

L i b e r a t i o n

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L i b e r a t i o n

Formerly, the Movement for Colonial Freedom, Liberation was founded in 1954 as the Movement for Colonial Freedom. Today, Liberation campaigns for Peace, Economic Justice, Equality and Human Rights.

CONTENTS

Page 3	Ocalan and Peace in Kurdistan
Page 4—5	Special Recognition Award to Ken Keable
Page 6—7	Kenyan Elections
Page 8—9	Iran Post Election
Page 10—11	Back to the 'Nineties with Trump
Page 12	Book Review by James Grayson
Page 13	Nuclear power: end of an era?
Page 14—15	Iranian elections
Page 16—17	On democracy

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Ocalan and Peace in Kurdistan

Stephen Smellie

Since 2015 Turkey has seen an escalation in violence which is amongst the worst in the country's history. The government of President Erdogan has been responsible for the deaths of hundreds of people, thousands of political activists have been imprisoned and hundreds of thousands of public servants have been dismissed with their passports cancelled and their right to claim social security benefits denied.

Erdogan claims last year's attempted coup is the justification for the state of emergency, declared in the aftermath and still in place today, the sackings, the restrictions on press freedom and the right to assembly. However these policies, and the violent destruction of whole towns, the arrest of Kurdish supporting People's Democratic Party (HDP) activists and MPs have been in place since the year before. The attempted coup merely gave the government the cover it sought for suppressing democratic politics and moving to one man, one party rule.

In early 2015 there were genuine hopes for peace and democratic progress. Government officials were privately briefing that a peace agreement with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and its leader Abdullah Ocalan was very close. The ceasefire declared by the PKK was holding and progressive forces were allying with the Kurdish movement within the newly founded HDP readying to contest the June general election.

The positive prospects for the HDP, which went on to win 13% of the national vote and 80 MPs, and the success of the Kurdish forces over the border in Syria, defeating ISIS at Kobane and forcing them to retreat for the first time, led Erdogan to conclude that a successful, democratic and peaceful Kurdish movement in Turkey and successful Kurdish political and military forces in Syria did not assist his aim of securing unprecedented political power in Turkey.

Almost on the eve of a peace agreement between Ocalan and the Turkish government, Erdogan declared there would be no more talks with 'terrorists' and proceeded to start a campaign of coercion and force to, seemingly, scare the electorate not to vote for the HDP. Refusing to form a coalition, after losing its overall majority in parliament, he called a second election in November which ran amidst violence and murder. The leaders of the HDP were forced to curtail public appearances and many party offices were closed as Erdogan's AKP gained an overall majority. It was no surprise that Erdogan regained his majority.

The attempted coup led to attacks on the Gulenist movement, with thousands arrested in the immediate aftermath. Increasingly Turkish people in NGOs (over 400 of them closed down), journalism and the media, were acquainted with the tactics and pressures that the Kurds had enjoyed for years, whilst the Kurds remained at the forefront of it.

Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of the PKK, was abducted and kidnapped on 15 February 1999 and taken to Turkey. Initially sentenced to death, he has been detained in solitary confinement

on the island prison of Imrali ever since. Despite this isolation Ocalan has led a campaign for peace and a democratic solution. He has developed his ideas on how a democratic peace can be achieved. His 'Road Map to Peace' has inspired millions of Kurds, in Turkey and beyond, to seek a democratic path to freedom within the existing borders of Turkey. His call for the guerrillas to withdraw ended the armed conflict in 2013 and introduced a PKK ceasefire allowing for detailed negotiations with the state for peace.

Without a resolution to the Kurdish Question in Turkey there can be no peace. The Kurdish movement is committed to a peaceful and democratic solution as repeated by the imprisoned leaders of the HDP, Demirtas and Yuksekdag.

Ocalan is central to this mission and remains the best hope for peace in Turkey, but the Turkish government has to determine that it wants peace and is prepared to talk to achieve it.

It must recognise that, as in 2014/15 when Turkey negotiated directly with him, Ocalan is key to this peace mission. Only he has the authority within the Kurdish movement to seek peace and his ideas for 'democratic autonomy' (which include devolution of powers to regions and councils) give clarity as to how a longer term solution may be found.

That is why the Freedom for Ocalan Campaign was launched at a packed meeting in Westminster by the GMB and Unite unions, supported by a number of MPs and other organisations, including a number of Kurdish groups. The intention of the campaign is to highlight the importance of Ocalan's role and to work to put pressure on the Turkish government to release him.

In 2019 Ocalan will be 70 years old and in prison for 20 years. On simple humanitarian grounds he should be released from prison. His release is important for the future prospects of peace and democracy and indeed his release would signify the end of the period of war and a concrete statement of intent by the Turkish government that they desire peace.

This article was written for Liberation by Stephen Smellie, Freedom for Ocalan Campaign and Peace in Kurdistan

Special Recognition Award to Ken Keable, member of Liberation

The South African Communist Party has honoured the "London Recruits" with its Special Recognition Award. The other Recruits chose Liberation member Ken Keable to go to South Africa to receive the award on behalf of them all. Here is the prepared text of Ken's acceptance speech, made on 14 July 2017 at the SACP's national congress in Boksburg. A video of the occasion, including an introduction by Ronnie Kasrils, can be viewed on www.londonrecruits.org.uk The speech, made to about 2,400 delegates and guests, was warmly received.

AMANDLA! Comrade chair, distinguished guests, comrades!

I am very proud to receive this award on behalf of all the London Recruits. It is a great honour for us all.

I am pleased to be accompanied on this platform by two other Recruits: comrade Ian Beddowes, who worked undercover in three of the frontline states and now lives in Johannesburg where he works on the staff of the SACP; and comrade Bob Newland, who set off leaflet bombs in Johannesburg in 1971 and spent eight dangerous weeks in South Africa in 1972, preparing for the arrival of a detachment of MK fighters by sea in a ship which, unfortunately, had to abort the mission because of engine trouble.

I am delighted, also, that comrade Ronnie Kasrils is here with us. He sent most of us on our amazing, life-changing missions to South Africa or the front-line states and he holds a very special place in our hearts. Thank you, Ronnie!

After the Rivonia trial ended in 1964, with Nelson Mandela and other leaders jailed for life, almost all the other ANC members had to go into exile, to avoid arrest and torture.

Then they were faced with the problem: how were they to carry on their liberation struggle inside the country when they were outside?

They came up with a brilliant idea. They would recruit young, white internationalists, mainly in the London Area - people who had no personal connection with South Africa and were therefore not known to the racist regime. We could enter the country posing as tourists, business people or honeymoon couples, without arousing suspicion. The regime assumed all white people were racists like them, that was a bad mistake.

Some of the London Recruits were students at the London School of Economics, including several young Trotskyists belonging to the International Socialists. Some had no political label. However, the great majority of the Recruits were young workers belonging to the British Young Communist League or, in a few cases, the Communist Party. Most of our expenses were met by the Soviet Union. Some Recruits received training in the Soviet Union or Cuba.

In 2005 I began researching and editing the book, London Recruits - the secret war against apartheid that was published in 2012. When I began the book, I knew that there were other Recruits but I had very little knowledge of who they were, how



Ken Keable, introduced by Ronnie Kasrils, accepting SACP award on behalf of London Recruits.

many there were or what they did. Each of us only knew our own little part of the story, and even that we had kept secret for decades because the habit of secrecy was so deeply ingrained. Besides, it seemed to belong to another era. I was amazed at what I found. Some smuggled large quantities of weapons into South Africa. Some did reconnaissance. Some helped MK fighters to enter the country. Some smuggled thousands of letters and packages into South Africa and put them in the post. However, the main activity was to set off leaflet bombs or other leaflet distribution devices, along with street broadcasts using amplified cassette players. We did that once a year every year from 1967 to 1971, each time hitting five cities simultaneously - Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, Durban, East London and Cape Town. This hit the headlines and told the people that the ANC was not defeated. The leaflets also brought news, gave advice on how to conduct the struggle and they brought hope.

I will never forget the beginning of the street broadcast that comrade Pete Smith and I set up in Durban in 1970. After 15 minutes of silence - which was our getaway time - the voice of Robert Resha boomed out, "This is the African National Congress. This is the African National Congress. This is the voice of freedom". This was followed by the choir of London exiles singing the ANC anthem Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika. Then there was a speech and more songs.

We make no money from the book; all royalties go to the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund. We also have an excellent website that contains lots of new material. On Wednesday, I visited the Museum of the Armed Struggle at Lilliesleaf Farm, Rivonia, which has a special section devoted to the London Recruits. Our story is now being made into a documentary film, called London Recruits that will be premiered in London in January. It will be more than just the film of the book, because the film company has done a huge amount of research. British trade unions have given the film terrific support. The film also has a website, londonrecruits.com.



Ken Keable accepting SACP awards

I want to mention three Recruits in particular because they were arrested and tortured: Sean Hosey, born in Dublin; on his second mission he walked into a trap and served 13 months awaiting trial and then five years in prison; Alex Moumbaris, a Greek-Australian, who was arrested in 1972 while helping MK fighters to enter South Africa by land; he was sentenced to twelve years in jail but escaped after seven and a half years; and Marie-José Moumbaris, Alex's French wife, who was also arrested and tortured but was released after a few weeks.

When I asked Alex to describe his torture, he replied that there are different levels of torture and he wouldn't want his suffering to be compared to that of the black comrades.

We now know the names of 66 people whom we can call London Recruits. Besides the British people, these include four from the USA, four Irish people, one Greek, one Greek-Australian and one Frenchwoman. One, only recently discovered, came from Britain's Ugandan Asian community. She worked in Botswana. Thirteen of the 66 are women.

How significant our efforts were is for others to judge. We know that the South African people liberated themselves from the evil apartheid regime but we are happy to have played a part, however small. The defeat of the apartheid regime struck a mighty blow against racism all round the world, not least in Britain, so we are grateful for that.

Comrades, we were not busybodies, interfering in the internal affairs of another country that were none of our business. The apartheid system was a crime against humanity and capitalist Britain was up to its neck in the crime. The British Parliament founded the Union of South Africa on the basis of institutional racism. Most of the banks and big corporations, and the finance houses of the City of London, invested heavily in apartheid South Africa and profited hugely from it. The British diplomatic service did its utmost to protect South Africa from international sanctions.

Those institutions are still in place. That is why our struggle continues.

Comrades, the ideals that motivated us in our youth are now more relevant than ever. We hope that our story will inspire people, especially young people, to fight for a better world and this wonderful award, this great honour, will help to achieve that. Thank you!

Amandla!

Viva SACP viva!

Viva international solidarity viva!

Ken Keable, member of Liberation

**Liberation/Movement for Colonial Freedom Archives
are available at the following libraries:**

- **Working Class Movement Library**
- **SOAS Library**

INTRIGUING SIX-PIECE 2017 KENYAN ELECTIONS

Dan Thea

On the 8th August 2017 15 million Kenyan electors, (79% of the total 19 million), swarmed 40,883 polling centres to elect 1,882 officials and legislators at both national and county levels; for the second five-year term under the 2013 constitution. Kenyan elections are held every five years, on the second Thursday of August; not, as in some countries, at the whim of the government. They are run by the constitutionally established Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, (IEBC).

Elections are hugely anticipated, fiercely contested, and attract mass participation. This time round pubs, restaurants etc. were demanding sight of prospective customers' voter registration cards before serving. "No voting card; no service, thank you!" At home, "No voting card; no cuddle"! In the countryside, men were stunned by a mass onslaught by women who were pouring the popular 'home brew' booze down hillsides, with the President applauding. "Show your voting card; or don't you intend to vote?", became the greeting!

The political parties, and especially the candidates and their supporters, were on the campaign trail everywhere; night and day. Bear in mind that Kenyan parliamentarians are among the best paid in the world. In a developing country, a £7,000 monthly pay; plus up to £800 "attendance allowance"; not to forget a £50,000 car grant, is huge motivation to become an MP... for you, relations and friends. Once elected, you become a "Leader". Your first monthly pay lifts you, (and yours), to the hugely rated, and envied, "middle class"!

A major negative factor in being an MP is that you are very unlikely to be re-elected. Kenyan electors are the world's most demanding and unforgiving. They scrutinize their representatives closely and endlessly; and are constantly at your door. Your performance is monitored, compared and contrasted with that of your colleagues. Only a fraction of the elected are returned. So, if you cherish your privacy and quiet; or a steady and continuous career, shun Kenyan politics.

Come election time, city/town dwellers travel "up-country"/"home" to vote. Workplaces close down, and town homes are locked up. A newspaper reported: "patients abandon hospital beds to vote in Embu"; adding: "Mr Munyi said he had ferried about 40 patients (to vote) by 2pm." Another reported of: "Voters injured in a stampede after being picked from hospital to cast their vote". When pubs closed on the eve of the elections, revellers went straight to their polling stations and spent the night there to ensure being among the first to vote in the morning. In Murang'a County, all bars and clubs were ordered to close by 8:30pm on the eve of the elections; and could only re-open after the polling stations closed the following evening. Other would-be voters went to bed unusually early, aiming to get up at the crack of dawn to go to their voting centres. Then there was a report: "Man with oxygen tank turns up to cast his vote." What about this indignity: "First Lady queues for four

hours to vote!" Country-wide queues of voters zigzagged round polling stations, not sparing even the President's wife.

As one would expect by now, Kenyan elections open early... at 6:00am!

The national level posts under contest were the President; Senators; Women Representatives in each of the 47 counties; and a Member of the National Assembly for each of the 290 constituencies. Additionally, electors voted for Governors and a varying number, (depending on the population and geographic size), of Members of the County Assembly. Thus, the voter had six different ballots to cast.

Two main political formations, both recently reconstituted, Jubilee and Nasa, dominated the elections. Led by President Uhuru Kenyatta, aged 55 years, and his deputy William Ruto, Jubilee was the out-going governing party; while Nasa, led by Raila Odinga, aged 74 was composed of four parties.

Jubilee appeared to have a more coherent political platform; based on its performance during its nearly five years in office, centred on its well publicised development projects in sectors such as education, roads, ports, airports, electricity and water connection to homes and public places, public facilities, a brand new 472 kilometres standard gauge railway and expansion of healthcare provision. Everybody clamoured for "development" and "projects". (How wonderful it would be if this hard-headedness was entrenched long-term!)

The announced election results showed Jubilee winning all the six elections, while vastly extending its territory. Kenyatta was pronounced as retaining the presidency, with, not the small majority he had in 2012, but 8.2 million votes, 54.2%; against Odinga's 6.8 million, 44.9%; i.e. an impressive 1.4 million votes majority) The other six presidential candidates shared under 1% of the vote. (NB: Of course Kenyatta's victory margin did not even approach the magical 99% scored by his near neighbour Rwandan President Kagame shortly after!)

Besides winning 50% +1 votes, a presidential candidate must also get at least 25% of the votes in a minimum of 24 Counties. Kenyatta won in 26 counties.

Note that while the national voter turn-out was impressively high, at 79%, it was not as high as in 2013. Murang'a County led with 88%; followed by Nyandarua, Nyeri and Kirinyaga, with 85% each; then Siaya with 81%.

Kiambu County's gender voting participation split was the closest, with males edging out females by a mere 0.4%. The country's first three women Governors were elected in the counties of Bomet, Kirinyaga (both Jubilee) and Kitui, (independent).

Regarding the youth, Jubilee's 32 years old Stephen Sang, having been elected a Senator at 28 years of age in 2013, now won Nandi Governorship with a stunning 91% of the vote.

In this powerful and highly coveted governor race, Jubilee won 29, (62%), of the 47 positions; taking seats from Nasa, including in the capital Nairobi, Meru, Nandi, West Pokot, Isiolo; and parliamentary seats in the Coast, South Rift; North East, and the Maa regions. Its pitch for Mombasa was a bitter flop though!

As with governors, the country's first three women Senators were elected; with Jubilee the victor in Nakuru and Uasin Gishu, and an independent in Isiolo. With 41 Senators, Jubilee has total control of the chamber. Among the 47 Women Representatives Jubilee won 31, (i.e. 66%).

The election also produced a small increase in women's representation in the National Assembly; up from 84 to 96, i.e. a poor 27% of the principal parliamentary chamber's 357 members. In any case only a lowly 22 of the 96 women were constituency members.

The gender gap issue produced a sharp put-down by the National Assembly Speaker Justin Muturi, responding to a mouthy American, pronouncing thus: "After only fifty years of independence Kenya has attained 19%: against 18% for the USA after more than 246 years!" Unanswerable!

None of the above small advances in women representation in elective positions is bearable today; let alone the clumsy "two-thirds" rule; which is designed to hide the fact that what it really means is that the constitutional goal is for Kenyan women to be satisfied with a mere "one-third" of the top level representation positions. Since women constitute a little more than a half of Kenyans, why would we be content with them occupying less than a half of the top public service posts?

On racial equality, the government, under strong pressure from the Kenyan Asian community to recognise it as a "tribe", in a similar manner as the Kenyan Makonde community of Mozambiquan origin had recently been recognised as the country's 43rd 'tribe'; consented; with the community becoming the 44th 'tribe'. Come the August elections shortly after, the new tribe, which constitutes about 1% of the population, saw three of its members elected to the National Assembly; similarly representing nearly 1% of the chamber's membership. (Why, oh why, can't the same happen regarding gender?)

The elections seemed to have given the governing party complete political control: National Government, Senate, National Assembly, County Government and County Assemblies. Kenyatta was congratulated by his fellow East African Community leaders of Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi; the Inter-

Governmental Aid and Development, (IGAD), which consists of the EAC members plus Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan and Djibouti, recommended other African states to emulate Kenya. Kenya's principal development partner China's President Xi Jin Ping said that he "looked forward to enhancing "the China-Kenya Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation"; while the European Union assessed the elections as fair. All the national, regional, African and global electoral observer missions, including the Law Society of Kenya, the African Union Election Observer Mission led by President Thabo Mbeki, and the African Electoral Observation Group found that "the process was free, fair, transparent and credible"; the Commonwealth Observer Mission, European Union, Britain, etc pronounced the elections clean and fair; and the 200-odd accredited foreign reporters joined the chorus. The Carter Centre Observer Delegation concluded that the electoral body "appears to have a strong system to ensure ballots counted are what is announced".

Unsurprisingly, NASA was disappointed; and went to court, as it was entitled to, and challenged the presidential vote result; complaining that there had been massive fraud in the presidential electoral process, with Kenyatta the beneficiary. The Supreme Court heard the case; and voted 4-to-2 that "irregularities and illegalities" had been committed when the unchallenged winners were sworn into office. However the new National Assembly, Senate, County Government and County Assemblies are functioning normally; while constitutionally Kenyatta's National Government remains in office. Thus, the actual current position is as it would have been without the appeal.

The court gave its ruling and undertook to expedite the full judgement.

The IEBC has set the re-run for 17th October; and Jubilee claims it will win it, not with the previous 54%; but over 70%.

Dan Thea is a regular contributor to Liberation journal, writing mainly on Africa.

Post Election - the Deceit and Repression Continues!

Jane Green

The presidential elections in Iran on 19 May saw the re-election of President Hassan Rouhani for a second term in office. As was widely expected by most Iranian observers, this was the most convenient outcome for the theocratic regime in Tehran. Jane Green considers the implications of the election outcome for the Iranian people.



President Hassan Rouhani for a second term in office.

The inauguration of President Rouhani, for a second term of office on 5th August, was presented to the world as a victory for democracy in Iran. Official figures suggested that 92 nations were represented at the ceremony. The Iranian regime has been quick to latch on to this as somehow underlining its legitimacy, though those delegates in attendance were relatively minor officials in most cases.

Most political observers in Iran - including ardent supporters of Hassan Rouhani - have subsequently expressed dismay at the list of ministers presented by the president to parliament for endorsement. No women were included, nor anybody hailing from Iran's Sunni Muslim minority. In fact, the new cabinet was more retrogressive and right-wing than the last one and, in the eyes of many analysts, incapable of offering any solution to the manifold complex social, economic, cultural and environmental issues facing the country. Simply put; the new team selected by Rouhani for his second term of office is economically neoliberal, politically rightwing and socially conservative. One of its main mission will be to prepare the Iranian economy for direct foreign investment through the slashing of labour rights, cutting of regulations (what little 'red tape' there remains within Iran) as well as reform of the banking and insurance systems.

Under the Iranian presidential system, only the powerful Guardian Council - in the firm grip of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei - can approve candidates for any political office. This ensures that the ruling theocracy have total control over the 'democratic' process.

Heralded as a reformer by certain sections of the Western press, Rouhani has spent four years in office without having lifted a finger to improve the human rights record of the Iranian regime. He has done nothing to support the development of trade unions or advance the position of women in Iranian society, while his neoliberal economic policies have seen astronomic inflation and soaring unemployment.

Rouhani secured a further four years in office posturing as the man who delivered an end to international sanctions through the deal with the United States and the European Union. The deal, whereby international sanctions will be softened in exchange for Iran accepting strict controls on its nuclear energy programme, was barely bedded-in when the US electorate returned Donald Trump as president.

Trump has been a vociferous opponent of the deal with Iran. In spite of his 'put America first' policy, Trump has actively engaged in major foreign policy controversies, with airstrikes on Syria and Afghanistan as well as the significant ramping up of tensions with North Korea.

On 21 May, Donald Trump delivered what was billed as a 'speech to the Muslim world' from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on his first international trip as president. In a speech that pitched the fight against terrorism as a struggle between good and evil, Trump played to the Saudi gallery and cast Iran as the regional bad guy.

Trump accused Tehran of providing terrorists with "safe harbour, financial backing, and the social standing needed for recruitment" before going on to suggest that the Iranian people "have endured hardship and despair under their leaders' reckless pursuit of conflict and terror."

However, Trump is clearly shedding crocodile tears over the fate of the Iranian people. Let us not forget that Trump is on recent record as having said that the nuclear deal, negotiated before he came to office, is too soft on Iran. Any change he initiates is unlikely to be in the direction of improving the lot of the ordinary people.

Only three weeks after Trump's Riyadh speech, US Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, threw more fuel on the fire by explicitly calling for regime change in Iran, stating "[The US will] work toward support of those elements inside of Iran that would lead to a peaceful transition of that government. Those elements are there, certainly as we know."

There is no doubt that the Iranian regime is deeply unpopular. President Rouhani is clinging to the hope that the nuclear deal can be salvaged and that a less onerous sanctions regime could help reboot the economy. His recent re-election campaign was largely based around needing another four years to finish what he had started. In the eyes of many Iranian people, this simply means four more years of poverty and lack of democratic rights - not a prospect to be welcomed.

In order to create the illusion of a contest in the presidential election, the Guardian Council fielded a rival candidate in the shape of Ayatollah Ebrahim Raisi, well known for his part in the mass execution of around 5000 political prisoners during the autumn of 1988. Raisi is regarded by many as a likely successor to Khamenei, though he lacks political experience at executive level. However, the regime was aware that Raisi's election could weaken Iran's position as far as the foreign policy challenges confronting the regime are concerned. There are a number of court cases, lodged internationally relating to the massacre in 1988, outstanding against Raisi, potentially limiting his ability to travel abroad.

Rouhani was, in effect, the only candidate worthy of consideration by the regime, based on the fact that the Iranian leadership would want to continue the normalisation of diplomatic relations and cooperation with the EU and US. The main concern of the regime has been to see the lifting of financial and economic sanctions and thus the removal of the immediate threat to its survival. A Rouhani administration was seen as a grouping of mainly able technocrats, many educated in the UK and US, who are best placed to oversee this process of detente.

In the absence of any opposition political parties or trade unions - which are prohibited by the Islamist regime - Rouhani's neoliberal programme was neither scrutinised nor exposed. His reformist sounding rhetoric was given sufficient airing to attract voters opposed to the hard-line fundamentalism of Raisi. Based on a statistical analysis of the election results constituency by constituency, polling stations in working class districts were without exception very quiet on 19 May. Many ordinary Iranians omitted to cast their votes in an election the outcome of which was clearly foreseeable and thus neither of relevance nor interest to them.

There is certainly little hope in prospect for the Iranian people from the election outcome. Negotiations with the government

have been ongoing for some time in order to set a national minimum wage, based upon an agreed basket of goods and services. Over the last year the cost of the basket of goods and services that could provide an acceptable living standard for workers has, according to the National Statistical Centre, risen from \$863 to \$924 monthly.

The government committee setting the minimum wage in March determined the rate for the current financial year at \$287, based on the argument that the employers and the government were not prepared to accept an increase of more than 14.5% on the previous year's figure.

In its effort to shackle the rights of workers the government has tried to amend the labour law. The main aim is to make it easier for employers to hire and fire employees. The regime has also been trying to open the labour market to foreign capital. They argue that the Iranian worker is educated, skilled and the cheapest in comparison with similar countries.

Since his election to the presidency in June 2013 Rouhani's government has attempted to persuade the parliament to agree to change the law. Mass demonstrations outside parliament on the 15 of November last year put pressure on it to send back the proposed legislation to the government. With the outcome of the recent presidential election, there can be little doubt that the government will once again try to reverse one of the few legal protections afforded to Iranian workers.

International factors no doubt played some part in determining the outcome of elections in Iran. Rouhani used the threat of external action or sanctions to try and galvanise the support of the population. Though it may well be that internal factors are more significant over the coming months, as protests against the ongoing lack of human and democratic rights continue to be a feature of Iranian politics following the election outcome.

In recent weeks the Iranian government has gone on the offensive particularly towards the restive trade unions within the country, moving to detain and impose long prison sentences on several noted activists and leaders, including Reza Shahabi and Esmail Abdi - showing its eagerness to reassert complete control in this area as well as exposing its growing insecurity by equal measure.

Whatever the attitude of the West, and the United States in particular, to the regime in Tehran, the fate of Iran should be in the hands of no-one other than the Iranian people themselves and free from external interference.

Jane Green is National Officer of CODIR (Committee for the defence of the Iranian People).

Back to the 'Nineties with Trump

Steve Ludlam

Dr Steve Ludlam explains Trump's new measures against Cuba and what they mean for the Cuban people and international solidarity movement.

Following President Obama's dramatic retreat on Cuba policy in 2014, the Cuba Solidarity Campaign maintained that the blockade legislation remained untouched, that the US had merely refocused its regime change strategy and that Obama's reforms, all made by presidential directive, could easily be reversed by a successor. President Trump's National Security Presidential Memorandum on Strengthening the Policy of the United States Toward Cuba of 16 June 2017 proves the point; and is a significant setback for the Cuban people.

The first headline of Trump's announcement is stricter enforcement of the 1990s blockade legislation, designed by right-wing Cuban-American groups. The Obama administration's record-breaking billion dollar fines on international companies' financial transactions with the island has already hit Cuba hard with banks withdrawing and others frightened off.

In the UK we have first hand experience of this with the Cooperative Bank's closing of the Cuba Solidarity Campaign's accounts, and the Open University, barring applications from Cuban students.

Trump's new tightening of the blockade will exacerbate this crushing fear of investing.

Secondly, Trump will police much harder the ban on US citizens travelling to Cuba as tourists. The few permitted educational groups of US 'people to people' travellers will again face onerous pre-Obama controls and sanctions and the 'group of one' permitted by Obama is abolished. This is already hitting the private tourist businesses Trump claims he wants to support.

Thirdly, financial transactions will be prohibited with a new list of Cuban institutions and companies considered to be 'under the control of, or act on behalf of, the Cuban military, intelligence or security services or personnel' and which 'disproportionately benefit' such services or personnel 'at the expense of the Cuban people or private enterprise in Cuba'. Cuba's armed forces, completely rebuilt after the revolution, are popular and trusted: the 'people in uniform' are partners in building a new society. They successfully took responsibility for many struggling businesses during the Special Period (when the demise of the Soviet Union caused the Cuban economy collapse overnight) and created large corporations to organise them. Targeting their business activities has nothing to do with weakening the armed forces, but everything to do with causing maximum economic damage. The forces' companies are, for example, partners in the giant Mariel container port and many tourist facilities, including the new joint-venture hotel with the US com-

pany Starwood. The White House says existing business deals are not affected but it will become illegal for US citizens to use such facilities, adding more disincentives to international investment.



Trump's new Cuba policy

A fourth shift widens the ban on Cuban officials travelling to the US. The old list banned government and Communist party officials. It will now encompass, 'secretaries and first secretaries of the Confederation [sic] of Labour of Cuba (CTC) and its component unions; chief editors, editors and deputy editors of Cuban state-run media organisations and programmes, including newspapers, television, and radio, and members and employees of the Supreme Court.' It is to be hoped that both trade unions which support Cuba, and journalist groups that regularly condemn Cuba, will respond. Amnesty and Human Rights Watch have already rejected Trump's policy.

Trump appears, at first sight, to have stepped back from his election campaign promises to reverse everything Obama did. He boasted in his 16 June speech that, "Effective immediately, I am cancelling the last administration's completely one-sided deal with Cuba." But this was fake news. He is not breaking off diplomatic relations, nor reinstating the 'wet foot-dry foot' immigration policy; its abolition last year virtually ended people-trafficking and Cuban deaths at sea. He is not tearing up post-2014 accords in areas such as counter-narcotics, marine and environmental protection, hydrography, civil aviation safety, mail, telecommunications and internet services, public health and biomedical research, and scheduled airline, cruise and ferry boat links. He is not re-imposing pre-Obama limits on Cuban-American visits and cash remittances to families and others on the island. Obama's policy permitting US visitors to bring back Cuban products remains. Trump has not re-imposed the ban on cargo vessels visiting US ports within six months of visiting Cuba, nor reversed the easing of payment conditions for Cuban

imports of US food products. Cuba is not being re-listed as a 'sponsor of terrorism'.

It would be a serious error to assume that Trump feels permanently constrained by US business interests, diplomatic pressures, or the opposition to the blockade by the majority of US public opinion, not least of Cuban-American opinion. Trump's Cuba policy team included Cuban-American right-wingers like Senator Marco Rubio. They have not immediately received everything they wanted, but they believe that they will. Announcing his policy in a Miami theatre named after a prominent Cuban-American terrorist, Trump told his hard-line audience, referring to the promise to repeal all of Obama's directives:

"I promised you -- I keep my promises. Sometimes in politics, they take a little bit longer, but we get there. We get there. Don't we get there? You better believe it... We get there. (Laughter.) Thank you. Thank you. No, we keep our promise."

Apart from the potential for reversing more of Obama's reforms, the new policy builds in procedural opportunities for hostility against the Cuban people. It requires various government agencies to regularly report on the implementation of blockade legislation and the travel ban. These reports will assess Cuba's 'progress' in meeting US 'transition government' (i.e. regime change) demands, including 'democracy program' spending in Cuba, in terms of the objectives of the hard-line 1996 Helms-Burton embargo legislation and evaluate progress with listed 'US interests' which start with (US-defined) human rights and developing Cuba's 'private sector independent of government control'.

These reports, together with the promised resumption of opposition to the annual UN motion condemning the US blockade, will provide endless scope for right-wing politicking aimed at pushing or helping Trump to fulfil his total reversal promise. The same is true of the process of identifying which financial transactions with Cuba are subject to the new ban on 'disproportionate' benefit to Cuba's military and security institutions. The more high-profile delay and uncertainty is generated around investment in Cuba, the more Cubans will suffer.

Trump's "I'll do a better deal" rhetoric is breathtakingly arrogant, given that the US always unilaterally imposed or changed policy. His Memorandum has been widely attacked as a return to Cold War posturing. In fact, it is more a return to the post-Cold War 1990s strategies driven by Cuban-American right-wingers, to strangle Cuba economically while nurturing internal subversion to trigger regime change. In this, it remains consistent with Obama's strategy of influencing an expanding private sector to erode Cuba's socialist constitution: the 1990s' 'track two' approach. Trump's promise to intensify both the blockade and 'track two' subversion threaten new harm to Cubans and new challenges to solidarity groups.



Trump unveils new Cuba policy

In the US, ranged against Trump and the 'Miami Mafia' will be the many business, political, solidarity, academic and cultural groups that have campaigned against the blockade and to preserve Obama's limited reforms. As Trump's Memorandum turns into regulations, they will fight back. Our solidarity with them and with the people of Cuba requires that we also intensify our resistance to the blockade and this recapture of US policy by the remnants of the Batista dictatorship and the defenders of anti-Cuba terrorism.

**This article originally appeared in CubaSí magazine.
www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk**

BOOK REVIEW: 1997 The future that never happened

**By Richard Power Sayeed, Zed Books, 2017.
Reviewed by James Grayson**

In his first book the author emerges as an aspiring cultural commentator.

To some 1997 has become a neglected opportunity. The author traces the absorption and dilution of radical approaches and ideas into the various Establishments.

The perspective is twenty years on and the House of Windsor is as firmly entrenched as ever. Blair and later Brown had their chances to govern. The consequence has been austerity and with it declining standards of living for most of the population whilst businesses are lightly taxed, if at all, and much more lightly regulated.

The Lawrence family suffered a personal tragedy and campaigned at considerable personal cost. A number of co-incidences helped, Neville Lawrence had worked for a newspaper editor and the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police could smell the problems although his successors brought reforms into play. It emerged that the Met had officers seeking to discredit the Lawrences even undercover in their support groups.

Girl power came and went. The artists all flourished for a time; one has a strong current influence in the world of fashion. The second chapter which deals with music pays more attention to the battles of the bands and the changing use of popular music. There is also an interesting line on changes at the BBC.

A chapter entitled Sensation considers the Young British Artists, their dealers and collectors with a particular view of the use of the media to influence publicity; if not taste.

This book concludes that very little progress, if any, has been achieved but it is not a lament, rather a recording of missed opportunities.

Nuclear power: end of an era?

Kate Hudson

News that Three Mile Island nuclear power plant may be shut down in 2019 will reawaken the stuff of nightmares for many of the older generation. Think before Chernobyl, or Fukushima and the horrors we now associate with them, Three Mile Island was the name that spelt fear and dread. In March 1979, one of the plant's two reactors suffered a partial core melt down, resulting from mechanical and human error. Radioactivity was released into the environment in what was the worst commercial nuclear power accident in US history.



Nuclear Power Plant Station, USA

Despite official claims that the human health impact was minimal, the accident led to massive protests, in the US and around the world, and the nuclear power industry in the US faced a shattering setback. Within a few years construction of new nuclear power plants had pretty much ground to a halt and the national debate over nuclear power was largely won by its opponents. These included the likes of Jane Fonda, who combined celebrity glamour with activist grit; the release of her film *The China Syndrome* just days before the accident gave the issue massive popular cultural exposure.

Now it looks like the plant's days are numbered. The reactor that suffered meltdown was never reopened, and the owner has said that the plant is no longer financially viable, given the competition from natural gas and renewables. And other Pennsylvania nuclear plants are at risk of closure too on economic grounds. For the reality is, that although Three Mile Island may have been iconic in a previous age, its fate is now becoming the new norm. Many reactors, across Europe, the US and beyond, are being closed without replacement.

Close observers may have noticed foreign companies pulling out of bids to take on new power stations here in Britain. Again, the key problem is a financial one, experienced by a number of major nuclear power companies. EDF, Europe's biggest nuclear operator is in significant debt, and the problem is thrown into sharp relief by the fate of Westinghouse. This is the major company that developed the pressurized-water reactor and has been the world's largest provider of nuclear technology. Now it has filed for bankruptcy following major problems with its newest reactor design. Its parent company, Toshiba, is having serious problems too, as a result.

The truth is, this is not going to change. Gas and renewables are becoming cheaper. The cost of nuclear power is rising; it continues to have associated problems that renewables just don't face: the risk of catastrophic accident, the impact of radiation, the unsolved problem of waste storage, the dirty and dangerous nature of the fuel cycle. These are all problems that won't go away, but fortunately there is no need for nuclear, because we have renewable energy. It's time for our politicians to grasp this and ditch their outdated nuclear addiction.

Nuclear power, along with nuclear weapons, is part of a tragic phase in twentieth century history which has done too much damage to people and the planet. That era is now ending.

Kate Hudson, General Secretary

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (www.cnduk.org)

Iranian elections: 'democracy' within the framework of theocracy

Navid Shomali

The presidential elections in Iran on 19th May saw the re-election of President Hassan Rouhani for a second term of office. As was widely expected by most Iranian observers, this was the most convenient outcome for the theocratic regime in Tehran. The election, from the opening of nominations, the vetting of candidates, the televised debates during a three-week-long campaign, followed the normal practice of a carefully state-managed show. Yet, the liberal newspapers and media in North America and Europe presented the election as an exercise in democracy in which the "reformers" won decisively.

In Iran a very tightly controlled theocracy which does not believe its legitimacy derives from the ballot box, holds sway. Popular participation in the elections is widely encouraged and facilitated by the regime to impress upon an external audience that the Iranian people endorse their clerical oppressors.

Under the Iranian system, only the powerful Guardian Council can approve candidates for the presidency or any other key political office. The Guardian Council itself is under the firm grip of the Supreme Religious Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, ensuring that the ruling theocracy enjoy a stranglehold on the 'democratic' process, effectively a charade.

Liberal observers could be forgiven for not fully appreciating the complexity of the power structures devised by the clerical leadership to maintain its grip on power. The candidate entrusted with executive power is carefully selected on the basis of whether the regime considers that he has the key qualities to secure its survival.

There are two main factors that chiefly shape the regime's selection criteria in this process. Firstly, there is the growing threat posed internationally to the Islamic Republic of Iran, due to its often provocative and interfering foreign policy stance. The hostile diplomatic moves by the Trump administration, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Israel are recent notable examples.

Secondly, and of equal importance, is the increasing level of internal discontent due to the sharply worsening socio-economic situation within the country, combined with a decline in the living conditions of the masses. The regime is working on a strategy to control growing public protests in the short and medium term without having to change course from its neoliberal and outdated macro socio-economic policies.

ROUHANI OFFERS TESTED RECORD

Heralded as a reformer by certain sections of the western press, President Hassan Rouhani has spent four years in office without doing anything to address the most basic economic demands of the working poor or to improve the human rights record of the Iranian regime. Widespread inequality, unemployment, absolute poverty, environmental degradation, abuse of women's rights, and wholesale suppression of dissent have characterised Rouhani's first term in office. Rouhani has done nothing to support the development of trade unions or advance the position

of women in Iranian society. His neoliberal economic policies have seen rampant inflation whilst unemployment has soared.

Despite this, Rouhani has secured a further four years in office. He did not stand on a platform of extending the misery of the Iranian people but as the man who delivered an end to international sanctions through the 5+1 deal (JCPOA) with the United States and European Union. The deal involves international sanctions being softened in exchange for Iran accepting US/EU demands for the dismantling of important parts of its nuclear technology and strict controls on its nuclear energy programme.



Trump has publicly been a vociferous opponent of the deal with Iran since before his election last November, though he is aware that important voices in the US, EU and the UN are likely to resist any attempt to tamper with the JCPOA. This is not to say that Trump will not continue to pursue his objectives against Iran. His speech in Saudi Arabia on his first overseas visit recently was evidence of this. This inevitably meant that the Iranian theocracy had to carefully select its candidate for the presidency, based on a proven record of dealing with international challenges, at the same time as remaining steadfast in adherence to the traditions of the Islamic Republic.

The list of candidates for the election on 19th May did not include any opposition. All opposition forces are banned and routinely suppressed. The Iranian communist Tudeh Party continues to operate underground, as it has since 1983, when it was attacked by the theocratic regime. Its entire leadership and many of its cadres were arrested and executed.

In order to create the illusion of a contest the Guardian Council fielded a rival candidate in the shape of Ayatollah Ebrahim Raisi, well known for his part in the mass execution of around 5000 political prisoners during the autumn of 1988. Raisi is regarded by many as a likely successor to Khamenei, though he lacks political experience at executive level. The regime was aware that

Raisi's election would weaken Iran's position as far as the foreign policy challenges confronting the regime are concerned. There are a number of court cases, lodged internationally and relating to the massacre in 1988, outstanding against Raisi, potentially limiting his ability to travel abroad.

On the other hand, Rouhani's cards were already on the table.

Rouhani was, in effect, the only candidate worthy of consideration by the regime, based on the fact that the Iranian leadership would wish to continue with the normalisation of diplomatic relations and cooperation with the EU and US. The main concern of the regime has been to see the lifting of financial and economic sanctions and thus the removal of an immediate existential threat to its survival. A Rouhani administration is seen as a grouping of mainly able Islamist technocrats, many educated in the UK and US, who are best placed to oversee this process of detente.

ROUHANI: THE SAFEST PAIR OF HANDS

In the absence of any opposition political parties, and with trade unions prohibited by the Islamist regime, Rouhani's neoliberal programme was neither scrutinised nor exposed. His reformist-sounding rhetoric was given a sufficient airing to attract voters opposed to the hard-line fundamentalism of Raisi. The ruling circles temporarily tolerated Rouhani's propaganda campaign up to a point but still felt the need to remind him not to cross the Islamic Republic's "red lines".

It is important to note that based on the statistical analysis of the election results constituency by constituency, the polling stations in the working class districts were without exception very quiet on the 19th of May. Workers' representatives mostly omitted to cast their votes in an election, the outcome of which was clearly foreseeable, and thus neither of relevance nor interest to the vast majority of the labouring class.

The Iranian Left in general disputes Rouhani's credentials as a reformer. He has been a key figure at the heart of the theocratic regime right from its inception in the early 1980s. As a member of the National Security Council from 1989 to 2013, and for 16 years its secretary, he was involved in many key life and death issues. He is recognised as a representative of an emerging powerful section of the neoliberal capitalists that advocate the extending of Iran's trade relationships with the West, including the US. However, the opposing and competing factions always ultimately unite around support for the Supreme Leader, this being the fundamental internal dialectic of the regime.

It can be safely stated that no significant change is expected in the nature of the "political economy" of the Islamic Republic and that only cosmetic adjustments to the capitalist management of the economy may be forthcoming. Rouhani will no doubt continue to defend the free market economic policy and to rely on a rigid "Monetary Policy" and open-door to foreign trade and investment. The price of these policies is paid mainly by the workers and wage earners. The experience of the past twelve years has shown that during Rouhani's four further years in office, the conditions of life of the classes and strata involved

in productive work, the majority of the population, are unlikely to improve.

Iran – Type of Leader



- Iran is a theocratic republic with a presidential system.
- The government of Iran is based on Islamic law.
- The Supreme Leader of Iran, who is a religious leader, is chief of state and has final say on all matters.
- The Supreme Leader is commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

The fact that Rouhani was considered the safest pair of hands in directing Iran in the turbulent climate of the Middle East; neither contradicts the existence of an intense struggle between factions of the regime nor its continuation in domestic Iranian politics. Regardless of how this struggle plays out behind closed doors, all the competing factions will unite around the objective of lending legitimacy to, and bolstering the mandate of, the chosen candidate through attracting people to voting stations in a cosmetic 'people's ballot'. Unfortunately, the liberal media in the US and EU, including in Britain, fall for this and in effect legitimise the predetermined result of an election in which people had no real prospect of fundamental change.

This article was written for Liberation by Navid Shomali, International Secretary of Tudeh Party of Iran

They keep screaming democracy at us at every opportunity

Brian Mitchell

Let's leave Tellytubby land and learn a little from the history of countries merely wanting to be economically independent, neutral or militarily non-aligned. Democratically elected popular governments have been intervened in and overthrown by the US and Britain, such as Cheddi Jagan's Guiana, Jacobo Arbenz's Guatemala, Salvador Allende's Chile, Mohammad Mossadeq's Iran among others.

"Capitalism has destroyed our belief in any effective power but that of self-interest backed by force ." (George Bernard Shaw.)

A condition of Britain receiving US Marshall Aid after the war was militarily with the United States through NATO. In order to keep themselves in power, the pseudo-socialist governments, usually social democrats, of Europe and Britain pandered to US dollars and voted the way the US required in UN, NATO or other negotiations and agreements.

How many European countries have secret treaties or agreements which are not openly written into their constitutions? (Britain remains one of the only countries in the world which does not even have a written legal constitution or a Bill of Rights), but such as the FRG (West Germany) – that forces of another NATO country have the right to intervene if the interests of NATO or the US are considered to be threatened – e.g. by the coming to power of a socialist, neutralist or militarily non-aligned government, or one that wanted to remove US nuclear weapons and bases, or leave NATO?

"In case the Federal Republic [of Germany] and the European Defence Community are unable to deal with the situation which is created by ... subversion of the liberal democratic basic order [i.e. capitalism], a serious disturbance of public order, or a grave threat of any of these events, and which in the opinion of the Three Powers endangers the security of their forces, the Three Powers may, ... proclaim a state of emergency ... Independently of a state of emergency, any military commander may, if his forces are imminently menaced, take such immediate action appropriate ... to remove the danger."

(From Article 5 of the Bonn Treaty.)

"...including the ability to deal with a serious disturbance of public security and order."

(From Article 5 of the "Convention On Relations Between The Three Powers And The Federal Republic Of Germany" as amended by the Paris Agreements of October 1954.)

"In the present situation it is certainly the internal unrest, sabotage and civil war type conflicts, that is, local disturbances in their broadest sense, which under certain circumstances could most of all endanger the Eastern borders of the NATO bloc."

(Wilhelm von Schramm, Der Deutsche Soldat, 1961.)

"The draft of the committee enables the executive to deploy the armed Bundeswehr inside the country and to misuse it for internal political aims - without having obtained the sanction of parliamentary authority. The armed forces may not only be deployed for police tasks, but also internally 'with weapons'. The decision rests with the federal government because if any such action becomes topical it is always possible to say that 'the situation required this sort of immediate action'."

(Frankfurter Rundschau, 26 April 1965.)

When discussions on ratifying the North Atlantic Treaty were held, US Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Dean Acheson stated that one of NATO's chief aims was to prevent what it called aggression "by an election or a coup" or of "conquest through persuasion" [ie: popular election of a genuine socialist government]. And the NATO Commander in Chief in Central Europe in 1956 referred to NATO as a shield against the "infiltration of ideas". Various NATO "leaks" to the press in 1970 stated that the US in Europe could resort to sabotage and subversion and other warfare in the event of what is called "emergency situations" and if necessary take full power and bring any weapons onto a country's territory, including chemical and biological weapons, use all information available and suppress any movement "threatening US strategic interests." A US document published by the Italian press in 1981 showed that of over 23,000 missile targets only about 2,500 were in Warsaw Pact countries.

So if a genuine socialist government is elected to power by an overwhelming majority, will it be crushed militarily?

Soon after Marshall Aid was agreed by the US Congress, Britain and the US had secret talks on NATO in the Pentagon in 1949. These discussions were made public in 1979. In the documents of these discussions NATO's class war policy is clearly stated:

"The Parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened."

(From Clause 4 of the Constitution of the North Atlantic Treaty (NATO).)

In the US government's esoteric political language this "affect security," and "threatened" means the security of capitalism and the rich is threatened, and that "consult together" means military intervention.

The European capitalist leaders offered the US and NATO the right to intervene diplomatically, economically, and militarily in any "political change favourable to an aggressor" in any NATO country. In other words, the election of any Socialist government or any government committed to and implementing political or military neutralist, non-aligned or disarmament in Britain or any other European country. And "territorial integrity" includes colonial or neo-colonial territories. The people of the British Commonwealth territory of the tiny island of Grenada know full well the meaning of this application of NATO's Clause 4.

It is also important to understand and point out that this means that it is only necessary that the "political independence or security" of any NATO or NATO dominated country is judged to be "threatened" not by the country concerned, but by "any one of them".

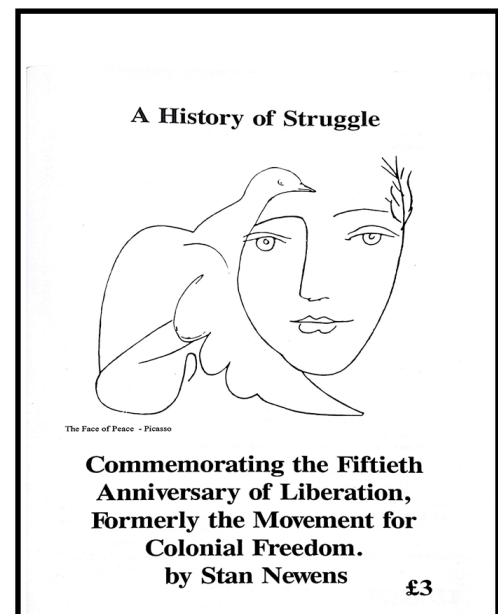
There is no doubt that, in the event of civil unrest in any European country not being able to be contained by the forces of "law and order" of that country, the US would intervene militarily. With the collusion of European so-called "democratic socialist" governments (ie: social reformists), the US had the right to be the world's anti-Communist policeman and intervene.

A group of wealthy and powerful people which has such fears and responds to them with such contingency plans is already on the slippery slope to a repetition of the rise of Fascism as in Germany in the 1920s and 30s and a devastating world war as in

1939, and all imperialist wars ever since, ultimately to a nuclear catastrophe.

If a genuinely socialist society cannot defend itself against whatever remains of a former capitalist state, it is doomed to failure. Hence the first priority of the Russian Revolution was to arm the workers in the creation of the Red Army. Can anybody imagine a capitalist government like Britain being confident enough to arm the working class? Look at what the Russian Revolution had to defend itself against in the form of capital – counter-revolution and the Wars of Intervention where the USSR was invaded by 15 capitalist nations, including: Britain, the US, Japan, France, Germany and other neighbouring capitalist states, till they finally left in 1923; then diplomatic and trade isolation, and finally the onslaught of Nazi Germany – financed and supported by British and US capital. Look at what Vietnam had to defend itself against. With capitalist control of such states and their military, these socialist governments could not have survived.

This article was written for Liberation by Brian Mitchell, member and supporter of Liberation.



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