

WORKERS

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ENERGY BRITAIN NEEDS A POLICY FOR POWER

UKRAINE The big lie

ROTHERHAM Only local?

ELECTIONS The real issue

CUBA Return of the Five

SUPERMARKET WARS

SOVIET FINANCE

TTIP Road to war

plus News,

Book Reviews

and more

WORKERS



Away with parliamentary illusions

THE RUN-UP to an election is a strange time. There is much talk of democracy while in reality a range of tactics is deployed to remove citizens from the electoral roll (the Local Government Association said last year that 5.5 million people were removed when the most recent registers were set up).

There is much talk of the importance of discussing the issues. But when workers want to talk about the impact of the free movement of people on wage levels, this is called “racist” and trade unions actively connive to make it a taboo topic.

There are many references to the importance of involving “the whole country” at the same time as every effort is made to divide and fragment us.

The real issues of peace and war, pay, jobs, housing, planning, industry and sovereignty will not be changed by any decision on 7 May. They will scarcely even figure in the “debate”.

Yes, we should use this strange pre-election time to raise these questions with politicians, but more importantly we have to discuss them in the workplace and where we live.

Here’s a prediction: come 8 May we will have a government committed to the European Union and the free movement of labour, to the continuance of anti-trade union laws, to NATO and TTIP, to the marketisation of the NHS, and to the growth of free schools and academies.

When it comes to Ukraine, every single so-called opposition party from Greens to Conservatives is a

paid-up member of the anti-Russia hate club. Working class opposition stopped the government’s planned bombing of Syria. We need to be equally vocal now against anti-Russia warmongering. Ballots don’t stop bombs.

In Scotland, where the referendum resulted in a vote for the unity of Britain, that democratic decision is now being set aside and a new campaign to fragment the whole of Britain into regions is under way. It will continue after 7 May, whoever gets elected.

There is a huge responsibility on those who voted No in Scotland to continue the fight for unity. Equally, the rest of Britain must understand the importance of the unity of Britain. We need to be united in the fight for wages, for planning our future needs, and for peace.

This party will be holding May Day meetings in Edinburgh, Leeds and London (details on page 6). Our theme is British Workers: Unity not Division. Please join us if you possibly can and even more importantly take every opportunity to raise these issues with others in the workplace and elsewhere.

Everything we produce, every part of our infrastructure and welfare is run by workers who understand them better than any politician. Yet we continue the myth that parliamentary parties can “solve” things for us.

We know they can’t and won’t. It is we who must take responsibility. ■

Cover image Workers



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Unions consider health vote



UNIONS IN HEALTH will be meeting at the start of March to consider the results of the ballots on the government's offer in the NHS pay dispute. If the offer is accepted, the issue is closed. Otherwise, the stage is set for further strike action on 13 March.

No one on the union side is claiming a victory, with most saying the offer is the best that can be expected without further action. There are some small improvements in relation to pay spines and consolidated pay (which would be

part of pensionable salary), but overall the offer can be politely described as not very good.

But while all eyes were on Jeremy Hunt's general pay offer to unions, an important aspect of that offer received scant attention – provisions relating to ambulance workers.

Almost a year ago a national strike in the ambulance service very nearly took place, ("Ambulance dispute looms", *Workers* April 2014) when the employers tried to change unsocial hours provisions. Hunt's current offer settles that dispute – by conceding the unions' point. The offer also talks about reimbursing ambulance workers' pension contributions, which unions hadn't even asked for!

Why these big steps forward? The fact is that ambulance workers are generally better organised and are capable of delivering dangerously powerful industrial action. The thought of a 12-hour ambulance strike on 29 January followed by 24 hours on 25 February, with the prospect of real threat to life and limb on the streets of London and other large cities, finally shook the government into action. Hunt called the unions in, initially to lambast them, but ultimately to make an offer he didn't want to make.

It should come as no surprise that there are effectively two different settlements on offer. Both reflect the industrial action that produced them. Lessons, as from all disputes, will have to be learned. Non-union members must join. Union members must vote in the ballots that lead to action, and fight once the decision to fight has been taken.

The NHS is far too important to be a general election issue. It is an issue involving politics. And political issues are fought out in workplaces, not in elections, nor in parliament. If that lesson is learned, the NHS pay dispute will constitute a real victory. ■

• A longer version of this article is on the web at www.cpbml.org.uk.

LIBYA

The authors of chaos

IN AN ACT of supreme irony, the US, France, Italy, Germany, Spain and Britain have said the forces of disruption "will not be allowed to condemn Libya to chaos and extremism". But the NATO attack did precisely that, creating a disaster with two competing "governments", rampant militias, dwindling oil revenues, and 3,000 people killed in the past year. Hundreds of thousands are fleeing the country, causing chaos in other countries too. ■

MINIMUM WAGE

A handful of prosecutions

THE GOVERNMENT has made great play of naming and shaming employers who fail to pay the minimum wage. Yet just 92 employers have been prosecuted over the past two years, according to figures published at the start of the year – and only because individual workers complained. The TUC estimates that between 250,000 and 300,000 workers are being unlawfully paid below the minimum wage. ■

HOUSING

Empty investments

LONDON HAS tens of thousands of "safe deposit boxes" positioned on its public streets – houses and flats bought for investment but untenanted. The revelation follows the analysis of the purchase of 30,000 homes by ten foreign investor companies based in Abu Dhabi, Hong Kong, China, Malaysia, Australia, Singapore and Sweden. The new perversion in the housing market is no longer "buy to let" but "buy to leave". ■

Workers

If you have news from your industry, trade or profession we want to hear from you. Call us on 020 8801 9543 or email workers@cpbml.org.uk



ON THE WEB

A selection of additional news at cpbml.org.uk...

US, NATO stoke the flames of open war over Ukraine

Despite the peace talks, the US and NATO are moving onto a war footing...

'Fair pay' fortnight launched

The TUC's "Fair Pay Fortnight" ran from 16 February to 1 March, supposedly a time for unions to campaign over Britain's depressed wage rates...

National Gallery: fighting on

National Gallery workers were on strike for five days against privatisation proposals. They are part of a wider fight to defend Britain's cultural heritage...

Executive pay: All in it together?

German executive pay has outstripped the level in Britain for the first time. But British directors are doing their best to catch up – to the detriment of both companies and workers...

Cypriot workers fight aftermath of EU-ordained closure

Unions in Cyprus are still fighting the aftermath of the shutdown of the national air carrier. An EU ruling that financial help given by the Cyprus government was illegal state aid effectively shut it down in January, with the loss of 560 jobs...

Litvinenko inquiry attempts to demonise Russia

The public inquiry into the murder of Alexander Litvinenko is rapidly turning into an ugly farce, and a blatant extension of the campaign to demonise Russia...

Plus: the e-newsletter

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Workers

Scandal of tax avoidance

TAX AVOIDANCE has been much in the news. That it happens is no surprise to workers. The scale of the tax unpaid and the extent to which it is ingrained in our economic system might be.

The response in Westminster is to trivialise the issue. Each party looks to embarrass the other for electoral advantage, offering only headlines and sound bites. There is no recognition of the root cause in the way that international capitalism works.



Avoidance of tax by very wealthy individuals and multinational corporations fits tightly with the drive to undermine national sovereignty and the state. Around 60 per cent of government revenue is from income tax, national insurance and VAT, paid predominantly by workers on their wages and consumption. The vast sums companies avoid would make a great contribution to national reinvestment and development.

The two recent scandals arose because brave individuals each decided that the activities of their employer were so far from the common good that they had to be exposed. Antoine Deltour worked for international accounting firm PWC in Luxembourg. Hervé Falciani worked for HSBC in Switzerland. Both are facing prosecution for their actions.

The details of tax avoidance are complex but the underlying ideas are simple. On the one hand legitimate international companies take advantage of tax treaties intended to regulate business between countries, and pervert them. Transactions are artificially moved to places where they won't be liable to tax, if necessary by creating fraudulent paperwork. And on the other hand, criminal profits and personal wealth is hidden, undeclared and untaxed, with the help of compliant bankers.

Those working for HMRC see this daily. Tony Wallace, president of the First Division Association's HM Revenue and Customs branch said the government is still cutting staff and the opposition seems bent on blaming tax workers for avoidance. He condemned the "corrosive message...that paying tax is no longer a good thing for society". ■

NHS For sale – in Europe

THE NHS in England is now advertising across the private sector in the European Union to sell off the "back office" or administrative functions of GP practices, running medical and patient record systems, and collating and recording patient information and GP payments.

These functions date back to the origins of the NHS and employ almost 2,000 workers across England (slightly different arrangements apply to other parts of Britain).

Following the government's disastrous Health and Social Care Act (now officially condemned as a destructive waste by leading NHS think-tank the King's Fund), these services were transferred from the now abolished Primary Care Trusts to NHS England.

As part of the vicious reorganisation of the system, they were redesignated as Primary Care Support Services, and immediately lost 40 per cent of their funding. This led to proposals for nearly 1,000 redundancies and closure of offices (including all four offices in London).

Worse was to come. The scale of these

cuts made the services effectively inoperable. NHS management was told to come up with new proposals. A suggested selling off to a part-public mainly-private company was scotched when the new NHS England Chief Executive insisted that full EU-wide private sector advertising take place.

Workers are now being told that no transfer will take place before the election. Management have been embarrassed and appalled at what they've been required to do, and the workers' union, Unison, has been struggling to keep its members abreast of ever-changing proposals.

A voluntary redundancy scheme has been established – and more than half of the workforce scrambled to go, rather than be sold off with the services they provide. Understandable, yes, but not a solution to the problem.

No future lies in such a response. It is a betrayal of those who fought to establish these important services, and a betrayal of future workers who will not have these valuable jobs to do. And it is a betrayal of the workers themselves, by the workers themselves. Workers must gather themselves, and must move away from such defeatist and defeated thinking. ■

SCOTLAND

SNP hits education

UNDER THE Scottish National Party teacher numbers and college places have both fallen. Teacher numbers have been cut from 52,446 in 2007 to 48,452 last year, according to official statistics.

Education body Colleges Scotland has also documented a decline in Scottish college students, falling to 238,805 in the academic year 2012-13 from 347,336 in 2009-10. Over the same period, the hours of learning delivered by colleges fell from 83.4 million to 73.7 million, while college staff numbers dropped from 20,686 to 13,761. ■

EU tries again on trade deal



A WORRIED EU Commissioner for Trade Cecilia Malmström paid a visit to London on 16 February. Maintaining the EU position on growth and jobs despite all evidence to the contrary, she repeated previous attempts to revive support for TTIP, this time promising “maximum transparency”. Negotiating texts would be published and explained, she said.

So now we can at last “read what TTIP is all about”. Before, the only access to negotiations affecting millions of people was via a reading room in Brussels, limited to one British

representative who was prohibited from recording his or her findings. But admitting to the shadowy workings of the EU does not herald an end to secrecy if that is what “business confidentiality” demands.

The successful signing off of TTIP is a priority for Malmström’s boss, EU president Jean-Claude Juncker, but he has handed her a poisoned chalice. Support was flagging even before she took office last November. Opposition is now so widespread that the deal seems unlikely to survive, though not yet in its death throes. There is increasing concern in the US Congress, and the necessary unanimity in Europe looks hard to achieve, if only because if Greece remains in the EU Syriza have vowed to oppose the deal.

Talks are suspended pending reworking of provision on investor state dispute settlement (ISDS), the most toxic element, with its potential to impoverish whole countries and industrial sectors. As a gigantic model of a TTIP Trojan Horse tours Europe, Malmström makes it clear that ISDS will not be revoked. Even if TTIP were agreed in principle, she warns that it would be barely possible to water down protection for corporate investors without abandoning the whole project. The final draft scheduled for the end of 2015 will not necessarily include a reformed ISDS for scrutiny, and even if it does, the EU Council of Ministers and the European Parliament will have the final say, whatever Westminster may say or think.

Every time the EU speaks on TTIP, it is condemned out of its own mouth. Malmström’s fellow commissioners have tried to imply that all public services would be excluded, but she contradicted them (and her own previous statements on health, education and water management) saying that only “publicly funded” health services would be protected. This too is an assertion rather than a fact. Even where EU publications indicate that state monopolies will be protected, this is contradicted elsewhere when referring to services of general economic interest such as utilities and public services, to be “governed by normal competition law”.

It is just such EU incompetencies, contradictions and uncertainties around the scope of ISDS that, happily for workers, have led to its rejection so far. And in Britain the distinction between public and private services has become dangerously blurred.

Malmström admitted there was double-dealing going on. EU leaders want TTIP secured, she said, while pretending to side with protesters at home. Westminster is riddled with MPs sending mixed messages. It is all about “scrutiny” and no place for opposition. As one MP admitted: “The truth is that this place lacks proper ways to hold ministers to account for what they do or decide in Europe on these trade deals.” And on everything else! ■

• A longer version of this article is on the web at www.cpbml.org.uk.

WHAT'S ON

Coming soon

MARCH

Wednesday 4 March, 7.30 pm.

“Science for the people: Away with superstitions.”

Bertrand Russell Room, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL

CPBML Public Meeting



The forces of reason are under attack.

The assault on progress is coming from all sides – religious reaction, quasi-religious environmentalist fringes, and all those in power who fear the strength of scientific thinking.

Science must be reclaimed by the people for what it is: a force for progress.

Come and discuss. All welcome

CPBML MAY DAY MEETINGS

“British workers – unity not division”

LEEDS Thursday 30 April, 7.30 pm.

Sovereign Suite, Cosmopolitan Hotel, Lower Briggate, Leeds LS1 4AE

EDINBURGH Friday 1 May, 6.30 pm.

Word Power Bookshop, 43 West Nicolson Street, Edinburgh EH8 9DB

LONDON Friday 1 May, 7.30 pm.

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL

The British working class has been a thorn in the side of capitalism ever since it came into being. Hence the attempt by capitalism to divide and rule.

We are all exploited by capitalism for the creation of profit. Any attempt to divide us helps our enemy. This May Day, say no to capitalist-inspired division, yes to working-class unity.

Down with separatism, down with the EU, no to imperialism. Workers of all lands, unite!

For more detail, see advert, page 6.



CPBML MAY DAY MEETINGS 2015

BRITISH WORKERS: UNITY NOT DIVISION

Capitalism never gives up in its drive to defeat the working class today and render it incapable of winning in the future.

Ensuring its profits is all that matters to the ruling class – even if that means signing us up to destructive treaties like the EU's TTIP or dragging us into its imperialist wars.

The British working class has been a thorn in the side of capitalism ever since it came into being. Hence the attempt by capitalism to divide and rule.

Even when we score a notable victory – such as the vote of Scottish workers to remain part of the British working class – the enemy immediately tries to regain the upper hand.

Our greatest strength is our unity in struggle – but that requires a clarity of thought which is not always evident.

Those in the labour movement who emphasise differences between workers – religion, north/south, male/female, “race” or skin colour, “well-paid” vs “vulnerable workers” and so on and on – reject the essential common class interest of all workers in Britain.

We are all exploited by capitalism for the creation of profit. Any attempt to divide us helps our enemy. This May Day, say no to capitalist-inspired division, yes to working-class unity.

**Down with separatism, down with the EU, no to imperialism.
Workers of all lands, unite!**



EDINBURGH

Speakers, music and discussion
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Leeds LS1 4AE

LONDON

Speakers, social and refreshments
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Conway Hall
Red Lion Square
London WC1R 4RL

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Capitalism doesn't understand merely economic interests. It wants the elimination of all opposition...

TTIP's drive to war

OPPOSITION TO the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership is growing. On the face of it, this is a free trade agreement between the European Union and the USA, but it has dangerous economic, legal, and political consequences.

TTIP could force a future government to privatise the NHS and education, and its provisions for Investor State Dispute Settlements will make private corporations more powerful than elected governments.

For both of those reasons it is right to oppose TTIP, or more properly the EU's TTIP, as it is the European Union which is the mechanism for forcing it on us.

But bad though these things are, they are not the Treaty's most dangerous aspect. TTIP is a treaty aimed at war. The countries signed up to TTIP constitute a bloc for war, just as certainly as the Triple Alliance and the Entente Cordiale were military alliances 100 years ago.

A bloc for war

This new war bloc includes NATO (and therefore Britain), plus other allies dominated by the US across the Pacific, now being organised into the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP): Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. Plus the Gulf States, and others.

The bloc is aimed at those countries which will not join TTIP or similar US-dominated trade and investment groups. It is aimed at the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa); it is aimed at the 33 countries of CELAC (the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States).

TTIP seeks to establish a one-sided trading system just as the US tried to establish the FTAA, the Free Trade Area of the Americas, which foundered on the opposition of countries now joined together in CELAC, led in their opposition by socialist Cuba.

In those countries that have not signed up to TTIP or TPP, governments are less dominated by transnational, essentially US, companies. So the clash is the old clash in new guise: capitalism against the people. A future war would be just that class-based war that bourgeois



Andrew Wiarid/andrew-wiarid.info

Anti-TTIP demonstration in London, November 2014.

pundits have said could not happen anymore, because they claimed the only threat of another war came from the existence of the Soviet Union.

In fact such a war could not have even been contemplated had the Soviet Union still been with us. The force of its deterrence upon belligerent western capital was unfortunately underestimated by most workers in most countries. The detrimental effect of the USSR's absence was demonstrated by the fact that as soon as it collapsed war broke out in Europe for the first time since 1945, in Yugoslavia.

Chaos

Then we had the Middle East, where the first Gulf War, leading to a process which has directly created the chaos in the region and one of the greatest war threats we now have. In the 1990s, the first post-Soviet decade, 4 million people died in 49 separate armed conflicts, 90 per cent of them civilian.

The countries signing up to the TTIP principles are heavily armed, or, like Japan, are re-arming rapidly. And all of them immediately offer to invade a country alongside the US when it, or its leader, decides it needs to intervene militarily

'As soon as the USSR collapsed war broke out in Europe.'

anywhere in the world.

That is what lies behind the attacks on Russia about the Ukraine. Once it became clear that Russia was not going to join TTIP, or for that matter join NATO or the EU either, a major effort was made to detach the Ukraine from its position as an historic ally of Russia.

After the demise of the Soviet Union, Russia is no longer a symbol or centre of working class power. Yet – by being outside the US-EU bloc – Russia is still seen as a rival in the world trade that TTIP seeks to dominate, and is therefore seen as an enemy. ■

This article is an edited extract of a speech delivered at the CPBML meeting "One world – divided by class" at Conway Hall in London on 12 November.

Want a country without enough energy to prevent blackouts with the muddle of complacent governments and environmentalists?

Why Britain needs an industrial revolution

A STRANGE THING happened in the middle of February as the shrill pre-election circus gathered speed. Messrs Cameron, Clegg and Miliband promised to work across party lines to agree a programme of further reductions in carbon emissions. At a stroke, they confirmed publicly what has long been known: that Britain has no credible, independent energy policy. Instead, we pay homage to the EU and its desperate push to a “low carbon economy”, tellingly dubbed a post-industrial revolution.

This is a precarious position for a modern industrial country. We import most of the coal we burn. North Sea oilfields are in a state of near collapse. Power stations are closing – Centrica, one of the largest suppliers of electricity, announced in February that it will close two gas-fired stations. At present we can store just 15 days’ supply of gas, compared with the 100 days other European countries consider prudent.

Most of our nuclear power stations are close to the end of their working lives, with question marks hanging over replacements. Renewable sources such as solar, wind, tidal and biomass are providing just a fraction of the energy we use.

If Britain struggles along in this fashion for much longer, our luck will be all out. And so will the lights.

Quick fixes

For decades, successive governments have been allowed to neglect our need for energy self reliance. The quick fix prevails over the long-term interests of Britain – from opening up the North Sea to international markets, through the dash for gas, to selling our nuclear capability to another country.

If we want to continue living in a society where energy is so central to our lives, where is it going to come from? Some advocate a move away from energy altogether, as though the spinning wheel was morally superior to the loom. British workers are not seduced by this nonsense. We know that energy gives us work and the tools to make the world a better place.

But we are less robust in our thinking when confronted by false attributes attached to particular forms of energy, as characterised by “coal bad, biomass good”, or “internal combustion engine bad, solar



Workers

Deconstruction – just about the only growth industry in British energy. Photo shows Bradwell nuclear power station.

panel good”.

We cannot afford to be so indulgent. Burning fossil fuels currently creates unwanted emissions. It’s a scientific matter and not answered by fanciful ideas about escaping from industry. We are finding, and will find, scientific solutions to these problems. Nuclear power offers the best option of a sustainable long-term resource, and we must reassert our control over it. Meanwhile imported gas and coal remain essential to our industrial survival over the next few years, whether we like it or not. It’s time to set out a policy for Britain.

Demand 1. Restore British control over our nuclear industry.

Sizewell B in Suffolk was the last new nuclear reactor to be built in Britain, commissioned in 1988 and on line from 1995. Since then successive governments have capitulated to the anti-nuclear lobby and set their faces against replenishing our nuclear stock. The 2003 energy White Paper solemnly intoned “...its [nuclear] economics make it an unattractive option”.

Reality began to intrude: dependency

ts? Fancy a return to 18th century? It's simple – just stick
mental extremists...

dependent energy policy



nuclear power station, Essex, currently being decommissioned, with no replacement in sight.

'All but one of our existing nuclear plants are now run by the French state subsidiary EDF.'

French-designed European Pressurised Reactor. But this design has proved to be hard to construct and more expensive than estimated.

The Chinese want further guarantees from the French government before they release funds, a larger slice of the contract for Chinese manufacturers, and for EDF to hand over the site at Bradwell, Essex, to build a reactor to a Chinese design.

Now Austria has challenged the EU approval of the British government's planned £17.6 billion subsidy to the operators of the Hinkley station. That case could take up to five years to resolve. And EDF wants its investment back should the Austrians succeed. As well as the delay to generation capacity, the uncertainty jeopardises thousands of construction jobs and hundreds of site operation jobs once the station is built.

The delays at Sizewell arise largely from disputes between the Chinese and the French, and the EU and Austria. This highlights the failure of British governments to nurture what was once a world-leading British industry in the construction and operation of nuclear power plant. They have placed a key component of Britain's vital infrastructure and security in the hands of sovereign nations.

The government's handling of the nuclear issue is perverse. It talks of market forces, but is prepared to guarantee £92.50 a megawatt hour, twice the market price of electricity in Britain. It also promises to shoulder the costs of decommissioning, on top of the costs associated with any major incident. That's privatisation of profit and nationalisation of loss.

on imported oil and gas left Britain exposed to spiralling prices and insecurity of supply. From 2006, the government began making tentative steps towards nuclear expansion. In the past eight years expectations have increased from an initial 1 gigawatt of power on stream by 2020 to 16 gigawatts, with the first reactor in place by 2018.

But governments have also decided that all production will be in the hands of private companies – anyone but the British public sector.

All but one of our existing nuclear plants are now run by the French state subsidiary

EDF. Unsurprisingly it is the preferred option for the construction of new plant. EDF leads the £16 billion contract for construction of a new reactor and power station at Hinkley Point in Somerset. But even the government's favourable terms are not enough to guarantee that construction will be complete by the 2023 deadline.

The original start date was July 2014, now pushed back until this autumn at the earliest due to disputes over funding and design. Two of China's state nuclear companies between them have put up 40 per cent of the funding. EDF insisted on the

Continued on page 10



What price wind power? 19 January 2015 will go down in history as the day wind powered electricity generation died. On the day that Britain's electricity demand peaked at 52.54 gigawatts, wind power generation could only produce between 0.354 and 0.573 gigawatts, less than 1 per cent of demand. After all the government hype, vastly inflated subsidies, desecration of Britain's beauty spots by the erection of turbines, it flopped. The so-called wind farm capacity of 28 per cent failed to deliver – except to landowners raking in guaranteed profits while household bills go through the roof. Gas, coal, nuclear, hydro generation saved the day. To meet Britain's needs we have return to a real mixed generation energy platform based upon coal, oil and gas using carbon capture technologies, and nuclear power. Photo shows wind turbines near Bradwell nuclear power station, Essex.

Continued from page 9

Demand 2. Research clean coal to reduce dependence on imported oil.

Coal is still a major component of British energy production. We burned 60 million tonnes in 2013, contributing 37 per cent of electricity generated. But 49 million tonnes were imported even though we have arguably 300 years' worth of coal under our feet.

Thatcher's onslaught against the coal industry was not motivated by saving the planet but by her hatred of workers, especially organised workers. But the damage is now done; most closed pits can't be reopened. Their seams will have collapsed and flooded. We will have to be creative to be able to use the coal still in the ground.

Open cast mining is a consideration, but most of the remaining coal deposits are either under the sea bed or deep beneath

the surface of the earth; extraction will be complex and expensive. But 300 years' worth of coal is too much to ignore.

There are technologies that can potentially give a new lease of life to coal reserves too deep or inaccessible for conventional mining. One such is Underground Coal Gasification (UCG) which involves burning coal underground and using the gas produced to drive turbines. A UCG facility in Uzbekistan has been producing gas for power generation since 1961. It took many years to come to fruition and there are still considerable challenges to practical exploitation, but the science is there.

Britain leads in the technology aimed at reducing emissions from burning coal, such as coal washing, scrubbing and gasification. We have continually advanced and demonstrated the scientific evidence and technological competence to clean up coal's dirty tag.

One example is the White Rose research project involving a number of uni-

versities and centred on the Drax power station in Yorkshire. This ambitious plan takes existing technologies and brings to a new level our ability to remove more emissions during combustion, and to capture, transport and store those emissions.

The government must decide whether or not to back the construction of the power station and associated pipeline infrastructure in North Yorkshire and Humberside. They are presently dithering, as did the previous government when the original plan was mooted in 2007. The sooner developments like White Rose are allowed to prove their worth, the sooner we can get away from dependence on imports.

Demand 3. Stop short-term tax breaks and plan for the proper use of oil and gas.

The recent collapse in oil prices has encouraged some investment. But it also has serious implications for investment and jobs in the oil sector and other fuel extraction industries.

Approximately 16 billion barrels of oil are thought to remain under the North Sea. An estimated 400,000 jobs are dependent upon North Sea oil and gas extraction, but activity was winding down even before prices fell.

Royal Dutch Shell applied to start decommissioning its Brent field operations in February 2014. BP has already announced 300 layoffs in the North Sea and plans to cut its investment this year worldwide by £4 billion. We can expect to see more jobs lost and research into extraction and exploration curtailed.

Worldwide crude oil stocks are at or near the record 1998 levels of 2.83 billion barrels. The cost of extraction in difficult areas like the North Sea becomes unattractive to oil companies. Hence the plea to George Osborne for new exploration credits and relief on corporation tax at the recent Aberdeen Conference.

OPEC, especially Saudi Arabia, has maintained production levels. That seems odd until you recognise that the Saudis are keen to stifle Russia as a rival producer and to prevent the US shale oil and gas industry from developing.

When North Sea oil came on stream in the 1970s, Labour Energy minister Wedgwood Benn presented a comprehensive national plan for the extraction and use of this national resource. Then Thatcher opened up our country's resources to all and sundry. Those who followed her have abandoned any notion of planning and managing North Sea oil and gas stocks.

There are about 25 years of oil and gas supplies left in the North Sea, if they can be exploited. There may be new stocks elsewhere around our coasts, but exploration and development costs are likely to be high as is the potential for political disputes to disrupt supplies. But granting short-term tax breaks to oil giants is no guarantee of a long-term supply. Along with developing other energy sources, we urgently need to start planning the future for Britain's oil and gas extraction.

Fracking

It's time, too, to have a grown-up debate over "fracking" – an ugly US abbreviation for "fracturing".

Amid the claim and counter-claim about the environmental effects of fracking, the plain fact is there is too little data, and almost all of it comes from the US, where environmental protection standards are much lower than in Britain.

Generating energy from shale gas releases far less carbon dioxide than from coal (possibly half as much), and less even than from oil. Much of the clamour against fracking comes from the green lobby precisely because it has the potential to be less "carbon polluting" than other fossil fuels. Their vitriol is poured out against anything that might make fossil fuels more usable.

The contagion has spread to the TUC, whose policy is scientifically ludicrous. It has adopted the "precautionary" principle, saying that there should be a moratorium on fracking "unless proven harmless to people and the environment". That sounds all nice and friendly, but in reality science cannot prove a negative.

No human industrial activity has been without some measure of risk to people and the environment – but against that has to be set the benefits of industry. Life expectancy in Britain was less than 40 in 1700. Now it is

'The contagion has spread to the TUC, whose policy is scientifically ludicrous.'

over 80 – no thanks to the TUC.

Without energy homes go unheated, meals go uncooked, hospitals stop working, and people die. Estimates of the volume of shale gas that fracking could deliver suggest that Britain has enough reserves to meet our gas needs for 400 years. That measure of indigenous energy resource cannot be dismissed by an ugly word.

Equally, the shales that hold the gas are not going anywhere. A brief moratorium to establish the science will help, but only if people are prepared to look at the evidence rather than their prejudices. And with all that potential wealth underground, we must ensure that it is not handed over piecemeal to individual capitalists to waste. It is a national resource, and should be owned and controlled by the nation.

Wind, solar and wave power may

contribute to Britain's energy needs, but can't be the whole answer. Apart from expensive offshore wind, their contribution is very small. Government does no more than pay lip service by supporting inland wind farms – all the handouts to landowners (even when the turbines are producing no energy) contribute next to nothing to the grid.

Remote locations and the unpredictability of weather militate against using renewables for large-scale energy production. As with oil, nuclear and coal, more research is needed. That must be part of a national plan, not left to market forces or EU grants.

Demand 4. Leave the EU. Stop Brussels dictating how we plan our energy.

The lack of a coherent national plan for the generation of energy leaves us in a vulnerable position, unable to guarantee power supply into the near future.

We must demand, of this and future governments, an end to the dependence on others. Let British firms compete for the contracts, and let British workers build what we need. Such a demand is impossible while we remain members of the EU. For our own integrity and security Britain must leave that sinking ship. ■

Meet the Party

The Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist's series of London public meetings continues with meetings on 4 March and 11 June in Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1R 4RL. Other meetings are held around Britain. For meeting details see What's On, page 5, or visit www.cpbml.org.uk/events.

M The Party's annual London May Day rally is always held on May Day itself, regardless of state bank holidays – in 2015, Friday 1 May, in Conway Hall, Holborn. There are also CPBML May Day meetings in Edinburgh and Leeds. See page 6 for details.

M As well as our regular public meetings we hold informal discussions with interested workers and study sessions for those who want to take the discussion further. If you are interested we want to hear from you. Call us on 020 8801 9543 or send an email to info@cpbml.org.uk

There's a toxic presence in Britain's retailing, and it's called pay, waves of redundancies, zero hours contracts and into

In supermarket wars, we

OUT OF THE estimated 30.6 million people at work in Britain and Northern Ireland, just under one million are employed by the four major supermarket chains – Asda, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Morrisons – with an estimated minimum of seven workers dependent on every one of those supermarket jobs in distribution, supply, food production, manufacturing etc.

With its myriad full-time, part-time, zero hours and fixed term contracts, this sector is gargantuan. Along with the rest of retail it distorts and perverts the employment and industrial infrastructure of Britain.

Napoleon described Britain as a nation of shopkeepers. A more up-to-date definition would be one dominated by huge companies waging a trade war with global ramifications characterised by vicious tactics, rivalry, and saturation of the market.

Life and death

The life-and-death struggle between Sainsbury's, Tesco, Asda and Morrisons is on the one hand about share in a market of about £270 billion. On the other hand it is a struggle to stop if not obliterate the threat from cheaper rivals Lidl and Aldi who are leading the EU penetration into Britain.

Small in British terms, these German-based companies are major players in the European Union. Strategies of the discounters like Aldi and Lidl may drive the big four to respond by price reductions but this is only a tactic until their rivals are seen off. Once the competition is destroyed, once they have secured the market, then by nature the companies will return to basics and look to maximise profit.

Tesco saw a 92 per cent drop in its profit for the first half of 2014, coupled with a major share collapse following exposure of its alleged accountancy scams and investigations from the Grocery Code Adjudicator into alleged unfair trading practices. At the same time it is also trying to capture markets in the US and China.

Since Asda is owned by the US Walmart conglomerate – portrayed as a “family” unless you join a trade union and expect something more than the minimum wage and a zero hours contract – you have the setting for multi-national companies clashing globally. Walmart versus the world

with Asda as its British stalking horse.

Morrisons is struggling since it spread from its heartland in Northern England into London and the South East. With all the self-proclaimed big four moving into online grocery deliveries, a market estimated to be worth £17 billion. The big four are only the big four until either they eat each other up or until the peripheral raiders – Marks and Spencer, Co-op, Waitrose – steal a market niche.

Internequine rivalry between the companies and the battle for market share has led to every dirty trick of marketing. Product shrinking is common – you get less than you did previously, averaging a 25 per cent reduction, but the price remains the same or is increased. Packaging is changed to misrepresent the brand. Adulteration of food products through increased use of salt, sugar, water etc undermines the quality of food and contributes towards obesity. Likewise the promotion of junk food and fast food leads to obesity and other health-related issues.

Price wars to seize market share are wiping out producers. For example, the price of milk, which recently dropped through the floor due to a combination of the blockade against Russia restricting milk exports and the EU lifting the milk quota sales scheme, allowed the supermarkets to squeeze dairy farmers to the point of devastating dairy production not only in Britain but across the EU.

So damning has been the criticism of supermarkets and their relationships to producers – especially farmers – and of the financial irregularities they enforce on their suppliers, that the Grocery Supply Code of Practice was introduced. This followed the

‘Cost reduction is not about returning benefits to the consumer – it is about increasing profit.’



Workers

Sainsbury's Local brand along with others such as

revelation of Tesco's accountancy practice of double counting that amounted to over £263 million, in which suppliers had also been subjected to bullying and intimidation.

There were incorrect deductions to payments to suppliers which could take months to correct; retrospective charges to suppliers going back several years; lump sum payments demanded in advance, and listing fees – whereby a supplier pays the supermarket for an advantageous selling position in the store; enforced changes to packaging of brands; and threats of sudden de-listing of products (effectively blacklisting) unless the price was dropped.

The Code of Practice aims to stop all these tactics, collectively described as blackmail and intimidation to force suppliers to reduce costs – reductions which are not actually passed on to the consumer because the supermarket can cross-subsidise products and cream off the surplus.

This legislation, which introduced another toothless organisation with minimal

and capitalism. The drive to increase profits has led to low tolerable squeezes on agriculture...

They are the first casualty



As Tesco Extra attempts to drive out all independent retailing.

powers to fine or influence the supermarkets, was so delayed by the government in its passage through Parliament, that it could not be applied retrospectively to the behaviour of Tesco and friends.

The Tesco accountancy scam is under a tripartite investigation by the Groceries Code Adjudicator, Serious Fraud Squad and Financial Reporting Council. Do not expect any prosecution, only perhaps guidance on how not to do it again or at least not get found out!

The 'preferred list'

Tesco responded with another tactic, announcing that it plans to rationalise its 90,000 product range. What clearer signal to producers that the war is now taking another turn? If you want to have your product sold then you're going to have to be on the preferred list.

How do you get on the preferred list? Drop your prices. The offer of discounted products to consumers is just another

squeeze on producers to justify maximising market share while disguising the real profit-gathering exercise.

On top of the battles with each other for market share and with producers to drive down the cost of delivery to the supermarket down (without reducing profit margins), all the big four are committed to cost reduction exercises over the next four years.

Cost reduction is not about returning benefits to the consumer – it is about increasing profit return to the shareholders. The first target is the terms and conditions of the workers employed. Final salary pension schemes are being closed. Companies are paying the national minimum wage or as little as possible above it as they believe they can get away with, dependent on the local supply of labour.

Other reductions come from continuous job re-defining, reorganisation, relocation of head office functions, breaking down jobs into packages of hours ensuring zero-hour contract employment, instability of employ-

ment, fragmentation of employment. All these practices mean great difficulties for workers in their lives and in their ability either to express their collective identity or to organise in a trade union.

Those who manage to join a union face enormous problems in finding an organising strategy through this swamp of disintegration. The GMB has had some success in dealing with Asda–Walmart, but it has to run faster and faster just to stand still.

The Groceries Code Adjudicator describes the supermarket sector as a "battlefield". In addition to fighting against one another, against producers and against those employed by their own companies, supermarkets want to saturate the retail market and ensure that the nation of small shopkeepers is well and truly buried.

Large capital is ensuring that small capital is a distant memory. So the big four run their "extra" and "local" stores, supermarkets and hypermarkets, stores in petrol stations and motorway service stations, subsidiary labels. The uniformity across Britain's high streets has been described as an "occupation" of local communities.

The big four are also big landowners. Apart from their stores, they own "landbanks" kept empty for potential out-of-town superstores. They are currently hoarding over 46 million square feet of land.

Consumer choice?

Many supposedly competing brands come from the same monopoly producers, just under a different label. The essentials of life are measured only by how much they inflate company balance sheets. Freedom of consumer choice? Freedom defined by the boardrooms of the big four supermarket chains with all their subsidiaries and secondary labels is no freedom for us.

Meanwhile the quality of the food chain in Britain has been under assault for years as reflected in the numerous food scandals – BSE, CJD, salmonella and so on.

A radical restructuring of food and grocery production, supply and delivery needs the removal of the toxic presence of capital in the food chain. Workers need to have a new and different plan for production and distribution around what we need and want on the supermarket shelves. ■

The publication of the Jay report into the sexual exploitation happens when professionals stay silent rather than stick to

Rotherham: more than a

PROFESSOR ALEXIS JAY'S report, *Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham 1997-2013*, was commissioned by Rotherham Council to ascertain the extent of child sexual exploitation in the district and how well the authority was dealing with the problem. It now seems as if commissioning the report was just about the only decent act of the council in this sorry saga.

The salient feature of Professor Jay's report, issued in August 2014, is her commitment to "tell it as it is". That includes facing up to the issue of sexual exploitation of girls by Pakistani-background men and the reluctance of authorities either to acknowledge a pattern of organised criminal activity or act to stop it.

The shock of the findings, the extent of the abuse, the poorly organised responses by social services, police, health services and others have all been extensively discussed. Senior councillors, council officers, the Police Commissioner and others have finally fallen on their swords. The government announced in early February 2015 that it would install five Commissioners to run the council.

But at least 1,400 girls aren't going to benefit. Nor will an unknown number of boys. And yet reports indicate that known criminals are still exploiting youngsters with impunity.

It looks bad, and it is

Rotherham looks bad; and it is bad. In reality, though, it is probably indicative of the situation in many other cities and towns across the land.

Much of the sexual violence against youngsters detailed in the report would have been perpetrated by white men as well as by Pakistani-background men.

'Jay doesn't hold back from criticising police and social work professionals.'



Connor Matheson/reportdigital.co.uk

The abuse uncovered in Rotherham, dreadful as it is, is probably indicative of the situation in many

Many of them were responsible for organising the abuse and trafficking of youngsters; mainly from white backgrounds but also girls from all backgrounds.

Jay differs from others' reporting and commentary on this criminal exploitation. She doesn't hold back from criticising police and social work professionals who failed to identify the background of the exploiters because it would be politically uncomfortable. In doing so they helped a bad situation grow worse for the individual victims and in general.

Senior council managers, scared of charges of racism, put pressure on case workers to remove references to the eth-

nicity and background of the perpetrators. Police managers acted in the same way.

Operation Central led to five convictions in 2010 for sexual offences against teenage girls in Rotherham. Good practice from that case was not followed in subsequent cases. Taxi drivers, their firms and connected criminals got off. Many repeat offenders, trading in under-age children, were allowed to carry on exploiting youngsters and intimidating their families with impunity.

Connected

Senior Rotherham councillors are cited by Jay for their refusal to acknowledge what

on of children in Rotherham has lifted the lid on what
their heads above the parapets of political correctness...

a local problem?



by other cities across the country.

was being undertaken by people who were connected by clan and family. Yet in Rotherham, the majority of known perpetrators were of Pakistani heritage. Latterly, some child victims of sexual exploitation and some of the perpetrators were of Roma Slovak origin.

In section 11 of the report, there are references from an earlier report commissioned in 2003 by Dr Angie Heal in which it was stated: "In Rotherham, the local Asian community are reported to rarely speak about [the perpetrators]. The subject was taboo and local people were probably equally frightened of the violent tendencies of the perpetrators as the

young women they were abusing."

In a follow-up report to the council in 2006, Heal described how "the appeal of organised sexual exploitation for Asian gangs had changed. In the past, it had been for their personal gratification, whereas now [2006] it offered career and financial opportunities to young Asian men who got involved".

Gangs

She also noted that Iraqi Kurds and Kosovan men were participating in organised activities against young women in the town. The 2014 Jay report goes on to cite further evidence of this kind from victims of the gangs and their families as well as social workers.

The stereotype is of Muslim men preying on vulnerable white girls who are seen by perpetrators as deserving of such treatment. This seems to be borne out by the mass of evidence in reported cases. If so, that demonstrates what happens when pre-medieval mores and practices are encouraged in the name of multiculturalism – and when people are encouraged to be distinct from and set aside from British workers in Britain.

Even in reports that are highly critical of what has been going on, there is awkwardness in the use of language. There is acceptance that there is some validity in separation. For example, by the use of "Asian" to describe people who were probably born and brought up in South Yorkshire. There is constant use of "Pakistani-heritage" in an effort to convey to the reader an understanding of who is being described.

Double standards

We are so used to describing people who are British in this way that it is hard to think of alternative usages. Nevertheless, what that conveys is an otherness and that special rules or dual standards apply to people so described.

This usage also conveys an acceptance that they do not belong in the same way. For example, when do we cite the Italian or French heritage of fourth-generation immigrant families? Rarely, if ever.

That confusion is a crucial factor in

'It demonstrates what happens when people are encouraged to be set aside from British workers in Britain.'

this unholy mess. The Jay Report candidly exposes the corrupt core of those who silence workers by threatening them with the tag of being "racist" if they say what is known to all who are dealing with child sexual exploitation in Rotherham.

One project manager reported to the inquiry that she was told not to refer to the ethnic origins of the perpetrators when carrying out training. Support workers assisting Pakistani heritage women fleeing domestic violence were confronted by councillors who demanded that they reveal the whereabouts of the women or effect reconciliation rather than help women to decide for themselves the best options.

Priority

Other staff said that they felt constrained by being thought racist if they reported attempts to change their practice because of issues around ethnicity. Professor Jay states, "The issue of race, regardless of ethnic group, should be tackled as an absolute priority for it is known to be a significant factor in the criminal activity of organised abuse in a local community."

This notion of community runs through the report as letters through a stick of rock. Councillors claim to represent "communities". Imams do the same with police and the c. Almost all were exclusively self-appointed men.

As workers, brought up on ideas of workplace discipline, or even bourgeois

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democracy, we should be more critical of this notion of “the community”. It has become a reactionary excuse for allowing backward thinking and practices into this country.

Parliamentary parties happily garner votes having persuaded or bribed this community leader or that to throw in their lot. Self appointed religious tyrants claim to determine what food should be served in schools, what children of others should be able do – paint, play instruments, dance, swim, know about their bodies.

Denial

We have councillors, such as those in Rotherham, denying that there is a deep-rooted problem. The same councillors refuse to acknowledge that young girls are systematically abused and traded from within their own groups; they sit on the problem.



Rotherham town hall.

There is condescension in the term “community”, too. It is used to refer to groups who cohere around a particular religious or ethnic background. French people in Britain are rarely spoken of in terms of community even though there are 300,000 living here. Similarly, Germans or Americans are rarely, if ever, grouped as a homogenous mass, all subscribing to the same thoughts and ideals. So why are these assumptions applied to people whose families originated from Pakistan or India, for example?

The Jay Report has brought out many of these matters in a forthright, honest way. Sadly Rotherham is not an isolated case; we have to face up to that. And if pending court cases live up to expectations, the extent of organised abuse of girls and maybe boys in Yorkshire will be difficult to comprehend.

The notion of multiculturalism is in truth one that encourages monoculturalism and separatism. It fetes backwardness and lack of cultural development. And it excuses the abuse of children – something that will have to be challenged again and again, as in the case of female genital mutilation

As workers we also need to think deeper. Why are there 68,000 children in local authority care in England alone, and why is the number rising? How has Rotherham changed since the destruction of the steel and coal industries – long the basis of its economy and working-class identity? ■

The strange death of language centres

THE HOME OFFICE originally funded language centres to help schools cope with large numbers of families with little or no English. Staff were drawn from local schools and were trained in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL).

The purpose was solely to integrate children into mainstream schools with functioning levels of English. The thrust was right: to get the children to know and use English as their main language in a society where such command of the language was essential to future life prospects.

Funding was reduced after mass inward migration from the Indian sub continent was curtailed in the late 1970s. Bradford and some other areas with a high proportion of immigrants had a stay of execution, but with less dedicated funding.

At the same time, the local management of schools introduced by Thatcher's government meant that the local authority no longer had the reserves to maintain a proper system of language centres, staffed

by highly qualified staff.

Against this background the pernicious cult of so-called “mother tongue” teaching preached by multiculturalists took hold. Now children were being taught by teachers with no expertise in English language, certainly not in TEFL. Then we saw bilingual assistants lacking teaching expertise.

Marking banned

Things had reached a ridiculous state by the mid-1980s: for example language support teachers in Bradford were forbidden to mark, prepare and plan children's work – and on occasion were disciplined for doing so. Mother tongue but no English instruction for the Bradford-born meant that the literate who spoke Urdu and English did OK, but illiterate Punjabi, Pashto and Bengali speakers floundered.

The bad situation entered into the mainstream from 1998 onwards. Blair's government seized on the supposed success of Bradford, introducing a national

programme. Money expended and wasted on ethnic minority achievement projects, mother tongue teaching, bilingual assistants and so on was now afflicting the whole nation and the lives of millions of children.

Under Labour's national language strategy there was dedicated funding in school grants. But even a British-born child able to speak perfect English could be registered as belonging to a minority group. And if that group were regarded as non-English speaking, the school grant increased. So if black, the child was counted as African, not black British, and was worth an extra £700 for the school.

A return to language centres is not really possible. But we can look at other ways of achieving what they aimed to do – to teach children English in a compressed time span. One Leeds head has ensured that all children in her school receive high-quality TEFL, including the 25 per cent who have English as a first language. ■

With all the Miami Five safely home in Cuba, we look at the background to this great victory...

The 5 are back again!



The Miami Five pose for the cameras on their return to Havana.

THE MIAMI FIVE are now all free and back home in Cuba with their families, after being released from US prisons by President Obama last December. To understand them and the relationship between Cuba and the US, we have to go back to the early post revolutionary era.

Following the Cuban revolution's success on 1 January 1959, a number of people fled to Miami from Cuba. First to go were the most powerful and wealthiest of the deposed Batista regime and the Mafia who had run Havana as a giant casino and brothel. These were followed by the business elite, many of whom already had property in Miami. They assumed that this move would be temporary.

The CIA trained and armed groups of Cuban émigrés in Florida in order to create counter-revolution in Cuba. Known as Brigade 2506, they invaded Cuba at the

'There would be a number of attempts to bomb Cuban embassies and damage the Cuban economy.'

Bay of Pigs in April 1961. It was a disastrous attempt to overthrow the revolutionary government. Although they were armed and transported by the CIA who supplied eight B26 bombers for the invasion, President Kennedy felt unable to give them air cover for fear of revealing US involvement. The revolutionary Cuban forces killed 118 and captured 1,202 of the attackers. Many more Cubans were killed.

Bombing

Following this debacle, anti-Cuban terrorist organisations sprouted up in and around Miami. Funded and trained by both the CIA and the Mafia, there would be a number of attempts to bomb Cuban embassies and damage the Cuban economy.

There were two key figures among these groups. The first was Orlando Bosch, a CIA veteran and co-founder of the terrorist umbrella organisation CORU. He was behind the 1976 bombing of Cubana Flight 455, killing 73 passengers including the Cuban youth fencing team. As early as 1964 Bosch was arrested in Miami for towing a homemade radio-operated torpedo along a main road in rush hour. Two years later he would be arrested again for making bombs to drop on Cuba. In 1970, he was finally convicted, for firing a bazooka at a Polish ship docked in Miami port.

While on parole, Bosch skipped the country because police intended to arrest

him for murdering another Cuban exile. On the run Bosch carried out numerous terrorist acts aimed against Cuba in Venezuela and other Central American countries. Questioned in Costa Rica about a plot to kill Henry Kissinger, Bosch claimed that the target was the nephew of deposed Chilean President Salvador Allende.

Bosch was deported to the Dominican Republic where he plotted with Luis Posada, the second key figure. Posada, like Bosch, was a co-founder of CORU and implicated in the Cubana bombing. He was also the self-confessed instigator of the 1997 Havana hotel bombing campaign, which killed an Italian tourist. Posada too eventually went on the run after escaping from prison in Venezuela, where he had been jailed in connection with the Cubana bombing.

Bosch returned to Miami in 1987, where he was temporarily imprisoned for breach of parole. The US Justice Department challenged his petition to be allowed to stay in the country, as he was not a US citizen. The Cuban American National Foundation, (CANF), an umbrella group for all the counter revolutionary Cuban exile bodies in the US, lobbied for his release and right to stay in the US.

CANF was based on the Israeli lobbying body AIPAC in the US, but was considered

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more effective. President George H Bush was conscious of the need for votes for Republicans in Florida; he now joined the lobbying. Bosch was allowed to stay in July 1990. The Cuban Government, of course, was not amused. "We cannot [accept] the news of the release of Orlando Bosch, who is a terrorist," explained a spokesperson for the Cuban Interest Section at the Swiss Embassy in Washington. Havana had no intention of waiting quietly for Bosch's next attack.

On 8 December 1990 René González "stole" a light plane from an airfield on the outskirts of Havana and flew to Key West in the US. He was greeted by immigration officials and the FBI as the latest escapee from Cuba. But González, a veteran of the Angola war against South Africa, was also a Cuban intelligence agent.

'Cuba vowed that there would be no relations with the USA until the Five were freed.'

Others took different routes to Miami pretending to be defectors. There were more than just five, maybe up to twenty. One of them, Juan Pablo Roque, told *Workers* in Havana how he had entered the sea in south eastern Cuba, wading and swimming through the mangroves, into the shark-infested waters and on into Guantanamo Bay US Naval Base.

Their target was to infiltrate Miami based terrorist groups in order to warn Cuba of any coming attacks. One main target was Brothers to the Rescue. Cubans also infiltrated CANF, Alpha 66 and a range of other terrorist outfits based in Miami. They were known in Havana as the Wasp Network.

The leader of Brothers to the Rescue was Jose Basulto, trained by the CIA in espionage, cryptography, infiltration,

weapons and explosives. After the Bay of Pigs attempted invasion, he was infiltrated into Cuba to bomb an air base. He failed. In 1962, he machine-gunned the north Cuban coastline from a speedboat.

Basulto had acquired a small fleet of aircraft, launches and weapons. Brothers to the Rescue's public mission was to rescue Cubans floating on rafts from the waters between Cuba and the US. Privately its intentions were somewhat different. Basulto was the pilot for its first mission on 25 May 1991. His co-pilot was none other than René González. Juan Pablo Roque was also recruited as another pilot. Once the US coastguard started to round up rafters and incarcerate them in Guantanamo Bay US base, Brothers to the Rescue no longer had anyone to rescue.

Nobel prize-winning Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez was due to visit the US in April and May 1998. His itinerary included a meeting with one of his fans, President Bill Clinton. He was asked by his good friend Fidel Castro to take a file to Clinton. It contained all the information including names, dates, weapon stores, plots and terrorist actions carried out by CANF, Alpha 66, Brothers to the Rescue and so on. The file was a compilation of the work of the Wasp Network.

Terrorists

Cuba had previously sent information about the terrorist activities of Alpha 66 to US authorities, but nothing had happened. The Cubans thought that García Márquez's direct access to Clinton might yield more success in stopping the criminal activities of the Miami groups. Clinton opened a back channel and the FBI sent a delegation to Havana to meet with Cuban State Security in June 1998, an unprecedented move.

The FBI promised to consider and analyse all the information it was given, and respond. There was no reply for three months. Then on 12 September five members of the Wasp Network were arrested. They were René Gonzalez, Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino and Fernando González, who became known as the Miami Five. They were held in solitary confinement for seventeen months and then given long sentences



Workers

Some of the Cuban flags outside the US Interest Section in Havana – there is one flag for every Cuban killed by terrorists.

ranging from 15 years without parole to double life sentences. René González and Fernando González in April 2013 and February 2014.

Cuba vowed that there would be no relations with the USA until all the Five were freed. President Barack Obama eventually decided that it was time to develop relations with Cuba because the US blockading policy had failed. He held secret discussions with President Raul Castro. It is hardly surprising that the demand for the release of the Miami Five was on the table as a first priority.

On 17 December 2014 the remaining three of the Miami Five were freed, allowing Cuba and the US to talk about the opening of embassies in each country. Cuba is under no illusions about the developing of relations between Cuba and the US. It has specified that the opening of embassies depends on US assurances that their diplomats will cease attempts to overthrow the Cuban government.

Guantanamo

Developing further relations is dependent on shutting the Guantanamo US Navy base, returning the occupied land to Cuba and ending the 53-year blockade of the island. Raul Castro has said there is no question of Cuba changing its socialist system. He has also indicated that Cuba requires reparations for the damage caused to the economy of Cuba and the lives of its citizens.

As Cuba enters its 56th year since the revolution, Cuba has good relations with the whole of Latin America and the Caribbean, Canada, Asia, Russia, China, Africa and Europe. So it's the US that's isolated and not Cuba. ■

The Soviet period provides a few clues on how to successfully industrialise and break from capitalism...

Bolshevik finance

THE NEED for a financial system that supports British national industrial development is becoming a regular topic of conversation throughout the country. How to run industry and finance without capitalism was one of the things the Bolsheviks learned how to do in the Soviet Union after the October Revolution, and we can learn something from studying how they did it.

At the core of the Bolshevik outlook was the view that the hoarding of money into capital as a store of value is simply an inefficient practice. So money took on a different role, as briefly outlined in the box overleaf.

The end of market rates

Private capital ceased to be an “instrument of production”, and market interest rates for the hire of it (in other words interest-bearing loans) were replaced by rates that served a completely different purpose. First, rates were set to help pay the operating expenses of the Soviet banking system. Secondly, they were applied to penalise industrial organisations that were inefficient in regulating their cash flow.

Bolshevik rates of interest were simply a means of supporting the cost of running an efficient financial administration. Another



The Moscow metro: opened in 1935, it showed what state investment could do.

extremely important feature of Soviet currency was that it played no formal role in either Soviet exports or imports (international trade was carried out in Western currencies), thereby avoiding the impact of foreign currency speculation.

All of this meant that competition and anarchy of production, things we in Britain are all too familiar with, were replaced by a balanced and proportionate development of the national economy.

And with housing allocated on the basis of need, no one could buy a home. The housing market – one of the worst failures of modern British capitalism – simply did not exist.

Resistance

Of course the Bolsheviks encountered powerful resistance from the capitalist forces both inside and outside the Soviet Union. What also developed was a “unity of opposites” between the supporters of capital and “leftists” whose critique of the Soviet Union under Stalin was that it was state capitalism based on commodity production.

Opposition by capitalists was understandable: they were facing redundancy.

But what “leftists” failed to recognise was that commodity production – production for exchange – in itself is older than capitalist production, making it possible for it to be modified. Actually, commodity production was confined to agricultural produce, which politically united the Soviet workers and peasantry.

Stalin simply posed the question like this: “Why then, one asks, cannot commodity production similarly serve our socialist society for a certain period?” The core point was that socialist adaptation could remove the cornerstone of bourgeois political economy, namely the ridiculous theory that the exploited cannot do without the exploiters.

With money no longer bundled as capital or traded, and with the abolition of the system of capitalist wage labour, the two biggest markets, namely the markets in capital and labour, were scrapped. In so doing the Soviets achieved an economic success between 1917 and 1953 that is yet to be surpassed. Some people talk glibly about a global slump in the 1930s. Not so. In Soviet Russia there was no slump, and no unemployment.

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How is this useful to British workers today? Apart from dealing with the nonsense spoken about markets (“markets are the most efficient way”, and so on), what comes through loud and clear is the particular role currency plays both in planning and helping to keep a working class together as a national economy and as a society.

National currency

Although in a different context, it was the importance of a national currency that resonated in British workers’ minds when rejecting the euro. It was again present to help counter the SNP reactionaries during their recent attempt to break up Britain. A similar British working class national per-

spective (and more) should also apply when addressing the Westminster-inspired devolution and regionalism agenda, which embodies the same liberal mixture of reaction and political cowardice that underpins separatism.

While the Nazi attack on the USSR of 1941-45 was horrendous, paradoxically the most politically destructive moves came from within, starting with the Khrushchev economic reforms. These ran hand in hand with the gradualist “road to progress” adopted by many European labour movements from the mid-1950s onwards.

Have any of these post-1953 actions, including the latest dollop of regionalism, brought the British working class nearer to socialism, or on the contrary have they taken us further from it? Most workers would say it’s further.

Workers who for so long have taken it for granted that a capitalist market economy is the highest form of endeavour are beginning to feel uncomfortable. They may not be aware of the expression “Pull the donkey’s tail out of the mire and his nose will stick in it, pull out the nose and his tail will be in it,” quoted by Stalin when describing capitalism in November 1927, but a similar perception is beginning to take hold in many workers’ minds today.

Finally to those in the labour movement who advocate regionalism we would put one question: Where is your national plan for Britain? Answer: nowhere to be seen, because you don’t have one and instead hide behind regional break up as a pretend economic solution, whilst siding with the forces North and South who seek to politically divide the British working class. ■

Accounting for money in the Soviet Union

DURING SOCIALIST transition some workers were in more mechanised workplaces than others, some less rationally organised or working with less up to date equipment etc. So the same product(s) produced from different locations could not at this time be directly exchanged with other products solely on the basis of the number of hours worked.

The nature of unevenness meant one worker’s hour of labour could not yet be fully equated with another’s. It was found that an alternative measure must still be used – one which represents socially necessary labour in the abstract. Value expressed in money as outlined below was therefore the most convenient medium ready to hand for this purpose.

Key to the system that operated after 1931 was the ability to administer the amount of paper money, coinage and industrial credit in circulation, so that it broadly matched the sum of the following four elements that represented the estimated total cost of social production for the coming year:

a) The total cost of social production

for the previous year.

b) A credit margin to cover the transfer of goods in production and unexpected contingencies during the daily manufacturing process, e.g. mechanical breakdown or delays in the delivery of raw materials.

c) An amount to facilitate the exchange of agricultural commodities produced by the peasants.

d) The anticipated increase in the total social product expected to be generated throughout the coming year.

During each year a part of element d) above as designated by an equivalent number of notes, would be withdrawn from circulation by the Central Bank (Gosbank).

The amount withdrawn was treated as savings and was broadly calculated by reference to the formula Total Cost of Production *less* Total Cost of Consumption *equals* Savings (Surplus Product). The annual withdrawal using the aforementioned formula would therefore signify in money terms the surplus product (value) embodied in the new plant and capital equipment such as factory buildings and machine tools that had actually been pro-

duced during that year. Once banked as savings the surplus product would re-emerge in money terms the following year, to be used as new industrial credit (e.g. factory grants) as part of the five-year planning and investment cycle.

By accounting both annually in advance and annually in arrears meant the amount of circulating currency and industrial credit could be constantly increased to match the actual annual increase in productive capacity (i.e. balanced proportionate development of the economy).

So as well as being used as wages, as a means of distributing consumer goods and services and thereby facilitating “to each according to his work”, money in the Soviet Union also became an accounting device to measure savings to be set aside and allocated as part of further investment, including education and health provision.

No longer was the question of national finance a thing to shy away from or for it to be treated as a mystery. During the 1930s workers were often heard saying, “There is no fortress the Bolsheviks cannot storm” – finance being a case in point. ■

Capitalism tries to make out that it is a force for good. We review two books that expose the myth...

Bad for everything

Private sector myths

The Entrepreneurial State: debunking private versus public sector myths, by Professor Mariana Mazzucato, paperback, 266 pages, ISBN 978-0-85728-252-1, Anthem Press, 2013, £13.99. e-book £8.75.

PROFESSOR MARIANA MAZZUCATO has made a fascinating study of the respective roles of the state and private enterprise in innovation. Her book challenges the false image that “Business is accepted as the innovative force, while the State is cast as the inertial one”.

In recent decades there has been a massive withdrawal of the state from economies throughout the world. This is grounded on “the erroneous idea that the state is naturally bureaucratic, cannot pick winners and is incapable of taking entrepreneurial risk”.



Mazzucato dismisses as an illusionary myth the widespread contention that state programmes should be cut to make the economy more “competitive” and “entrepreneurial”. Instead she proposes that we reimagine what the state can do to sustain recovery.

“Most of the radical, revolutionary innovations that have fuelled the dynamics of capitalism – from railroads to the Internet, to modern-day nanotechnology and pharmaceuticals – trace the most courageous, early and capital intensive ‘entrepreneurial’ investments back to the State,” she says.

Mazzucato purposely uses many examples from the US to show how it has

one of the most interventionist governments when it comes to innovation. This contradicts its image as the country that most represents the benefits of the free market system. In particular, she shows how the state played an active role with vision and targeted investment beyond mere facilitation in innovation hotbeds such as the Silicon Valley knowledge economy in California.

Mazzucato stresses the importance of the role of the state in guiding for productive rather than purely speculative ends. The state is often more daring than the private sector, willing to take the risks that businesses avoid.

The search algorithm that led to Google’s success was funded by a public sector National Science Foundation grant. Monoclonal antibodies, which provide the foundation for biotechnology, were first produced in public Medical Research Council labs in Britain. Many of the most innovative young companies in the US were funded not by private venture capital but by public venture capital, such as the Small Business Innovation Research programme. It was the visible hand of the state which helped these innovations to occur.

• A longer version of this review is online at <http://www.cpbml.org.uk/news/who-needs-private-sector> ■

Capitalist destruction

This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate, by Naomi Klein, hardback, 566 pages, ISBN 978-1-84-614505-6, Allen Lane, 2014, £20 or less.

NAOMI KLEIN, author of *The Shock Doctrine* and *No Logo*, has written another challenging book. In this one, the Canadian author and journalist shows how capitalism is destroying our environment.

The capitalist cartel the EU plays a leading role in this destruction. It took Canada to court over its renewable energy programme because that included support for local jobs. That’s illegal under World Trade Organization rules as protectionist and discriminatory.



Meanwhile the EU’s Emissions Trading System created windfall profits of more than \$32 billion for electricity companies in Britain, Germany, Spain and Italy, in just five years. That was little to do with protecting the environment.

The US BlueGreen Alliance of trade unions and environmentalists estimated that investing \$40 billion a year in public transit and high-speed rail for six years would create over 3 million jobs. A 2011 study by Smart Growth America found that such investment creates 31 per cent more jobs per dollar than investment in building new roads and bridges.

We need to invest in public transport, and in upgrading buildings to make them energy-efficient. We need a form of society in which long-term public planning achieves the use of natural resources to maximise human welfare, not private profit. Klein calls for practical alternative development models yet makes not a single mention of Cuba.

Oxfam’s Duncan Green pointed out in his useful book *From poverty to power*, “Cuba was the only country in the world that managed to live within its environmental footprint while achieving high levels of human development. This was probably due to its unique combination of sound environmental management, excellent health and education provision.”

Cuba met its people’s needs using reasonably low levels of natural resources. If it can do so in spite of the US-led boycott, so can Britain and other countries. ■

Britain's repressive role in the world remains for many a hidden truth. One such episode occurred in Greece, just after that country had been liberated.

1944: the battle for Athens

SYNTAGMA SQUARE in Athens is the site of the Greek National Assembly, where huge numbers of people demonstrated in the run-up to the election of Syriza this January. It is also the site of an armed assault by Greek police on a demonstration by hundreds of thousands of Greeks, with the complete support of the British military.

It was December 1944, still some months before the final defeat of Germany, but the Nazis had been driven from Greece in October. Like many countries in Europe, the people of Greece had responded to Nazi invasion with armed resistance led principally by the Communist Party (the KKE). The German retreat in October 1944 had left the country effectively under the control of the National Liberation Front (EAM) and its military wing, the Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS).

Throughout the war Britain maintained a government in exile, headed by the King of Greece, George II. They sat out the war in Cairo, idle and powerless. Once the Nazis left the British moved them closer, to Caserta in Italy, and then to Athens itself.

Mutiny

With them came the Third Greek Mountain Brigade. It was formed by the British after the two Greek brigades in North Africa and the Greek fleet in Alexandria had mutinied in April 1944 over the refusal to create a government of true national unity.

That mutiny had collapsed when the British Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham declared he would sink the entire Greek fleet "within five minutes" unless they laid down their arms immediately. The mutineers were disbanded and interned; only politically reliable officers and men were included in the Mountain Brigade.

On 8 August 1944, Anthony Eden reported to Churchill's War Cabinet that a friendly government in Greece was essential for Britain's strategic interests. He warned that might not happen without British help. The next day, the War Cabinet agreed to send a 6,000-strong force to Greece to remain after the Nazis left.

The Caserta Agreement in September 1944 put all the forces in Greece under the control of a British general, Sir Ronald Scobie. Britain moved to disarm ELAS,



ELAS guerrillas: men and women fought against the Nazis, and after liberation ELAS and the Communist Party organised elections in the liberated areas where for the first time in Greece women were entitled to vote. But women were not enfranchised in the 1946 election following the reinstatement of the old order under British protection.

whose fighters had ousted the Nazis. On 1 December, advised by British ambassador Sir Reginald Leeper, Greek government leader Georgios Papandreou demanded the disarmament of all forces – except, of course, the Mountain Brigade and the SAS-type "Sacred Battalion".

On 3 December EAM held a massive demonstration in Syntagma Square, estimated at between 200,000 and 250,000 people. It was peaceful and unarmed. With British military police looking on, police chief Angelos Evert signalled police units to emerge from nearby buildings and open fire, killing at least 28 and injuring 148.

“The German tanks had been replaced by British ones, the SS and Gestapo officers by British soldiers.”

So began the *Dekemvriana*, the "December events". As told in a Channel 4 documentary*, shown only once, in 1988, Prime Minister Winston Churchill wrote to General Scobie on 5 December: "Do not hesitate to act as if you were in a conquered city where a local rebellion is in progress. We have to hold and dominate Athens, with bloodshed if necessary."

Scobie declared martial law. On 6 December, British troops took over the EAM headquarters, and open fighting ensued. But EAM quickly took control of Athens, and fighting spread round the country.

British troops were vital as the government had only the Mountain Brigade and the Sacred Battalion, along with the right-wing royalist organisation "X", which EAM saw as having collaborated with the Nazis.

But 6,000 British troops were not enough. The British Military Mission flew in the 4th Indian Infantry Division from Italy. Soon it was involved in direct fighting with EAM/ELAS in Athens.

Even this was insufficient. Greek scholar Eleftheria Delaporta documented in her 2003 thesis on Britain's military and political role in Greece that between 13 December

hidden history. One
has been liberated...

ens

and 16 December Britain landed two British divisions, a tank regiment, two brigades and other supporting units at the port of Piraeus.

Artillery and bombs

The British military went all out, using heavy artillery and bombing raids. The resulting carnage was described graphically by Neni Panourgia in his book *Dangerous Citizens: the Greek Left and the Terror of the State*, published in 2009. "The British and government forces, having at their disposal heavy armament, tanks, aircraft, and a disciplined army, were able to make forays into the city, burning and bombing houses and streets and carving out segments of the city under their control," he wrote.

"The German tanks had been replaced by British ones, the SS and Gestapo officers by British soldiers... Navigating the streets proved dangerous because of government and British snipers, who would fire at will. 'You would be walking in the street and suddenly someone would fall next to you, all bloodied, and you didn't know if he was dead or just wounded. All you could do was run for cover.'"

By 15 January EAM/ELAS had lost their fight for Athens, and a ceasefire was agreed with General Scobie. A comprehensive agreement followed in February that saw ELAS disbanded. It led to the arrest of tens of thousands of communists and other former members of ELAS.

Right-wing terror

The result was predictable: right-wing terror groups went on the rampage, attacking villages that had resisted the Nazis, killing more than 1,000 communists and their supporters and employing widespread torture. In 1946, the KKE called for armed resistance, and a full-scale civil war began.

That civil war would have ended in victory for the communist side, were it not for huge aid in men, material and money. It came first from Britain (led by the postwar Labour government) and then, when the government ran out of money, from the US – but still, as Delaporta describes, with Britain playing the key role in policy. ■

*<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tXb5YkQeDM#t=1807>

6 SIX CALLS TO ACTION

Worried about the future of Britain? Join the CPBML.

Our country is under attack. Every single institution is in decline. The only growth is in unemployment, poverty and war. There is a crisis – of thought, and of deed. The Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist held its 16th Congress in November 2012, a coming together of the Party to consider the state of Britain and what needs to happen in the future. Here we set out briefly six Calls to Action for the British working class – for a deeper explanation, see www.cpbml.org.uk.

1: Out of the European Union, enemy to our survival

The European Union represents the dictatorship of finance capital, foreign domination. The British working class must declare our intention to leave the EU.

2: No to the breakup of Britain, defend our national sovereignty

Devolution, and now the threats of separation and regionalism, are all products of only one thing: de-industrialisation.

3: Rebuild workplace trade union organisation

Unions exist as working members in real workplaces or they become something else entirely – something wholly negative. Take responsibility for your own unions.

4: Fight for pay, vital class battleground

The fight for pay is central to our survival as a class, and must be central to the agenda of our trade unions.

5: Regenerate industry, key to an independent future

The regeneration of industry in Britain is essential to the future of our nation. Our grand-parents, and theirs, knew this. We must now reassert it at the centre of class thinking.

6: Build the Party

The task of the Party is singular: to change the ideology of the British working class in order that they make revolution here.

Interested in these ideas?

- Go along to meetings in your part of the country, or join in study to help push forward the thinking of our class. Get in touch to find out how to take part.
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CPBML

78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB

email info@cpbml.org.uk

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phone 020 8801 9543



Ukraine – the big lie

'The US wants to isolate and weaken Russia, and to achieve that it is willing to fight to the last European. It wants a war on the cheap, waged by others.'

MUCH TO the chagrin of Obama and Cameron, the governments of Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France concluded a peace agreement in Minsk on 12 February.

That it was concluded at all was down to three factors. First, the Kiev government was desperate for a ceasefire. The eastern Ukraine resistance forces have pushed the Kiev forces, fascist militias and mercenaries out of the Donbass/Donetsk region.

Second, the main warmongers – the EU Commissioners and the US, British, Polish and other Eastern European governments – were not invited to the peace talks.

And lastly, the peace agreement came about because Russia called for the meeting. It is Russia that wants peace.

The US wants to isolate and weaken Russia, and to achieve that it is willing to fight to the last European. It wants a war on the cheap, waged by others.

So it spreads the big lie that Russia is an aggressor, in a continuation of the cold war rhetoric that characterised the second half of the 20th century.

But just look at the facts. Even the Chief of Ukraine's General Staff, Colonel-General Viktor Muzhenko had to admit on 29 January, "Currently the Ukrainian army is not fighting with the regular units of the Russian army."

All NATO's surveillance has been unable to find evidence that Russia has sent "hundreds of heavy weapons across the frontier", as alleged by human rights warmonger Samantha Power, the US Ambassador to the UN.

The US, meanwhile, has been stoking the flames of war. President Obama signed into law a Ukraine Freedom Support Act on 19 December. This provided for increased sanctions against Russia. It also authorised \$350 million of military aid to Ukraine. It designated Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia as

major non-NATO allies, to speed up the transfer of military equipment. And it authorised \$10 million a year for 2015, 2016 and 2017 to "counter Russian propaganda" in the countries of the former Soviet Union.

Now, in a further move, 30,000 NATO troops are to be deployed in the region in what NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg called "the biggest reinforcement of our collective defence since the end of the cold war".

Meanwhile, Kiev's assaults have driven an estimated 1,500,000 Russian-speaking Ukrainians from their homes. Kiev has blocked all Eastern citizens' social security and pensions, frozen their bank accounts and cut off their electricity.

The agreement hasn't stopped NATO from expanding military aid for the junta in Kiev. A US State Department spokesperson said the Obama administration was still prepared to arm the Ukrainian regime.

This is the intentional and immediate sabotage of the peace agreement, already violated by the EU and the US allowing their client regime in Kiev to ratchet up tensions. Ukrainian military spokesman Andriy Lysenko bluntly stated, "there is no ceasefire, and so there is no precondition for a pull-back of heavy weapons." Right Sector leader Dmytro Yarosh announced that his private army and the Azov Battalion will ignore the agreement and fight on.

The US has few enough allies in its warmongering. Now it is reduced to relying on Cameron, a humiliation in itself. Cameron for his part once again has gone red in the face and "warned" Vladimir Putin that there will be "consequences". Defence secretary Phil Hammond has had meetings with US vice president John Kerry. They share the same objective: finding someone else to die for their strategic ambitions. ■

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