

# Reviews

## Europe in question

**Stuart Holland, *Europe in Question and what to do about it*, Spokesman, 2015, 302 pages, paperback ISBN 9780851248400, £15, e-Pub ISBN 9780851248356, £9.99**

In a time when Europe seems unable to address the challenges it currently faces, Stuart Holland's *Europe in Question and what to do about it* emerges as an enormously important contribution, which contains not only an extremely clear diagnosis of the key problems besetting the European project, but also the most lucid policy solutions that have emerged so far.

Holland presents an alternative to the false dilemma usually posed between deflationary policies within the Eurozone that neglect the second pillar of the 1986 Single European Act (concerned with a Social Europe), and the supposed need of deepening the development of federal and supranational institutions in order to address social cohesion. He convincingly shows that the problem of cohesion cannot be reduced to a territorial problem, since it is also a social problem, and that the goal of European competitiveness can be best achieved through a European Industrial Policy rather than through the displaced belief that unregulated markets will bring about the required economic and social progress. Such a European Industrial Policy can be achieved within the existing institutional framework, which contains also the means for implementing an economic policy that can address the problems of unemployment and of imbalances between member states. This is so because the European Investment Bank, together with the European Investment Fund (and in articulation with the European Central Bank and the European Stability Mechanism), can help bring global savings into an investment-led recovery, centred on social and environmental projects, which can increase employment, especially if technological development of products subject to global competition is combined with labour-intensive employment in the social sphere in sectors not subject to global competition, such as health and education.

*Europe in Question* is much enriched by the fact that it is written by someone who has a deep knowledge not only of economics, politics and psychology, but also extensive experience obtained through influencing and interacting with key protagonists of the European project. The book contains an innovative diagnosis and policy prescription for Europe within

a confederal (rather than federal) framework, and constitutes the most remarkable contribution on the European project written in the last decades.

*Nuno Martins*

## The long view

**Paul Mason, *PostCapitalism: A Guide to Our Future*, Allen Lane, Penguin Random House UK, 362 pages, hardback ISBN 9781846147388, £16.99**

Paul Mason has worked as a freelance journalist on both business and computing magazines and has written extensively in the press, becoming business editor of the BBC's *Newsnight* in 2001 before joining *Channel 4 News* in 2013 as economics editor. He has penned several books and his latest title follows the other texts in adopting an individual, iconoclastic and forthright style, as one would perhaps expect from his self-description as a former 'leftie activist'. His bold theme for this new book is that the ever-adaptive capitalist market system has run out of wheezes, and has been floundering ever since 2008, and that information technology (IT) and what he refers to as 'free stuff' make that 'other world' a distinct possibility. The author is careful to add that *PostCapitalism* is not a blueprint for the defeat of our élite adversaries. What he wants to try and do 'is to map the new contradictions of capitalism so that people, movements and parties can obtain more accurate coordinates for the journey they are trying to make'.

The key to Mason's dynamic is the arrival of information technology, much of it free, in the context of a 'broken' neo-liberal system. IT is the spark that fundamentally alters the future, however much the monopolists controlling it now (Microsoft, Google, Apple, etc.) try to steer it in the direction of restrictions, brandishing their software copyright agreements. The first part of *PostCapitalism* encompasses the endemic malfeasance in the financial sector, its spiralling inequalities, its voracious appetite for credit and fiat money, and its blissful insouciance when it comes to the despoilment, particularly in developing nations, of the natural environment. Much of the detail will be familiar to readers of *The Spokesman*, but the facts are placed before us with a verve and panache not usually found in texts on economics, and this style is maintained throughout. Again, stylistically Mason is sufficiently confident to proclaim that we are in the final stages of the market economy and the capitalist order. The reason for this is the incompatibility of information technology

with existing capitalism. Supply and demand is side-stepped by the ability to copy, by a mechanism that gravitates towards low prices (even free). Then there is the Internet proper with free social media, knowledge exchanges between artists and scientists outside the usual commercial straightjacket, and free software such as GNU, Firefox, Wikipedia, etc. Meanwhile, neo-liberalism is ‘broken’ ideologically: it has become a machine that produces austerity, riots, civil wars, unemployment, and mass migration. Mason seems to agree in part with most radical economists (and some former fans) that the resulting outcome of the 2008-9 crisis is a period of profound economic stagnation, certainly in the medium and long term, but within it there are smaller peaks and troughs. Frankly, I have my doubts that the technological imperatives of IT are capable of generating sufficient force, perhaps as yet, to acquire the transformational drive that Mason is so convinced it has. Also, there has to be a political organisation capable of leading such a struggle and in *PostCapitalism*, while social democracy and Soviet style parties are given the thumbs down, there is precious little about what an alternative might look like.

Additionally, Mason wants to place contextually the present recession in terms of the wave theory of Soviet economist Nikolai Kondratieff, shot on Stalin’s orders after suffering eight years in the Gulag. His ‘long waves’ were connected to changes in the means of production and other factors on a roughly 50-year cycle. In fact, he remarks that the ‘fifty-year cycles are the long-term rhythm of the profit system’. All this provides a backcloth to the development of Mason’s ideas and makes for interesting and lively reading. The author plunges into Marxist theory, tackling the theory of value and the falling rate of profit inherent in a market economy. Central to his thoughts on the latter are the continued waves of technological innovation now leading to computerised robotics – hyper automation. We can see these developments in computer assisted design (CAD), robots with artificial intelligence, and nanotechnology. Nor is he the only one thinking about these issues. The higher management of multinationals are actively considering the results of this transformation, as witnessed by a recent report commissioned for Merrill Lynch, and intercepted by a newspaper, which states:

‘We are facing a paradigm shift which will change the way we live and work ...’ and “could leave 35% of all UK workers, and 47% of those in the US, at risk of being replaced displaced by technology over the next 20 years, according to Oxford University research cited in the report”.’ (*The Guardian* 05/10/2015)

After a fair dose of doctrinal apostasy, Mason moves onto the second part

of *PostCapitalism* which aims to make clear how capitalism is sowing its own seeds of destruction through the development of the ‘knowledge economy’. The knowledge economy was named by the management guru, Peter Drucker, a student of Josef Schumpeter, who opines:

‘That knowledge has become *the* resource, rather than *a* resource, is what makes our society “post-capitalist”. It changes, and fundamentally, the structure of society. It creates new economic dynamics. It creates new politics.’

The key worker is the ‘knowledge worker’, who combines the organisational skills of the manager with the ability to realise and activate the specialised knowledge being developed in any number of disciplines – to join up disciplines and different knowledge centres and to provide innovative processes and goods. Mason quotes approvingly Drucker’s description of a person who is not a polymath but, through the mechanism of, primarily, the internet (using networking), replicates ‘the kind of connections that the brain of an Einstein would make spontaneously’.

For Drucker and, presumably in part, for Mason, the history of capitalist society is broken into five phases: stage one utilises cruel mechanical exploitation; stage two sees a leap in productivity with new techniques, processes and the application of more skilled labour; stage three is the application of mass production – ‘Fordism’; after 1945, stage four is the application of ‘scientific’ management techniques coupled, towards the end of the period, with neo-liberalism and financialisation. Hopefully, there is a stage five, where the application of knowledge to knowledge becomes a reality, and it is at that stage that capitalism finds its final impasse. Consequently, it is this stage which holds out the hope of some form of socialist transformation. We should note that the phases of capitalist adaptation listed above correspond somewhat approximately to the 50 year cycles outlined by Kondratieff.

So there we have it: a layer of highly skilled workers producing the goods we need, using the most advanced technology which has reached levels we can just about imagine, thus reducing working hours dramatically. This leaves us free to ‘hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner’ – or whatever is the 21<sup>st</sup> century equivalent. There will have to be a few problems solved before we get to this happy state, for Mason questions the primacy of the traditional working class, and further states that, all those years ago, Marx and Engels got it ‘wrong’ when ascribing it with revolutionary potential. This is a theme beloved by many, both on the left and the right, but Mason captures our interest on the subject by ranging over the territory with some

stimulating and provocative writing. We are presented with a veritable pantheon of Marxist luminaries – not just Kondratieff but Luxemburg, Lenin, Trotsky, Hilferding, Carchedi, Gramsci, Preobrazhensky, Lange, even Bogdanov, Lenin's philosophical sparring partner. Bogdanov, we learn, wrote a futuristic book, *Red Star*, in 1908, that encompassed many modern technologies including jet propulsion, atomic weaponry, blood transfusion, even computers. There is also a more mainstream supporting cast, with Keynes leading the field alongside Schumpeter, Romer, Bell, Mises and, of course, Adam Smith and David Ricardo.

For the author one of the basic contradictions, touched upon earlier, is the tension between the mechanism of the market and the increasing number of goods that have become free, or so cheap, as to minimise personal indebtedness. But one contradiction that Mason does not really discuss is the ramifications of globalisation. Are we to have the new order only in the advanced nations? What happens to the exported proletariat working away in China and other developing countries? Some catching up will surely have to be part of the package. Is it possible, for example, to reconsider the ideas of André Gorz and others and to agree with the author that work is losing its 'centrality both to exploitation and resistance', at least in the advanced industrial nations, while things are markedly different for the populations of many Third World and East European countries?

There is in the text a fairly dismal reading of the so-called stage four in the Kondratieff schema, which many economists refer to as the 'Golden Age'. This is in terms of the combativeness of the working class who, Mason claims, had 'abandoned the ideologies of resistance' and were presumably unprepared for the battles from 1979 onwards. This is reminiscent of the old embourgeoisement idea, which was never very convincing: that home-owners, and Sierra drivers in particular, would, because of their material betterment, vote Conservative. Whilst it does seem that part of the skilled working class was detached from Labour, but recaptured by 'New' Labour, this all smacks of over-simplification.

The final part of *PostCapitalism* deals with the transition to post-capitalism, and there is an extensive discussion based on the experience of the Russian Bolsheviks, in particular the debate over what should regulate the new dispensation, plan or market. Then there is the process which Mason calls the molecular build-up of the new within the old, comparing it to the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Alternative methods of production and control are not to be looked at merely for their novelty, but should be seen as harbingers of the future. Presumably he means by this workers' democracy, co-operative enterprises, Wikipedia and the whole gamut of IT

manifestations. For me, as stated earlier, it will take more than that to capture the strongholds of the élite, who hold on tenaciously to power. The treatment of the Syriza Government in Greece by the Troika comprising the International Monetary Fund, the European Commission, and the European Central Bank, as well as the struggle in Venezuela show it is no easy task we have given ourselves. On top of this, Mason touches on the problems of global climate change and the ‘demographic time bomb’, and I am sure we could add to that list without any difficulty, but he does set out in the final chapter a list of demands and aims of which social movements should take note. No wonder the penultimate chapter is entitled ‘The Rational Case for Panic’!

*PostCapitalism* is a highly stimulating and provoking book. It raises matters which do not usually excite but are an intrinsic part of our present predicament. It is written in a style that entertains and holds the reader’s attention. Mason spices it up with the occasional anecdote or comment from his journalistic travels. It has been criticised as providing nothing new but I found *PostCapitalism* gripping at times. Many readers, like me, will find much with which to disagree, but *PostCapitalism* touches on a great number of issues that warrant careful consideration by everyone active in social movements that want to bring about a better world, and for that Paul Mason deserves our thanks. It is also well worth while watching him on YouTube.

*John Daniels*

## Espionage and the Bomb

**Geoff Andrews, *The Shadow Man: At the Heart of the Cambridge Spy Circle*, I B Tauris, 2015, 288 pages, hardback ISBN 9781784531669, £20**

**Nicholas Deakin (editor), *Radiant Illusion: Middle-class recruits to Communism in the 1930s*, Eden Valley Editions, 2015, 188 pages, paperback ISBN 9780992972325, £10**

It’s 25 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Yet the peace of the world remains threatened by a continuation of the nuclear weapons rivalry that persisted between the United States and the USSR and was a hallmark of the Cold War. President Putin emphasises investment in Russia’s strategic nuclear weapons while her military doctrine expressly includes escalation across nuclear thresholds should conventional, non-nuclear means appear inadequate. Meanwhile, President Obama oversees massive

investment in overhauling the US's extensive nuclear triad of air, sea and land-based nuclear weapons. Michael Fallon, Britain's Defence Secretary, urges NATO to conduct nuclear weapons drills, while Pakistan, one of several nuclear-armed states unrestrained by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, seeks miniature nuclear weapons with which to threaten its neighbours, including nuclear-armed India. And in January 2016, North Korea again breaches the moratorium on nuclear weapons testing to join the super-destructive hydrogen bomb club.

When the Soviet Union recruited James Klugmann (styled 'Shadow Man' here) as an agent, in 1937, nuclear weapons had yet to be invented. Fascism was on the rise in Europe, and the Civil War in Spain was its frontline. The NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, which also sent agents to work abroad) had in mind a particular task for Klugmann. They wanted him to recruit John Cairncross as a Soviet agent. Cairncross, 23 years old, had known Klugmann, two years his senior, at Cambridge. Klugmann, openly a member of the Communist Party, was not as posh as Guy Burgess, Kim Philby or Donald Maclean, and was thought to be a better psychological fit for recruiting the modest Cairncross, who had started work at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The choice of Klugmann proved sound and, one spring evening in Regent's Park, Klugmann introduced Cairncross to Arnold Deutsch, 'who in the same park three years earlier had recruited Kim Philby to Soviet intelligence'. So Geoff Andrews tells us in the Prologue to *The Shadowman*, his highly readable biography of James Klugmann.

Cairncross went on to work at Bletchley Park during the Second World War, decoding Nazi Germany's military communications via the Enigma programme. He passed much raw intelligence to his Soviet handlers, including information about the Wehrmacht's campaigns in southern Russia. This information may well have been decisive in the Soviet victory at Kursk, the largest tank battle in history, which marked a turning point on the Eastern Front.

Meanwhile, Klugmann himself was busy with Special Operations Executive, firstly in Cairo, and later in Bari. He probably first met Tito, the future Yugoslav leader, in Paris in 1937 or thereabouts, when they were both engaged in Comintern duties organising International Brigades to fight in Spain. Klugmann was instrumental, with Bill Deakin, Churchill's secretary, in persuading Churchill to switch allied support to Tito's Partisans from the Chetniks in Yugoslavia. Ultimately, Yugoslavia liberated itself from Nazi occupation, the only country to do so. By 1948, Tito found himself at odds with Stalin and, despite the former's strenuous efforts, there followed a significant split in the international communist movement. Klugmann was

on the horns of a dilemma, ultimately following the Party line. His hack work, *From Trotsky to Tito*, published in 1951, denounced Yugoslavia's 'betrayal' in terms consistent with the Cominform's line. It represented the nadir of Klugmann's accommodation to Stalinist orthodoxy.

Betrayal is central to Raymond Williams' gripping political novel, *Loyalties*, to which Andrews refers. First published in 1985, in the bitter aftermath of the Miners' Strike in Britain, Williams seems to have known much of the story about Klugmann and others that Andrews unfolds, notwithstanding that official sources opened only after Williams' death in 1988. In the novel, Norman Braose and Monkey Pitter, Cambridge mathematicians in computer development during the 1950s and 1960s, attempt to redress the 'deficit' in Soviet missile and nuclear technology, or so it seems. Williams is anything but explicit, which is why his novel keeps you hooked until the last sentence.

In 2010, Christopher Andrew published *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (reviewed in *Spokesman 107*). This mammoth work seemingly contained some notable inaccuracies about people long dead, such as Bernard Floud, as well as others more recently deceased, such as Jack Jones, the widely respected leader of the Transport and General Workers' Union. Floud was a member of the Communist Party in the 1930s and 1940s, and eventually became a Labour MP. To what extent do the errors in Andrew's history of MI5 reflect inaccuracies in the organisation's files? Roderick Floud, Bernard's son, would like to find out for himself by reading his father's file, but 'MI5 continues to refuse me access to the file until, possibly, 2017 – fifty years after my father's death'. Roderick explains that this denial of access is 'particularly annoying, and painful', since Andrew's book, presumably reflecting the content of MI5's file, wrongly claimed that his mother 'committed suicide following a long period of mental illness'. Roderick expresses gratitude to Professor Andrew 'for removing this inaccuracy from the second edition of his book', but questions what other inaccuracies are contained within MI5's files.

*Radiant Illusion?*, in which Roderick Floud makes his case, is based on lectures and seminars held at Gresham College, London in 2013 and 2014. This intriguing collection includes Jane Bernal on her mother, Margot Heinemann, who was a close comrade of Klugmann's, as well as Geoff Andrews on the 'Shadow Man' himself. Gresham College, founded in 1597, is a well-connected City institution whose wide-ranging programme includes a penchant for espionage. Richard Dearlove, head of the UK's Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) in 2002 when Bush and Blair were plotting their illegal war on Iraq, lectured on 'our changing perceptions of



national security' in 2009.

Subterfuge plays handmaiden to espionage. Deception, dissembling, tightly buttoned lips, and linguistic competence all add to the mix. Democratic, open and honest politics struggle badly when great power unaccountably resides in the 'security' agencies of the State. Individuals' lives are shaped and sometimes crushed by the spy's vocation. Such generalities mask some of the specifics of the 1930s. Guy Burgess, who was an exceptional history student, had initially been drawn to left-wing politics under the influence of Jim Lees, a former Notts miner and Independent Labour Party member, and had got to know Klugmann and others at Trinity and the Cambridge University Socialist Society (p49).

Donald MacLean, working at the British Embassy in Washington, sent to the Soviet Union crucial intelligence obtained from the Manhattan Project, eventually enabling the first Soviet nuclear test in 1949. It might have been sooner if the data hadn't lain unread in the safes of the NKVD for more than a year, according to Zhores Medvedev, peerless historian of the Soviet nuclear programme (see *Spokesman* 67). Information was coming from England via John Cairncross and Klaus Fuchs, the physicist and atomic scientist who left Germany in 1933, and from the United States via Bruno Pontecorvo, an Italian émigré and close collaborator of Enrico Fermi, who, in 1942, constructed the world's first nuclear reactor. Stalin's personal control of military intelligence seems to have delayed this key data reaching people who could understand and act on it.

Of course, it was a select few who spied for the Soviet Union. Denis Healey, somewhat tongue in cheek, told the Gresham seminar:

'... the remarkable thing really is the fact that my generation at Oxford, although very many of us were members of the Communist Party, we never wanted to do anything particularly for the Russians, whereas at Cambridge they all spied for the Russians.'

*Anthony Lane*

## Okinawa in view

**Sarah Bird, *Above the East China Sea*, Vintage, 2015, 336 pages, paperback ISBN 9781101873861, \$15.95**

This is Sarah Bird's second suspense-filled novel with an Okinawan setting written from the viewpoint of a daughter in a troubled military

family. Her earlier *The Yokota Officers Club* (Random House, 2001), set at the height of the Cold War, features tumultuously comic scenes of the family's life on base and in the nearby 'base' town (in both senses of the word). It also reveals the rigid hierarchy among officers' wives that results in bullying of the younger women among them. The story concludes with tense drama when her Air Force pilot father narrowly escapes death in a dangerous reconnaissance mission over the Soviet Union.

Informed by her extensive research in Okinawa's history and culture, Bird's *Above the East China Sea* juxtaposes the horrifying ordeal of Hatsuko, an Okinawan high school girl drafted to serve in 1945 as a combat medic during the Battle of Okinawa, with the trauma of Luz, an American military dependent sent in the 1990s with her family to the vast complex of US bases in Okinawa. Troops train there daily for the war in Afghanistan where her sister, the person to whom she is closest, volunteers for deployment and dies in an ambush. Both protagonists confront suicide. Hatsuko's sister Tamiko is ordered by Imperial Japanese soldiers to leap from high cliffs to her death in the ocean to avoid capture by the Americans. 'The soldiers, either Japanese or American, will kill us as soon as the sun rises' (p.2); and Luz, overcome with grief for her sister Cody, stands poised to jump off a cliff high above the East China Sea. 'A hundred and fifty feet straight down at the base of the cliffs ... That's where I'd land. Death would be instantaneous' (p.5). The loss of family members in war and rituals for communicating with spirits of the dead connect these two narratives which take place in disparate times and cultures, but in the same lush environment of this sub-tropical island, an ironic backdrop to the events portrayed. This double drama is enhanced, as in her earlier novel, by the author's first-hand knowledge of growing up in a military family overseas and her ever-sharp ear for raw and raunchy teenage dialogue.

The narratives unfold during the three-day O-bon festival when the spirits of ancestors are welcomed for a return visit to the world of the living. Bird weaves flashbacks and remembrances smoothly into the narrative. In telling of Tamiko's family and her childhood, Bird portrays characters among Okinawans from many walks of life in the 1930s and 1940s with remarkable fullness and credibility. 'I loved watching scenes flash past my window,' Tamiko recalls of her childhood.

'[H]ousewives squatting at the edge of a stream, washing potatoes and squeezing and pounding dirty laundry on the stepping stones; old men sitting in the shade of a banyan tree transforming strips of bamboo into baskets; peddlers pushing carts down village lanes advertising their fresh tofu or sweet red-bean

cakes; children bouncing balls of rubbery sago-palm pulp, spinning around and catching them as they sang in our native Okinawan language.’ (p. 57)

Bird portrays how Okinawan children, like those in mainland Japan, were captivated during the war by dreams of glory fighting in the imperial forces, and embraced, like most Japanese adults, the propagandistic myths promoted relentlessly by the government in education and the media.

‘[My] three older brothers ... honored our clan by being accepted to the elite boys’ high school. Upon graduation, they all, in turn, enlisted in the Imperial Army and [were] allowed the privilege ... of fighting for our emperor. The second-born, Takashi, was serving with the emperor’s forces in Manchukuo to liberate the native Manchurian people from the cruel Russians. My third brother, Mori, was helping to liberate the Filipino people from the colonial dictators. And my fourth brother, Hiroyuki, was battling the British aggressors in the jungles of Burma. Even Hatsuko had the honor of serving the emperor. She and her classmates at Himeyuri High School were training as nurses in case of the remote possibility that the Imperial Army might need them.’ (pp.56-57)

That ‘remote possibility’ becomes a reality when Imperial soldiers come to Okinawa for what would be the last and worst battle of the Pacific War, taking an estimated 265,000 lives, more than half of them Okinawan civilians. While Japanese forces are still preparing for the anticipated US invasion, Tamiko is travelling through a city near army headquarters when she comes upon an internment camp of Korean sex-slaves, the so-called ‘comfort women’.

‘[A]ll the trees had been cut down. The barren field, trampled now into mud, was surrounded by a tall barbed-wire fence with loops of razor wire at the top. Inside were rows of crude, hastily constructed huts, each one with a door opened at the top like a stable. All the doors had a number on them; most were shut. At the few open ones, women stood looking out ... Outside the fence, a line of soldiers – low ranking ones in baggy uniforms, crumpled, sweat-stained caps, and dirty leg wrappings – waited beneath a sign that read, “Welcome Soldiers of a Holy War”. When each man’s turn came, a sergeant gave him a number and pointed to one of the doors. Clasp his number, the soldier would hustle over to the appointed stall, step in, and both sections of the door would be closed behind him. Two briefly unoccupied women exchanged a few words in a language that wasn’t Okinawan or Japanese.’ (p.112)

Bird narrates the Battle of Okinawa from Tamiko’s and Hatsuko’s first-person viewpoints that, although fictional, convey persuasive authenticity. The novelist’s dramatizations of Okinawan religious beliefs and ceremonies focusing on death and the afterlife are compelling and

illuminating, especially for Western readers who might have difficulty understanding them when described in academic discourses. They include rituals and performances during the O-bon Festival, visits of respect to ancestors' tombs, and consultations with shamans to seek solace in spiritual communication with departed relatives. The author shows how Okinawan religion enriches daily life, providing comfort and hope in terrible times. Yet her depictions of religious leaders are not entirely uncritical. In her portrayal of one shaman, she shows how the bereaved can be exploited for money, a practice by no means exclusive to shamans and Okinawa.

As readers are drawn into the lives of Bird's characters, they will learn much about Okinawa's history and culture.

*Steve Rabson*

*Professor Emeritus, Brown University  
Veteran, United States Army, Okinawa*

## **Global Working Class?**

**Immanuel Ness, *Southern Insurgency: The Coming of the Global Working Class*, Pluto Press, 2015, 240 pages, £16.99 ISBN: 9780745335995, £16.99**

During the 1970s and 80s, the declaration by some theorists that the working class was dead was, according to Immanuel Ness, a little short sighted. It may well be that the Global North now has relatively fewer manufacturing jobs, but this is symptomatic of a shift from North to South in the global race to the bottom. In *Southern Insurgency*, Ness argues that the view that the proletariat is dead and buried is far from accurate and that it results from an abandonment of classic Marxist understanding of labour.

The diminishing profile of industrial workers in the Global North has been replaced by an abundant army of reserve workers from the Global South. Far from vanishing, industrial production has simply migrated to countries that provide the lowest waged labour. This new title from Pluto Press examines the labour structure of the twenty-first century and argues that, with the rise of neoliberalism, the regions that are being accessed for the production of consumer items are (increasingly) situated in countries such as India, China and South Africa. Ness's ethnographic and comparative study of the working class in these countries concentrates on workers' movements and their struggle for better working and living conditions.

From a Marxist perspective, labour power is put to use by the capitalist in order that the latter might attain his/her goal of extracting a profit. Put simply, the worker owns nothing but his/her labour power, and sells that capacity to the owner of the mode of production in return for payment. This relationship results in the individual labourer being thought of as a (replaceable) commodity in the market place. Commodified labour that is made available to capital must be low-waged in order for profit to be obtained, and it is for this reason that a number of corporations have shifted their operations to the Global South. For over a century, labour in the West became more unionised as workers' rights were fought for and won. The consequences included higher wages, better working conditions and living standards for the working class in the Global North but, subsequently, a reduction in industrial and manufacturing production as companies migrated south to maintain high levels of profit. In the Global South there is ample access to a body of cheap labour that consists of workers, many of whom not only lack rights in the workplace but also in the society within which they live. It is these often migrant workers who constitute the global working class of the book's title and focus.

During recent decades, migrant workers and their families in such countries as China, India and South Africa have been recruited by contractors for what is usually low-waged and precarious employment. To date, many have been denied the rights obtained by most workers in the Global North but, since the start of the new millennium, the millions of migrant workers have sought to mobilise themselves around collective interests. Ness argues that the traditional union structures we are used to in the North are not always applicable in the Global South due to conditions inherent in the neoliberal political economy. Competition, as the principle characteristic of neoliberal society, constructs social relations in such a way that individuals (as well as States) tend to be treated as mini enterprises. It pits one economic class (and country) against another, and exploits differences 'to create hierarchical systems of relative favouritism to promote lower wages and poorer conditions for all labourers' (p.5). It is this exploitation that the migrant workers of India, China and South Africa fight against.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) dictates the working conditions in these countries as each seeks to compete against the other on a global level. In order to attract investment, some States acquiesce to corporate demands over and above the workers themselves. In Ness's case studies, governments are shown to be actively hostile towards independent workers' movements, favouring instead corporate or State controlled trade

unions. Formal trade unions in the Global South represent only a small number of workers – usually full-time contract workers – and seek deals to ameliorate conditions whilst often submitting to the demands of corporate finance. More insidiously, in order to obtain foreign direct investment, governments in the three countries studied by Ness have ‘ensured that new industrial enterprise zones [are] union free’ or permit ‘employers to form company-dominated unions’ only (p.49).

In India, where the manufacturing workforce is mainly comprised of rural migrants, central unions are described by Ness to as ‘too weak to consolidate power on a national level’ (p.81). In China, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), which is the largest in terms of membership, is accused of not being sufficiently independent from the State or corporate interests to actively represent all workers (full-time, part-time or casual). The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has had similar accusations levelled at it by mineworkers in that country. In all three countries, national unions are often seen by the workers themselves as toothless in the face of governments that are enamoured of foreign capital. So the workers are establishing their own independent movements to actively campaign for better working conditions.

The case studies in *Southern Insurgency* concentrate on rank-and-file militancy at the Maruti Suzuki auto manufacturing plant in India, the Yue Yuen shoe manufacturer in China, and various platinum mines of the Bushveld Complex in South Africa. Through protests, sit-down strikes, walk-outs, and the formation of autonomous unions and assemblies in the face of violent repression, the workers in these manufacturing industries not only resist exploitation inherent in finance capital, they also call for restructuring of society to benefit *all* workers. One aspect that the studies have in common is the coming together of full-time, unionised workers with casual, migrant workers in order to obtain the changes that each individual worker seeks. By standing in solidarity with one another and challenging corporate interests, the global working class advances new collective conditions, which, for Ness, ‘will have important consequences for the world economy’ (p.144). In other words, if all the workers of the world unite there will be nowhere left for capital to shift production in order to extract profits from the next set of low-waged workers.

The empirical case studies that form the basis of *Southern Insurgency* map the effects of globalisation on the Global South and indicate that the collective and militant will of workers can be an effective force against exploitation. The research is underpinned by a Marxist tradition, complemented with insightful theoretical assumptions about the nature

and impact of neoliberalism, capitalism and globalisation. The overall message of *Southern Insurgency* is that the workers of the Global South are ‘paving the way for a democratic, inclusive and participatory unionism that challenges the system of capitalist domination’. This is an important read for those interested not only in an informed analysis of worker militancy in India, China and South Africa, but also in an optimistic assessment of the success of worker action.

*Abi Rhodes*

## Fly a wish

***Fly Kites, Not Drones: We all live under the same blue sky, available for download from [www.flykitesnotdrones.org](http://www.flykitesnotdrones.org), 2015, £5 where sold***

This beautifully-named project takes its lead from a campaign by the group Afghan Peace Volunteers. Their partnership with Voices for Creative Non-violence UK, Pax Christi UK, Quaker Peace & Social Witness, and the Drone Campaign Network has created a learning resource that calmly challenges the narrative that terrorists are the only victims of aerial assaults. Running through the heart of it is the true story of Aymel, who as a very young boy faced the death of his father, a farmer, in a drone strike.

Aymel’s love of kite flying, and the struggle to enjoy life under constant threat of attack are the themes connecting the activities in the pack, and which no doubt make the subject more accessible to an audience not normally involved in it: schoolchildren – outside of Afghanistan.

The materials are versatile, with activities tailored to both primary and secondary school level; from, for example, language learning games, up to debate schemas. Accompanying videos and further resources are available online, giving teachers the freedom to adapt as either starter activities or as part of a longer, comprehensive topic. The pack’s natural conclusion – flying your own kites – would obviously excite younger students, but even for years 7 and on, kite-making with an emphasis on perhaps the technical design and specifications would be a rich experience.

Workshop 1 serves as an introduction for 8 to 11-year-olds to Afghanistan, in context, and encourages learners to share their own perceptions of life there. The notes poignantly remind teachers that some ‘might be aware of Afghanistan only as a war zone’. This is accompanied by an explanation on human and children’s rights. There are also prompts for an enlightening but chilling circle time game, requiring an image of a drone’s control panel,

which is provided. A pair of goggles for effect are also suggested. One child acts as a drone and does as their classmates bid them, following commands on the control panel. These commands run in a scale of green-yellow-red, with green representing the least morally problematic actions (e.g. ‘Check what the weather is like’; ‘Slow’). Other students ‘pilot’ the drone by calling out commands, initially only the playful green ones, before the teacher allows them to move through the other stages. At the same time, these students can also act as a conscience, and shout for the drone to stop if they think the commands given are wrong. Some of the yellow commands (‘Fly close to scare someone’) may elicit this reaction, but what is obviously expected is that students will condemn the sole red command: ‘Drop a BOMB on an adult’. At this point, there would be a discussion on the aspect of conscience, and the key point that while drones are not sentient beings, their pilots are, and it is they who must make a moral decision to commit strikes, often when they cannot be certain of their target’s identity, or whether they can kill without also committing civilian casualties. Even the action of steering in closer to make observations, while not destructive, is now common enough to intimidate citizens below.

Workshop 2, for 11 to 16-year-olds, illustrates the impact of drones on people’s ordinary lives. Resources provided online for this section include image slides showing Afghan children flying kites, and military pilots at a computer; throughout the materials this juxtaposition is intentional as, we are told, perfect kite-flying weather is also perfect drone-flying weather. There are also texts illustrating both sides of the debate on drones, which students have the opportunity to make notes on before sharing ideas with the class.

Workshop 3 is in the form of a debate, intended for 14 to 18-year-olds. Two fixed perspectives are introduced – either that armed drones are essential, or that they should never be used. Students are asked to identify with one of these perspectives, or at any point on a scale between the two. After an in-depth series of discussions and activities that highlight facts and opinions on the matter, they are asked to re-evaluate where they stand, and if their mindset has changed at all following the session. This looks to be a particularly valuable activity, especially for this age group, who will be able to take on board the harsher implications of drone strikes more fully than younger students.

Raising the mood, a charming kite template and assembly instructions are the final items. They suggest dates on which students might fly them as an expression of solidarity, not least of which is March 21, Afghan New Year, *Nao Roz*. According to Afghani beliefs, kites can be sent into the air



with a wish, and when that happens, the wish will come true. Let's wish for an Afghanistan that's a war zone no more.

*Nicole Morris*

## Trump, UKIP, Abe

**Leo Panitch and Greg Albo (editors), *The Politics of the Right: Socialist Register 2016*, Merlin Press, 392 pages, ISBN 9780850367133, £16.95**

The nineteen essays contained in *Socialist Register 2016* are essential reference points for anyone actively engaged in progressive, radical or socialist political activity. International in scope, scholarly yet accessible, *The Politics of the Right* analyses the emergence of contemporary right-wing movements, parties and ideas from Japan to Brazil, India to Israel. As each contribution demonstrates, such an analysis is not just of academic interest but also has an urgent, practical relevance, ranging from geopolitical considerations to localised tactics. A survey of the American scene demonstrates the pressing relevance of this volume.

In early December 2015, Donald Trump, a leading contender in the race to become Republican nominee for President, called for Muslims to be barred from entry to the United States. In itself, Trump's demand was neither unexpected nor exceptional: the process of selecting a Republican candidate for the Presidency has long been infested by 'rouge' characters such as Trump and their vicious outbursts. Whether his demand was a calculated intervention into the debate on national security or, as seems more likely, he was just 'speaking his mind', it was of a piece with the convoluted processes to select a potential commander-in-chief of the planet's largest nuclear arsenal.

The unexpected and exceptional element of this episode is the impact it had on Trump's popularity. To summarize: his racism made him more popular amongst the Republican 'selectorate'. This popularity grew further as American broadcasters covered the story of an online petition to deny Trump entry to the United Kingdom. How can this be so? As Doug Henwood here points out in 'The American Right: From Margins to Mainstream',

'The Republican Party is now dominated by evolution-deniers, climate-change deniers, xenophobes, religious nuts. This seems not to alarm corporate America, which remains publicly devoted to diversity and the powers of instrumental reason ... [but] the big bourgeoisie wants it all, and is happy to let the ravers do some dirty work for them.' (pp 286)

Rather than publicly challenge or condemn such blatant assaults on the socially liberal consensus shared by the financial, industrial, property and media owning élites in American society, Trump is given free reign. For, as Henwood argues, short-term gain is the name of the game for corporate interests, and they are hedging their bets about whom they might end up doing business with come January 2017.

The impact of such an attitude on the Republican Party and American society at large is clear. As the extreme right of the Republican Party is given free reign to express and organise itself, the political centre of gravity within the Party as a whole has shifted to the right. This is not only because other sections of the Republican Party have become incapable of articulating alternative ideas in a sustained and convincing way, but also because the extreme right has shown itself capable of mobilising and appealing to the grass roots of American society.

Analysing the historical roots and appeal of right-wing ideas in the United States, Bill Fletcher Jr notes that '[w]hat is of particular political importance is the recognition that neoliberal capital does not have identical interests with the right-wing populist movements, particularly that segment of neoliberal capital that is linked with the transnational capitalist class' ('Stars and Bars: Understanding Right-Wing Populism in the USA', p298). Fletcher's analysis complements Henwood's who, whilst focusing on the organisational aspects of the Right's ascendancy, points towards the central dynamics in play.

Fletcher also notes that as 'right-wing populism looks for scapegoats it especially focuses on the identification of so-called *legitimate* and *illegitimate populations*. Right-wing populism cannot be understood outside of an analysis of "race".' What else motivated Trump in his call for barring Muslims and his demand for a wall on the Mexican border, other than racial scapegoating? One need look no further than the stark contradictions between the brutal treatment of activists in the Black Lives Matter movement and the light-touch management of an illegal occupation in Oregon to see the extent to which racism plays a part in the political 'process' and the state itself. Since early January, a group of heavily armed members of a right-wing militia have been occupying a wildlife reserve in south-east Oregon. They are not there to protest in support of environmental conservation, or to save a rare species from extinction. This militia demands that the US government hand over millions of acres of land to ranchers, the lumber and mining industries. Just to be clear: an armed group has occupied government owned buildings and has made political demands. Inspired by a multi-millionaire rancher and notorious

racist, this group presents itself as defenders of the American Constitution.

Now imagine what the consequences would be if, rather than a group of white racists, this property had been occupied by supporters of Black Lives Matter. Imagine what the response would be if, rather than calling for the opening up of natural resources to industrial exploitation, the occupiers had called for an end to police brutality. Supporters have occupied this property for some weeks unmolested. How many hours, minutes even, would anti-racists have been left to continue their peaceful protest? What if those occupying the wildlife reserve had been members of the indigenous nation, laying reasonable claim to their historic lands? How long would the state have tolerated their presence?

The United States is not the only largely anglophone nation considered in this volume. Richard Seymour provides a lively and incisive survey of one aspect of the situation in Britain in 'UKIP and the Crisis of Britain'. He begins: 'The barely told story of the British general election of May 2015 is the almost four million votes accumulated by the hard right UK Independence Party'. If taken together with the total Conservative vote, these votes account for nearly half of all votes cast. Further, although UKIP won only a single seat in parliament under current electoral rules, Seymour states that a system of proportional representation would have returned 83 UKIP members of parliament.

Seymour challenges the narrative contained in such works as Ford and Godwin's *Revolt on the Right* which suggests that UKIP's growth has been the result of its appeal to white, working class voters who feel abandoned by the Labour Party. Rather than boosting its popularity and appeal by taking up the issues faced by previously Labour-voting communities, UKIP's four million votes were preponderantly right-wing ones. His evidence for this comes from an examination of political events between the 2010 and 2015 general elections. Whilst identifying brief moments where it appeared that the Left might make some headway – the student protests of 2010 and united strike action in 2011 – Seymour contends that a series of 'moral panics' have shaped British society and opinion. He cites the responses to the widespread rioting of August 2011; the controversy surrounding the cases of Pakistani men found to be grooming and raping underage girls; the media-centred hounding of welfare recipients; 'extremism' in schools; and fear of 'invasion' when the borders were opened to Bulgarian and Romanian citizens of the European Union.

Seymour convincingly articulates the ways in which UKIP adapted its blatantly racist strategies from the 2010 campaign to an interpolated racism seen in the 2015 campaign. By echoing media hysteria over the

'panic' issues, riding the waves created by the Tories responses and organising on-the-ground campaigns in target areas, UKIP built its base of support. To reinforce his claims, Seymour quotes statistics to the effect that, of its 2015 vote, 43 per cent of UKIP voters had previously supported the Conservatives whilst 14 per cent had supported Labour.

Seymour deploys a form of Gramscian analysis pioneered by the late Stuart Hall, in particular the idea of 'counter-transformism', to develop a theoretical framework for understanding UKIP's dynamics. 'Counter-transformism' is the contradictory counterpart to 'transformism', a process by which political blocs are consolidated at the political 'centre' as part of the development of societal and economic change ('passive revolution', in Gramscian terms). Seymour references New Labour as an example of 'transformism', resulting from the 'passive revolution' brought about by Thatcherism. 'Counter-transformism' is a process by which political forces at the centre can be dragged to the Left, or in the case of UKIP, the Right. In this framework, UKIP can be understood as acting to 'articulate a range of class-specific discontents within a nationalist discourse, to incorporate diverse class strata into an attack on the existing ... consensus, and to re-polarize national politics, in this case to the Right'. (p 37)

Such a process is time limited and fragile, depending to a great extent on the inability of the Labour Party to mobilise and organise its support in a meaningful non-election focused fashion. Probably written in the weeks immediately bracketing the 2015 election, Seymour will not have had the opportunity to factor the 'Corbyn for Leader' campaign into this part of his analysis of UKIP's likely trajectory. However, given the title of his forthcoming book, *Corbyn: The Crisis of British Politics*, we should expect to hear more about Jeremy's own brand of 'counter-transformism'.

The final contribution that will be covered in this review is Gavan McCormack's 'Chauvinist Nationalism in Japan's Schizophrenic State'. McCormack's article is particularly useful in that it covers a vital aspect of Japanese politics, providing the context for a number of recent events that would otherwise appear puzzling. For example, protests organised by 'Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy' outside of the Diet – Japanese parliament – reached a high point in August 2015 in response to Prime Minister Abe's plans to remove the pacifist clause from Japan's constitution. These protests have been characterised as the culmination of a movement that emerged in the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster of 2011.

At the very end of 2015, the governments of South Korea and Japan came to an agreement over the 'comfort women' – women forced into

sexual slavery in Japanese brothels in occupied territories before and during World War Two. Without consulting the surviving women involved, the South Korean government agreed to £5.6million compensation to be paid by Japan, and the prospect of negotiations over other issues related to the episode.

What possible motivation could there be for Japan to amend its pacifist constitution? Why after so many decades of avoiding the issue, would right-wing premier Abe agree to a deal on ‘comfort women’? Why risk disruption on the streets and opposition from your closest allies in government?

McCormack identifies Abe as ‘a politician who (in)famously looks with pride on Japan’s feudal and fascist past, but who, Janus-like, is at once deeply hostile towards the United States and utterly servile to it’. The political outlook and composition of the current Japanese administration is portrayed in deeply sinister terms in McCormack’s analysis. Just as sinister is his identification of the Japanese leader as ‘the most enthusiastically pro-American of contemporary world leaders’. (p 232)

In conclusion, McCormack asserts that the

‘paradoxical Japanese state, founded and structured seventy years ago by US forces as a dependency, chose in the late twentieth/early twenty-first century to deepen that relationship into the “client state” or *zokkoku*, and since then seeks to further reinforce military and strategic integration with the US on an anti-Chinese axis whilst widening and deepening economic and financial submission.’

So, in order to maintain its client status with the US, Prime Minister Abe is willing to compromise with another US client. In order to maintain and extend its military – as well as economic – influence on the Chinese periphery, the US is willing to tolerate a Prime Minister who, at the very least, can be said to have sympathy with Japan’s imperial and fascist past.

There is much more besides this survey of a small selection of contributions within the 392 pages of the *Socialist Register 2016*. As with previous volumes, *The Politics of the Right* makes a substantial contribution to our collective understanding of past, current and unfolding events, and will help inform our responses.

*Tom Unterrainer*