

Venezuela shows battle that would be faced by Corbyn government

Decisive break with capitalism needed

During the recent general election campaign the Tories and Theresa May, backed up by the capitalist media, presented the choice before the British people as 'me [May] or the chaos of a Jeremy Corbyn/Labour government.'

This spectacularly backfired when May's campaign itself descended into chaos as she was forced to repudiate the increased charges for social care and other attacks on working people!

Now, with the government hanging by a thread and another general election possible soon, there is the real prospect of a Corbyn government being pushed to power against the background of the continuing mass revolt against austerity. The Tories and the capitalist media are therefore trying to conduct a scare campaign, rehearsing the same shop-worn theme of 'chaos', only this time linking Jeremy Corbyn to the current turmoil in Venezuela.

'Look: Venezuela shows that Corbyn's policies inevitably produce chaos, food queues, rioting and the threat of disorder', they'd like us to believe. No mention of course that the greatest cause of chaos today is capitalism itself, which they ferociously defend.

This system has generated unprecedented misery throughout the world, massive growth in the number of poor, unprecedented concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a greedy capitalist elite - with eight men controlling 50% of the world's wealth. Food shortages proliferate throughout the world, including in Britain with food banks. These conditions have helped to ratchet up conflict, including war and revolution, internationally and within each country in the form of an intensified class war.

Sabotage

A few words of Jeremy Corbyn three years ago supporting the late Hugo Chavez and his commendable efforts to change Venezuela in favour of the poor and the working class are woven into a completely false narrative that if you challenge capitalism and its representatives, the current situation in Venezuela - chaos, they say - will ensue. Any 'chaos' is mostly caused by the sabotage of the capitalists, both in Venezuela and internationally, and would be replicated in Britain with the coming to power of a Labour government!

There is nothing new in this. Winston Churchill, Tory leader in the 1945 general election, warned that a Labour government would be similar to the Nazi Gestapo! Even the mild social democratic Labour government of Harold Wilson in the 1970s was threatened behind-the-scenes with military plots and army manoeuvres at Heathrow. The 'respectable' Economist magazine talked about a 'Bolshevik' threat from the government of very limited increases in corporation tax, which did not even trim the fingernails of big business!

Moreover, as [the excellent article by our Venezuelan sister parties of Izquierda Revolucionaria and Socialismo Revolucionario shows](#), the situation in the country is the result not of socialist policies but exactly the opposite - the movement by the Maduro government away from real democratic worker-based socialist policies towards capitalist ones.

Neither the government of Maduro nor, unfortunately, that of the late Hugo Chavez himself, although he did seek to carry out serious reforms in the interests of the working class and poor, has completed the incipient socialist and democratic revolution which Chavez had presided over.

That would have meant taking over, with minimal compensation on the basis of proven need, not just a minority of industry, but the commanding heights of the economy, the big monopolies, domestic and foreign, which still control the country today. This would have to be accompanied by nationalisation of the land and its distribution to the farmers and poor.

This would lay the basis for the beginnings of a planned economy, controlled and managed by the working class through a system of workers' control and management to eliminate the stifling and corrupt bureaucratic elite. This in turn would have detonated mass movements in other countries to emulate and join up with Venezuela to create a socialist confederation of central and south America.

As the Venezuelan members' article clearly explains, a halfway-house position - one quarter or even one third and more of a revolution - always gives the opportunity for the not yet disarmed capitalists to organise and sometimes to resort to the forcible overthrow of the government.

Revolution

In the [Portuguese revolution in the 1970s](#), the government was compelled by the mass movements which defeated the right-wing Spinola coup of March 1975 to take over, through the nationalisation of the banks, 70% of the economy. Even the Times newspaper said "capitalism is dead in Portugal".

But this was not true, because the revolution was not completed. This, together with the mistakes by the Communist Party and sections of the radicalised army who did not decisively base themselves on democratic control from below, allowed reaction to gradually regather its forces and roll back the revolution.

Reaction, however, faced with the still hot lava of revolution, carried out a drawn-out counterrevolution in a 'democratic' form. Something similar is happening in Brazil at the present time and Venezuela may evolve in this way as well. Although a right-wing coup cannot be ruled out as in [Chile in 1973](#).

Venezuela did not go as far as the Portuguese revolution in striking at the economic foundations of capitalism. Nor did a sufficiently independent working class develop which was able to put its own decisive stamp on the situation through control and management, exercised at every level. These are the real lessons of Venezuela which can be applied to Corbyn's programme today and the prospects of a Labour government led by him.

The mood is there for real change in Britain. That was shown by the reception to the launch of Labour's manifesto during the general election which was a real game changer. At its heart was the proposal to nationalise some industries and the [promise to cancel tuition fees, including telling all those students starting in October that they would not have to pay fees!](#)

Now, confronted with a media campaign that this could not be 'afforded', some Corbyn supporters have unfortunately appeared to water down the promise already, by suggesting that a 'review' will be undertaken to study its 'feasibility'.

It does not need a study to understand that our youth are being crucified by this savage financial impost, which is now enormously worsened by charging higher interest rates on total fees - unbelievably up to and beyond 6% a year.

No backtracking! Make an unequivocal commitment to repudiate these unfair criminal attacks on young people, the future! How to pay for this? Introduce a wealth tax, particularly as the capitalists are piling up profits at the present time, through slave-like wages of low-paid workers like hospital workers and young people in particular.

If they say they cannot afford it, we say we cannot afford your system. What validity is there in the capitalist system if it cannot - which is now openly admitted by the defenders of the system - give the same meagre conditions as in the past? True, a record number of jobs have been created but this has not resulted in an overall growth in wages because of the scandalously low wages in Britain, the US and elsewhere.

The twin pillars of Corbyn's election manifesto were to abolish tuition fees and the call for the nationalisation of the railways, water and fuel. There is already undoubtedly a majority in favour of these measures. This was

further fuelled by the arbitrary 12.5% increase in the price of electricity by British Gas, which will further crush millions of poor people.

The Daily Mirror, for instance, carried a whole page where every letter demanded the re-nationalisation of energy and many other industries. One letter in favour of renationalisation of British Gas said in relation to the government's 'regulations' that "they are as effective as a chocolate teapot". Another stated: "I find it ironic that the man who announced British Gas price rises has the surname Conn."

And the situation is no different in the 100 or so monopolies which now control the economy. Venezuela is at a crossroads now. A real right-wing coup is threatened because sufficient action - even under Chavez, despite his honesty and good intentions - was not taken to decisively break once and for all the power of the big capitalists and landlords through effective nationalisation of the monopoly firms and companies.

Timing

The same dilemma will ultimately confront a Corbyn government. Timing can be of the essence in politics. Failure to strike a decisive blow at the opportune moment can give big business the time to sabotage, through lies, conscious mismanagement and so on, as a means of eventually defeating proposals for nationalisation.

And even Corbyn's current modest proposals for nationalisation propose a gradual takeover of the railways, for instance by taking over each company when its franchise runs out. It is estimated this could take seven years to complete - more than one parliamentary term - which gives adequate time for the capitalists and their press to prepare a campaign of intrigue and sabotage.

History shows - including in the drama now being played out in Venezuela - that piecemeal reforms irritate the capitalists but at the same time do not satisfy the demands of the working class for real change. The British and other ruling classes throughout the world are attempting to use Venezuela as a scarecrow to frighten the working class away from socialism.

They can only be defeated through the adoption of clear, fighting, socialist policies in Venezuela and in Britain.

We can assist the masses of Venezuela, and ourselves, by explaining similar ideas in Britain and exerting pressure on the labour movement for the Corbyn revolution to be completed, both in the internal battle to defeat the Blairite right and programmatically with measures which can really lead to a democratic and socialist Britain.

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Striking back against poverty pay

Bob Severn, South East Birmingham Socialist Party

What's summer about? Sun, sea and... strike action! Fat cats and their Tory MP mates might be lounging on private beaches on private islands, but a big wave is going to hit them - a strike wave!

Strikers include [Birmingham bin workers](#), [Barts NHS trust hospital ancillary workers](#), [Mears housing maintenance workers](#), [housing association support workers in south Wales](#), [BA cabin crew](#), [Sheffield steel workers](#) and [Bank of England staff](#) (no, not the actual bankers - but low paid maintenance and security workers).

Poverty pay is an issue that unites all the disputes, from the Rom Ltd steel workers fighting for their first pay rise in a decade, to Bron Afon support workers in south Wales facing a £3,000 pay cut.

Birmingham bin workers could lose £4,000 a year - or their jobs. Workloads, bullying management and protecting terms and conditions are also threads that tie together the summer strikes.

Scrapheap

None of these workers want to strike - but they have been left with no choice but to take action so they aren't left on the austerity scrapheap. But many others might wonder - why aren't we taking action too?

The Tories are weak and divided, and united strike action by public and private sector workers could push them and their austerity agenda over the edge.

Unite union members in London from Barts Trust, British Airways, and the Bank of England showed the way on 3 August, [when the strikers coordinated their marches and rallied alongside each other, supporting their fellow workers, increasing their strength and confidence.](#)

So the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) is calling on the TUC - the organisation that is supposed to bring together and lead the trade union movement - to lead a joint fight to smash the Tory pay cap and win decent pay for all workers, public and private.

As summer goes into autumn, the strike wave could turn into a tsunami that wrecks austerity - and stops it from wrecking our lives!

You can help make that happen by joining the lobby of the TUC in seaside Brighton on 10 September.

Fight together to scrap the Tory pay cap!

- National Shop Stewards Network rally at TUC congress
 - Sunday 10 September at 1pm, Arundel Suite, Holiday Inn, 137 King's Road, Brighton BN1 2JP - all welcome
 - Confirmed speakers: Len Hockey, Unite Barts NHS Trust branch secretary; Mark Serwotka, PCS general secretary; Steve Gillan, POA general secretary; Ronnie Draper, BFAWU general secretary; Sean Hoyle, RMT president and Amy Murphy, Usdaw southern division EC member. Chaired by Janice Godrich, PCS president
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Rashan Charles death: end police racism and austerity

Marvin Hay, Socialist Party black and Asian group

[The video of the violent abuse of Rashan Charles](#) in Hackney, east London, leading up to his death on 22 July, has rightly caused outrage in working class communities in London and beyond.

The brutal assault of a 20-year-old black man at the hands of not only a police officer but a member of the public is all the more poignant because of its immortalisation in film.

Like [the video of police choking Eric Garner in New York in 2014](#), the three-minute CCTV recording of Rashan sums up the adversarial approach of the police to the black working class.

The gentrification project in Hackney ploughs on. Meanwhile the police act to smooth the transition of Hackney from working class suburb into high-cost playground for the city elite.

The number of black and minority ethnic people killed by police in 2017 is already the highest in over a decade. At the time of writing, [campaign group Inquest reports eleven such deaths in police custody or](#)

[shootings so far this year.](#)

Edson Da Costa, [reportedly blinded by police CS spray](#), died on 22 June after police apparently used excessive force arresting him in Beckton, east London.

Edson's family reports a doctor telling them he sustained neck and spine injuries which caused a seizure. [The Independent Police Complaints Commission \(IPCC\) now disputes this.](#)

The death of Rashan Charles is the [fourth death in Metropolitan Police custody so far in 2017](#). Three were black or ethnic minority.

Meanwhile in Warwickshire, [Darren Cumberbatch died on 19 July](#) as a result of severe injuries following his 10 July arrest in Nuneaton. Some outlets are reporting an allegation that [police also tasered him](#) - nine times, according to one.

These names, like the names of all those who have had their lives ended before them, must be added to the never-ending list of black people killed at the hands of the police.

What's followed in Hackney is an outcry of sorrow and grief. However, there is also an increasing naked anger and cry for justice, demonstrated through the spontaneous protests that have erupted in the days following.

Austerity effects

But what cannot be ignored is the effect of austerity. In the drive to overcome the most recent crisis of capitalism, the austerity agenda has ushered in cuts to 'non-mandatory' services that gave young people like Rashan the help and support they may need.

In 2011 youth services in Hackney went from 181 staffed posts to 90, with a £10 million cut to their budget. In 2017 a further £4 million has been shaved off the already slender budget, with youth services provision at an all-time low across the capital.

The Socialist Party says these cuts are having a dire effect on our young people and their ability to access opportunities away from crime and contact with the police. We demand fully funded council services for all and an end to all cuts.

Investigations

Rashan's death will be investigated by the IPCC. However there is little belief in working class communities and the trade union movement that its 'investigation' will provide the justice we all demand.

The investigations into the deaths of [Habib Ullah in High Wycombe in 2008](#) and [Mark Duggan in Tottenham, north London](#), in 2011 are testament to this. So is the [decades-long fight of those who lost loved ones at Hillsborough](#).

It is of great concern that [Home Secretary Amber Rudd continues to sit on a report](#), commissioned following the 2015 election, into deaths in police custody.

Among other things it was meant find out whether black and minority ethnic victims are more common and suffer worse treatment. Of course, we already know this is true.

The racism that plagues police forces is institutional and pandemic. It is a product of capitalism and the exploitation of black people throughout history.

Racist harassment

Deeply rooted racist stereotypes and police profiling make 'stop and search' a tool for racial harassment. In 2015-16, black people were [six times more likely to be stopped and searched](#) on average. In Dorset, [figures](#)

[for 2014-15](#) showed black people were over 17 times more likely to be stopped and searched.

The Socialist Party demands an immediate end to police harassment, including the use of stop and search. We call for a full, open and democratic public enquiry, involving community groups and the trade union movement, to represent the views and needs of working class communities.

We demand full democratic community control of police policy and hiring. We call for the Corbyn-led Labour Party to put pressure on the Trade Union Congress to tackle the issue of institutional racism in the police force, making the link between austerity and structural racism.

We call for disbanding of the IPCC and the creation of a democratically accountable investigatory body made up of trade unionists and community groups.

But ultimately, as Malcolm X and Kwame Ture pointed out, "you can't have capitalism without racism." In order to end police abuse and wider racism in society, we need to end the system which benefits from it.

That means linking the fight for demands like these to the need to take the power away from the capitalists, and build a new society based on public ownership, democratic planning and solidarity: a socialist society.

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Coventry: hundreds join march following racist police killing

Coventry Socialist Party

Over 200 came to the launch meeting of the [#Justice4Daz campaign](#), set up after Coventry man Darren Cumberbatch died on 19 July following "contact" with the police. Hundreds also joined a [march in Nuneaton on 29 July](#).

Darren is the third black man to die in such circumstances in a month, after [Edson da Costa](#) and [Rashan Charles in London](#).

The meeting heard that Darren left his sister Carla's house on 9 July "healthy and in great form." Police only informed the family he was in George Eliot Hospital on 12 July.

Witnesses said he had been "battered" by police, and had black eyes and burns on his body. He told a friend he had been tasered nine times.

Speakers called for use of tasers to be suspended, and for the officers involved in Darren's death to be suspended immediately. The Independent Police Complaints Commission was described as "not fit for purpose."

A speaker from Black Conscious Coventry rightly said police brutality and racism are systemic and rooted in capitalism. "Policing is not there to protect the community, it's there to protect property and big corporations."

Hundreds marched through Nuneaton, where Darren's violent arrest occurred.

The march was led by his friends and family. Marchers laid flowers and candles outside.

The march proceeded to the police station. Luke, a witness from the night, said "something kicked off around two o'clock in the morning. I heard him screaming, I heard him shouting. The police were there.

"He was screaming for help. He was asking, 'What have I done?' I heard no reply. I heard tasers - no warning of tasers. I heard CS gas - no warning of CS gas..."

"That night there was something going on that shouldn't have been going on by police."

Government's tribunal fees defeat should give trade unions confidence to fight

Vicky Perrin, Unison national executive member (personal capacity)

Unison's successful [Supreme Court challenge to the government's tribunal fees policy](#) on 26 July is an important victory for workers and the trade union movement.

It abolishes the [up-front fee of up to £1,200 that, since 2013](#), workers have faced before they can seek to enforce their employment rights in court. And it forces the government to repay the more than £27 million paid out by workers in fees over the last four years.

The Tories' own figures show a 67% fall in the number of employment tribunal cases since the imposition of these fees, and the amount of discrimination cases being heard has suffered the most dramatic fall - 83% fewer workers have challenged cases of discrimination in court since fees were imposed.

No longer will bullying employers be able to exploit the cost barrier to workers seeking justice, to delay negotiating claims of failing to implement employment rights. Having been emboldened by the cost to low paid workers of seeking justice, employers now once again know that they face the threat of litigation for riding roughshod over workers' rights.

While this is a crucial victory which must give confidence to the trade union movement, and we defend every legal gain, we know only too well that employment law is not weighted in favour of workers. As with everything, prevention is better than cure.

Solid workplace organisation and a confident fighting lead in response to employers breaking the rules, or when disputes break out, are the best deliverers of justice for us. No law has prevented the slaughtering of 600,000 local government jobs or seven years of a pay freeze meaning our wages have fallen by 20% in real terms over that period. Those battles will be fought and won on the picket lines not in the courts.

The TUC, which has been disgracefully timid until now, standing by passively while the anti-trade union laws, including the Trade Union Act, were driven through, now needs to harness the boldness and determination of the disputes being fought in hospitals and schools up and down the country and across the private sector, into a sustained coordinated fightback against austerity.

Endemic low pay and the most precarious employment market rife with zero-hour contracts and relentless attempts to massacre hard won terms and conditions mean that workers' resolve and courage are hardening as they are left with no option but to fight.

Unison has the resources and potential weight in the trade union movement to fight and win important battles like this in court, not only for its members but for workers everywhere. But it could and must also use its weight in the TUC to lead the charge for the coordinated resistance that could bring this hated and beleaguered government, with unlawful legislation, down to its knees.

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40% of England's psychiatric wards are 'unsafe'

Fight for mental health funding

Clare Wilkins, Birmingham South East Socialist Party

Nearly [half of England's mental health units are out of date or unsafe according to healthcare regulator COC](#). Thousands were "inadequate" or marked "requires improvement."

This is against the background of more people than ever requiring care, and of poor access to mental health services in general. The report covers both NHS and private facilities.

Two in five services inspected since 2014 failed safety standards. Patients are being treated on out-of-date wards which don't have enough staff.

Thousands of service users are still locked up in asylum-type units. It is over 50 years since such arrangements were deemed unsuitable.

There are still 3,500 beds in 248 locked wards in England. Around two thirds are managed by private or third-sector providers. The average stay on high-dependency wards is 341 days - but some stay nearly five years.

[Some wards are still mixed-gender](#). It is decades since this should have stopped.

Most provision was found to be "outstanding" in terms of staff providing care, but falling woefully short on safety.

Last year, Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust [recorded over 1,000 violent incidents against staff](#) and 480 against other service users, and removed 148 potential weapons from service users.

The only treatment ward in Solihull was closed because it was a mixed-gender 'stand-alone' ward, and safety of staff and service users could not be ensured.

[Although NHS England reports that 120,000 more people are receiving mental health care than three years ago, access is still inadequate](#).

Since 2010, the number of mental health nurses working has fallen by 5,000 according to nurses' union RCN.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt [has promised an extra £1.3 billion to recruit 21,000 more mental health workers](#). But this is not new funding - it was first promised by David Cameron in 2016.

Too many patients are sent miles away for treatment because of a lack of local beds. Many others do not get access to treatment at all.

The consequences of austerity have led to a rise in the number of people with mental illnesses.

But mental health provision is the poor relation of physical care in the NHS, and the whole service is impoverished and in crisis. This is part of a deliberate strategy to run it down to make it ready to privatise.

Virgin already has £1 billion of NHS contracts. The Socialist Party fights to reverse all NHS cuts and sell-offs.

Scrap the obsolete, prison-like locked wards and fund enough safe facilities and specialist staff to provide mental healthcare for all.

Capitalism is literally making us sick. We need a socialist world.

Marx's Capital at 150: an unequalled analysis and critique of capitalism, still relevant today

Robin Clapp, Socialist Party national committee

The Daily Mail [reacted with predictable hysteria when, in May 2017](#), John McDonnell stated: "You can't understand the capitalist system without reading Marx's Das Kapital." When asked to immediately condemn his shadow chancellor, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn refused to do so and correctly [added that Marx was "a great economist"](#).

These endorsements are a long way removed from former Labour leader Harold Wilson's pathetic attempt to put down Marx's masterpiece in 1963 when he sneered that he hadn't got beyond the second page footnote.

Wilson's arrogance reflects a bygone era. The post-war economic boom appeared to have set capitalism on a relentless forward march that was effortlessly erasing remaining class contradictions. A Labour leader's job was to simply help manage the system, pacifying the working class through the benefits accruing from the 'trickle down' effects of increasing wealth, full employment and publicly owned services.

Karl Marx was widely ridiculed as an irrelevant 19th century ideologue. His predictions that capitalism would lead to expanding wealth disparity between the classes and the pauperisation of millions of workers were treated with derision.

Today's world however, reveals that Marx's prognoses are once again haunting the bosses as they seek in vain to find a way out of the ongoing damage brought about by the Great Recession of 2008 - which has cost at least \$12.8 trillion globally in lost output and \$10 trillion in state bailouts.

No surprise therefore that the neoliberal Economist magazine should decide to examine Marx's theories again. [In an article entitled 'Labour is Right: Karl Marx has a lot to teach today's politicians'](#), it points to the concentration of capital in fewer and fewer hands, the falls in workers' wages and the explosion of the casualised 'Uber economy' with its insecurity and misery for millions, especially young people.

None of these trends, long ago explained by Marx, are unique to this period. In chapter ten of Das Kapital (Capital), which deals with the working day, he exposes the shocking working conditions and chronicles the degradation young and old alike were exposed to in the name of profit.

He shows how capitalists try to lengthen working hours, or intensify the existing conditions in the workplace in their insatiable quest for more profit. Workers' safety and general health are ignored as competition between companies and nation states intensify.

The centenary of the mighty Russian Revolution beckons in two months. Yet it is another anniversary on 14 September, that of the publication in 1867 of Volume One of Karl Marx's Capital, that was to provide the initial theoretical building blocks for the emergence of the party which became the Bolsheviks under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky in 1917.

Political economy

Capital was published in nine languages while Marx and Engels were alive. The first translation of the three volumes was into Russian. Eager young workers and intellectuals immersed themselves in its pages.

Lenin's elder brother, Alexander, read it with enthusiasm, recommending it to his sibling. Tragically Alexander was later hanged for attempting to assassinate the Tsar through a desperate and misguided act of individual terror, while the younger Vladimir Ilyich read, learned, put into practice and prepared. Lenin was later to characterise Capital as "the greatest work on political economy".

Marx's lifelong collaborator Frederick Engels reviewing the book in 1867, wrote that "As long as capitalists and workers have existed in the world, no single book that could have had such importance for workers has

appeared".

Marx devoted 40 years of his life to the writing of *Capital*. After his death in 1883, the indefatigable Engels undertook the prodigious task of collating and deciphering Marx's unfinished notes into what were to become Volume 2 (circulation of capital) and Volume 3 (capitalist production as a whole and its contradictions).

In their works of the 1840s (*A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, *The German Ideology*, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, *Wage Labour and Capital* and *The Communist Manifesto*), Marx and Engels had begun to formulate the basic propositions of the materialist interpretation of history and the theory of scientific socialism growing out of it.

Capitalist laws

In *Capital*, Marx discovered the economic law of development of capitalist society. In Volume One he traces the history of the economic struggle of the working class, explains the role of factory legislation in this struggle and analyses the capitalist application of machinery.

Crucially he explains how money becomes transformed into capital as the capitalist accumulates a surplus that is invested for no other reason than to obtain a larger surplus in the next chain of production.

Underpinning every assertion is the application of the 'dialectical materialist' interpretation of the historical process to the analysis of capitalist formation. Marx shows that capitalist economy does not develop through a series of random individual acts of exchange, but instead is directed by specific and identifiable economic laws.

He starts *Capital* with an examination of commodities, which are products of human labour that are exchanged. Capitalist production is, above all, the creation and immense accumulation of commodities.

Every commodity has a use-value. This means they must have use to someone else who will purchase them. Use-value is limited to the physical properties of the commodity. But every commodity has a twofold nature, having also an exchange-value.

While use-values have been produced in every age, only the capitalist social stage of production converts them into exchange-values - goods that are produced not for direct consumption but for sale. Commodities thus have a dual character. They possess a specific form (coat, ice-cream, newspaper, etc) which at any moment may or may not be required by a potential consumer able to purchase them. But also a mysterious hidden property that cannot be worn, eaten or read and lacks material form.

Despite their physical differences, commodities in the market, whatever their use, can be exchanged with other commodities. But how does this happen? What is the mechanism through which different commodities are exchanged?

Human labour

It was Marx who saw that the common thread between all commodities was the expending of human labour on their production, more accurately the purchase by the capitalist of the worker's labouring power.

At any given period, using the average labour, machines and methods, all commodities take a particular time to make. This is governed by the level of technique in society. In Marx's words, all commodities must be produced in a socially necessary time.

The value therefore of every commodity is the amount of socially necessary labour time employed in its production.

Supply and demand do not ultimately determine price. A lorry will always be more expensive than a plastic table because of the amount of labour time spent in the production of each respective article. The ultimate expression of this exchange value is money, price being the monetary expression of value.

In selling their labour power, the capitalist enters a contract to pay the worker a wage. Labour power too is a commodity and its value is determined by the labour time necessary for its production.

Marx showed that labour power is a commodity like every other commodity, but yet a very peculiar commodity. It alone is a value-creating force, the source of value and the source of more value than it possesses itself.

Money trick

The great capitalist 'money trick' then comes into play. Having agreed a wage, the worker, for example, then reproduces its equivalent value within the first four hours of production. Yet the employer has bought eight hours of labour power and so the worker earns their wage for only half of the shift, while for the other four hours they are creating surplus value, ie working for the capitalist.

Marx explains the process succinctly: "The fact that half a day's labour is necessary to keep the labourer alive does not in any way prevent him from working a full day."

The surplus thus extracted is the surplus value or profit - the unpaid labour of the working class - and forms the source of the accumulation of capital.

The class struggle played out in every workplace for more pay or more profit is nothing more than a continual fight for the division of surplus value. Even the dimmest boss instinctively grasps the idea that 'time is money.'

Marx was the first to understand the source of surplus value. Others like the classical economist Ricardo had identified it but could not adequately explain its origin.

Collating all his previous research into the subject, Marx began a dialectical examination of all the processes of capitalist production, beginning with the analysis of the commodity as its elementary cell-form and the contradictory twofold character of the labour that creates a commodity.

The discovery of surplus value, was to Engels, Marx's second monumental discovery after historical materialism.

Capital is a treasure trove of ideas that explain the workings of the system with its inbuilt exploitation of workers' labour power.

Cynical economists who cheerfully confess that they can predict nothing about their system's tomorrow, never mind its longer term prospects, nevertheless claim that economics is too complicated for ordinary people to understand.

Revolution

For us, as for Marx, a study of political economy strips bare the economic forces that govern our lives and shows their interaction on social developments, history, politics, culture and the class struggle.

In evaluating Capital, Trotsky wrote in 1940: "If the theory correctly estimates the course of development and foresees the future better than other theories, it remains the most advanced theory of our time, be it even scores of years old."

Today, as capitalism becomes ever more discredited - facing political, social and economic impasse - workers around the world will once again study Capital and the other works of Marxism, always remembering Marx's famous maxim that "philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it."

Left Books

The Socialist Party's book service is now called Left Books - to which payments should be made.

Visit leftbooks.co.uk - or for a printed list of socialist literature, as well as details of bulk order discounts, etc, phone Keith on 020 8988 8789.

Socialist Books is now the publishing house of the Socialist Party.

Marx writings available from Left Books:

- Capital Volumes 1 & 2 - £3.99
- Capital: A new abridgement - £8.99
- Capital Volume 1 - Penguin Classic - £18.99
- Capital Volume 2 - £16.99
- Capital Volume 3 - £18.99
- Value, Price & Profit - £2.00
- The Communist Manifesto (Marx & Friedrich Engels with introduction by Trotsky) - £3.50
- The Communist Manifesto (Penguin Classic) - £1.00
- Wage Labour & Capital/Value, Price & Profit - £7.95

Also...

- Marxism in Today's World by Peter Taaffe - £8.00
- Marx's Das Kapital: A Biography by Francis Wheen - £7.99
- Marx's Capital Illustrated by David Smith - £13.99
- Please add 10% postage to all orders
- See leftbooks.co.uk for full list of Marx & Engels' books
- 020 8988 8789
- bookshop@socialistparty.org.uk
- Left Books, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD

Angry Birmingham bin workers enter fifth week of strike action

Clive Walder, Birmingham Central Socialist Party

Birmingham bin workers, members of Unite the Union, feel angry that the Labour council has forced them into a fifth week of industrial action to defend jobs, pay and the safety-critical member of the bin wagon crew.

But as their action bites they feel determined to stick it out until victory. They want to get back to collecting Birmingham's rubbish but not on the council's shoddy terms. Workers are furious with council financial mismanagement of the service.

Solidarity action must be stepped up. The Socialist Party believes that all local government unions should hold workplace meetings to explain the dispute and the wider consequences should the bin workers be defeated. This can be followed up with bucket collections on the next payday.

In Small Heath, [a community group have started their own rubbish collections](#). It's unlikely a small group of volunteers could make a difference to the level of uncollected rubbish but it is significant that the council has taken no action. They may think it undermines the strike, but workers are concerned that these volunteers have not been trained to collect rubbish or meet health and safety standards.

Some workers wonder whether the council is digging in for a long dispute, but the truth is that they have been put through this five week disgrace by council officers and senior councillors. Most councillors will be unaware of most of the issues, and it is time they were lobbied and had things explained to them.

It has been rumoured that some Birmingham Labour MPs have been pressuring the workers to compromise rather than demanding the council withdraw the job losses and downgrading.

A local Communication Workers Union branch passed a motion of support moved by a Socialist Party member and also agreed to write to Jeremy Corbyn asking him to remind Labour councillors that they should not attack their own workers.

Labour

Many feel that these Labour councillors should not be allowed to stand as Labour candidates at next year's election. Labour Party members should challenge councillors who are not supporting the bin workers.

Unite has made it clear that they will back the workers financially and industrially for as long as it takes and a hardship fund is in the process of being established.

Socialist Party members have been visiting the picket lines at all four depots regularly and are warmly welcomed by the strikers. Four bin worker bulletins have already been produced and been well received with many workers reading them on the picket line immediately.

On the ['Support the Brum Bin Strike' Facebook page](#) one worker is quoted: "We've been bending over backwards for these lot for eight years now, but you can only kick a dog for so long before it turns round and bites you. This is what's happening right now".

It is vital that solidarity is built as this dispute could drag on. All readers of the Socialist should pass motions of support and send donations from union branches and other organisations.

- Please send messages of support to Howard.Beckett@unitetheunion.org and donations can be sent to Unite the Union, 9-17 Victoria Street, West Bromwich, West Midlands, B70 8HX

Barts strike: Keep up the pressure on Serco and the trust!

Talks are expected between NHS privateer Serco and [striking Barts health workers](#) as we go to press with the next strike set for 6am on 18 August. The workers, members of Unite the Union, have just completed another solid round of strike action, this time they were out for a fortnight.

There has been fantastic coverage in the press, solidarity action at Serco offices in Europe and on 3 August [a coordinated day of action with other Unite members on strike](#) at the Bank of England and British Airways mixed fleet cabin crew.

The day started with a lively demonstration outside a Serco shareholders' meeting. The meeting was taking place in the London HQ of Serco's accountants, JP Morgan.

After protesting against Serco, the strikers marched together to the office of the Civil Aviation Authority for a second rally, and the handing in of a letter from the cabin crew. The day ended with the strikers joining the picket line outside the Bank of England.

The determined Barts workers have previously also struck for three days and seven days in July and had a 1,000-strong march through east London on 15 July. "Serco made an £82 million profit last year and its CEO was paid £1 million," a Unite rep told the rally outside JP Morgan. Yet the company is refusing to give a below-inflation increase of 30p an hour.

Len Hockey, Unite branch secretary for the four Barts Trust hospitals and a member of the Socialist Party, spoke at all three rallies. He applauded the "magnificent action so far" and welcomed the linking up of the three strikes against low pay.

What next?

Some ideas to discuss for the rest of dispute are:

- More protests can be planned, what about holding big rallies at each hospital in turn?
- A protest could be organised at the next meeting of Barts Trust to pressure them to intervene
- Use buckets and collection sheets to go out to the public and local workplaces - this is already being done with great success
- We must use the opportunity of being together on picket lines to discuss the strike
- Hospital workers in other departments could be asked to take signs, stickers and collection sheets

To support the Barts strike:

- Send a message to len.hockey@unitetheunion.org
- Donations to branch LE/7384L, sort code 60-83-01, account number 20344885.
- Protest to Serco, send an email to: generalenquiries@serco.com and sign the online petition change.org/p/serco-pay-up

Sheffield: Steel workers at Rom Ltd strike for a pay rise

Alistair Tice

No pay rise for ten years! That's why 18 steel fabricators in Sheffield are on strike for a rise. They are members of Community union and work for Rom Ltd, one of many companies owned by Spanish steel multinational Celsa.

They started a two week strike on Tuesday 25 July, and have a picket rota covering two gates from 6am to 6pm. There's only agency staff working and they don't know what they are doing without the contracted workers.

I talked to Chris, Keith, Brian and Andy on the picket line. Between them they have worked there for 136 years! They've never been on strike before, or not since the national steel strike in 1980.

Chris explained that when the economic crisis hit in 2007 the company said: "Don't come asking for a rise for the next two years, then another two years, etc".

As the placards say: "We helped Celsa"; but Celsa has kept taking advantage by eroding terms and conditions. Brian said: "They've even take our £15 Xmas voucher, £15!"

The strikers have just heard that workers at another Rom site in Newport who were going to ballot for industrial action have had an increased pay offer to 2%. They are sure it's because the bosses didn't want two sites coordinating strike action. This has only made them more determined and they will strike for another fortnight if Celsa doesn't shift.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 1 August 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Coordinated action needed to break pay restraint

Marion Lloyd, Left Unity chair and PCS executive committee member (personal capacity)

The misery of austerity for millions of workers is set to continue under the Tories. Chancellor [Phillip Hammond has defended the 1% pay cap](#) and claimed that public sector workers are overpaid.

Tell that to the workers who have suffered a major decrease in living standards over the years of Tory pay restraint.

These comments are a bit rich coming from Hammond, whose wage is [at least £150,000 a year and since 2015 has seen his pay go up by 13%](#).

Hammond also took a side swipe at the quality of public sector pensions as a reason for why the 1% pay cap was reasonable. What he fails to mention is that his pension is at least as good but that didn't stop them agreeing huge pay increases for MPs.

The role of the trade union movement is vital if we are to break pay restraint. This is why the decisions made by the PCS national executive committee are so key - to build maximum unity across the public sector while at the same time preparing for a consultative ballot of civil service workers.

With the Tories divided and Labour against the pay cap we must put maximum pressure on the government to scrap it. PCS has already raised the question of united action with the TUC and the role they must play to initiate and coordinate action.

The HMRC pay protests on 31 July were well supported and demonstrated a growing mood among PCS members to take on the government over pay. However the aim must be to build a pay campaign which will end the pay cap for all public sector workers.

End poverty pay for sleep-in care workers

Katie, support worker for adults with learning disabilities

'Amnesty' for care companies, more poverty wages for the workers.

Since the NHS began outsourcing care services to private companies and charities, wages and conditions for carers, support workers and healthcare assistants have been squeezed. The care sector is fast becoming the new slave wage job where employers are taking advantage of the cheap overseas labour pool. And with more and more older adults and more people with disabilities living into adulthood these services are at full capacity.

As a result there are thousands of workers across the UK who are being paid illegal [wages. One such case has highlighted the issue. The charity Mencap has been found to be in breach of minimum wage laws for paying £29.05 for nine-hour, sleep-in shifts](#). And this is not a rare case. As a carer and a support worker I have undertaken sleep-in shifts for a variety of companies with one paying as little as £24 for a nine-hour shift. Yet a recent government ruling has let these companies off the hook. Mencap claimed that obeying the law could lead to a loss of services to vulnerable adults.

But where is the amnesty for those staff who spend nights away from their families for a pittance? Some staff have been asked to sleep with noisy monitors beside their bed and fire doors that slam shut at 4am.

The Socialist Party calls on all unions to back a list of demands including hourly pay for sleep-in staff, without averaging out and for a massive increase in investment into care services, including from local councils.

RMT condemns Welsh government rail privatisation

Dave Reid, Socialist Party Wales

[Rail union RMT has condemned plans by the Welsh Labour government to further privatise the Welsh rail network.](#)

Private train companies currently operate the trains in Wales on tracks owned and maintained by the publicly-owned Network Rail. The franchise for operating the south Wales valley lines is coming to an end and is currently held by Arriva trains, which has run the service into the ground.

Arriva made £88 million profit in the last five years while its passengers endured an appalling service. But instead of renationalising the service, it is being put out to tender to four private companies, including Arriva.

Rail privatisation has been an unmitigated disaster. Despite billions of pounds in subsidies the private train operating companies offer a poor service and charge some of the highest fares in the world. The tracks were renationalised in 2002 because the private company, Railtrack, provided such a poor service and following a number of fatal rail disasters.

Yet the Tories are trying to re-privatise track maintenance by getting private train operating companies to take them over.

Now the RMT has learnt that not only is the Welsh government going to allow the continuation of privatisation of the train service on the south Wales valley lines, it intends to follow the example of the Tories in England and hand over the entire Metro scheme to a private company including running the tracks and infrastructure.

Between 70-80% support renationalisation of the railways in most polls, yet the Welsh Labour government intends to further privatise railways.

Mick Cash, general secretary of the RMT said: "The idea that this trade union will sit back while plans are being hatched for a £5 billion scheme to hand Welsh railways to private operators is ridiculous."

This threatened privatisation underlines how the Welsh Labour government is dominated by the Blairite right wing who are carrying out distinctly different policies to those promised by Jeremy Corbyn.

Young, angry and fighting back

Join the Young Socialists!

Mick Whale, Hull Trade Union Council (personal capacity)

Despite the arrival of Siemens' wind farm factory, unemployment and underemployment in Hull, particularly for young people, is unacceptably high.

We are [Britain's 'city of culture' for 2017](#). There is no doubt that in the city centre, which has been extensively rejuvenated, there is a feel-good factor.

But go a mile or so out of town in any direction to Hull's working class estates and it's a different feeling.

Many young people are on zero-hour contracts in minimum wage jobs. It is difficult to see how the legacy of being city of culture will mean a sustained increase in jobs and living standards.

The Tories' cuts have bitten deep into Hull. By 2020, the local council will have more than £100 million less to spend on services compared to 2010.

The cuts to children's services mean that the flimsy safety net which once gave some protection to the poorest and most vulnerable young people in the city has all but gone.

Communities are reporting an increase in petty criminality and drug addiction. This is symptomatic of the decline in living standards which visitors to Hull would miss if staying in the city centre.

Hull trade union council is using the city of culture label to try to cut through this. It is only by organising together and fighting back that young people and all workers can turn these appalling conditions around.

So we have organised the Collective Youth festival on 19 August with local bands and trade union speakers to help draw more young people towards the workers' movement and the fightback against austerity.

Speakers include Laura Garcia from the Sindicato de Estudiantes the militant school and university students' union in Spain. By leading [mass student strikes last year](#) it stopped the right-wing Spanish government's education attacks.

Another international speaker will be a young Kurd explaining how young people are fighting back against Isis in the Middle East.

In the June general election, young people showed they can be a decisive force for change.

Many who campaigned for Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity manifesto have joined the Labour Party. But its bureaucratic internal regime means they still struggle to find an outlet for their enthusiasm for socialist ideas.

So Socialist Party members and others are setting up 'Young Socialists' groups, including in Hull.

The Young Socialists will be a campaigning organisation challenging poverty pay, education cuts and fees, and poor working and living conditions. The Young Socialists will be demanding more housing for young people in the city.

- Collective Youth festival: 19 August from 12pm, Queen's Gardens, Hull
- Young Socialists public meeting: 22 August at 7pm, Royal Station Hotel, Hull - all welcome

Young Socialists off to a flying start in Cardiff

We launched Young Socialists in Cardiff [at a 'justice for Grenfell' protest](#) and found it had a very positive reception. We made speeches about how the fire could have been avoided and how we can never let it happen again.

George Godden, a young member of the Socialist Party in Cardiff, had an idea to set up a gig to raise money for Grenfell and engage people for a YS meeting. Local bands packed out the venue and Richard Edwards gave a rousing speech about Grenfell and why it is key to organise a movement.

We had sold out the venue in under an hour and had a queue formed down the street, meeting loads of new people in preparation for our first meeting on 10th July. We raised over £1,400.

Our first meeting was another success with 30 young comrades full of ideas discussing the way to take the movement forward. On 24th July we had our second meeting with a discussion on Socialism vs the free market.

Lots of those who came are doing bar work or work in the gig economy. Someone came with their Uber Eats backpack on and told us how they'd been told they should wait outside McDonalds because there was loads of demand, but in three hours didn't get any work. Someone else said they'd got a job three months ago but had only had three shifts in that time!

So we're going to hit the High Street this Saturday and leaflet places like Sports Direct where the pay is low and the work insecure. We want a £10 an hour minimum wage and the scrapping of zero-hours contracts. We've got loads of plans for campaigns and events to keep the momentum up and drive forward to a mass youth movement.

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 27 July 2017 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

Campaign fights closure of Chatsworth rehab ward

Karen Seymour, Mansfield Socialist Party

35 concerned patients, ex-patients and staff attended a passionate public meeting called by the Socialist Party on 3 August to discuss plans to fight [the closure of the Chatsworth rehabilitation ward at Mansfield Community Hospital](#). Its dedicated staff treat people with long-term neurological conditions such as multiple sclerosis.

An ex-patient spoke movingly from the platform about how the staff had cared for him when he felt alone and vulnerable and a current patient made his way over the road from the hospital in his wheelchair to attend. Other platform speakers included Socialist Party members Tom Hunt, the Chatsworth ward leader, Jean Thorpe, local trade union council secretary and Jon Dale.

Although staff have been found positions at another local hospital, their first concern was for their patients, whose quality of care would suffer if Chatsworth closes.

The powers that be who want to close this ward think that it will not be missed. But staff, patients and other interested parties are ready to create a massive fuss to get this decision reversed. They understand that if this small ward closes, more could follow.

A campaign committee was set up, showing the determination of all to fight to keep this ward open.

Thanks

To loud applause from the whole meeting a nurse thanked the Socialist Party for helping to get the campaign to save Chatsworth Ward started. She said that without this support staff felt they would be walked into closure.

The meeting, which was full of tears and laughter, was later shown on the BBC regional news and a Socialist Party campaign stall on 5 August also raised £76 fighting fund and sold 31 copies of the Socialist.

#WeAreAllChatsworth

Support for Socialist Party campaigns at biggest ever Leeds Pride

Mary Finch

Socialist Party members joined an excellent Leeds Pride on 5 August. It was the biggest ever Pride parade in Leeds, with over 40,000 attending.

There was a keenness among many to organise to reclaim Pride from its corporate sponsors.

Instead of being led by Sainsbury's supermarket, as the organisers planned, the parade was headed by local campaigners who cut in with a 'Pride is political' banner.

And there was overwhelming support for Socialist Party campaigns. We raised £50 fighting fund, and our stall was mobbed by overwhelmingly young, working class LGBT+ people.

We petitioned for LGBT+ rights in Northern Ireland, the only country in the UK without marriage equality, and [against the deportation of Ali Feruz](#).

Ali is a gay journalist seeking asylum in Russia, after fleeing persecution and violence in Uzbekistan. He works for the newspaper that broke the story about the gay 'concentration camps' in Chechnya. In a blatantly political attack the Russian state plans to deport him back to Uzbekistan.

There was an instinctive understanding of the need for international solidarity. One person commented: 'If that was me, I'd need people to help me'. She was one of many who signed the petition and took a photo with our solidarity posters to send to Ali.

Northern Pride's a success

Socialist Party members attended the tenth annual Northern Pride event on Saturday 22nd July to celebrate LGBT+ culture, history and societal diversity. Record numbers in their thousands attended the three-day event, hosted at Exhibition Park between Friday 21st July to Sunday 23rd.

The rain did not dampen the spirits of our comrades, who marched in solidarity with the Pride parade and trade unions that supported the event, from the Civic Centre to the Town Moor.

We enjoyed the shows, stalls and music; sold copies of the Socialist, distributed innumerable flyers and were able to reach many hopeful and enthusiastic folk in an exchange of ideas.

At one point as we were distributing our #JC4PM flyers, a crowd of people began to chant and sing upon seeing them: "We love Jeremy Corbyn!" Spirits are high for socialist policies and a Corbyn-led government.

We will continue to fully support the LGBT+ community's struggles against repression, violence and inequality and to fight for a world in which all can enjoy our rights to the full.

James Hunter, Newcastle

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Housing safety campaign kicks off in Coventry

Coventry Socialist Party held a public meeting in Hillfields about a new campaign for housing safety in Coventry on 1 August.

Attendees included a number of local residents from tower blocks across Coventry. They were all keen not just to highlight their own concerns and experiences but also to get involved and take action in organising a campaign on housing safety. This is an issue which has really come to the forefront in the wake of [the Grenfell disaster](#).

Local residents raised issues such as fire alarms being removed from tower blocks and housing provider Whitefriars charging tenants for repairs - up to £600 in some cases!

One of the main proposals of the meeting - to get local residents organised in tenants' groups - was well received, with plans now underway to have tenants of different tower blocks organise door-knocking and petitioning of other residents in their own flats.

The demands discussed include the fitting of sprinklers in all tower blocks. The vital importance of a fully-functioning sprinkler system was shown in the difference between the fire at Grenfell Tower and [in a hotel in Dubai - a very similar structure but for a sprinkler system - in 2016](#). In the latter, nobody was killed.

It's clear that pressure must also be put on local landlords to fully enforce the highest safety standards across all housing in Coventry - private or social - and pressure should be put on local councillors to help tenants organise and fight for our rights.

We have to link these issues to the overall demand to bring all housing back under public ownership.

This is also linked to our demands to change society along socialist lines, to bring all infrastructure and the economy into the democratic control of working class people.

For a society run for people, not profit!

Coventry Socialist Party

Far right thrown out of Newcastle

On 29 July Socialist Party members found out that remnants of the north east's divided far-right organisations were planning a demonstration in Newcastle city centre. It wasn't long until we discovered them at Grey's Monument.

What made this event completely different was that before any organised left groups appeared, working class people began to challenge the hateful ideas and speech flowing from behind the banner of the 'Northern Nationalists'.

Vile anti-Catholic and anti-Irish abuse was hurled at passing Celtic football fans making their way to a match in Sunderland. Northumbria Police did absolutely nothing about any of the abuse, instead issuing numerous warnings to working-class people expressing revulsion at the hate speech being poured out.

The demonstration ended after only 40 minutes.

We commend all who stood in unity, solidarity and participated in the counter-demonstration which far outnumbered that of the Northern Nationalists.

Many people expressed an interest in joining the Socialist Party, we raised £21.87 for our fighting fund and let the far-right know that their ideas will not be tolerated here without a fight!

Northern Socialist Party

Postie paper sale

Colin John, a new member and retired trade union convenor, turns up regularly on our Saturday campaign stall in Swansea despite his mobility problems. He has also started taking five copies of the Socialist to sell to family and friends during the week.

He recently told us that the postie delivering his Socialist remarked: "That looks interesting, I wouldn't mind having a look after you've finished with it". Colin responded: "Hang on a second, give me a pound and you can have a copy now". "No problem" said the postie and off he went with a copy of the Socialist.

Knowing Colin, his postie better prepare himself for a regular paper and a lot more discussion!

Venezuela: Capitalist offensive sharpens after assembly elections

The escalating civil strife and economic crisis in Venezuela is being used by western governments and the establishment media as a stick to beat socialists with. However, as Marxists in Venezuela explain in the following article, the Maduro state bureaucracy is incapable of mobilising the working class to defeat the capitalist counterrevolution.

Izquierda Revolucionaria and Socialismo Revolucionario (CWI Venezuela)

On 30 July elections were held to the new national constituent assembly (ANC) in Venezuela. US imperialism and the MUD (Democratic Unity Roundtable - the coalition which unites the right and far-right) backed a campaign of threats and violence to stop them taking place. US and European imperialism and various capitalist governments have refused to recognise the results.

On the day of the elections, the MUD did not only call for a boycott. In the middle and upper class neighbourhoods which they control they threatened those wishing to vote, put up barricades blocking access to voting centres and even organised a terrorist attack in Caracas.

The fact that in this context, millions of people still went to vote in defiance of imperialism and the MUD, shows that there is still the potential to defeat the plans of the counterrevolution.

However, the only way this could happen is if the workers and poor are at the head of the state, instead of bosses and bureaucrats (as is currently the case), and if socialist policies are implemented.

Unfortunately, the general policy of the Maduro government continues to move in the opposite direction.

Capitalist policies

Under pressure from the capitalist class and as part and parcel of its policy of seeking alliances with so-called 'productive (or patriotic) bosses', the government has implemented measures against the interests of working class people.

Together with scarcity of basic goods and medicines and the highest inflation rate on the continent, this has increased discontent among the population. Such discontent has been used by the right wing to stir up conflict on the streets, resulting in a wave of violence.

However, the calling of elections did not halt the violence, but in fact intensified it. The opposition's campaign since April to overthrow the Maduro presidency has so far led to 125 deaths.

Hence the ANC election took place in an atmosphere of great pressure and tension. Many voting centres had to be moved due to the violence between representatives of the MUD and the police. In some voting centres, there was destruction of voting materials and armed clashes.

Bureaucracy vs rank and file

During these elections, sections of the rank and file of the Chavista movement (named after the late reformist president Hugo Chavez) went through a new experience of struggle against the government bureaucracy, deepening their criticisms of it.

The fact that 54,000 people enlisted independently as candidates for the ANC, over the heads of the bureaucracy and its lists, reflected a mood of rebellion which grew during the campaign.

The leadership of the fight against reaction cannot remain in the hands of the same leaders, increasingly distrusted by the masses, who have implemented capitalist policies and separated themselves from the people.

In many areas the ANC campaign was conducted through bureaucratic methods, breaking with electoral rules and using the electoral machine of the ruling PSUV (United Socialist Party of Venezuela) against the rank and file to guarantee victory to the bureaucracy's candidates.

This included pressuring state employees and beneficiaries of state benefits to vote, and to vote for government candidates - instead of convincing people with policies that could solve their problems.

Many critical candidates who fought against the leadership are now reflecting on the situation, and many have protested the results which, days after the close of polls, had not been fully released.

We defended a vote for those rank-and-file socialist candidates who raised criticisms of the government. These candidates put forward a revolutionary programme in defence of the gains won since Chavez's first election in 1998.

We also stand for fighting for these gains to be added to, satisfying the demands of the workers and poor and ending the power of the capitalists and bureaucrats, to solve the worst problems facing the population.

On the night of the elections [it was announced that 8,089,320 people had voted, 41.53%](#). In the 2015 assembly elections, PSUV and its allies won 5,622,844 votes and Maduro won the presidential elections with 7,587,579 votes.

While we cannot simply believe government figures (as there was no transparent scrutiny of votes), it is clear that participation was still significant.

However, turnout in elections to a genuinely revolutionary constituent assembly, elected democratically in workplaces and communities, would have been much higher.

Venezuela is at a critical juncture. The road of the government - of capitalist policies and conciliation with capitalism and imperialism - can only lead to defeat, which would mean the loss of all social gains won and the continuation of poverty and exploitation.

In this situation, revolutionaries should defend a genuinely socialist programme to stop a victory of the pro-imperialist right wing. At the same time, we must struggle to build an alternative revolutionary pole to the government bureaucracy which does not want to break with capitalism.

This alternative is the organisation and mobilisation of workers and the poor to defend the gains of the revolution and extend them; uniting all the oppressed in a struggle to expropriate the capitalists and build a revolutionary socialist state to replace the current one, which remains capitalist.

Such a state would be based on workers' and neighbourhood councils, at local, regional and national level, elected and recallable at any time - and where every representative earns only the wage of a skilled worker.

A state where power and wealth is really in the hands of the workers and poor - achieved through democratic public ownership and control of the commanding heights of the economy.

- [Full article can be read on socialistworld.net](#)

Workers' struggles in Peru: eyewitness report

Beth Webster and João Félix

In Peru, the working class are fighting against sharp attacks on healthcare, education and working conditions. Doctors and teachers are striking nationwide.

The Federacion Medica Peruana (Peruvian Medical Federation) and SUTEP (Unified Union of Education Workers) have called the strikes, not just to defend working conditions but to demand good quality public healthcare and education.

Also, a widespread youth movement is protesting against Ley Pulpin (Pulpin Law), which attacks the pay and employment rights of young workers and students in Peru.

Doctors have been on strike since 4 July. They are demanding an increase in the health budget; a resolution to the infant health crisis (in Peru more than 50% of children under three have anaemia); the enactment of the Medical Work Law and the implementation of fair and dignified pay.

The doctors are demanding the immediate resignation of the health minister Patricia García, who has consistently attacked workers and patients, and demand that the president of Peru, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, fulfils his election promise of increasing the health budget by 0.5% of GDP. They are also calling for cancellation of the 700 million sol (currency) debt of hospitals - which lack drugs and basic medical supplies.

At the time of writing, five doctors have been on hunger strike for eleven days in front of the health ministry, with striker Dr Antonio Limay having to be hospitalised.

The teachers' strike, which started in Cuzco on 21 July, has spread nationally. The teachers' demands are an echo of the doctors: an increase in the education budget; proper meals for students to combat endemic malnutrition; an end to unfair dismissals, which are frequent; and an end to 'hunger wages', as many teachers work multiple jobs to survive.

The struggle has become turbulent, especially in the south, with militant action being met with brutality by the police, and demonstrations in Lima being forcefully dispersed. But protesters' militancy has already produced some results, with the government agreeing to increase wages in an attempt to break the strike.

Both teachers and doctors are fighting against privatisation. Many aspects of their struggles mirror our own in Britain. Incidentally, the Peruvian government has sent a team to the UK to pick up tips from the Tories on how to successfully privatise a health service!

As Erick Flores, hospital worker and trade unionist, told us: it is a critical moment for the labour movement in Peru, where the working class is rising in struggle and coordinating its fight for healthcare, education and a decent life for all.

Their struggle is our struggle!

How much reserves have councils got?

New TUSC report shows potential for councils to end cuts

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) has launched a new report on the level of reserves held by Labour-led councils. It argues that "the substantial resources of the local state under the control of the Labour Party" could be used to fight austerity now, "without waiting for a change of government."

The statistical profile of all 124 Labour-led councils in Britain is entitled 'How much reserves have they got?' It shows what a counter-power to Theresa May's 'weak and wobbly' government they could be - if they were prepared to turn Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity message into action.

The report's introduction points out that Labour councils' combined spending power is greater than the total state budgets of 16 EU member states!

If they declared they will use their borrowing powers and reserves to immediately stop all cuts - in the expectation they would be reimbursed by a future Corbyn-led government - what could the Tories do?

The TUSC report will be important source material for anti-cuts campaigners.

Labour-led Birmingham council is attempting to impose job losses and wage cuts on its refuse workers to 'save' £5 million, provoking a bitter strike. But £5 million is around 1% of its usable general reserves of over £400 million!

Jeremy Corbyn should instruct the councillors to withdraw their attacks on the workers now or face not being able to stand as Labour candidates in next year's elections.

Meanwhile Bristol's Labour mayor, Marvin Rees, has written an open letter to council leaders calling on them to "harness the energy" of anti-austerity campaigns. He wants to use them against "the weakened position of the government," proposing a September lobby of parliament.

This hasn't stopped Rees planning new cuts for next year's council budget. But his call is significant because of his warning to the other Labour council leaders that "if we don't lead this energy, someone else will."

Who could he mean? Is it just a coincidence that in the last local elections in Bristol, May 2016, TUSC candidates polled over 4,700 votes across the city, including in the mayoral contest, on a 'no-cuts budget' programme?

In launching the report, TUSC national chairperson and Socialist Party member Dave Nellist said: "There is a chance to show in the months ahead what Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity policies could mean in practice if Labour councillors refused to vote for cuts in the council chambers.

"This TUSC report will be a powerful tool in the fight to make that happen."

- 'How much reserves have they got?' is available at tusc.org.uk/txt/402.pdf
- A TUSC briefing pack showing the powers councils have to resist austerity, 'Preparing a no-cuts people's budget', published in early 2016, is also available at tusc.org.uk/txt/355.pdf

Global finance: Are those storm clouds ahead?

Is capitalism reproducing the same conditions that led to the 2007-08 financial crash? In two introductory articles, Ross Saunders looks at the rickety global financial order and Ian Groeber points to the recent Italian bank bailouts to show how the working class continues to pick up the tab for the capitalists' failures.

Ross Saunders, Socialist Party Wales

The world's banks are betting that the economic recovery has begun, but every day there is more evidence that none of the fundamental problems in capitalism have been solved.

The Federal Reserve, the USA's central bank, has raised interest rates, beginning to turn off the tap of cheap money which has supported the American economy since the 2008 financial meltdown.

Last month, the Fed backed the plans of all 34 major American banks to give big payouts to their shareholders, judging that there is less need for banks to hoard cash in case of a new economic crisis.

Recovery?

Mario Draghi of the European Central Bank said at the end of June that "deflationary forces have been replaced by reflationary ones" in the European economy. The capitalists think that after a decade of painful austerity, the recovery is finally underway.

They are gambling that the economy is robust enough for them to begin clearing out the bad loans that have lain on the books of the banks for the last decade.

In early June, the European Union's bank rescue fund, the Single Resolution Board, stepped in to rescue Banco Popular, handing it to Spain's biggest bank, Santander.

This was followed by the Italian government's bailout of two Venetian banks (see adjacent article), which swallowed €17 billion of public money. But it is not clear how the mountain of bad debts in economies like Italy can be unwound without triggering a new round of crisis.

Trouble

France, too, is in trouble: Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said the country is "dancing on a volcano" of €2.1 trillion of debt - equal to its total GDP.

According to US financial consultants Standard & Poor's, the UK's 1.8% growth rate last year was pumped up by an increase in consumer debt which will continue to rise, particularly because wages have been held down.

Global debt now makes up a larger proportion of GDP now than it did before the beginning of the financial crisis a decade ago.

The stimulus has failed to rebuild the economy because returns on investments aren't profitable enough for the private investors which dominate the world economy to judge them worth the risk.

The worst example is the UK, where exporters have used the weakness of the pound not to invest and take over more market share but merely to raise prices.

No solution

There are signs now that the mechanisms used to rescue the economy could now be putting it at risk. Capitalism has found no solutions to the devastating effects of the last economic crisis, and the next is already ripening.

The banks and big finance companies along with the major corporations which dominate the UK economy should be nationalised and investment decisions made by democratically elected bodies made up of workers in the industry and from wider society.

Italy's failed banks

Ian S Groeber, Plymouth Socialist Party

The Italian government has recently bailed out two failed Venetian banks; Veneto Banca and Banca Popolare di Vicenza.

These two lenders have faltered on the back of bad loans and a mis-selling scandal - problems of their own doing, and yet the Italian public will spend €17 billion to clean up the mess.

The banks' assets are being divided into 'good' and 'bad' assets. The 'good' ones will go to Italy's biggest retail bank, Intesa Sanpaolo, and the 'bad' taken by the government, and therefore the Italian public.

€12 billion of the €17 billion total will be spent by the government on guarantees to cover losses from the 'bad' assets, with the remaining €5 billion being kindly taken by Intesa for the privilege of acquiring the 'good' assets! A clear example of privatisation of profits while the public is burdened with 'bad' assets.

Also of note is the European Union (EU) Commission's response to this bailout. Following the 2008 financial crisis, the EU proposed rules with the intention that the public would no longer expect to fund bank bailouts unless other attempts have failed. Not all of these rules have been followed in this Italian case, yet the EU Commission fully condoned the bailout.

It shows again that the EU is a bosses' club, putting the rich above the poor by diverting public funds into the pockets of the bankers. In addition, we are yet to see if Intesa decides to close any of its newly acquired branches and how many jobs will be lost following this bailout.

We see in the example of Banca Popolare di Vicenza's scandal how the interests of a privately owned bank conflicts with the interests of societal welfare.

The bank purposely misled regulators and investors about its capital strength after lending money to customers so they would purchase the bank's shares; a move that not only manipulates market strength but is also potentially illegal in Italy.

There is a resemblance in Banca Popolare's actions to the London Interbank Offered Rate (Libor) scandal in which UK banks fraudulently altered their rates in order to profit from trades, and appeared more creditworthy than they actually were.

Music review: 'Every Valley' by Public Service Broadcasting

Crunchy guitar and poignant dialogue in alt-rock homage to south Wales miners

Matt Kilsby, Salford Socialist Party

Combining music, sampling, spoken word and audio clips, Public Service Broadcasting's ['Every Valley'](#) is a poignant, angry exploration of mining, pit closures and the legacy of industrial decline in south Wales.

To record the album, the alt-rock three-piece travelled to Ebbw Vale where they interviewed ex-miners and their families. Some of these interviews feature on the album, together with audio from British Film Institute footage of the period.

The album's opening is optimistic. The third track, 'People Will Always Need Coal', samples a 1970s TV advert that cheerily urges viewers: "Come on, be a miner! There's money and security!"

However, this mood of optimism turns sharply with 'Go to the Road'. There is the gathering storm in the industry between 1979 and 1984, when 47,000 mining jobs were lost and 21 pits closed.

The album's stand-out track, 'All Out', is a clash of picket-line noise and crunchy guitar that perfectly evokes the titanic battles of the [miners' strike between 1984 and 1985](#). An ex-miner tells the listener that "we never went on strike because we wanted more wages... we went on strike for a job."

The track evokes the conflict between the heroism of millions of ordinary working-class people during the strike, and the treachery of the official leadership of the labour movement - in particular Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock and the Trade Union Congress.

An important feature of the strike was the role played by women. Many joined political activity for the first time.

'They Gave Me a Lamp' features clips from an ex-miner's wife explaining how the strike got women out of the kitchen, onto picket lines and organising support groups. She concludes: "I think a lot of women found their feet."

With the betrayal by the right-wing union and Labour leaders and consequent defeat of the strike came pit closures and the devastation of mining communities. There is a sense of angry sadness pervading 'Mother of the Village' which describes the destruction of towns and communities in painful detail.

As poignant as the album is in places, it is not an exercise in nostalgia. There's a sense of defiance throughout - and that working class people will fight to defend their jobs and communities, and fight for a better future.

- 'Every Valley' is out now on CD, vinyl and download
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Awesome sound

I've never bought a Public Service Broadcasting album until now.

But when I saw their new release was called 'Every Valley' and featured soundbites from the Manic Street Preachers' James Dean Bradfield, Richard Burton and the miners and their communities themselves, I couldn't resist.

The album sounds awesome and makes me proud to be from the Valleys with every track, especially 'All Out' and 'They Gave Me a Lamp'. The south Wales miners have always held a special position in the working class for their sacrifice, solidarity and place at the forefront of every major struggle.

Appropriate timing too, 100 years since the Russian revolution. The miners always linked their struggles to the fight for socialism, and Lenin and the miners exchanged letters and ideas.

Towns across the Valleys became 'Little Moscows'. My nan always calls the Socialist the 'Daily Worker' because my grandad, her dad and brothers - all miners in Abertillery in the 1940s and 50s - used to buy it.

Great album about a great history.

Scott Jones, Loughton

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/25964>