to reverse the referendum result of June 2016, undermining voter trust in the parliamentary system.

Referenda per se undermine the authority

of Parliament. The UK is a representative parliamentary democracy. MPs are elected to make decisions on behalf of their electors. They are representatives, not delegates. The final say on the Brexit deal should therefore be left to the elected representatives of the people, not the people themselves. Under section 13 of the EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018, Parliament is entitled to a meaningful vote on the outcome of the negotiations. And Theresa May has said this will be honoured before the end of March 2019.

Europe has been a divisive issue for the Conservative party since Ted Heath took the UK into the EEC, as it was then known, in 1973. Now the party is in total disarray tearing itself apart over EU membership. There is a lack of trust in Theresa May among Conservative backbenchers to deliver what the hard Brexiteers claim the people voted for in June 2016. The Brexit knives are out for May. One backbencher has said that she should bring her own noose to the 1922 Committee, to which all Conservative MPs belong. Others have said May must go and they would be prepared to put the knife in to ensure it happens.

Speculation about a leadership challenge to May has been mounting for months. So far no stalking horse has come forward, but Boris Johnson's ambitions are well known. But even if the required 48 letters are delivered to the Conservative Chief Whip triggering a leadership contest, it is extremely unlikely he would unseat May. This would require 158 of the 315 Conservative MPs to vote against her. Johnson may be popular with the membership, but he is seen as a loose cannon by many of his parliamentary colleagues.

Labour has the opportunity to speak for the nation as a whole. But it is mostly silent on the most

crucial issue facing the UK in decades. Labour simply insists that any deal must pass its six tests. One of which is that a deal must offer "the exact same benefits as membership of the single market and customs union". This will be widely seen as support for the UK remaining in the EU permanently. Should Labour insist on this it is possible that Leave supporters in Labour held constituencies will turn away from the party at the next general election.

The clock is ticking and the time needed to get the legislation through parliament is tighter by the day. There is a danger that debate will be curtailed, thus preventing incisive scrutiny of a deal, should there be one. Labour needs to up the ante and press May on the fine detail of the 95% of the withdrawal agreement she claims has been settled. What for example has been settled on EU citizens' rights? What will happen to UK citizens in Europe when the UK leaves? Will they continue to receive an increase in their UK state pension? These and other issues affecting UK citizens living in Europe require honest answers from May. Labour needs to stand up for them as well as those who remain in the UK.

If a final deal cannot be supported in Parliament, Labour's preferred option is for a general election. But it is difficult to see Conservative MPs, fearing the election of a Corbyn-led Labour government, voting in favour. The priority for Labour members is to unite around the leadership and assert as strongly as possible a radical social and economic programme which will sweep away the gross inequality and injustice that lies at the heart of British society.

Labour Affairs

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Parliament And World War One

by Dick Barry

Sir Henry Dalziel, Bt, (24/4/1868-15/7/1935) was a British newspaper proprietor and Liberal politician. He was first elected in 1892 for Kircaldy Burghs. Dalziel was an outspoken advocate of home rule for Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

Ronald McNeill (30/4/1861-12/10/1934) was born in Ulster. He was a Conservative MP, first elected in 1892 as a Unionist member for St Augustine's division of Kent. From 1910 he resided at Glenmona House in Cushenden, County Antrim. He was burnt out of the house in 1922.

MILITARY SERVICE. 25 June 1918

Sir H. DALZIEL I do not propose to refer to the larger issues that have been raised in the Debate to-day, although I hold very definite opinions in regard to them, and I hope to get another opportunity on which to express my views. I rise now, in pursuance of notice I gave to the Chief Secretary this afternoon, to ask him a definite question with regard to a matter closely associated with the subject debated to-day, to which the last speaker in the Debate alluded indirectly—that is, how long the Government are going to allow the scandal of young men going to Ireland to escape military service? I raised this question eighteen months ago, and I raised it nine months ago. From the late Chief Secretary I got no satisfaction whatever. I made personal investigation, and found that between the Home Office and the Irish Office continual correspondence was going on, but nothing was done. I call this one of the greatest scandals of the War, that, with the connivance of the Government, young men of eighteen, twenty, and up to thirty years of age have been allowed up to this moment, this very week, this very day, to go to Ireland and carry on business there. Some of them, I know, are spending thousands of pounds a year, which I can prove, in telegrams in order to carry on their business in Dublin, with their head centre in London. The Chief Secretary is just new to his office, but I want him to give us a definite pledge on this point. The

Government are trying the patience of some of their supporters because they are taking men fifty years of age and ruining their business prospects, while they sit still and look on at these young men going to Ireland.

They introduced a short time ago a so-called passport system for Ireland. There was never a greater fraud introduced so far as this matter is concerned. What is the position to-day? If the Chief Secretary goes over to Ireland to-morrow, he will find, if there is room on the boat, plenty of young men. I do not know why they are not stopped by the Government. All the Passport Department does is to keep a black book. If the names of the men are not in that black book, they can go to Ireland at the present moment. That is a scandal. If you go to any of the cinemas in Ireland you will find they are full of young men from England. [An HON. MEMBER: "And from Scotland!"] Probably some of them come from Scotland. They are simply defying the authorities. If you go to any race meetings in Ireland you find that the greater proportion of the people there are not Irishmen. They are men who have gone from this country—bookmakers, with all their paraphernalia. Is the Government sincere in this matter of trying to get men, when they allow these men to cross on the very boats on which members of the Government themselves are crossing? They have all gone to Ireland to escape military service. I want the right hon. Gentleman to tell us that he is going to deal with this matter at once. The Government are trying the patience of many people in this country in regard to this and other matters. I will not detain the House by going into the scandal in London, where you see thousands of young men who are escaping military service

at this moment. I will take another occasion to deal with that, and give my impressions. I ask the right hon. Gentleman is he aware of these things; does he admit them, and is he prepared to take immediate action to put a stop to them?

Mr. SHORTT I quite agree that this scandal, to which my right hon. Friend has alluded, exists. It has existed for some time. But there are very considerable difficulties in the way. In the first place, most of these people who go over to Ireland change their names. They are very difficult to identify, and, unless they can be shown to be absentees, there is no means by which they can be arrested and brought back to this country. This matter has been engaging the attention of the Irish Government for some little time, and the Attorney-General, with the representative of the Ministry of National Service, has gone into the subject very carefully. They have now arranged that these men can all be called up by Proclamation, and the Proclamation is actually prepared, and will be published in the course of a day or two, and all these men will become Reservists and will be, therefore, absentees, and can be taken and handed over, under military escort, to this country. If my right hon. Friend can help us with names, because identity is one of the greatest difficulties the Irish police meet with, it will be of the greatest possible assistance; but I can assure him that the so-called scandal is fully realised, and steps have been taken to meet it and defeat it, and I think when the Proclamation is issued, and these men become, in fact, absentees, they can be dealt with and brought back to this country.

General McCALMONT Is sufficient attention paid to the fact that anyone who crosses to Ireland

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This also has old issues of Problems magazine.

in uniform is practically allowed to pass without any question at all, and anyone wearing the uniform of an officer has only to go to the gangway of a ship, give a name, and say where he is going, and, as far as I have seen, he is allowed to pass without question? Is it not possible that people are making use of that means of going to Ireland?

Mr. BOOTH Thanking the right hon. Gentleman for his sympathetic reply, I would ask the Whips when we may hope to find a copy of Mr. Justice Atkins' Committee's Report upon emergency legislation? It is now three weeks since I stopped this Motion going through. It was called after Eleven o'clock and I objected. We had not yet got a copy of the Report on the subject which this Committee was appointed to consider. We have patiently waited. Surely it cannot be the fault of the printers any longer. Is there any explanation?

Mr. JAMES HOPE (Lord of the Treasury) I can only say, as my Noble Friend said last night. The hon. Member cannot be more solicitous in regard to this matter than we are. The Report is not yet printed. All we can do is to urge the printers.

Question put, and agreed to.

MARQUESS M'SWEENEY. 18 July 1918

Mr. RONALD McNEILL asked the Chief Secretary whether he has any information as to the nationality and antecedents of one M'Sweeney, commonly known as Count M'Sweeney, who resides in Fitzwilliam Square, in Dublin; if he can say whether he is the same M'Sweeney who, being the son of an Irish butcher, but having married a Brazilian heiress named Cavaleranti de Albuquerque, went to Rome in 1894, and in the following year was appointed to a post in the secret service of the Vatican, his name appearing as Petruzio MacSweeney, of Washington, in the Papal Calendar for 1896, about which time he received the title of Marchese from the Pope, and who, after obtaining a divorce from his first wife, was married in 1910 in the chapel of the castle of Schlitz, in the Grand Duchy of Hesse, to Her Highness the Countess Anna von Schlitz, a

relative of the German Emperor, and was afterwards employed in the German secret service; whether M'Sweeney purchased an estate near the South Coast of Ireland in 1914 from the Estates Commissioners; whether, after the outbreak of war, the Government was warned several times by the late Mr. Commissioner Bailey that M'Sweeney's movements and conduct were suspicious; whether M'Sweeney's house in Dublin is a rendezvous for Sinn Feiners; and whether, having regard to M'Sweeney's German relations and to the fact that he has been employed in the secret service both of the Pope and the Kaiser, the Government is satisfied that his present activities are directed to the national advantage?

Sir STUART COATS Before the right hon. Gentleman answers that question, is he aware that the Vatican has no secret service, and also that Patrizio M'Sweeney, who was at one time a Private Chamberlain to Pope Pius X, had all the papal honours of which he had been the recipient annulled by Pope Pius X several years before the death of that Pontiff, and that his name has not for many years appeared in the *Annuario Pontificio* which is the official year book of the Vatican?

Mr. SAMUELS The Marquess M'Sweeney is, as I am informed, the son of a British subject, and was born in France. He held the position of Vice-Chamberlain at the Vatican, but I have no information that he was in the German secret service. His present wife is a daughter of the late Count von Schlitz, and is related to the Kaiser. He purchased some small property in the neighbourhood of Macroom, county Cork, shortly before the War, and was living at Killarney. He was associated with the National Volunteers. He was afterwards regarded with suspicion, chiefly, as I am informed, owing to his wife's German origin. Having obtained permission for his wife to reside in Dublin, the Marquess M'Sweeney took a house in Dublin some time ago. His house has been kept under observation from time to time, but no suspicious persons have been observed to visit there or to associate with the Marquess or Marchioness M'Sweeney.

Mr. McNEILL Will the right hon. Gentleman answer that part of the question referring to the warnings given by the late Commissioner Bailey?

Mr. SAMUELS I have no information about Mr. Commissioner Bailey.

Mr. McNEILL Can the right hon. Gentleman not inquire whether warnings were not given before he and his friends came into office by Mr. Commissioner Bailey?

Mr. SAMUELS I will make inquiries, and I will communicate with my hon. Friend on the subject.

Mr. McKEAN Is it right for a Member of this House to put upon the Paper a series of charges in the shape of questions reflecting most seriously on the character of an honourable man without there being any opportunity afforded on the same occasion for a reply being made to those charges. I know the Marchese M'Sweeney—

Mr. SPEAKER I have frequently pointed out, especially to the hon. Member's colleagues in the past, that it was very undesirable indeed to make charges against persons who had no representatives here, and who had no means of answering. If an hon. Member places a question of this character on the Paper, it must be assumed that he has himself made some attempt at investigation, and that *primâ facie* he believes the statements he makes.

Mr. McKEAN He may be wrong, but if he is wrong what opportunity is there for the party defamed to justify himself—

Mr. SPEAKER The proper course for any person who feels himself aggrieved by a question on the Paper is to communicate with the Minister who has to reply, and the Minister will, no doubt, use his judgment and discretion as to the information which he gives to the House, and will probably state that the information came from the person who was aggrieved.

Mr. McNEILL As the question which I put on the Paper has now been answered by a Member of the Government, as far as I have been able to follow it, substantially in the affirmative as regards the statement

of facts in the question, I wish to ask whether, at a time like the present, a Member of Parliament is not only allowed, but it is his duty when information reaches him, provided he takes care to substantiate it to the best of his ability in the interests of the country, to ask for information from the Government as to whether suspicious characters are or are not sufficiently safeguarded?

Mr. McKEAN Arising out of the answer in which you, Mr. Speaker, gave to me, I wish to put this further question. You suggested in your reply that the proper course for a person about whose character certain statements are made is to communicate with the Minister who will answer the question. Is it the position that a Minister will accept from a person about whom such charges were made such information as authentic and give it here in this House? I do not think he would.

Mr. SPEAKER If he did his duty properly he would say he had received information to a contrary effect or to this effect or the other.

Mr. McKEAN I cannot——

Mr. SPEAKER The time for questions is limited——

Mr. McKEAN This is a very serious question.

HON. MEMBERS "Order, order."

Mr. SPEAKER I cannot allow any further discussion at the present time upon this matter.

STATEMENT BY MR. CHURCHILL. 22 July 1918

Colonel W. THORNE (by Private, Notice) asked the Minister of Munitions if his attention has been drawn to a leaderette in to-day's "Chronicle" in connection with the threatened strike of munition workers, which alleges that a certain firm at Coventry posted a notice worded in such a way as to create an impression that the district rate of wages was to be destroyed; if he is aware that Mr. John Hill, the General Secretary of the Boilermakers' Society, has stated that the action taken by the Ministry of Munitions in restricting the powers of certain firms to freely engage workmen is a considerable extension of the proposals made by the Ministry in June last which the Trade Union Advisory Committee

could not accept; and if he will make a statement on the whole position?

The MINISTER of MUNITIONS (Mr. Churchill) My attention has been drawn to the terms of the notice referred to by my hon. Friend. The notice is not official, and the Ministry of Munitions is not responsible for its wording. It appears to be an inaccurate summary of instructions issued by the Ministry of Munitions, and only to have been posted, according to my present information, in the works of a single firm in Coventry. There is, of course, no question of any reduction in the district rates of wages. Steps have been taken to make this clear.

I may mention that there is at the present time an unsatisfied demand for skilled men to the extent of between 50,000 and 60,000 for whom war work could immediately be found. Skilled men, therefore, have an enormous choice of employment open to them, and this is not appreciably affected by the fact that, in the present scarcity of skilled labour, we cannot allow firms who already have more than their proper share to add to their staffs.

With regard to the second part of my hon. Friend's question, I have seen the statement referred to by Mr. John Hill, the general secretary of the Boilermakers' Society. The action taken by the Ministry of Munitions is no extension of the proposals made in June last. On the contrary, it was clearly foreshadowed by me as one of the safeguards contingent upon the abolition of the leaving certificate as far back as 15th August last year. Perhaps I may read to the House the actual words I used: What is called poaching, or potential poaching, by employers of any fluid labour can be prevented by Regulations under the Defence of the Realm Act, and I shall hold myself free to utilise that. I do not wish to say that what has taken place in the firms upon which we placed the embargo constitutes poaching. Poaching should properly be defined as bribing men away from other firms. I do not make that accusation at all, but over-staffing and the readiness to exaggerate over-staffing belongs rather to the realm of potential poaching, and is, therefore, entirely covered by the statement I made nearly a year ago.

All these proposals, both for engaging additional war munitions volunteers, and for restricting over-staffing by certain firms, were fully explained to the Trade Union Advisory Committee at several meetings in April last. The Trade Union Advisory Committee were not asked to take responsibility which properly belongs to the Government, and I have never sought to throw an unfair burden upon them. At the same time, it is right to say that the result of those conferences led all who were present to the conviction that trade unionists and the workmen generally throughout the country were resolute to repair the damage which the military disasters of March last had caused, and to support the national cause by every means in their power, and especially by liberating men and making munitions. To that conviction we still adhere with the utmost confidence.

Colonel THORNE What efforts are being made to avoid this awful calamity? Does the right hon. Gentleman know that, so far as the executive of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers are concerned, they have deprecated the action taken?

Mr. CHURCHILL I know that every effort has been made by responsible trade union leaders to remove the misunderstanding, and I am in close touch and consultation with them.

Sir H. DALZIEL Will the right hon. Gentleman take steps for the immediate removal of all persons of German origin from any Department of the Ministry?

Mr. CHURCHILL I really do not think that has anything to do with the question.

Sir H. DALZIEL I am sorry you do not.

Mr. CHURCHILL I hope that matter will not be mixed up with this entirely different, complicated, and delicate question.

Sir H. DALZIEL Is it true that there are persons of German origin in important positions in the Labour Department of the Ministry?

Mr. CHURCHILL I must adhere to what I said, that it has nothing to do with this. I understand that

a Committee is about to be set up for the purpose of examining this very question, and I will not in any circumstances prejudice the status of individuals whose cases can be reviewed by a properly constituted and competent tribunal.

Mr. PRINGLE Cannot the Ministry deal with individual cases of alleged over-staffing with skilled men without issuing a general declaration likely to cause unrest all over the country?

Mr. CHURCHILL I do not think we have issued a general declaration. A letter has been sent to certain firms telling them that they have got enough, and must not engage more skilled men.

Mr. GEORGE LAMBERT Why is it that these Labour questions are not dealt with by the Labour Ministry, especially constituted for the purpose?

Mr. CHURCHILL That is a very large question, and I am sure my right hon. Friend will realise that there is no more anxious or thankless task than this work of the Ministry of Munitions. It would be much easier and a less thankless task if we could transfer all these difficulties en bloc to another Department and simply criticise any difficulties they get—and which are largely inherited—in the present situation. But at the present time I am responsible for the welfare of the great mass of munition workers, on whom we depend for our output, and I do not think, looking back over the year, that we have any reason to be dissatisfied.

Colonel THORNE Does the right hon. Gentleman's answer mean that men wanting to leave any particular firm are free to choose any employment they like, with the exception of a certain number of firms who have more skilled men than they require, while there is a shortage in other parts of the country?

Mr. CHURCHILL That is the exact position. It is hardly possible to sum it up more cogently than my hon. Friend has done. Only he might have added that the number of firms which are subject to the embargo are an infinitesimal part of the number of firms open for free engagement.

KILLER GRAVES, TWO OF MANY

Menachem Begin,
raw bloody meat he ate
on the altar of the pagan
at Deir Yassin,
the colour red and the smell of
blood
on the assassins.

The road out of Palestine forlorn
with the foetus
of the Palestinian still-born.

Irgun Zvai Leumi the slasher,
ethnic cleansing
screaming through his
rotten knashers.

Then before he died
some remembered those terrible
deeds
and cried.

Fury drove him beneath the earth
where he lies thinking
of his personal history's dearth.

Ariel Sharon, with Sabra and
Shatila,
he acted strong.
Defence minister for the IDF
he sure had
a killer-fest.

16-18, September, '82
3,000 Palestinians died
in these West Beirut human zoos.
The Christian Phalange
did his dirty deeds.

Their garden of remembrance
now grows weeds.
Then an involuntary rest
for eight long years,
unconscious, bedridden
but never near that sea of salty
tears.

Afterwards, the depths of holy
ground
while other gods look on
and frown.

WJ Haire. 14th August, 2018

TRUMP AND THE SYNAGOGUE KILLINGS

'It's a terrible terrible thing
that's happening
with hate with our country.'

(Splintered words hewed with
carpentry
and to our intelligence an
effrontery)

'The results are devastating.
They had a maniac walk in
and they had no protection.'

(Ingratiating
that stone without sin?
Throw it just a fraction)

'If they had some sort of
protection
within the temple
maybe this would have been
a very different situation.'

(Assassination by drone for
example,
the US overseas perpetual
crime scene
with national ego inflation?)

'To see what is happening
again
and again and again is just
a shame.'

(Won't stop.
Won't take the blame)

'The world is a violent world.
He is a madman and a wacko.'

(The Stars and Stripes unfurled.
Echo Echo Echo)

Wilson John Haire.
29th October, 2018.

Froggy

News From Across The Channel



Mélenchon replacing Marine Le Pen?

The powers that be have broken the puppet Marine Le Pen by rough handling at the last presidential election. The mistake was made of exposing her dangerously in a televised debate with Emmanuel Macron. Her limitations were cruelly exhibited. She spent her time attacking Macron, with a bright smile on her face. He countered that he could attack her if he wanted to, but he had better things to do, solving the problems of France, etc, over an hour in that vein.

Her father had made it clear that he was not seeking high political office in earnest. It was pretended that he did, and that he was a danger to democracy.

He played a useful role as a foil during elections. Then by a silly miscalculation, Marine Le Pen was exposed as really not a serious figure, light years away from power. Her party disintegrated, her symbolic bastion (a village in the North) renounced her, her main ally and heavy weight influence went off to found his own groupuscule, away in Arras. She had to pick up the pieces of the National Front and give it a new name: it is now the National Rally.

That leaves Macron with a problem: who to set up as an opponent to knock down? Perhaps Mélenchon, and his group *France Insoumise* (France Unbowed); the name says it all: France not bowing to who or what? Not to the state? Not to the EU? Not to the US? Is it all of France that is unbowed, or just the members of the group? It's all left vague. One thing is clear, Mélenchon is anti-communist; for example he only accepted collaboration with the Communists if the latter agreed not to stand their own candidates in the presidential election, and in many constituencies.

A recent incident was useful in puffing him up and bringing him to the attention of the population: his house and offices were searched, in the context of supposed electoral expenses fraud, and he reacted verbally violently; the media then found some members who

admired his violence and others who disapproved, and even someone who was creating a new movement called 'Democratic Unbowed France' in a bid to get away from the domination of the leader. Nicely mired and split, he and his group are ready to be put up and knocked down at the next electoral show.

The idea of 'unbowed' is vague enough for Macron himself to use it in his last speech; he said, 'deep down, the French are never ready to submit', meaning something flattering like 'what a good lot of rebels you are, really you are'; does Mélenchon mean more than that? Macron was making a speech to try and regain the moral high ground that he lost this year after various accusations were made against him, and he fluffed his lines a bit too often, using unpresidential vocabulary and appearing in photos that made him look ridiculous. None of these things really matter; De Gaulle must have had worse security personnel than Macron and no one cared. Young presidents can't be expected to have the dignity of old-fashioned types.

He is criticised for these small things, by a press that has little interest in the big issues. It's not that the big issues are not there, but nothing is done in practice by the government, and the media don't complain. Macron had a plan against poverty; he concluded the speech he gave on the subject by appealing to the people: 'I know that together we can eradicate poverty, I have a plan; I will not set out criteria to define success [amazingly, he actually said that], but I know we will succeed'.

Then he had a big plan for agriculture, discussed for months, in particular the vital question of a living wage for farmers. The resulting law did no more than recommend that big firms be encouraged to negotiate prices fairly with the producers, in other words wishful thinking.

In Brittany, a big agricultural area, producers are part of so-called 'cooperatives' which sell them machinery, buildings, animals and animal feed, or machinery, seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, tell them how

to work, and then buy the product at a price they set. The word cooperative is a misnomer, because the producers have no say at any point in the process. They also have no alternatives since the cooperatives drain all agricultural activity in one area. Farmers who tried to protest are told that no other cooperative will take their produce, or else they are given inferior materials to work with, as retaliation. The cooperatives then sell to the supermarkets, which pay the lowest possible price.

In a situation like this, what inducements have the big firms to negotiate fairly? The result is huge pressure on farmers, who work with a minimum of staff in order to make ends meet; that means they have to work on their own at a cost to their physical and mental health, can't pay a wage to family members and can't contribute to reducing unemployment in the countryside. The government needs to set minimum prices, applicable at all levels, and in particular in the supermarkets. That would be revolutionary, humble as it appears.

La Plaine in Marseille

Markets are becoming rarer and rarer as production, as mentioned earlier, is streamlined from large concerns to large supermarkets, leaving no opportunity for small amounts to find their way to local traders and local consumers, a system the French approvingly call '*circuit court*' [local distribution network]. This new phrase is bandied about more and more, in a nostalgic sort of way.

La Plaine in Marseille is a large square with space for a market three times a week, space for sitting and walking around and a play area for children; the surrounding district is home to the much vaunted (in theory) social mixity, it's lively and untidy. The square has over sixty trees.

You can guess what is happening there now; the trees are being cut down and large lumps of concrete put down

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Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

Trump Resigns as World Boss

When Thatcher persuaded Bush Senior to give Saddam Hussein no way out after he invaded Kuwait, I said he was aiming to be 'Bush the Boss-Man'.

Everything we in the Bevin Society said back then reads very well today. We saw that they were ignorantly wrecking the functional secularism and Westernisation of the Arab world. If we didn't anticipate the rise of global terrorism by Islamic extremists, it also didn't surprise us.

Bush Senior had the sense not to go into Iraq. He wanted it ruled by someone similar but *not* Saddam, so he could claim a grand victory. Hoped they would not put the welfare of citizens above the profits of US oil companies. But when he saw a serious alternative emerging, a religious-Shia revolt in south Iraq, he 'accidentally' gave Saddam a free hand to crush it.

Later Presidents understood less. They mistook the official propaganda for truth. Smashed stable autocratic regimes. Were repeatedly surprised

when the result was chaos.

Trump is wrong on many things, but right to see that the US cannot be World Boss. His much-derided business contacts in Russia must have told him that 90% of Russians are deeply offended by their loss of income, security and status after Russia collapsed the Soviet Union. Feel they were tricked, after treating the USA as a friend.¹ He'd know what seems beyond most Western commentators: that Putin is a *moderate* in Russia politics. That a revived Communist Party is his only serious rival.

Liberal intellectuals make as many errors as Trump supporters. But they are much better at finding excuses. And are assessed mostly by their own kind: intellectuals on the right are fewer and much less intelligent.

Intelligent people who don't personally benefit from capitalism are mostly on the left. But from the 1970s, when the Soviet Union ceased to be a useful guiding light, they increasingly got lost. They fail to understand Trump, or see how he can be useful.

Trump's much-derided UN speech breaks with the global policy first attempted by Woodrow Wilson, and revived by Franklin D. Roosevelt: the USA as the world's gun-toting Moral Guardian. The policy Bush Senior tried to turn into a real global hegemony.

Not seeing it so, Trump said:

"We are standing up for America and for the American people. And we are also standing up for the world.

"This is great news for our citizens and for peace-loving people everywhere. We believe that when nations respect the rights of their neighbors, and defend the interests of their people, they can better work together to secure the blessings of safety, prosperity, and peace.

"Each of us here today is the emissary of a distinct culture, a rich history, and a people bound together by ties of memory, tradition, and the values that make our homelands like nowhere else on Earth.

"That is why America will always choose independence and cooperation over global governance, control, and

domination.

"I honor the right of every nation in this room to pursue its own customs, beliefs, and traditions. The United States will not tell you how to live or work or worship.

"We only ask that you honor our sovereignty in return."²

Not that he's consistent: he's not happy with Assad's survival in Syria, and is targeting Iran. But he is also moving away from the system of US-dominated economics that was falsely called Free Trade. It always involved regulation and a lot of state power. It involved large payment by the USA in return for its hegemony being recognised. Trump is giving up on this:

Amusingly, it is People's China that now calls for 'Free Trade'. Meaning '*trade just as free or unfree as we want it*', which is also the real meaning that everyone else puts on it.

Deng, by seeming to move towards full Westernisation, got the world to open up to cheap Chinese goods. The Chinese government retains a lot of control over both finance and nominally private companies. Trump had solid grounds to complain:

"For example, countries were admitted to the World Trade Organization that violate every single principle on which the organization is based. While the United States and many other nations play by the rules, these countries use government-run industrial planning and state-owned enterprises to rig the system in their favor. They engage in relentless product dumping, forced technology transfer, and the theft of intellectual property.

"The United States lost over 3 million manufacturing jobs, nearly a quarter of all steel jobs, and 60,000 factories after China joined the WTO. And we have racked up \$13 trillion in trade deficits over the last two decades.

"But those days are over. We will no longer tolerate such abuse. We will not allow our workers to be victimized, our companies to be cheated, and our wealth to be plundered and transferred. America

Continued From Page 7

to delimitate the building site it will be for the next three years, for its so-called renovation. It will be gentrified and the market is not part of the new plan. Locals had a cheaper plan for improvements, which would have kept the amenities. They are now trying to stop the work progressing, but riot police stand between the workmen and the protesters, spraying teargas at individuals; a photo shows several people holding open umbrellas to try and protect themselves from the hand-held sprays (mustn't be employed less than a meter from someone's face, say the regulations).

As with farmers, people's needs are being ignored; here a place to meet, a place for children to play, trees to look at, walking about where your parents walked before you, where you have your habits, see familiar faces, have congenial places to shop. These are the things that matter, not whether the president said something silly, or how the next elections will be stage managed.

¹ See <https://gwydionwilliams.com/99-problems-magazine/the-mixed-economy-worked-quite-well/> for details.

² <https://www.vox.com/2018/9/25/17901082/trump-un-2018-speech-full-text>

will never apologize for protecting its citizens.”

He’s imposed tariffs against China, but so far China has retaliated rather than concede much. A quarrel with the USA might suit them, as would higher prices for US luxury goods and less admiration for the USA within China. It would ease the long-term goal of persuading Europe to become more neutral between the USA and China.

Japan has also decided that it is best to be warmer towards China. As the BBC put it:

“Trade tensions with Washington have driven Japan and China into an unlikely friendship”.³

Trump might not mind. Less hostility might be good for the less-globalised world he wants to create.

On ‘International Law’, Trump openly states what has always been the real position – the USA is not going to let its people be judged by any sort of impartial international tribunal:

“As my administration has demonstrated, America will always act in our national interest.

“I spoke before this body last year and warned that the U.N. Human Rights Council had become a grave embarrassment to this institution, shielding egregious human rights abusers while bashing America and its many friends.

“Our Ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, laid out a clear agenda for reform, but despite reported and repeated warnings, no action at all was taken.

“So the United States took the only responsible course: We withdrew from the Human Rights Council, and we will not return until real reform is enacted.

“For similar reasons, the United States will provide no support in recognition to the International Criminal Court. As far as America is concerned, the ICC has no jurisdiction, no legitimacy, and no authority. The ICC claims near-universal jurisdiction over the citizens of every country, violating all principles of justice, fairness, and due process. We will never surrender America’s sovereignty to an unelected, unaccountable, global bureaucracy.

“America is governed by Americans. We reject the ideology of globalism, and we embrace the doctrine of patriotism.

“Around the world, responsible nations must defend against threats to sovereignty not just from global governance, but also from other, new

³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-45989353>

forms of coercion and domination.”

Nominal global authorities could only be tolerated for as long as the USA could be sure of dominating them. The USA’s bungling in its brief 1990s dominance and lost status after the 2008 crash. And no one in the US establishment would ever consider allowing US citizens to be subject to global authorities representing actual global opinion. Trump is being logical in saying that the USA will no longer pretend.

Most important of all, he avoided bad-mouthing Russia. Just some mild remarks about Poland building its own pipeline to get natural gas from Norway via Denmark.⁴

Trump Upholds Feed-the-Rich

Trump remains deluded on the US economy. Claimed success, where most people see injustice and failure. The *New York Times* noted:

“Donald Trump campaigned for the presidency claiming ‘the world is laughing at us.’ Now it really is laughing — at him.

“Apparently mistaking the United Nations General Assembly for a campaign stop on Tuesday, Mr. Trump opened his annual address — usually a somber occasion for a president to assess the state of the world — by boasting that his administration ‘has accomplished more than almost any administration in the history of our country.’

“That’s when the other world leaders started chuckling.

“‘Didn’t expect that reaction,’ Mr. Trump said, like a comic in a roomful of hecklers, ‘but that’s O.K.’

“Actually, it’s not O.K. America’s president is now openly derided in the most important international forum.”⁵

But the main economic problem is policies he inherited from Ronald Reagan. Most critics of Trump would not denounce it as the nonsense it is:

“A century or more ago, 80% of bank lending, went to businesses for genuine investment. Now, less than 4% of financial institutions’ business lending goes to manufacturing — instead, financial institutions are lending mostly to each other, and into housing and commercial real estate.

“Investment rates in the UK’s non-financial economy since 1997 have been the lowest in the OECD, a club that includes Mexico, Chile and Turkey. And in Britain’s supposedly “competitive”

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baltic_Pipe

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/25/opinion/editorials/trump-un-general-assembly-laughter.html>

low-tax, high-finance economy, labour productivity is 20-25% lower than that of higher-tax Germany or France. Resources are being misallocated as finance has become an end in itself: unmoored, disconnected from the real economy and from the people and real businesses it ought to serve.”⁶

It began before Reagan, but he smoothed the US public into believing that their success after World War Two was the ‘miracle of the market’. That the curbs imposed in the 1930s New Deal and its pattern of vast government spending were a burden on that success, not its cause.

His opponents conceded, with Bill Clinton saying, ‘the era of big government is over’.⁷ In fact it continued — but calling state spending an aberration made it easy to bias it towards the needs of the rich and powerful.

The lightly-regulated capitalism of the 1920s was not restored. But many rules that business found inconvenient were removed. And almost all of the wealth created in the USA since the 1980s has gone to a tiny more-than-millionaire class.

Most economists insist that massive speculation is essential to economic health. I see it as no more useful than gambling or the supply of drugs to addicts. Maybe even more damaging to ordinary people. But the speculators take good care of economists, mostly without anything as crude as an actual bribe.

They also believe their own nonsense:

“The ‘businessman fallacy’—the notion that a rich businessman (never a woman) can run government better than a mere politician—is Donald Trump’s basic promise. That’s why the combustion of his son-in-law, fellow real-estate heir and senior adviser Jared Kushner—whose business dealings in the White House scream conflict of interest—is so telling. Kushner incarnates the businessman fallacy. Here’s why it is a fallacy.

“It is a lot simpler to run a company than a country. It’s not even the difference between checkers and chess. It’s the difference between checkers and playing simultaneous chess on infinite boards...

“The businessman-turned-politician is often blinded by hubris. This usually stems from the ‘money delusion’: the idea that life is a race to make money,

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/oct/05/the-finance-curse-how-the-outsized-power-of-the-city-of-london-makes-britain-poorer>

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1996_State_of_the_Union_Address

and that rich people ('winners') therefore possess special wisdom.

"Many businessmen imagine they pulled themselves up by the bootstraps in a free market, something that more people could do if only there was 'less government in business'. This self-image usually omits context: the fact, say, that the businessman's father built the company (before being jailed on a ridiculous technicality) or that government enforced his contracts and schooled his employees. A corrective to the businessman's fallacy is to consider what happens to businessmen in Congo: they die young of cholera."⁸

But Blair, the Clintons etc. revered business opinion, even though they correctly said that they alone had the skills to sell it to the public. Trump encourages left-wing feelings among the young by his crude views.

Viewed crudely, the USA is working nicely for the more-than-millionaire class that Trump comes from. That he sees as the source of all wealth:

"The tax system is made for people like Trump, but not for the rest of us..."

"The recent exposé in this newspaper about the Trump family finances shines a light on the ways in which the wealthiest Americans can avoid estate and gift taxes on the transfer of assets to their children. While many of the Trump family schemes described in the report were clearly outside of the law, a disturbing number exemplify commonly used techniques.

"This would not be as troubling if the richest Americans paid more income taxes. But most of the wealth they acquire is not taxed as income. This situation — generous exclusions from income taxes combined with easy evasion of estate and gift taxes — has given the wealthiest a free pass on the costs of running the country.

"To see how the ultrarich acquire their wealth, look at the Forbes 400, an annual listing of the wealthiest Americans. This year an individual needed to have more than \$2 billion to be included, and together the group controls over \$3 trillion. This enormous wealth was generally acquired in one of two ways: through inheritance or by building or investing in a successful business."⁹

Doctor Who and the Real Racists

If you don't normally watch the BBC's SF series *Doctor Who*, you might still enjoy an episode that covers the actual story of Rosa Parks in the 1950s USA.¹⁰

⁸ <https://medium.com/financial-times/trump-kushner-and-the-businessman-fallacy-acdf1c5b114>

⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/11/opinion/trump-bezos-estate-tax.html>

¹⁰ https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7689190/?ref=tttr_tr_tt

She refused to give her seat to a white man on a segregated bus. This started the successful Civil Rights campaign of Martin Luther King.

Teaching real history was an aim from the series' 1963 beginnings:

"The show was created ... to fill the Saturday evening timeslot and appeal to both the younger and older audiences of the neighbouring programmes... Production was overseen by the BBC's first female producer Verity Lambert..."

"Historical stories were intended to educate viewers about significant events in history, such as the Aztec civilisation and the French Revolution; futuristic episodes took a more subtle approach to educating viewers, such as the theme of pacifism in with the Daleks."¹¹

Many previous episodes dealt with racism among invented species. Also in the historic past, and sometimes inaccurately. Twice, non-white companions have worried about being made slaves in a past Britain. Britain only ever had large-scale slavery for its own people, some sold to Ireland and others to the Islamic world.¹² Race-based slavery began centuries later, in colonies where Africans could work hard in hot climates that would have quickly killed European labourers. Though in the West Indies, most plantation-owners found it more economic to work slaves so hard that most died in a few years and could be cheaply replaced. Brutal though it was, slavery in the Southern USA let those populations increase.

It left a problem for settlers of mostly English origin. Whereas French and Spanish colonies had race bias, all English settlements imposed absolute racism. The US North did not allow slavery but was always unfriendly to non-whites, even if they'd lived there for generations.¹³ That side of history has not so far been touched: it was included in another little-known series called *Timeless*, which however was marred by a silly Sinister Conspiracy.

It is still good to have done it. And it is to the credit of actress Jodie Whittaker, playing a version of The Doctor who has just changed sex, that it was much as it might have been with any previous version.

Brazil, Where the Politics is Nuts

The elections of a Far-Right candidate is the big news. But Brazil was already working badly.

The deposition of the Workers Party's

¹¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctor_Who_\(season_1\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctor_Who_(season_1))

¹² <https://gwydionwilliams.com/40-britain/680-2/>

¹³ <https://gwydionwilliams.com/52-usa/both-sides-were-racist-in-the-us-civil-war/>

elected President and the barring of their best candidate was a scandal, as I have detailed elsewhere.¹⁴ But it goes deeper than that.

Elections were for both President and Legislature, with an absurd number of parties. Thirty-five of them stood, and thirty got at least one seat.¹⁵ Many countries have a cut-off: Germany excludes parties with less than 5% of the vote. Assuming the same voting, in Brazil there would only have been nine parties with seats. Similar parties would merge.

Bolsonaro's Social Liberal Party resembles the Nazis in suddenly going from the margins to strength. In 2014, 808,710 votes for the Chamber of Deputies and no seats. This time, nearly 11.5 million and 44 seats.

They are still not very powerful in a Chamber of 513 members, plus 4 out of 81 for the Senate. I see them as I see Trump. A regrouping of the Centre-Right, not a looming fascism.

Snippets¹⁶

Hurricanes

I said last month that for weather, 'Abnormal is the New Normal'. The world continues to have far more large hurricanes than normal.¹⁷

Japan Recovers

"For a country that has seen its population shrink in the 21st century, the economy has actually done pretty well. Since 2000, its per capita GDP growth is roughly on par with other G7 economies, and in the wake of the global financial crisis, its average growth was second only to Germany's. Today, the economy is at near record low unemployment and business and consumer confidence are up."¹⁸

They had a 'lost decade'. They are now a normal economy.

I had previously wondered if they *intentionally* stalled their economy in the early 1990s, to avoid US hostility when they were seen as the main rival.

I still wonder.

¹⁴ <https://gwydionwilliams.com/newsnotes-historic/2018-newsnotes/news-blog-october-2018/#Toc527801933>

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brazilian_general_election,_2018#Congress

¹⁶ Previous Newsnotes at the Labour Affairs website, <http://labouraffairsmagazine.com/past-issues/>. Also <https://longrevolution.wordpress.com/newsnotes-historic/>. I blog occasionally at <https://gwydionmw.quora.com/>.

¹⁷ <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/05/10/us/2018-atlantic-hurricane-season-fast-facts/index.html>

¹⁸ <https://www.quora.com/What-financial-lessons-can-other-countries-learn-from-Japan>

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: In the Armistice Centenary: A foot soldier's Remembrance and Reflexion

(1) "Soldier On"

(2) The Veterans for Peace UK

"You talk of better food for us, an' schools, an' fires, an' all:

We'll wait for extry rations if you treat us rational.

Don't mess about the cook-room slops, but prove it to our face

The widow's uniform is not the soldier-man's disgrace.

For it's Tommy this, and Tommy that, an' "chuck him out, the brute!"

But it's "Saviour of 'is country" when the guns begin to shoot;

An' It's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' Anything you please;

An' Tommy ain't a blooming fool – you bet that Tommy sees."

"Tommy," poem by Rudyard Kipling, first published in "Barrack-Room Stories," 1892.

(1) "Soldier On"

I saw a play the other night: "Soldier On," performed by several former servicemen – and women - in a large cast, which included professional actors, many with military backgrounds, including service in Northern Ireland. It works so well artistically, you'd have to consult the programme to work out who were the military vets and who the actors. In one case, though, it was obvious. An ex-Royal Marine, now turned successful professional actor lost a leg, in the Afghanistan war. He performed with exposed prosthetic – waving it over his head at one point, for black comic effect, while balancing, perfectly, on the other. It is a powerful, fleeting, image of the triumph of physical – and mental – resilience over adversity and, is, rightly, depicted on the play's programme cover.

In the words of Amanda Faber, an award-winning producer/writer and director for TV, Cinema and Theatre, responsible for this production - whom I had the pleasure of meeting on the night, along with cast members - the play, which has been performed up and down Britain and just come to London, can be summarized as follows. "A group of veterans and actors rehearse a play about a group of veterans and actors. The bonding, the humour all help to put them back together again. It's a story about surviving the forces, dealing with traumatic experiences and what happens when you leave the military family."

In other words, its premise is the cathartic power of storytelling in the healing process. This is something Amanda feels so passionate about that, in a busy life, she founded and guides the Soldiers Arts Academy (soldiersartsacademy.com)

Yes, it was all Pongos and Bootnecks amongst the characters – no representation from the Andrew, my British service background. No Airy Fairies either. Nor Sky Pilots – an interesting omission about a play on the theme of life, death and the whole damn teleological thing. Compare how O'Casey dealt with the latter in "The Silver Tassie"? The exhausted squaddies lying in their muddy trench in a lull in the murderous, hopeless, unnecessary war singing "We're here because we're here because we're here..."? A favourite theatrical moment of mine.

The most impactful moment in wartime drama, though, has to be the execution scene in the early 1960's film, "King and Country," based on a play by John Wilson which I saw earlier this year, revived, no doubt, for this Armistice centenary year and doing the rounds of the national fringe theatre. Sometimes stage plays have more dramatic intensity than the filmed version of the same story; and sometimes the reverse. "King and Country" is an example of the story-telling power of cinema.

In the film, a shell-shocked soldier is found guilty of desertion by a field court martial despite all the evidence presented that this was not premeditated desertion but mental collapse after living through the horrors of four years of war, culminating in having been covered in the liquidized body parts of his mate blown to smithereens beside him. So, the decision is made "higher up" to shoot him, "pour encourager les autres" on the eve of another "push."

But the execution is botched. The soldier (played by a young Tom Courtney) lies in his own blood and filth in the mud, still conscious. It is the execution party officer's job to finish him off, or administer the "coup de grace," as they would say in the Officers' mess. The officer (played by Dirk Bogarde) draws his '45 revolver, cocks it, kneels down and pushes it towards the half open bleeding mouth of the prone Courtney. As he is about to have his head blown off, Courtney is heard to say in a pathetic mumble: "Sorry, sir." Picture it. "Sorry"... "Sir." And then oblivion.

He is sorry to be putting Bogarde through this dreadful experience. English class deference. The tragedy of lions allowing themselves to be led by fecking donkeys! To be fair to the officer character played by Bogarde, he too is a victim of the murder machine that was the British Army in WWI. In another time he could have been the high-ranking

ex-officer in the cast of "Soldier On" who hasn't a misanthropic bone in his body, exuding "noblesse oblige" and man's humanity to man – even egalitarianism, insisting on being called Tom, not "Sir."

In the same film genre "A Month in the Country," 1988, we see two such young WWI veteran officers, played by Colin Firth and Kenneth Branagh, attempting to find themselves by immersion in their pre-war passions: one is an art restorer/conservationist (the Firth character); the other an archeologist (Branagh). The film doesn't show what they've been through with flash-back, flash-bang, action scenes, but, subtly, through a sensitive portrayal of their symptoms: the Firth character's stammer, Branagh's 'comfort' hole in the ground - into which he can dive when the ever-present remembered guns begin to roar - discretely hidden in the tent he occupies in the middle of his archeological digging site.

Once, during a love scene in beautiful, sunlit woodlands, a million miles from the killing fields of France – a farmer, out of vision, discharges a shotgun at some crows. This sends the Firth character diving for the ground, at the feet of the woman he's courting, clawing into the earth to escape from his demons. And a tender moment is shattered, never to re-emerge with the same intimacy and promise.

"A Month in the Country" is mentioned here because it shares the same theme. Though, what was for a long time called "shell shock," wrecker of many soldiers' relationships as well as their own lives, is now known as "PTSD" – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

In "Soldier On" there is a moment when the director of that play within the play, in exasperation with his cast, slams the heavy file of his directorial notes onto the wooden floor of the stage causing a loud bang – and sends the cast diving in all directions. We get it. This isn't playacting the veterans are involved in, it's serious shit. There is much at stake: people's mental health – and lives. To paraphrase Yeats: "tread softly, Mister Theatre Director for you tread on my nightmares." And we see the Director learn that lesson in further dealings with his cast.

In a generally favourable, and

sympathetic review of "Soldier On," acknowledging the quality of the production, theatre critic Christopher Hart writes in his piece in The Sunday Times: "One thing is certain about PTSD. It's over-diagnosed." He makes some grudging exceptions of those who experienced the most traumatizing moments in recent military encounters and bemoans the emphasis of modern theatre on the hidden injuries of war, not the heroism and gallantry.

Amanda Faber, Producer of the play would disagree with Hart and PTSD. She told me there's a veritable "sunami" of PTSD ahead in the Britain, citing the now identified delay between traumatic experiences of war and acting out the symptoms: the Vietnam war's delayed impact on US veterans being an example.

"There's a sense" Hart writes, "that the only kind of soldiers we should pay attention to now aren't the professional, highly trained combat forces who perform so outstandingly when put to the test, but those damaged souls who return home in need of care.... What you are never going to see on a modern stage or screen is a play about heroism, comradeship, sacrifice even the raw (if for some civilians, tasteless and taboo) thrills of combat. (Sunday Times, 1st April, 2018) "Those damaged souls who return home in need of care"? Don't you just love it when the right-wing press tell it as it is?

Michael Billington of the Guardian has a different take. Having acknowledged that the play shows the rehabilitative power of putting on a play, he says: "I'd like to have heard if ex-combatants feel a retrospective anger at the sacrifice they were expected to make." (Guardian, 30/10/2018) A fair comment. Another issue is: what about the damage inflicted by the military, in the course of conflict? What about the so-called "collateral" damage to the old, the innocent – and, yes the enemy combatants?

A question I put to one of the actors, invalidated out after long service, with PTSD, over a pint in the bar – to which most of the cast adjourned happy to talk to audience members. I wouldn't have presumed to put Billington's blunt question to him. Instead, I asked how the experience

of being in the play had changed his views of Army life and purpose. His answer was immediate: "180 degrees change." I didn't pry further. I didn't have to.

(2) The Veterans for Peace UK

Over the last year especially I've had a lot of contact with UK military vets, through the Labour Party, in which a number are active members. In the interval, after the First Act I thought: this is a dramatization of all the conversations I've been having with VFPUK members !

VFPUK was founded in 2011, as an open, democratic ex-service persons' organisation. Some of its oldest members saw WWII action and members have deployed in every war in which Britain has been involved.

"As a result of our collective experiences," a VFPUK statement says, "we firmly believe that: War is not the solution to the problems we face in the 21st Century. "We are not a pacifist organisation, we accept the right of self-defence in response to an armed attack." "We work to influence the foreign and defence policy of the UK for the larger purpose of world peace."

There is an idea emerging in some parts of the VFPUK that the time has come for it to consider becoming a part of the Labour Party, through reserved places for vets on local party branches, so that, like trade unions, they can pursue their social agenda more effectively than lobbying from the outside. Conversations have persuaded me that the multiplicity of inter-related social problems unique to ex-servicemen deserves recognition.

Finally, a question to Michael Billington, Guardian Theatre Critic. I first became aware of the VFPUK when a number of them gave testimony of their Iraq experience at Amnesty International's launch of Peter Osborne's book "Not The Chilcott Report" in the summer of 2016, addressing Michael Billington's concerns. But did his colleagues at the Guardian report that conference, and the soldiers' verdict on their experiences of the war?

I thought not.

Review of Andrei Martyanov: ‘Losing Military Supremacy: the myopia of American strategic planning’

by Christopher Winch

Andrei Martyanov¹ has a background of service in the Soviet armed forces. He moved to the United States where he works in commercial aerospace. He writes on military, mainly naval affairs.

What was the Cold War really about?

This is a prominent American international relations scholar quoted by Andrei Martyanov:

“I would say, and I have said many times before, that if the czars still reigned in Russia, that if Lenin had died of the measles at an early age, that if Stalin had never been heard of, but the power of the Soviet Union was exactly what it is today, the problem of Russia would be for us by and large what it is today. If the Russian armies stood exactly where they stand today, and if Russian technological development were what it is today, we would by and large be confronted with the same problems that confront us today.”

Hans Morgenthau at the US Naval War College in 1957, quoted at p.98-99.

In one sense this is highly realistic. The reality of relations between great powers are a constant, no matter who is actually in power. But this quotation takes on a different significance if one of those great powers cannot tolerate the fact that there is another power which places limits on the exercise of its own will and which can prevent it from ordering the world as it pleases.

¹ Atlanta GA, Clarity Press, 2018.

Such is the case with the United States, which wishes to order the world as it pleases, and Russia, which wishes to defend itself and its vital interests.

Russia is a major problem for the US because it is an immovable obstacle. Furthermore, as a great land power it has the potential to disrupt and bypass the ability of the US to control the seas. Control of the seas via eleven Carrier Groups gives the US the ability to intimidate weak powers and, more importantly, to choke international trade at such points as the Red Sea, the eastern Atlantic near Gibraltar, the Malacca Straits and the South China Sea. Suppose these carrier groups are vulnerable to missile attack. Suppose also that east-west trade can simply be re-routed via the Eurasian land mass. Both these possibilities negate the power of the US navy to a very large extent.

Eurasia is Harford Mackinder’s World Island and Russia is the major part of it. According to Mackinder’s geopolitical doctrine, control of the World Island is the key to world domination. This is partly the source of Russia’s power and also of its vulnerability. It has limited access to the sea but is a barrier to the aspirations of other powers. It has been repeatedly invaded over the centuries, including twice between 1812 and 1941. Martyanov stresses that Russia and its people know what war is from painful first-hand

experience of devastation of the motherland by the enemy. It is determined that this shall not happen again. By contrast, the US has never been invaded or humiliated on its home ground. Its experience of war is largely that of intervening abroad and invading or intimidating powers much weaker than itself. The American war machine is designed to do this rather than defend the homeland and to do so in a way that profits American industry, what Eisenhower called the ‘military-industrial complex’. Russia and the US have contrasting military priorities and have developed completely different ways of designing and commissioning military hardware. Relations between the two countries are now probably worse than at any time during the Cold War.

Stalin is the hero of Martyanov’s book. The Soviet Union under his leadership developed the industrial and educational base that ensured that invasion by a hostile power would be crushed. He is at pains to emphasise, however, that the Soviet Union’s power did not just rest on brute industrial muscle. The Soviet Union became a technological force to be reckoned with and they could not have accomplished this without an excellent education system. Furthermore, in order to design, build and operate technologically advanced equipment you need a highly educated populace and armed forces. The story of the Soviet Union’s advances in education is probably the

great untold story (in the West at least) of that country and an important legacy (albeit partly compromised) to the Russian Federation.

Martyanov emphasises that the Russian people are well aware of Stalin's and the Communist party's role in defending the country. Dissidents like Solzhenitsyn, by contrast are regarded dimly. They are seen as out of touch with later generations, disloyal to Russia and inaccurate in relation to Soviet history. Martyanov claims that Solzhenitsyn borrowed and distorted the data and views of Varlam Shalamov, another GULAG resident, exaggerating the number of inmates, failing to compare the Soviet penal system to that of other countries and ignoring the fact that much of the horror of residency in the GULAG depended on the fact that many criminals were incarcerated there. Even conservative Russian orthodox commentators have limited time for Solzhenitsyn:

"The West hates Stalin namely (I think this should be 'mainly' – CW) for restoration of the territory of the historic Russian state, and for Yalta and for Potsdam. These are the outcomes which do not allow them to calm down. You know, I am no Stalinist and I clearly understand that all the nostalgia for Stalin has its roots in a non-stop trampling of our history, making a mockery of the lives of our fathers. It is useless trying to prove to the West that Ivan Grozny (The Terrible) in 30 years of his reign killed 10 times fewer people than Catherine De' Medici killed during the St. Bartholomew's

Day massacre. We are going to be counted as barbarians not matter what, while the West will remain good!"

Natalya Narochitskaya a contemporary Russian Orthodox conservative, quoted by Martyanov, p.107.

Stalin and his successors built up and maintained Russian military strength and technological prowess and it did not completely disappear during the bleak and humiliating Yeltsin years. The best way to understand it is to grasp the following principles. First, the defence of the homeland is an absolute priority and all efforts and all technology must be put in that service. Second, world domination is not the concern of Russia, its vital interests are. Third, Russia will not compete with the naval power of the US and its allies but will seek to neutralise it. Fourth, it will attempt to make itself independent of the West through Eurasian alliances, with China in particular, and will seek, with China, to minimise the importance of those trade routes which the US seeks to dominate.

The most striking, although by no means the only, feature of this approach is Russian expertise in rocketry, missiles, radar and electronic warfare. Martyanov argues that Russian advances in these areas mean that the US mainland is now vulnerable to precision strikes from long range cruise missiles should the Americans try to attack Russia. Their anti-ballistic missile capacity has been neutralised through the Sarmat 2 and Avangard technologies and hypersonic missile technology, together

with cruise missiles renders US naval forces highly vulnerable and effectively useless except to intimidate weak powers near a coastline. Electronic warfare limits the capacities of US forces. The small Russian force invited to Syria to prevent that country being overrun by terrorists is backed up by an '800-pound gorilla' in the form of long-range cruise missiles which can be launched from deep inside Russia and which can imperil US naval forces in the eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf. The integrity of Syria is vital to Russian defence as, should it fall, the way is open for US proxies to attack the southern boundaries of the Russian Federation.

The US is encumbered with very high tech but dysfunctional weapons systems which are not fit for purpose, as the Russians have developed effective means of neutralising and rendering them vulnerable. Much as the US would dearly love to attack Russia, its leaders know that this is not possible because of the punishment that would immediately follow. The world should be thankful that there is at least one power in the world that will not allow the US to ride roughshod over them. It is also high time that the EU started to think seriously about our common trade and security interests with Russia and to co-operate with them instead of acting as a catspaw for the US. Martyanov's book serves as a valuable antidote to the endless anti-Russian propaganda to which even Corbyn and McDonnell sometimes succumb.

THE 'NEW LABOUR PLOT AGAINST THE NHS'

Part three: MORE ON THE 'INTERNAL MARKET'

by Peter Brooke

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS

In my last article I discussed the Griffiths Report of 1983 which began the process by which decision making passed out of the hands of doctors (who had been jealous of their power when the NHS was set up in 1948 but who had already been obliged to share it to a great degree with other health professionals, nurses among them, in the 1974 reform) into the hands of professional managers, but I wonder if I attached sufficient importance to it. According to Darren Williams' book *Clear Red Water* (showing how Wales managed to keep clear of many of the reforms introduced later under New Labour) the numbers of this 'new stratum of general or senior managers ... in England grew from 1,000 in 1986 to 16,000 in 1991 and then to 26,000 in 1995.' Where did they all come from? Surely we can relate this to the revolution that has occurred over the past fifty years in the development of business studies as an academic discipline.

According to a report on UK Business Schools: *Historical contexts and future scenarios* (Evolution of Business Knowledge/Advanced Institute of Managerial Research, 2016):

'Business schools developed late in Britain, but grew rapidly in the latter part of the twentieth century. There were no business schools in British universities before 1965, but by the beginning of the twenty first century there were approximately 120. Whereas in 1961 a university professor could confidently assert that "management has not yet passed the test of being a study discipline in the universities", by 2004 the business and management subject area accounted for one in seven of all students in British universities – and one in five of all postgraduates. In a rapidly growing HE [Higher Education] sector no subject discipline has undergone a more remarkable rise than business and

management.

Another account (a review of Allan Williams: *The History of UK business and management education*¹) 'in 2010 there were more than 250,000 full-time equivalent students studying business and management at foundation, undergraduate and postgraduate levels in publicly funded UK universities, and another 20,000 in private institutions: 15% of all HE students in the UK. There are also over 11,000 academic staff - compared with fewer than 10 in 1945. So that Business and Management is now the largest discipline in UK Higher Education.'

This seems to correspond rather neatly to the explosion of management roles within the NHS.

Those of us who supported the Bullock Report on Industrial Democracy in the mid to late 1970s may remember that one of our arguments was the general incompetence and weakness of British management. We thought that the workers, having a lively interest in the wellbeing of the place where they were working, could do better. But we of course were not the only people who had noticed the problem, and we could be impressed by the energy and commitment shown by the ideological supporters of free market capitalism. I am not in a position to provide a good account of the history of the development of business studies in Britain but if I rely on my memory of what I observed at the time it was happening I would say that the initiative came largely from individual businessmen. It could hardly have come from the Universities, torn as they were between Trotsky and Althusser nor, whatever encouragement they would soon get from Mrs Thatcher, from government in the 1970s. It was, it seems to me, the initiative of determined and intelligent wills with a better idea of their own interests and what to do about them than was being shown at the time among the

¹ <https://www.bl.uk/business-and-management/editorials/book-review-the-history-of-uk-business-and-management-education>

supporters of the working class.

THE DECLINE OF PUBLIC SERVICE MANAGEMENT SKILLS

By contrast I don't know of anything much being done in the field of public service administration. There is an academic discipline called 'Public Administration' but it seems to be concerned with studying how public administration works rather than training public administrators. To quote an academic article published in the early days of the post-2008 crash policy of austerity: 'In the United Kingdom academic endeavour in Public Administration has the reputation for being an old-fashioned backwater, restricted [! - PB] to pronouncing on the functions of institutions like the 'civil service, local government and nationalised industries.' (https://research.aston.ac.uk/portal/files/586481/Introduction_to_special_edition_final_post_acceptance_version.pdf). The article refers to 'David Cameron's claim that there is no public service that cannot be run by the private sector.'

Like 'Business Studies', 'Public Administration' was largely developed as an academic discipline in the US and in its early - inter-war - days it seems to have been genuinely concerned with the idea of public service. But the Wikipedia entry on 'Public Administration' informs us that

'In the late 1980s, yet another generation of public administration theorists began to displace the last. The new theory, which came to be called New Public Management, was proposed by David Osborne and Ted Gaebler in their book *Reinventing Government*. The new model advocated the use of private sector-style models, organisational ideas and values to improve the efficiency and service-orientation of the public sector ...

'Some modern authors define NPM as a combination of splitting large

bureaucracies into smaller, more fragmented agencies, encouraging competition between different public agencies, and encouraging competition between public agencies and private firms and using economic incentives lines (e.g., performance pay for senior executives or user-pay models). NPM treats individuals as “customers” or “clients” (in the private sector sense), rather than as citizens.

In this context the Wikipedia entry on the ‘Royal Institute of Public Administration’ is interesting. It was founded in 1922 ‘through the society of Civil Servants’. Its first President was Viscount Haldane - the Liberal Imperialist who, as we know from Pat Walsh, played such an important role in planning the Great War, and subsequently, after the war, joined the Labour Party. The ‘Society of Civil Servants’ was a union founded in 1918 to represent ‘intermediate class clerks.’ By 1963, as the Society of Public Servants, it had 46,000 members, more than 90% of those eligible to join it. The Institute of Public Administration launched a highly respected academic journal - *Public Administration* - in 1923 and in 1929 it organised a Diploma of Public Administration in conjunction with the University of London. Those were the days when there was some degree of intelligence and a sense of purpose within the union movement. It obtained a royal charter in 1954. But

‘In 1992, against a difficult economic background including public expenditure cuts, RIPA experienced severe financial difficulties and negotiations were initiated to dispose of the International Division as a viable commercial enterprise. Two new companies were formed by the International Division’s staff. The Institute itself was subsequently wound up and two new companies were formed by its staff. Public Administration International Ltd (PAI) which was incorporated on 14 February 1992, continues to operate as an independent company providing international consulting services and study programmes. The International Division was acquired by Capita Group plc and later transferred to the Strategy Group and rebranded

British Expertise International. The Institute itself was wound up.’

THE PURCHASER-PROVIDER SPLIT IN THE NHS

In my previous article, commenting on the introduction of the management structure in the NHS proposed by Griffiths I quoted several commentators saying that the immediate impact was not great - that the clinicians often proceeded as before, regardless. But that would have come to an end with the introduction, in the early 1990s, under legislation prepared by Kenneth Clarke, of the ‘internal market’ or at least, since it was not a real market, of the purchaser-provider split. Very broadly speaking, the purchasers were the District Health Authorities, the providers were the hospitals, but the ambition of the Conservative government was that GPs would agree to be the purchasers. In other words that they, instead of the District Authorities, would receive money directly from government which they would then use to purchase equipment and hospital services on behalf of their patients.

Obviously the ideal for this line of thinking would be that the patients themselves would become the purchasers. The 1979 Conservative manifesto had floated the idea of turning patient into fundholders/consumers through the introduction of an insurance-based scheme on the US (and European) model but this was, in the event, considered politically impossible. The purchaser/provider split was still a very radical rethinking of the British culture of public service management but thanks to Griffiths and, I am suggesting, the rapidly expanding culture of the Business Schools, there was in place the beginnings of a network of managers with some knowledge as to how such a system would operate. One can imagine them being a bit lost in the informal, non-commercial structure of the 1980s, but now they were coming into their element.

THE OLD ORDER

Colin Leys, co-author of ‘The Plot Against The NHS’, the starting point for this series

of articles, has written an account of how the old administrative British culture gave way to the more market driven idea of public service management, in his essay ‘The Cynical State’, originally published in March 2009 in the *Socialist Register*. Leys had been involved in the early days of the *New Left Review* but when the *NLR* under Perry Anderson drifted away from concern with immediate politics to devote itself to pure theory, Leys, together with Leo Panitch (who, as a friend of Ralph Miliband should have been, but wasn’t, mentor to Dave and Ed) parted company to produce the very, perhaps excessively, academic but nonetheless policy orientated *Socialist Register*. Describing the old regime finally broken by Thatcher and Blair, he says:

‘Britain’s previous liberal/social democratic policy regime combined elements of the Liberals’ state reforms of the late nineteenth century with elements corresponding to the interventionist state of the twentieth. The Liberals created a higher civil service recruited competitively from the cleverest members of the same social class, and educated at the same elite private schools and universities, as the elected ministers they served. The idea was that officials of this calibre and background would be in a position to offer elected ministers honest advice and ‘to some extent influence’ them, in a shared ‘freemasonry’ of public service. Because the emphasis was on social and political status, higher civil servants were, like almost all the ministers they served, ‘generalists’, relying for expertise on the advice of professional and technical civil servants – engineers, public health doctors, biologists, etc. For dealing with big issues of a politically sensitive nature they would recommend the establishment of Royal Commissions, composed of eminent experts with powers to commission research and call for expert evidence (between 1950 and 1980 one was appointed, on average, almost every year). For lesser issues that nonetheless called for additional expertise Departmental Enquiries could be set up, also with powers to draw on outside expertise ...

He describes efforts to develop a more Labour, less public school orientated, version of this culture:

‘Thomas Balogh, an economic adviser to the Labour prime minister Harold Wilson in the 1960s, voiced a growing impatience with the higher civil service’s typically humanities-based education and pre-industrial social attitudes, denouncing it as ‘the apotheosis of the dilettante’. In 1966 Wilson created a Department of Economic Affairs to offset what was seen as the Treasury’s bias for financial prudence over economic growth, and a Treasury departmental committee chaired by Lord Fulton (a university vice chancellor) recommended a reorganisation of the higher civil service on technocratic lines. A Civil Service College was established, to emulate the French *École Nationale d’Administration*, and a Civil Service Department took over the Treasury’s management of recruitment, training and promotion.’

But

‘Almost all these initiatives were neutralised, largely by the higher civil service itself. The Department of Economic Affairs was closed in 1969 after only three years. The Civil Service Department lasted longer, but was closed by Mrs. Thatcher in 1981. The Civil Service College survives, but only as a provider of short courses, with no prestige.

One wonders how the public-school system, which produced the cadres for the original idea of a civil service could have ended up producing the likes of David Cameron and Boris Johnson.

AND IN THE NHS

The similar relaxed, ‘paternalist’ organisation of the NHS is described by Rudolf Klein, author of a general history of the NHS - *The Politics of the National Health Service*, 1983. followed in 2006 by an updated version, *The New Politics of the National Health Service*. Klein, formerly a ‘distinguished faculty fellow’ at Yale University School of Management, is more sympathetic than Leys to the market reforms. In his essay ‘The Politics of ideology vs the reality of politics: the case of Britain’s National Health Service in

the 1980s’ (*The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly. Health and Society*, Vol. 62, No. 1, Winter, 1984) he describes the NHS as based on a principle of ‘paternalistic expertise’:

‘It is precisely this emphasis on creating an instrument for the deployment of paternalistic expertise, rather than a system of health care responsive to consumer demands (whether articulated through the political or the economic market), which makes the NHS unique in the Western world. In comprehensive but pluralistic health care systems, like Germany’s or France’s, demands are mediated by a variety of sickness funds. Even in a near-monopoly system, like Sweden’s, control is devolved to local government. But, consistent with its founding ideology, Britain’s NHS is designed to insulate decisions from either individual or political demands so that they may be taken according to rational criteria based on scientific or professional knowledge. Consequently, it divorces political decisions about the NHS’s total budget from professional decisions about the allocation of resources to individual patients. The budget is set annually by central government; the use of resources, however, is determined at the periphery by doctors who are subject to neither audit nor review procedures. While countries like the United States, which have open-ended financial commitments, insist on elaborate exercises in accountability, Britain’s NHS offers almost total autonomy to doctors.’

He argues that this ‘belief in paternalistic expertise’ was intrinsic to British culture, bringing together ‘Fabian reformers like the Webbs, Liberals like Beveridge, and Tories like Joseph and Neville Chamberlain’ and characterised by ‘its suspicion of competition, its reliance on a strong civil service, and its belief in elite consensus engineering’.

In a later article - ‘Risks and benefits of comparative studies: notes from another shore’, *Milbank Quarterly*, Vol 69, No 2, 1991) Klein reflects on the change of culture which has produced the Kenneth Clarke reforms and the extent to which this may be attributed to American influence:

‘One of the triumphs of the NHS, it is conventionally held, is that it manages to provide a comprehensive service both reasonably equitably and extremely parsimoniously. What is much more rarely recognised is the extent to which this achievement depends on the public’s acceptance of the medical profession’s definition of needs: political decisions about resources are, in effect, disguised as clinical decisions. In return for conceding an extraordinary degree of clinical autonomy to the medical profession, the state in fact delegated to it the responsibility for rationing - and thus made it [the rationing - PB] socially acceptable. It is precisely this implicit contract or bargain that is now in question, given the recent changes in the NHS introduced by the Conservative government. In turn, the public’s acceptance of rationing decisions by doctors may well reflect deep-rooted attitudes of deference to professional expertise. These, however, are gradually being dissipated: witness the semantic revolution in public debate that is transforming patients (those to whom things are done, essentially a passive concept) into consumers (those who go out to buy things for themselves, essentially an active concept).’

TOWARDS A NEW ORDER

The most prominent theorist of the ‘internal market’ was the American, Alain Enthoven. Enthoven came to Britain in 1984 to examine the workings of the NHS at the invitation of the Nuffield Trust (at that time the Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust, originally established in 1939 to research the problems of hospitals outside London). He gave his conclusions in a highly influential paper published by the Trust in 1985: *Reflections on the Management of the National Health Service*. It may be a little invidious to evoke Enthoven’s career in military research at the time of the Vietnam War, prior to his developing an interest in health but the temptation is difficult to resist. This is from the account of his career on the Stanford University website:

‘Professor Enthoven holds degrees in Economics from Stanford, Oxford, and MIT. He began his teaching

career in 1955 while an Instructor in Economics at MIT. In 1956, he moved to the RAND Corporation in Santa Monica and participated in continuing studies on U.S. and NATO defense strategies. In 1960, he moved to the Department of Defense, where he held several positions leading to appointment, by President Johnson, to the position of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Systems Analysis in 1965. His work there is described in the book *How Much is Enough?*, co-authored with K. Wayne Smith and published by the RAND Corporation [the book is an insider account of policy making during the Vietnam war under Robert McNamara, 1961-8 - PB]. In 1963, he received the President's Award for Distinguished Federal Civilian Service from John F. Kennedy. In 1969, he became vice president for Economic Planning for Litton Industries [major military equipment contractors - PB], and in 1971 he became president of Litton Medical Products ...

He has been a consultant to the Kaiser Permanente Medical Care Program since 1973. He has served as Chairman of the Health Benefits Advisory Council for CalPERS, the California State employees' medical and hospital care plans. He has been a director of the Jackson Hole Group, PCS, Caresoft Inc., eBenX, Inc. and Georgetown University.'

In a later paper by Enthoven published, again by the Nuffield Trust, in 1999 - *In Pursuit of an improving NHS* - he stresses the limitations of Clarke's reforms but he also expresses himself satisfied with the apparent direction of travel and especially with the continuation of that direction of travel by New Labour, despite its manifesto pledges. He is quite savage in his critique of the NHS as he found it in the 1980s:

'When I came to study the NHS in the 1980s, I encountered a gridlock of perverse bureaucratic incentives. People found that the best way to strengthen their case for more resources was by doing a poor job with what they had. If they were efficient, they would be forced to subsidise the inefficient. They also knew that if they improved the quality of their services, they would attract more patients but not the additional resources to care for them. In other words, "No good deed goes unpunished." The best course for one's career was to please the people in the hierarchy who control one's budget and career, rather than innovating to

make things better for patients. The predominant ethos was to "play it safe, don't make waves, don't risk being seen as hard to get along with, and above all, don't challenge poor performers." By contrast, the incentives for providers in competitive markets generally are to improve the product or service; reduce the cost of producing it; and produce it in just the right amount.'

Clarke's reforms were an improvement:

'The internal market in the NHS was an attempt to introduce some market incentives into a centrally planned, hierarchical system while maintaining universal and free access to health services. It recast the health authorities as purchasers of services on behalf of people in their districts, rather than as higher-level service delivery managers. Each district was to secure the best, most cost-effective services it could for its patients, whether or not those services were provided by the district's own hospitals. The internal market funded districts on the basis of needs-based capitation rather than historical patterns of resource use. It encouraged hospitals to become separate, self-governing legal entities that would earn revenues from health authorities by providing services to area residents. It encouraged general practitioner (GP) practices that would be large enough to accept responsibility for managing an expanded capitation payment for a range of services beyond primary care, including outpatient services and elective surgery. GPs became resource managers.'

But he is dissatisfied. In particular:

'reliable quality-related information is virtually nonexistent in the NHS. Many people appear afraid of it. Before reform there were no systematic reliable data on the costs of services ... [E]ven today what data are available are quite inadequate. For example, the 1998 NHS Reference Costs cover only about 40 percent of inpatient hospital costs ...

'Authorities also lacked freedom to buy selectively. They often were constrained in attempts to change their source of supply. Market discipline requires that some ineffective providers be allowed to fail. However, no hospitals were allowed to do so ...

'In the end, instead of "money following patients," as Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had proposed, patients followed money. That is, they went to where their health authority

had contracted ... But unless patients can freely change providers, a conflict with equity exists. People who reside in areas served by inefficient hospitals get fewer services than do those living in areas served by efficient hospitals. The principle of fairness suggests that the inefficient hospitals should be paid more money so that their patients are not disadvantaged by the hospital's inefficiency. But this would reward hospitals for their inefficiency. If patients could switch hospitals, they could move to efficient ones and leave the inefficient to lose business and suffer the consequences. If patients cannot switch, it is difficult to reform incentives for efficiency ...

In 1997, Labour came to power promising to end the purchaser/provider split and GP fundholding which they had been denouncing vigorously throughout the 1990s, and, with Frank Dobson as Secretary for Health, it seemed as if the promise would be fulfilled. But Dobson was replaced in October 1999 by Alan Milburn and, already in his November 1999 paper, Enthoven could see which way the wind was blowing:

'I find it noteworthy that despite its rhetoric about abolition of the internal market, the New Labour government has preserved its main components: the purchaser/provider split; the trust hospitals; and commissioning of secondary care services by GPs, with primary care groups (PCGs) and primary care trusts (PCTs) for all GPs replacing GP fundholding by some GPs. PCTs, with an average of 50 GPs and 100,000 patients, will serve all patients in their assigned areas and hold the full health services budgets for their patients ... The White Paper, *The New NHS*, makes it quite clear that PCTs will commission [i.e. buy - PB] services. PCTs are an extension of the fundholding and Total Purchasing Pilot (TPP) projects of the Thatcher government. This might actually be more effective and overcome some of the weaknesses in the health-authority-as-commissioner [i.e. purchaser - PB] model. So what exists in today's NHS is an internal market model in a somewhat different configuration. It remains to be seen whether it will be allowed to work'

Which brings us back to the first article in this series, the summary of the book by Colin Leys and Stewart Player, 'The Plot Against The NHS'.

To be continued.

A Letter From Our New Zealand Correspondent

Feergus O'Raghallaigh

Whither?

Recently the FT carried a long piece in its Weekend edition (How social democracy lost its way: a report from Germany) on the condition of the German Social Democrats (SPD). By the paper's Berlin correspondent Tobias Buck, it charted a story of remarkable decline. At the general election of a year ago "the banner-carrier of the German left for more than a century, had lost more than 1.7 million votes. Its share of the vote had plummeted to 20.5 per cent, the party's worst result since the creation of the federal republic in 1949 ..."

It has however been a long, relentless decline: "With one exception, the party has lost votes at every general election going back 20 years. Since 1998, it has shed half its electorate, and there is no sign the decline has stopped."

In state elections in Bavaria and Hesse in recent weeks the rot has been confirmed.

What makes it all so much worse for the party is that 1998 was a highpoint: "... when Gerhard Schröder defeated Helmut Kohl in a landmark election that ushered in the first coalition government at the federal level between the Social Democrats and the Green party. The new chancellor – confident, ambitious, clever – was hailed as a breath of fresh air after 16 years of CDU government."

In truth social democracy is everywhere today at sixes and sevens. As Madawc Williams repeatedly makes the point 'we' or 'progressives' (wherever 'we' are) have won (more or less) on the social and personal agenda but have lost (pretty much entirely) on the economic front. The most media-spectacular example of all of this is probably Ireland, which has imploded from being coherent-Catholic to being almost inchoate hedonistic-liberal socially and in the economic arena, through the IDA the engine is now a model of America's version of global-capitalist accumulation. In the course of this the Irish Labour Party has all but disappeared (a fate shared with the French Socialists).

In a New York Times Op Ed (What's Wrong with German Social Democrats?) a German commentator Jochen Bittner recently covered much the same ground as Buck. He opined *inter alia* "Part of the party's problem is that Ms. Merkel's conservatives have co-opted many of the center-left's ideas, from the introduction of the minimum wage to the establishment of same-sex marriage, and in doing so both embraced and suffocated the Social Democrats."

But, Bittner also opines, "... there's another, self-inflicted reason for the malaise ... the Social Democrats have shifted to the right economically, but ... to the left culturally. This may be fine for the country's urban upper classes, but it leaves most German voters confused about the party's appeal..."

New Zealand tells much the same story. Yes there is currently a Labour-led government. New Zealand Labour is (let us call it) a social democratic party in the nineteenth century European mould. This is a party rooted in a class history, organically connected with working class struggles to achieve the right to organise in the workplace, to bargain and advance collectively, to ultimately aspire to enter the parliamentary party-political arena. It is rooted in the mines of Westland on South Island (with their largely Irish Catholic workforces); on the waterfronts of Auckland and Wellington (again significantly Irish); in manufacturing and its growth. It is also something else: a party that achieved its political highpoints (in the 1930s and 1980s) inspired by a concept of society, of social advance and citizenship: in the broadest sense collectivist.

Reverting to Germany and the SPD, Tobias Buck reports his conversations with the leader of the youth wing of the SPD, Kevin Kühnert: "Since the mid-1990s, we have seen the rise of an ideology – not just in Germany but across Europe – that is a radical departure from the classic Social Democratic narrative, which is built

around the welfare state that takes care of people."

And then, somewhere around 25/30 years ago, "Suddenly, the message was that people should take care of themselves, that markets can do things better than the state. We privatised, we deregulated the labour market, we abandoned rural areas. All that contradicts what the SPD always stood for."

As Buck writes quoting Kühnert, "the party lost credibility with those "for whom the promise of social advancement has not been fulfilled".

"For the first time in many years we have a young generation where many sense that they will not automatically be able to live better than their parents. People on low salaries have seen their wages stagnate, or even fall. They can afford less than they could at the end of the 1990s. I don't need to have a big macroeconomic debate with them: they know they do not belong to society's winners."

Like the SPD, New Zealand Labour in many ways is stranded – as indeed are their British and other European counterparts. They are uprooted, without a compass, dare one say a proper purpose.

In the German case, quoting Jochen Bittner in the NYT, "... the SPD has ignored an issue that a center-left party, born of the labor movement, should be eager to embrace. Germany, the world's fourth-largest economy and Europe's richest country, is a prosperous place — but one riven by inequality and social injustice.

"... the drop of unemployment in Germany came at a price: the emergence of a new lower class, the so-called precariat — the working poor, or, as you might call them, the subsistence laborers — who find it nearly impossible to accumulate wealth. One million people in Germany are employed in the gig economy — "Leiharbeiter," in German — who do only temporary work without protection against dismissal. More than three million more Germans have only temporary

work contracts, with only mild protections.

It is much the same in New Zealand. Employers have, literally, managed in swathes of the economy to turn once upon a time employees into contractors and sub-contractors, naked of any protections, holiday and sick pay – and massively restricted in their collective bargaining rights, reduced to precariat conditions.

Those who have managed to hold onto their employee status are in thousands of cases forced into split shifts, the end of the eight-hour day and the 40-hour week. This devalues the statutory hourly wage. It is straight out of Capital.

One thing that occurs to me about all of this: it is that modern social democracy has been diverted into at least one wrong path, identity politics. In the words of the American academic Mark Lilla (discussing the decline of the Democrats in the US), politics has come to be “dominated by two ideologies that encourage and even celebrate the unmaking of citizens. On the right, an ideology that questions the existence of a common good and denies our obligation to help fellow citizens, through government action if necessary. On the left, an ideology institutionalised in colleges and universities that fetishises our individual and group attachments, applauds self-absorption, and casts a shadow of suspicion over any invocation of a universal democratic we.”

The contemporary progressivist agenda of identity politics has no place in socialism or social democracy. In a sense we need to become conservatives, to become a voice for old values and ambitions such as social welfare, collectivism, membership restricting anti-social hours, holiday rights and so on – and class and its political voice.

Merkel’s withdrawal is unlikely to breathe SPD renewal.

There is also another need: to abandon all commitment to the idea of the State as in some way akin to, an aggregate of households and bound by the spending rules and the monetary constraints of households.

But that’s another story, maybe for next month.

Black ‘47: Film Review by Angela Clifford

It is with trepidation that anyone would go to see a film about the Famine/ Holocaust. But *Black ‘47* is in a class of its own. Its history cannot be faulted. It conveys the devastation of a people and way of life—but as incidental to the action. It enables the viewer to comprehend that here was a well-populated, Gaelic-speaking population driven from their homes, cold and starving, finding bits of shelter where they can. But this is conveyed as background to the story.

The hero is an Irish Ranger who, having served in India and Afghanistan, deserts after saving enough money to bring his family to America, returns home to Connemara to find his family wrecked: mother dead, brother executed for resisting eviction, brother’s wife and children barely alive—subsisting on nettles and little else.

While he is with the family, the evictors come to take down the roof of their dwelling. He offers to pay the rent, which is rejected. His nephew, a child who is wanted for stealing some food, is killed for trying to escape and he is arrested for trying to protect the boy.

The story then features his escape from custody and the retribution he exacts.

In the course of the action we encounter hard facts: that Ireland’s population was reduced by a quarter; the view of the blond lieutenant that the Gaelic Irish are a feckless, inferior species; the export of grain under armed guard; the landlord who is making the most of this opportunity to start making money by clearing out his tenants and moving from cultivation to pasture; the official aim to make a Gael as rare in Ireland as a Red Indian in New York; the functionaries who are only ‘doing their duty’; and, above all, the sanctimonious ‘Soupers’.

The hero’s mother had died, refusing ‘to take the soup’. A particularly strong scene has the hero attending a field church service—benches of starving youngsters with no English—a cauldron of soup steaming in the corner of the tent, and a Protestant clergyman sermonising about the iniquities of Rome.

An unusual feature of the film is the way that acute political analysis is delivered in one-line remarks, which are in character for the person delivering them. There is no dwelling on the obvious or over-egging of the pudding speeches. In fact the hero doesn’t say much. What is said is terse and to the point.

Where appropriate the dialogue is in Irish, with well-placed English sub-titles. The action of the film holds the attention, much like a Hollywood production.

This has been the highest-grossing film in Ireland as of September 2018. But, not surprisingly, a Guardian reviewer found it “draggy”, a “weak revenge drama” (30.9.18).

Director, Lance Daly (a Dubliner) and the screenplay writers—P.J. Dillon, Pierce Ryan, Eugene O’Brien and Lance Daly himself—are to be congratulated. (The film is based on an Irish language short film called *An Ranger*—I have seen some of these Irish language bijou films made for schools, and their quality is outstanding.)

It is amazing that Lance Daly and his team got the funding to make this film, in view of the home truths it tells about British policy in Ireland—possibly a by-product of Brexit. This is a film that should not be missed.

Malachi Lawless and Fergus O Rahallaigh add:

The late Adrian Hardiman’s book, “Joyce in Court—James Joyce and the Law” (page 45), quotes James Joyce’s ‘the Citizen’ on the English in Ireland: “We’ll meet force with force, says the Citizen. We have our greater Ireland beyond the sea. They were driven out of house and home in the black ‘47. Their mudcabins and their shielings by the roadside were laid low by the battering ram and the Times rubbed its hands and told the whitelivered Saxons there would soon be as few Irish in Ireland as redskins in America. Even the Grand Turk sent us his piastres. But the Sassenach tried to starve the nation at home while the land was full of crops that the British hyenas bought and sold in Rio de Janeiro. Ay, they drove out the peasants in hordes. Twenty thousand of them died in the coffinships. But those that came to the land of the free remember the land of bondage. And they will come again and with a vengeance, no cravens, the sons of Granuaile, the champions of Kathleen ni Houlihan” (Ulysses: 12: 1364-7).

This is from the so-called ‘Cyclops’ episode, allowing the sneering sophisticated of suburban Dublin to dismiss the Citizen therein quoted as a one-eyed monstrosity to be at all costs ignored, censored, suppressed. The current film “Black 47” is a fairly accurate, forceful expression of the period it depicts, redressing sneering, sophisticated, hand-me-down accounts of a mere potato failure—the ‘act of God’ school of history of the period.

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Parliament Notes



Dick Barry

October EU Council 22 October 2018

The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May) Before I turn to the European Council, I am sure the whole House will join me in condemning the killing of Jamal Khashoggi in the strongest possible terms. We must get to the truth of what happened. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will make a statement shortly.

On the European Council, in addition to Brexit, there were important discussions on security and migration. First, at last Monday's Foreign Ministers meeting, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and his French counterpart secured agreement on a new EU sanctions regime on the use of chemical weapons. At this Council, Dutch Prime Minister Rutte and I argued that we should also accelerate work on further measures, including sanctions, to respond to and deter cyber-attacks. The attempted hacking of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague earlier this year was a stark example of the very real threats we face. We must impose costs on all those who seek to do us harm regardless of the means they use. This Council agreed to take that work forward.

Secondly, in marking Anti-Slavery Day, I welcomed the continued commitment of all EU leaders to work together to eliminate the barbaric crime of people trafficking. We reaffirmed our shared commitments to do more to tackle the challenges of migration upstream.

Following the Council, I met Premier Li of China, President Moon of South Korea and Prime Minister Lee of Singapore at the ASEM summit. Since 2010, our trade with Asia has grown by almost 50%, more than with any other continent in the world. I want to develop that even further. Indeed, the ability to develop our own new trade deals is one of the great opportunities of Brexit. At the ASEM summit, we

discussed how the UK can build the most ambitious economic partnerships with all our Asian partners as we leave the European Union. We also agreed to deepen our co-operation across shared threats to our security.

Turning to Brexit, let me begin with the progress we have made on both the withdrawal agreement and the political declaration on our future relationship. As I reported to the House last Monday, the shape of the deal across the vast majority of the withdrawal agreement is now clear. Since Salzburg, we have agreed the broad scope of provisions that set out the governance and dispute resolution arrangements for our withdrawal agreement, and we have developed a protocol relating to the UK sovereign base areas in Cyprus. Following discussions with Spain, and in close co-operation with the Government of Gibraltar, we have developed a protocol and a set of underlying memoranda relating to Gibraltar, heralding a new era in our relations. We also have broad agreement on the structure and scope of the future relationship, with important progress made on issues such as security, transport and services.

This progress in the last three weeks builds on the areas where we have already reached agreement: citizens' rights, the financial settlement and the implementation period; and, in Northern Ireland, agreement on the preservation of the particular rights of UK and Irish citizens, and on the special arrangements between us such as the common travel area, which has existed since before either the UK or Ireland ever became members of the European Economic Community.

Taking all of that together, 95% of the withdrawal agreement and its protocols are now settled. There is one real sticking point left, but a considerable one, which is how we guarantee that, in the unlikely event that our future relationship is not in place by the end of the implementation

period, there is no return to a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland. The commitment to avoiding a hard border is one that this House emphatically endorsed and enshrined in law in the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018. As I set out last week, the original backstop proposal from the EU was one we could not accept, as it would mean creating a customs border down the Irish sea and breaking up the integrity of our United Kingdom. I do not believe that any UK Prime Minister could ever accept this, and I certainly will not.

As I said in my Mansion House speech, we chose to leave and we have a responsibility to help find a solution, so earlier this year we put forward a counterproposal for a temporary UK-EU joint customs territory for the backstop. In a substantial shift in its position since Salzburg, the EU is now actively working with us on this proposal, but a number of issues remain.

The EU argues that it cannot give a legally binding commitment to a UK-wide customs arrangement in the withdrawal agreement, so its original proposal must remain a possibility. Furthermore, people are understandably worried that we could get stuck in a backstop that is designed to be only temporary. There are also concerns that Northern Ireland could be cut off from accessing its most important market, Great Britain.

During last week's council I had good discussions with Presidents Juncker, Tusk and Macron, Chancellor Merkel and Taoiseach Varadkar, and others, about how to break this impasse. I believe there are four steps we need to take.

First, we must make the commitment to a temporary UK-EU joint customs territory legally binding so that the Northern Ireland-only proposal is no longer needed. This would protect relations not only north-south but, vitally, east-west. This is critical. The relationship between Northern Ireland and the rest of

the UK is an integral strand of the Belfast Good Friday agreement, so to protect that agreement we need to preserve the totality of relationships it sets out. Nothing we agree with the EU under article 50 should risk a return to a hard border or threaten the delicate constitutional and political arrangements underpinned by the Belfast Good Friday agreement.

The second step is to create an option to extend the implementation period as an alternative to the backstop. I have not committed to extending the implementation period. I do not want to extend the implementation period, and I do not believe that extending it will be necessary. I see any extension or being in any form of backstop as undesirable. By far the best outcome for the UK, for Ireland and for the EU is that our future relationship is agreed and in place by 1 January 2021. I have every confidence that it will be, and the European Union has said it will show equal commitment to this timetable, but the impasse we are trying to resolve is about the insurance policy if this does not happen.

What I am saying is that if, at the end of 2020, our future relationship is not quite ready, the proposal is that the UK would be able to make a sovereign choice between the UK-wide customs backstop or a short extension of the implementation period. There are some limited circumstances in which it could be argued that an extension to the implementation period might be preferable if we were certain it was for only a short time. For example, a short extension to the implementation period would mean only one set of changes for businesses at the point we move to the future relationship, but in any such scenario we would have to be out of the implementation period well before the end of this Parliament.

The third step is to ensure that, were we to need either of these insurance policies, whether the backstop or a short extension to the implementation period, we could not be kept in either arrangement indefinitely. We would not accept a position in which the UK, having negotiated in good faith an agreement that prevents a hard border in Northern Ireland, none the less finds itself locked into an alternative inferior arrangement against its will.

The fourth step is for the Government to deliver the commitments we have made to ensure full continued access for Northern Ireland's businesses to the whole of the UK internal market. Northern Ireland's businesses rely heavily on trade with their

largest market, Great Britain, and we must protect this in any scenario.

Let us remember that all these steps are about insurance policies that no one in the UK or the EU wants or expects to use, so we cannot let this become the barrier to reaching the future partnership we all want to see. We have to explore every possible option to break the impasse, and that is what I am doing.

When I stood in Downing Street and addressed the nation for the first time, I pledged that the Government I lead will not be driven by the interests of the privileged few, but by those of ordinary working families. And that is what guides me every day in these negotiations. Before any decision, I ask: how do I best deliver the Brexit that the British people voted for? How do I best take back control of our money, borders and laws? How do I best protect jobs and make sure nothing gets in the way of our brilliant entrepreneurs and small businesses? How do I best protect the integrity of our precious United Kingdom and protect the historic progress we have made in Northern Ireland? If doing those things means I get difficult days in Brussels, so be it. [Interruption.]

The Brexit talks are not about my interests; they are about the national interest and the interests of the whole of the United Kingdom. Serving our national interest will demand that we hold our nerve through these last stages of the negotiations—the hardest part of all. It will mean not giving in to those who want to stop Brexit with a politicians' vote: politicians telling the people that they got it wrong the first time and should try again. And it will mean focusing on the prize that lies before us: the great opportunities that we can open up for our country when we clear these final hurdles in the negotiations. That is what I am working to achieve, and I commend this statement to the House.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab) I thank the Prime Minister for the advance copy of her statement, and I am pleased she has condemned the horrific murder of Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. But condemnation is not enough; what matters now is what action the Government are prepared to take. Will they now end arms sales to Saudi Arabia?

Moving on to Brexit, I hope our debate today will be conducted without some of the language reported in the press over the weekend. I have to say that every word on Brexit was anticipated: a mixture of failure, denial and delusion. The Conservative

party has spent the past two years arguing with itself, instead of negotiating a sensible deal in the public interest. Even at this crucial point, they are still bickering among themselves. The Prime Minister says that 95% of the deal is done, but previously she had told us that

“nothing is agreed until everything is agreed”.

Which is it?

The Government's Brexit negotiations have been a litany of missed deadlines and shambolic failure, and now they are begging for extra time. They promised that the interim agreement would be done by October 2017 and then by December 2017, but it was finally agreed in March 2018. The Prime Minister even missed the deadline for publishing her own Government's White Paper on Brexit. She said it would be published by the end of June, but it arrived in mid-July, lacking any clarity on the key issues. Crucially, it arrived after the EU summit at which Britain's proposals were supposed to have been tabled. And just last week, the Government missed their October deadline for agreeing to the terms of the exit deal with the EU—instead the Prime Minister went to Brussels to beg for an extension. The EU had already offered to convene a special summit in November to help the Prime Minister, but it now seems this has been withdrawn as she will not be ready by then either and so now December is being talked about. And the Prime Minister claims her extension of the transition period will be for only “a matter of months”. Is that three? Is that six? Is that 12? Is that 18? How many months is it? Who knows? Certainly the Prime Minister does not. But can the Prime Minister give one straight answer: what will it cost in extra payments to the EU per month during this extension? The Government are only proposing this extension because of their own incompetence.

We have had two and a half years watching the Tories' failure to negotiate. Now even the Prime Minister does not have confidence that she can negotiate a deal by December 2020—that is another 14 months. What faith can anyone have that extending that deadline by “a matter of months” will help? Perhaps the Prime Minister can inform the House?

The Prime Minister also begged European leaders to come up with creative solutions. The country voted to leave, her Cabinet members said they would take back control, and now the Prime Minister is pleading with the EU to work out how

to do it. It does not sound like taking back control; it sounds like a Government and a Prime Minister who are losing control.

The Government are terminally incompetent, hamstrung by their own divisions. The Prime Minister of Lithuania summed up the situation succinctly when he said:

“We do not know what they want, they do not know themselves what they really want—that is the problem.”

I am sure the whole House would love to hear the Government’s precise and detailed blueprint. Perhaps when she returns to the Dispatch Box, the Prime Minister could set out her plan. The whole country is waiting for a plan that works for Britain, not another fudge—kicking the can down the road to keep her party in power.

Much of the current impasse is due to the Northern Ireland border—hardly an issue that can have come as a surprise to the Government. There is a simple solution—a comprehensive customs union with the EU, a solution that would not only benefit Northern Ireland, but help to safeguard skilled jobs in every region and nation of Britain, and with no hard border in Ireland, no hard border down the Irish Sea and good for jobs in every region and nation. That is a deal that could command majority support in this House and the support of businesses and unions. It is Labour’s plan—a comprehensive customs union with a real say for Britain and with no race to the bottom on regulations, standards and rights. The alternative is not no deal: it is a workable plan.

The Government do not even trust their own Back Benchers to have a meaningful vote, with the Brexit Secretary submitting a letter that told us that we must choose between a disastrous no deal and the Government’s deal—a deal that does not yet exist and for which there is now no deadline.

Brexit was supposed to be about taking back control. That is what much of the Cabinet campaigned for, and where have we ended up? Parliament is being denied the chance to take back control and, because of the Government’s vacillation, five years on from the referendum we could still be paying into the EU but with no MEPs, no seat at the Council of Ministers, no Commissioners and no say for this country. Instead of taking back control, they are giving away our say and paying for the privilege. What an utter shambles! Having utterly failed to act in the public interest, will the Prime Minister do so now and make way for a Government that can and will?

The Prime Minister There was an awful lot in the right hon. Gentleman’s comments about process, but not much about substance, and what Labour actually wants to see. It is incumbent on all of us in public life to be careful about the language we use. There are passionate beliefs and views on this and other subjects, but whatever the subject we should all be careful about our language.

The right hon. Gentleman said a lot about process, as I said, and at one point he seemed to be asking us to set out our plan. I have to say to him that we set out our plan in the White Paper of more than 100 pages back in the summer. He talks about a future relationship of a customs union, but whatever future relationship we have, we do have to deal with the backstop issue. Without a backstop in the withdrawal agreement, there will be no withdrawal agreement. Without the withdrawal agreement, there will be no future relationship—nothing is agreed until everything is agreed—so it does not matter what future relationship we want, we still need to deal with this backstop issue.

The right hon. Gentleman’s position has been that no deal is not acceptable in any circumstances. That means accepting any deal that the European Union wants to give us, including a deal that would carve Northern Ireland out of the United Kingdom. Perhaps, though, his shadow Chancellor, who made the comment that he was longing for a United Ireland, might actually welcome that.

All I have to say to the right hon. Gentleman is that, throughout all this, all we have seen from the Labour party and from him is them playing politics with this issue. One minute, they want to accept the referendum, the next they want a second referendum. One minute, they want to say that free movement will end, the next they say that free movement is still on the table. One minute, they want to do trade deals, the next they want to be in a customs union that will stop them from doing trade deals. He is doing everything he can to frustrate Brexit and trigger a general election. He has voted against sufficient progress, he has tried to block the withdrawal Act, and he has vowed to oppose any deal that the Government bring back. I am looking and working for the right deal in the national interests of this country; he is putting politics ahead of the national interest.

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source of employment. Eventually it became obvious that the process was maiming and killing the miners and the company became bankrupt. Significantly, the new tunnel is on the same, north valley side, as the mines.

The stepped configuration of part of the open-cast mining can still be seen from the train. A memorial to the large numbers of people who became unwitting victims can also be seen nearby.

The *M5S* Mayor of Turin Chiara Appendino, is a firmly *NO TAV* Mayor. She is opposed strongly by Sergio Chiamparino, the Premier of Piedmont, and the Torinese businesses and institutions which will benefit from the construction and presence of the upgraded line. He is now pressuring the Government, knowing also that *YES TAV* also has the support of the majority of the unions. *Cgil*, (*The Italian General Confederation of Labour*) with around 5 million members, supports it nationally but not locally.

La Repubblica is finding its freedom to publish is being attacked. It is in its own words, currently under a fatwa from the *M5S* following its critical coverage of a demonstration against the *M5S* mayor of Rome Virginia Raggi. Undaunted, the paper has been critical of *NO TAV* and on 1 November published an interview with Sergio Chiamparino where he accuses Di Maio and Salvini of self-interest. He is critical of Di Maio for not prioritising jobs and investment; he is only a “*propagandist*”. He believes that it is characteristic of Salvini to be in favour but he might veto the scheme to save the government.

He goes on to say that it is vital that the north of Italy isn’t marginalised. The Region could attempt to manage this independently and attempt to find investment in the North of Italy and abroad. We must, he said, (unlike the manner of Di Maio and Salvini), “*Respect the commitments made by Parliament and Italy with the international treaties signed by the governments and the president of the Republic*”.

Listening to Italy

by Orecchiette

MONEY ALWAYS WINS

Italy was hit by unusually extreme weather at the end of October, beginning of November. 14 people died as a result of incidents resulting from whirlwinds, landslides and floods. The Berlusconi family yacht sunk. Even the last kilometre of the Venice Marathon was run through flooded streets. In subsequent days as much as 75% of the city was under water, with videos showing waves lashing the sides of generally land-based buildings. One of the possible disastrous consequences of this inundation is that the mosaic floors of the Basilica of San Marco were damaged by the salt water.

In the same week the Government of the puppet Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, which is in effect the Government of the Deputy Prime Minister, The Lega Party's Matteo Salvini, presented an illegal budget to the EU. This planned to increase Italy's budget deficit. The Italian Government's purpose was twofold: to stimulate the economy and also acknowledge election pledges such as the introduction of a Universal wage. The EU gave the country three weeks to propose a revision and sanctions have been threatened. Ezio Mauro, wrote a scathing editorial in *La Repubblica* saying that the budget had more to do with the coalition's ideological hatred of Europe and as such the consequences would be to the detriment of ordinary Italians.

Meanwhile the two Deputy Prime Ministers, Luigi di Maio (*Five Star Movement, M5S*) and Salvini have been dealing with two ongoing and long-standing issues which have now grown into political crises. The two members of the coalition not only have opposing views which threaten to split the coalition but M5S is even taking different positions within its ranks.

The *TAP* and *TAV*: The *Trans Adriatic Pipeline* and the *Treno Alto Velocità* have been the focus for dissent and demonstrations for many years. At issue is the refusal

of people who will be affected by construction works to have their area changed and spoiled by engineering projects which will be of no direct benefit to them. An apt comparison are the UK's anti-fracking protests.

The *TAP* project has been under construction for many years. It will be an 878-kilometre gas pipeline from the Shah Deniz 2 gas field in Azerbaijan, through Greece and Albania. It is planned to make landfall near San Foca in the far south of Italy. Currently Italy imports over 90% of its gas from Russia, Libya, Algeria and Holland. The Renzi *Pd* (*Partito Democratico*) Government approved the extension of the project into Italy in 2014. Ending the dependence of Europe on the Ukrainian gas supply is seen to be of great strategic importance to Europe and also, for political reasons by the US.

Italy's control of the pipeline would make the country an important supply and distribution hub for Europe. A large storage and distribution centre had been planned for Northern Italy but organisational delays have lost it the necessary investment for this part of the superstructure.

The M5S currently hold a majority of the local, Pugliese seats. They support locals who have three hot issues to contend with: *Ilva*, *Xylella* and *TAP*. The first is Taranto's heavily polluting steel plant that has caused a large increase in cancers. Locals want it shut. The second is an olive tree disease that the Government say must be countered by grubbing up many ancient trees. Locals believe that the disease can be contained by natural means. Then *TAP* – Italy's Environment Minister, who happens to be an M5S member, said that *TAP* was "pointless"; Barbara Lezzi (M5S) the Minister for the South of Italy said that it could be an unnecessary environmental danger. But the coalition made the choice between investment or the environment and Premier Conte announced that the project will go ahead. The 29 October *Corriere della*

Sera ran a headline that summed it up for M5S: *The NO TAP* (i.e. the protesters) *are burning M5S Flags. The rise and fall of the Grillini in Puglia.*

TAV, the *Treno Alto Velocità*, the high-speed train link from Lyon to Turin is the second contentious issue. This will link western and eastern Europe via a tunnel already partly-under construction under the Alps at Moncenisio (French: Mont Cenis). It is not just a short rail line but with links it is seen as a highly strategic cross-European route. The Lyon to Turin line exists already but is unsuitable for modification. This is because of its steep gradients and the limited width of both the Frejus tunnel (started in 1857) and the single-track line along the south side of the Italian Susa Valley. The line leaves the tunnel at the ski-resort of Bardonecchia and descends to Turin, and thence to Milan and beyond. The new line, which is already under construction, is flatter and tunnels under the opposite side of the Susa Valley.

The line has long been a contentious issue and the *NO TAV* campaign has effectively curtailed work and become a huge national issue and rallying call. More than 1,000 people have been arrested for their efforts of physical resistance. Local people oppose the disruption that the tunnelling work brings. They believe that they have a democratic right to refuse to let their deep, quiet and rural valley, the longest in Italy, be spoiled. Of particular concern are the excavation's extrusions which will pollute and spread dust throughout the valley. The nature of this spoil is of particular concern.

Asbestos and other minerals were discovered in the Susa Valley and open-cast mining started in 1918. At one time the San Vittore mine at Balangero was the largest in Europe and it was welcomed as a good

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