

SOCIALIST HISTORY SOCIETY

Newsletter

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New Series

One swallow doesn't make a summer

Jeremy Corbyn's triumph in the Labour leadership contest was a very welcome and unexpected surprise. The size of his majority, almost 60 % of votes cast, amazed even his closest supporters. He won in every category of voter: party members, affiliated members and registered supporters. Even his harshest critics were silenced momentarily by his overwhelming support.

That did not prevent the Labour apparatchiks and the establishment renewing their virulent attack on both the man and his policies as soon as the euphoria had died down. His choice of shadow chancellor of the exchequer, John McDonnell MP, was subjected to a barrage of abuse from the media to which he had little opportunity to reply. (Let's hope that Labour commits itself to the right of reply which should be a cornerstone of any free press). For daring to suggest that the armed struggle in the North of Ireland had made a contribution to bringing about the peace process McDonnell was labelled as a terrorist sympathiser. He apologised for any offence caused, but the substance of what he said seemed, to this writer anyway, pretty much common sense. There would not have been power sharing in Northern Ireland had not the IRA renounced the armed struggle.

Shadow Cabinet

As for the rest of Corbyn's shadow cabinet, in order to fulfil his commitment of a broad church there are very few close sympathisers. Some who are even likely to jump ship at the earliest opportunity. The newly elected leader now faces a tough time ahead. Not only will the right wing media continue with their attempts to derail him but the neo-liberal element in the Labour party who accept the Tory agenda that austerity must be paid for by working people will use any occasion to ridicule Corbyn's forward looking policies.

Yet Corbyn does have in his favour the great majority of the grassroots of the Labour party. The

newcomers, and the old hands who have been looking forward to this welcome change for some time-and make no mistake their support will be vital. It won't be an easy job to turn the party around from one that has become, not a party of reform, but one that provides seats in Parliament for self-seekers.

Transformation

The neo-liberals under Blair and Mandelson have since the 1980s when they gained control, transformed the Labour party from top to bottom and diverted it from its original purpose. It will take some time before the changes demanded by the grass roots filter through to the top. Let's hope that the enthusiasm which galvanised those hundreds of thousands into joining and supporting Corbyn does not go away. It may take some years of patient work at all levels before the Labour party again becomes a party dedicated to defending working people.

What now?

Corbyn's election however does not just affect the Labour party. There are literally thousands on the left outside the Labour party who are now not sure what to do. Should they join him? Until 12 September that was not an issue. During the Blair years and even before many had given up on Labour: they might vote for the party but only if there was no other left candidate. Thousands joined the Greens, less joined Left Unity and some TUSC, and many thousands remained non-aligned.

What will these people do now?

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Wellingborough Diggers Festival

Tony Banks, of the Wellingborough Diggers Festival, writes to invite SHS members to come to the festival that has now been held annually for the past 5 years with a fringe event in the autumn starting last year.

"We've enjoyed music, poetry, had museum displays & library events; our programme has included the writer Alan Moore on dissent in Northamptonshire, the late John Gurney, author of Brave Community: The Digger Movement in the English Revolution, and Christian Socialist, Andrew Bradstock, who has also published on the Diggers and Winstanley."

"SHS members should be interested in a dramatisation of the Putney Debates to be held on either 23rd or 30th October 2015 by the Bury St Edmunds Playgroup (date to be confirmed) and a talk by Prof Danny Dorling on injustice on Friday 11th March 2016. Full details of the programme of the Wellingborough Diggers Festival can be found on the festival website."

<http://www.diggersfestival.org.uk/index.aspx>



SHS committee member and secretary of the London Socialist Film Co-op Khatchatur Pilikian pays a tribute to Richard Attenborough

THE VENERABLE MAESTRO Richard Attenborough (1923-2014)

Towards the end of the 19th century art & technology gave birth to cinematography, moving pictures, soon known as the cinema. It was to become, in its time, the most popular and the most powerful visual medium ever created by humankind. Those who believe that "nothing is new under the sun" might link this new visual phenomenon to Plato's parable of the cave in the

"Republic", where an individual soul is watching the shadows of life pass him by. But suddenly in the onset of cinema millions of pictures are set in motion to move the souls of hundreds, nay even thousands, anytime and anywhere in the world.



One swallow doesn't make a summer

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Membership numbers released by Labour on 22 September showed that 62,000 people had joined the party in the week since Saturday 12 September when Corbyn was elected. Will this momentum continue? Let's hope so. But, and this is the big but, will these enthusiasts transform the party to such an extent that it becomes a vehicle by which to achieve socialism?

In 1945 Labour had a mandate to transform society but it did not succeed. Agreed there was much done, but still the commanding heights of the economy were left in private hands and even those industries that were nationalised had no democratic control. Within a few years the Tories were back in power and Labour's commitment to socialism took a back seat.

So, whether one Jeremy Corbyn swallow makes a socialist summer remains to be seen. There is a long way to go with many obstacles to be overcome. Let's hope that Labour does get back on course but even if it does, the question will remain- can a Labour government bring about socialism?

Mike Squires

If theatre acted as the artistic parliament of democracy for over 25 centuries, the audio visual art and technology of the 20th century made cinema eventually act as the theatre's Olympic companion to move the souls of the world public with global culture and pleasure.

No one moved these souls better than the actor, producer and director Richard Attenborough. Like his compatriot Charlie Chaplin, he became an acclaimed polymath maestro of the art of the moving picture. Throughout 55 years of his multi-faceted profession, his artistic prowess creatively embraced around 80 films. He acted in 64 films, directed three others, produced another four, and was the director/producer of a further nine - a magisterial output indeed.

Notwithstanding the intellectual and artistic pleasure he bestowed upon millions of spectators, Attenborough's lifelong ambition eventually failed to materialise, because of a lack of funding. He wanted to bring to life on the screen, his beloved hero, Thomas Paine. Unfortunately it was not to be. Attenborough's own assessment of Paine's life, "he was one of the finest men that ever lived", could well act as an obituary for his own.

Jack Goody: An Appreciation

Jack Goody, who died on 16 July age 95, was a social anthropologist whose influences were Marx, Weber and Freud among others. He was from the generation of left-wing scholars whose experiences in the 1930s and the Second World War were to shape their approach to academic research and influence their entire outlook on the world.

Goody had a very fertile mind and, like his contemporaries Christopher Hill and Eric Hobsbawm, he was very productive. He was to author over 30 highly original books on subjects as diverse as the growth of literacy, writing and the organisation of society, the development of the family, inheritance and kinship, the culture of flowers and food, cooking and class and modes of production. Again like Hill and Hobsbawm, Goody always wrote in a clear style with the minimum of jargon.

Born in 1919 to a Scottish mother and English father, Goody grew up in St Albans. He won a scholarship to read English literature at St John's, Cambridge, in 1938, where he came into contact with Hobsbawm and others scholars who were attracted to the left.

Miners and War

In his ambitious last book, *Metals, Culture and Capitalism* (published in 2012), Goody writes about Europe and the Near East from the Bronze Age onwards, but he begins on a personal reflection stating that "*my life has been much influenced by the Hunger Marches of the miners of my youth, by my serving in a regiment of Nottinghamshire miners in the war, by friends as Bevin Boys on my return, by the work of the Tavistock Institute in the coalfields after the war, of political activity of workers in the Fife coalfields, and by the attempts of Arthur Scargill and others to fight to keep the industry in this country.*"

On the outbreak of war in 1939, Goody immediately joined the army and was to fight against Rommel in North Africa. Captured by the Germans during the fall of Tobruk in June 1942, Goody was to spend nearly three years as a prisoner of war in Italy and Germany. During his time in the POW camps, Goody discovered two volumes that were to have a decisive impact on his future, JG Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and V Gordon Childe's, *What Happened in History?*



After the war, he returned to Cambridge to complete his studies and later carried out fieldwork in Ghana. Goody began producing pioneering comparative studies of the cultures, societies and economic development of Europe, Africa and Asia. In what is perhaps his most famous book, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (1977), Goody challenges the division between so-called "primitive" and "advanced" societies. He was especially interested in challenging notions of Europe's supremacy and uniqueness which he saw was related to the growth of imperialism and colonialism. Jack Goody's work shares some affinities with that of Victor Kiernan, Edward Said and Martin Bernal in uncovering the influences of the East on the West and vice versa. His historical critique of "Eurocentrism" can be found in books such as *The East in the West* (1996) and *The Theft of History* (2007).

Renaissances

In *Renaissances* (2010), Goody takes a new look at the concept of the European Renaissance and argues that it was only one of many similar "renaissances" that can be found in the histories of China, India, Judaism and Islam over the course of many centuries. In this volume, Goody dismisses traditional histories of European medicine which trace its foundations to Greece and Rome to the exclusion of the Arab, Jewish and Asian contributions; this is a "*notion that displayed some of the features of what it is not entirely wrong to describe as racist thinking,*" he says.

In all his books Goody is concerned with "big picture" issues in historical perspective such as inequality, which is what makes his work so deeply stimulating and readable. While his approach was clearly influenced by Marx, Goody did not describe himself as a "Marxist" - as far as I am aware - but he did say that he was "not a non-Marxist".

He remained strongly associated with the left, writing occasional articles for New Left Review and sitting on the editorial board of Past and Present journal. Jack Goody also gave a talk to the SHS at Marx House.

An extended interview with Jack Goody conducted by Eric Hobsbawm can be found here: <http://www.sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1117872>

David Morgan

The Legacy of 1945 and its Lessons for Today

Stan Newens, SHS President and former Labour MP, delivered an inspiring talk to the society on 19 September when he spoke about the record of the 1945 Labour government headed by Clement Attlee.

Combining factual description and analysis with personal memories and anecdotes, Stan convincingly argued that the proud record of the post-war Labour government was a victory for socialist advance and a tremendous gain for working people. The victory was a political earthquake and its legacy improved people's lives enormously for generations to come.

Tony Blair titled his autobiography, *A Journey*. Blair took the party far away from the fine ideals that guided the reforming Labour government of Clement Attlee which was swept to power on a wave of enthusiasm for social change in the immediate aftermath of the defeat of Nazi Germany.

Neo-liberals

As Stan recalled people were determined not to repeat the mistake of the previous war when Lloyd George's promise of "Homes Fit for Heroes" went unfulfilled. The journey taken by Attlee and his colleagues was to take the country in a completely different destination to the cruel neo-liberalism that drives Blair and the Blairites today. Stan totally repudiated the Blairite insistence that the 1945 manifesto had been a "moderate programme", by which they sought to reinterpret Attlee's inspirational victory as support for a "realistic" pro-business agenda.

He vividly described exactly how radical the '45 administration actually was and pointed out that it fulfilled many of its promises to the people in terms of housing, education, social welfare and better healthcare. The party had defied predictions to defeat war hero Winston Churchill, who had badly misjudged the popular mood by alleging during the election that Labour was intent upon establishing a "gestapo" in Britain; an utterly ludicrous suggestion given the reputation of the mild-mannered Attlee.

State Intervention

The principle of state intervention in the economy, shown to be successful during wartime, was essential in the period of post-war reconstruction.

It was not a gestapo tactic but common sense.

Stan's criticisms of Labour's record concerned its controversial foreign policy which was increasingly dictated by cold war anti-Soviet ideology and embodied in the figure of the pugnacious Ernest



Bill Caritt speaking at a demonstration against the Korean War

Bevin. His cold war rhetoric was never very popular and Stan recalled attending a debate in 1948 during which backbench Labour MP Konni Zilliacus demolished Bevin's attack on the USSR.

Radicals

The mood of the public had been well ahead of the views of many Labour leaders who remained cautious of their possible victory right up to the last moment. Herbert Morrison, for instance, believed that Labour would lose the election if it was too radical.

But the policies that Labour was to implement were not at all "moderate" in modern Blairite terms. Stan listed the range of ambitious achievements such as the extensive nationalisation, the creation of a national investment bank, repeal of the Trades Disputes Act, the new

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Stan Newens and Khatchatur Pilikian after the meeting

The Legacy of 1945 and its Lessons for Today

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towns, the NHS, education reform and granting freedom to India. The welfare state and full employment led to a real rise in the standard of living of ordinary people. Many of those who moved into new council housing experienced running water for very first time. Previously they had outside toilets, drawing water from a pump and tin baths in front of the fireplace. Labour had created an entirely different world and it was a significant step on the way towards building a socialist future.

Stan compared the excitement of Labour's victory 70 years ago to the enthusiasm for Jeremy Corbyn's campaign to become Labour leader in September 2015. The Tories had lost 181 seats and it was a fantastic feeling, Stan recalled. He remembered how church bells were rung in celebration at the first news of Labour's triumph.

In conclusion, Stan insisted that the 1945 Attlee government initiated the greatest social transformation of the 20th century and its record needed to be studied and lessons needed to be learned from it. The achievements could still inspire people today to aspire for a better future.

David Morgan



YCL demonstration against the war in Malaya



A request from the Marx Memorial Library

Are you a teacher?

Do you know a teacher who might be interested in the Library?

Can you help us with an exciting new project?

We recently piloted a programme of School Tours aimed, in the first instance, at GCSE and A-level students studying history (<http://www.marx-memorial-library.org/education/item/196-school-tour>).

We would like to build on this and work with a group of teachers to:

- * Launch a publicity programme to reach out to new teachers and schools
- * Improve our resources and the delivery of tours and archive talks in line with the needs of teachers
- * Develop subject specific study packs (e.g. on the Spanish Civil War and the Russian Revolution)

Get in touch if you'd like to get involved!

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IT'S YOUR NEWSLETTER

Contributions, articles (no more than 800 words), letters, notices are always welcome. Send these to:

Mike Squires, mikesquires70@hotmail.com or
by post to 50 Elmfield Road, Balham, London SW17 8AL.

'This is an updated edition of the Newsletter that was sent out a few weeks ago to those Society members on email. It could not be printed out for technical reasons.'

Our apologies to those who have already seen some of the articles.'

A Life in Political Exile: Siegfried Moos

Merilyn Moos is the author of *Beaten But Not Defeated: Siegfried Moos - A German anti-Nazi who settled in Britain*, which is the biography of her father. She delivered our talk on 21 February at Marx House.

Siegfried Moos was one of a small group who had actively opposed the rise of Hitler and were compelled to seek refuge in Britain. They were anti-Nazi revolutionary exiles but not all continued this political trajectory once they left Germany. Siegi Moos fell into the latter category and he would try to deter his daughter from any political activities whatsoever, which led to painful family disputes, as Merilyn recounted.

Merilyn described Siegi's activity in the German working class movement during the ferment when the left had achieved strength unparalleled in the country's history. He was in Bavaria when the short-lived Soviet was proclaimed and was to witness both revolution and counter revolution.

Repression

It was a time when the gutters of Berlin ran with blood after police savagely attacked marchers on May Day 1929 leaving hundreds beaten and maimed. Ten years after the killing of Rosa Luxembourg and Karl Liebknecht the SPD was to launch repression against Communists which led party activists to regard cooperation with the social democrats as impossible. Ultimately, these divisions only benefited the Nazis.

Siegi was active in Communist efforts to establish workers' organisations to challenge the SPD. He was involved in theatre and art groups when artists and writers such as Brecht and Ernst Toller were attracted to the CP. Agitprop theatre became one of the mainstays of the party's struggle in the battle of ideas. Siegi was also engaged in the "Free Thinkers" movement, which was a CP inspired social and cultural group, banned in 1931. With the mass arrest of Communists after the Reichstag plot, the party, including Siegi, had to go underground.

Red Front

A full-time revolutionary, he was active in the Red Front which was linked to the party but not entirely under its sway. At its peak, the Red Front boasted 11 thousand members in Berlin alone and organised local workers' committees to defend their communities from the Nazis. It attracted many

young people who wanted to fight the fascists in the streets.

The speaker said that Siegi disappeared after he was forced to go undercover during the growing Nazi repression. He arrived in London in February 1934 as one of a small group of German anti-Nazis who settled in Britain - only 200 German Communists were permitted to enter; most refugees from Germany were not Communists.

Merilyn Moos described the tough residential conditions imposed on Siegi in the UK especially that he would not

take part in politics. Under constant observation, the Ministry of Labour prevented him from finding a job for a while.

Optimism

Many of his friends and comrades were lost to the Nazis, which were terrible blows that he was always reluctant to discuss. She said that both her parents remained wary of speaking about many aspects of their past. Siegi fell out with the German Communist party and became isolated in later life.

However, she insisted that he did not entirely lose his optimism about the world and was not too lurch to the right politically as others did. Siegi's story was both inspiring for its fortitude and at the same time profoundly sad because the harsh experiences had scarred him.

David Morgan



Merilyn Moos speaking at the SHS meeting

Letters

Blame Thatcher and Blair

David Morgan, in his opening remarks to the Society's AGM, said, "One reason for this poor show - and it is to all intents and purposes a show - is that Labour displays all sense that it has forgotten its history and heritage. Possibly this can be attributed to the corrosive influence of the Thatcher and Blair decades." Is the word 'possibly' possibly a slip of the pen? I suggest that 'undoubtedly', not 'possibly', is the appropriate word.

In 2002 Thatcher made a speech in Southampton in which she said: "Our greatest achievement was Tony Blair. We forced our opponents to change." And there is no doubt in my mind that those two are largely responsible for the tremendous shift in the political outlook of millions in this country.

The Second World War had a huge effect on all those who experienced it. Their mind-set was radically changed. One by-product was, of course, the 1945 Labour landslide with almost 12 million votes for the Labour Party and just 8.7 million for the Tories. And the political attitudes that elected Labour in 1945 continued long after the defeat of the Attlee government in October 1951, when there were still more Labour than Tory votes.

The post-war Tory governments of Churchill, Eden, Macmillan, Home and Heath were markedly different to those of Thatcher. Those Tory governments competed with Labour over who could build the most council houses, while Thatcher preached the principles of home ownership and leaving housing policy to the market.

Until 1979, many leading Tories were not opposed to state intervention and treated trade union officials as equals. The Heath government of 1970 actually proposed and almost implemented a policy of state control of prices and dividends with the joint oversight of economic policy by a tripartite body representing the TUC, the Confederation of British Industry and the government.

Today it is all very different, and I suggest that Thatcher and Blair are largely to blame for the large shift in public attitudes and in the Labour Party that we have seen in the last three and a half decades.

*Chris Birch
London SW6*

A revival of ethical socialism

The Conservative victory in the election came as a surprise to many people and not least the wipe-out of Labour in Scotland. England and Scotland have been moving apart for some time and Mrs Thatcher played a part in driving a wedge between the two countries.

The Labour Party has acted as a bridge but many people in Scotland never embraced new Labour with enthusiasm and the SNP by moving smartly to the left has won over many disgruntled Scots.

Perhaps the time has come for Scottish Labour to declare its independence from a London-dominated British Labour Party, freeing it to work out its own policies?

In this way there could be a revival of the ethical socialism of the old ILP. I'm sure this would appeal to many Scots who deserted the Labour Party at the recent election. A Scottish Labour Party could team up with English and Welsh Labour Parties after a general election to form a coalition government. In Germany, the Christian Democrats and the Bavarian Christian Social Union have been operating in this way very successfully for many years. There is no reason to believe it would not work here.

Archie Potts

What history shows us

The article by David Morgan made very good reading and having heard and seen Liz Kendall, contender for the Labour Party leadership, there is no way she will or could revive the party. History shows us the labour movement's progressive struggles will bear fruit when pursued constantly. That thinking and activity must be revived to reconnect with people's lives. The following extract from a speech made many years ago shows I believe the way forward:

"Socialism versus Capitalism How long will we continue to tinker and patch at an inherently rotten system, every attempt to remedy its defects will shed light on the way forward. When Socialism becomes better understood, when its aims are seen not only to be beneficial but possible of accomplishment it will attract men and women to take the path of and not reconstruction and regeneration of society. Cooperative management would become a well-defined system and lead to an organisation of society which would take over the present system of fierce competition and selfish class interest to secure the welfare of all, to realise in time the best of humanity."

Tony Delahoy

Zimmerwald Centenary Conference, Berne

On 5 September 1915, as the First World War raged across Europe, 38 representatives of the anti-war wing of European socialism met for a conference in the village of Zimmerwald, not far from the Swiss capital Berne. This gathering, convened on the initiative of the Swiss socialist leader Robert Grimm (1881-1958), produced the most celebrated anti-war manifesto of the twentieth century. Its call for ‘peace without annexations or reparations’ on the basis of ‘self-determination of peoples’ became the rallying-cry of the anti-war socialists as the war dragged on.

The conference brought together socialists from Switzerland, Germany, Italy, France, Sweden – but it achieved lasting fame - or notoriety-on account of its Russian contingent. The Bolsheviks, Lenin and Zinoviev, the Mensheviks, Pavel Aksel’rod and Yuliy Martov, the then non-aligned Trotsky, and Viktor Chernov and Mark Natanson for the Socialist-Revolutionaries were all present, as were Karl Radek (Poland), Angelica Balabanoff (Italy) and Christian Rakovsky (Romania). Many of the future leaders of the Petrograd Soviet in 1917 were there as were many future founders of the Communist International in 1919.

To avoid unwelcome official attention, the meeting room had been booked under the name of an ornithological society, at a venue in a location with no revolutionary connections whatsoever. Thus a quiet, conservative Swiss village became involuntarily associated with a programme for militant action by the working class movement against capitalism and war, with the Russian revolution, and with the origins of world communism.

Notoriety

The municipality of Zimmerwald did its best to ignore its notoriety, much to the bewilderment of Soviet Young Pioneers who could not understand why their letters to ‘Lenin Museum, Zimmerwald’ were returned ‘addressee unknown’. For the centenary, however, the municipality decided to embrace its claim to fame, and joined with the Robert-Grimm-Gesellschaft and others in marking the anniversary. The resulting event, held in Berne and Zimmerwald on 4 and 5 September 2015, was part academic conference, part political rally, part celebration, but all very Swiss.

In the historical part, the spotlight was very definitely not on Lenin, Trotsky or the Russians. Various speakers presented Zimmerwald as a proud episode in the history of the Swiss labour movement, rather than as a footnote in the history of the Comintern. Following the Zimmerwald and Kiental (1916) peace conferences, in 1918 Robert Grimm had organised a general strike to press working-class grievances, which got him six months in prison. Grimm continued to pursue

class-struggle politics; it was not until after the Second World War that he and the Socialist Party were more or less co-opted into the Swiss political establishment.

The venue for the Berne conference was itself a metaphor for that co-optation – formerly the Socialist Party’s ‘Volkshaus Bern’, opened in 1914, it is now a very gracious flagship of the Best Western hotel chain. As such, it was both a link with the past, and a strong reminder of the present. As for Grimm himself, he is a figure that modern Swiss SP leaders prefer to venerate rather than emulate. A very sour leaflet distributed by the (communist) Party of Labour outside the hotel grumbled about turning the memory of the 1915 gathering into a ‘social-democratic Disneyland’.

Politics

This is not quite fair. There were some excellent historical presentations in Berne, such as Adrian Zimmermann’s account of the complex divisions in European socialism in 1915 and the place of the Zimmerwald movement within them. Donald Sassoon gave a very well-received survey of wars over the ages, looking at the arguments their advocates gave for waging them, and the hideous unanticipated consequences of those wars. As for the present-day politics, most of the speakers at the rally and workshops were from the left of the social-democratic spectrum – not least Gregor Gysi from Germany, who pulled no punches in denouncing the consequences of the western powers’ continuing obsession with waging war.

Present

Commemoration always tells us more about the present than about the past. The old communist narrative, according to which Zimmerwald led, via the October revolution, to the Communist International, the socialist bloc of states and ultimately the triumph of world socialism, has lost most of its force. It is easy to see the attraction of the narrative of the Swiss socialists, which sets Zimmerwald in a longer story of Swiss neutrality, internationalism and peace advocacy.

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Cannon Fodder *by Khatchatur I. Pilikian*

Dragging people through conscription to serve as cannon fodder has a very long and infamous history, all over the world. Armenians also served as such during the Crimean War. Early in the 1850s, a mysterious pretender to the crown of the Armenian Kingdom, Leo, who was resident in London at the time, issued the following proclamation with the intention of dragging the Armenians into the catastrophic Crimean War by exploiting their religious and patriotic sentiments.

Karl Marx himself realised the importance of the proclamation. He quoted it to expose the hypocrisy of colonial powers in an article in the *New York Daily Tribune*, on July 1, 1853, (No. 3809). Here is the full text of Leo's proclamation as presented by Marx.

"Leo, by the grace of God, sovereign Prince of Armenia, to the Armenians in Turkey:

"Beloved brothers and faithful countrymen. Our will and our ardent wish is that you should defend to the last drop of your blood your country and the Sultan against the tyrant of the North [the Tsar]. Remember, my brothers, that in Turkey there are no knouts, they do not tear your nostrils and your women are not flogged, secretly or in public. Under the reign of the Sultan, there is humanity, while under that of the tyrant of the North there are nothing but atrocities. Therefore place yourselves under the direction of God, and fight bravely for the liberty of your country and your present sovereign. Pull down your houses to make barricades, and if you have no arms, break your furniture and defend yourselves with it. May Heaven guide you on your path to glory. My only happiness will be to fight in the midst of you against the oppressor of

your country, and your creed. May God incline the Sultan's heart to sanction my demand, because under his reign, our religion remains in its pure form while, under the Northern tyrant, it will be altered. Remember, at least, brothers, that the blood that runs in the veins of him who now addresses you, is the blood of twenty kings, it is the blood of heroes - Lusignans - and defenders of our faith; and we say to you, let us defend our creed and its pure form, until our last drop of blood. (Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1979, Volume 12, p. 138. First appeared in *The Daily News*, No.2207, June 17, 1853. Cited by K. Marx in his article, June 17, 1853, first published in the *New York Daily Tribune*, No 3809, and the *New York Semi-Weekly Tribune*, No 845, July 1, 1853).

Thanks to Marx for having "saved" Leo's proclamation. However, it is tempting to brush it aside with "no comment", only it reminds us of a British colonel, Fenwick Williams, who was then modernising the Turkish army, before this was taken over by Germany. In March 1855, addressing the populace of the newly fortified city of Kars which included many Armenians and their Archbishop, Col. Williams declared:

The time has come when you may shake off your thralldom, and take your place as free citizens; . . . you will fight, then, for us; take your spades and come and dig with us at the batteries; we will welcome you as brothers.

Then, we are told what the Archbishop answered:

Oh! English Pasha, we are your sacrifice, we will work, dig, fight, and die for you.

The chronicler then observes:

The next morning the Turks were astonished at the crowd of Christians assembled with spade and mattock, and still more, at the good will with which they worked and the endurance with which they continued their labours. (Christopher J. Walker, *ARMENIA, The Survival of a Nation*, London: Croom Helm, 1980, pp. 58-59).

These same Turkish Armenians that had laboured so intensely and those that who had been called upon to defend their 'Turkish homeland' against Russia all suffered the same fate. Barely 60 years later in 1915 there took place one of the first modern genocides, that of the Armenians.

The outbreak of the First World War set the stage for this Final Solution.

Zimmerwald Centenary Conference, Berne

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That is a story which has a certain almost patriotic appeal even beyond the ranks of the left in Switzerland.

For the rest of us, we can take inspiration from the fact that the Zimmerwald slogans have become the classical formulations of a democratic peace. The socialists in 1915 who resisted the war hysteria, the threats and the inducements to join the chorus of warmongers, are remembered and honoured to this day. Those who succumbed are, at best, generally forgotten.

Francis King

Drugs, Murder and Imperialism *by Steve Cushion*

The news that Miguel Angel Jimenez Blanco was murdered in Xaltianguis in South-western Mexico adds yet another twist to the horrific tale of the 43 abducted students that has reached the British and international media. Miguel Jimenez was leading the hunt for the students of a local teacher training college who "disappeared" while organising a protest against political corruption in their home province. They were probably murdered by local police and gangsters controlled by politicians and drug lords.

Over 80,000 people have been murdered in Mexico in the last decade as a direct result of the "War on Drugs". But, as is often the case, the root of the problem lies to the north of the Rio Grande, where the main market for drugs lies; 50% of the world's consumption of narcotics is in the USA. As occurred with alcohol prohibition in the 1920s and 30s, the draconian repression of drug-taking has brought immense profits to crooked capitalists who supply drugs and led to waves of violence as they fight each other for markets.

War on Drugs

But there is much more to it than simple criminality. Jonathan Neale, in his book *"What's Wrong with America?"* argues that the "War on Drugs", started by Richard Nixon and continued by presidents to this day, along with the mass imprisonment of African Americans that has been a consequence, is the ruling class's response to the Civil Rights Movement. One in nine black Americans between the age of 20 and 25 are now behind bars. It has also been an excuse for massive militarisation of policing and border control, with the inevitable result of police killing black people and immigrants as in places like Ferguson.

South of the border, the Mexican government has received over \$2.3 billion in military aid to fight the drug war. Yet, given the vast profits made through drug dealing, it is hardly surprising that much of this weaponry has gone to police and soldiers acting as enforcers for the drug barons. The 43 disappeared students were last seen in police custody, and police are widely believed to be responsible for their murder.

Corruption

This is not just a question of a few "bad apples"; the whole Mexican political and social system is corrupted, with organic ties between gangsters, politicians, military and the police. As often happens, the tail wags the dog and the fabulously wealthy drug cartels are now a key part of the Mexican ruling class.



Meanwhile, crumbs from the drug lords' tables provide a little relief to a poverty-stricken population with barely any state welfare provision. This clientalism gives the cartels and corrupt politicians a social base.

The Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), produced one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, with high welfare spending used to buy off radical workers and farmers who were the backbone of the revolutionary armies. Since then, the Mexican bourgeoisie has slowly sought to claw back these reforms and the "War on Drugs" was a godsend. In the general mayhem, it was easy to pick off the radicals and blame "criminal elements". Recently, a leading member of the Mexican Communist Party, Enrique Lopez Gutierrez, was abducted and is believed to have been murdered. At the same time, thousands of soldiers and police arrived in the state of Oaxaca following a planned mass mobilisation against abolition of the State Public Education Institute.

Self Defence

As well as the massive protests about the disappearance of the 43 students, Mexico has seen the growth of community-based self-defence groups, often composed of women, who have armed themselves to resist the drug gangs and their state accomplices. Some groups have sadly been infiltrated by criminals and serve as fronts for one cartel to attack another, but most seem honest attempts by ordinary people to stand up to criminal intimidation when the state has either abandoned them or is in cahoots with criminals.

Of course, the government has reacted strongly against this challenge to the "state monopoly of violence" and the imprisonment of Nestora Salgado, one of the movement's leaders is an example of this. Paradoxically, the murder of Miguel Jimenez, who led his local self-defence grouping, is the best indication of his honesty. Such self-defence actions can only be a partial answer to Mexico's problems which are crying out for a political solution to restore hope to the people. Nevertheless, the mass protests provide the basis for the emergence of a real solution.

Book Review

**Britain's Communists: The Untold Story, By John Green,
with contributions by Andy Croft and Graham Stevenson, (Paperback; 250pp, £12.50)**

This is very much a book that deserved to be written and published, and it is unfortunate that Artery Publications, which deserves all credit for bringing it out, is not a sufficiently large enterprise to be able to publicise the volume around the country. It deserves also a much longer review than is possible in this Newsletter.

Who is aware that Gracie Fields in 1939 sent congratulations to the Daily Worker, or that Arthur Askey, the renowned comic, was on the management committee of Unity Theatre, a communist cultural centre, or that Anna Ford was the communist president of a student union, or that Hilary Mantel, so much in the news these days, was a YCL member?

As Green (who lists other unlikely names, such as Dylan Thomas) demonstrates, a great many eminent British personalities were members of or close to the Communist Party and only a few of these, even if they resigned or moved away, ever repudiated their attachment. 'Not many people know that!' as Eric Morecambe liked to announce.

In its blurb the volume makes clear that, 'It focuses more on the contribution communists have made in the various areas of society, rather than the ideological issues [or relation with the USSR]'. Mostly the authors succeed very well. The areas discussed are cultural creativity, professional workers, trade unions ('the main focus'), internationalism, anti-fascism, youth, students and the Young Communist League, the peace movement, the women's movement. Particular areas addressed are the role of the Daily Worker and Morning Star, the Second World War, and the always stressful relations with the Labour Party.

Class hatred and persecution

Graham Stevenson in his chapter provides a very detailed survey of the intense degree of surveillance and harassment the Party and its members were subjected to by the authorities. They were accused of all manner of depravity, intensely hated by the country's elites with their state servants and everyone they could convince through the media they controlled. The CPGB was never an electoral threat to the Establishment, nor was it ever likely to be in a position to lead an insurrection of any sort. Its crime in the eyes of the powers-that-be was its refusal to 'cringe beneath

the rich man's frown', or to take the established elites at their own valuation, as all good subjects were supposed to do. This venom was covered over by the allegation that communists were the agents of a foreign power. Certainly half a dozen of them (a fairly precise figure) acted as effective Soviet spies, having established their credentials with the British secret state, as Green points out, by pretending to pro-fascist sympathies.

Condescension of Posterity

Green's stated purpose is, following the precedent set by E P Thompson, to rescue from 'the enormous condescension of posterity' a very important trend in 20th century British life and politics, emphasising its emancipatory credentials, and in this he succeeds very adequately. Nobody who's not sunk in right-wing prejudice could fail to be impressed by this account of intense progressive commitment, enormous workload and unending self-sacrifice engaged in by the organisation and its members from all areas of society.

Britain's Communists, estimable though it is, is not without some shortcomings. Typos and minor errors of fact are too frequent, such as referring to the Cominform when the Comintern is intended (p.264). The Party's early relations with CND, though accurate in their main lines, are wrongly described in detail. Scotland could do with rather more attention than it gets, and at least one awkward episode is rather glossed over, namely the dramatic change of line with the enforced demotion of Harry Pollitt at the beginning of the Second World War.

Ending and the future

However, when he discusses the Party's disruption in the eighties and loss of initiative to the far-left organisations, followed by disbandment in 1991, Green's account is mainly balanced and accurate, doing justice to the positions of the two principal contenders, the 'Eurocommunist' and 'traditionalist' positions. He concludes that, 'In my opinion that Party's decline had more to do with the rapid and profound changes taking place in society ... than with internal or ideological problems ...' (p 286). There is however an element missing from this analysis, namely the degree of bitterness and antagonism that erupted between comrades who

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Britain's Communists

continued from page 11

whatever their differences were all committed to a great project of emancipation. In retrospect this is to be most sorrowfully regretted.

More concentration at the time on long-term aims rather than immediate expectations and organisational measures might have made a welcome difference.

The closing chapter, entitled 'A Summing Up', is quite inspiring, bringing out in a moving fashion what it meant to be a communist in Britain and committed to the values which the Party represented, values which even though no longer embodied in that particular organisation, well deserve to be carried on into the 21st century.

Willie Thompson

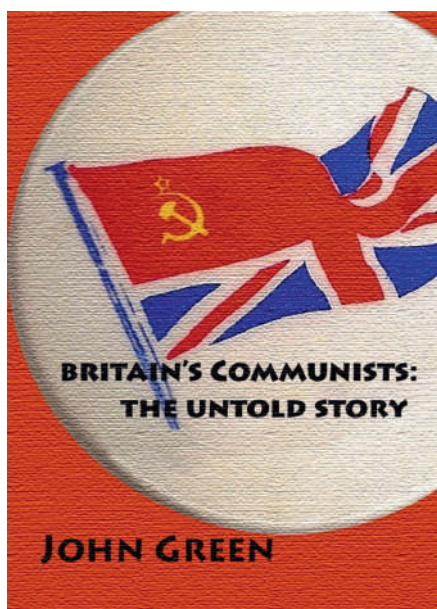
The Author

"John Green is a freelance journalist and author, living in London, UK. He has been coeditor of the Marxist arts magazine *Artery* (1970-81), was a documentary filmmaker for 20 years, covering social and political issues throughout the world, and then worked as a communications officer with the British public sector union UNISON (1989-2005).

Since then he has devoted himself to journalism and other writing projects. He published his reminiscences as a documentary filmmaker (*Red Reporter*) and recently wrote a well-received biography of Friedrich Engels (*Engels: A Revolutionary Life*, Artery Publications, 2008).

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John Green, Email: 41johnngreen@gmail.com



Call for Papers

Before '68: The Left, activism & social movements in the long 1960s

13 and 14 February 2016

School of History, University of East Anglia,
Norwich, NR4 7TJ, UK

The events of 1968, particularly those in France, have achieved a mythical status in both the memory and the historiography of the 1960s. For some, 1968 marked the end-point of a realignment of the European 'New Left'. For others 1968 represented a student generation in revolt, and many of the first accounts which sought to explain the history and meaning of '68 were written by that generation.

More recently historians have tried to demythologise '68, looking both at less 'glamorous' locales and at the deeper histories of anti-colonial struggles and worker activism prior to the events of that year. The aim of this conference is to explore the diverse histories of social activism and left politics in Britain and elsewhere, and how they prepared the ground for and fed into '1968'. Themes might include, but are not limited to:

- * Anti-nuclear & peace movements
- * Civil Rights struggles
- * The Black Power movement
- * Anti-colonial politics
- * The activities of the Labour movement and the 'traditional' Left
- * The grassroots activism of the 'New Left'
- * Far Left challenges: Trotskyism & Maoism
- * Campaigns around housing and the built environment
- * Campaigns around race and discrimination in the workplace and housing
- * Solidarity movements with struggles abroad (e.g. South Africa, Vietnam)
- * Campaigns for Homosexual Equality
- * Second Wave Feminism

We are seeking papers of 5000 to 10000 words on any aspects of left activism and social movements in the period preceding 1968 to be presented at the conference. Selected papers will be published in a special issue of the journal *Socialist History*. Attendance at the conference will be free of charge, but we ask that anyone wishing to attend registers in advance. Proposals for papers and any enquiries should be submitted to Ben Jones.

Email: b.jones5@uea.ac.uk

Deadline for proposals for papers: 31 October 2015

A World Turned Upside Down

This year's A L Morton Memorial Lecture was delivered by the Emeritus Professor of History at Warwick University, Bernard Capp, renowned for his research into 17th century popular culture and politics during the ferment of the English Revolution.

His first and perhaps most well-known book, *The Fifth Monarchy Men*, published in 1972, was an original and pioneering account of one of the small radical sects which emerged during the mid-century turmoil. Capp felt that they had been relatively neglected by previous historians of the period.

His talk, which stimulated an enthusiastic discussion, concentrated on the radical groups "to the left" of the Levellers, namely the True Levellers or Diggers, the Ranters and other short-lived groups such as the aforementioned Fifth Monarchy Men, who were appropriately named given that most of them were indeed men.

Breakdown in Censorship

Professor Capp explained that the 1640s was a decade noted for two key developments that provided fertile ground for the growth of radicalism: the breakdown in censorship led to the flourishing of cheap pamphlets and birth of weekly newspapers; meanwhile the flight of King Charles from London in 1642 had a great impact on the popular consciousness and undermined belief in regal authority. Capp compared the 1640s to the upheaval of 1789 in France as a period when people began to think the unthinkable, that the old social order could be "overturned" and replaced with an entirely new form of society. With the Bible for guidance, people saw the deep social unrest as signs that a new age was about to be born which would see "the rule of the godly". Such millenarian beliefs were shared by people across the social spectrum including Oliver Cromwell and John Milton, but they were especially prevalent among the "middling sort" who made up the ranks of the New Model Army.

Unfashionable Violence

The fifth monarchists believed in direct action to usher in the New Jerusalem and their tendency to violence means that they never been fashionable among historians, Capp said, unlike the Diggers and Levellers, whose ideas were much more

amenable to modern political thinking. Capp pointed out that the Quakers, who have long since become a respectable religious organisation in society, trace their roots to the radical sects that emerged during the 1640s and they shared some common beliefs with the Ranters, who were one of the most subversive of all the groups.

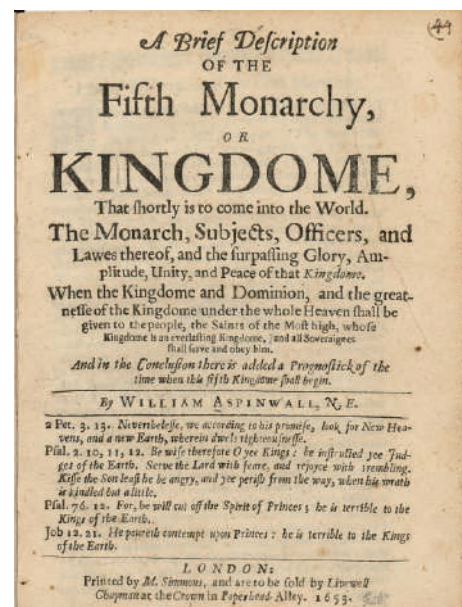
The Ranters held that "God was within everyone" which resembles the Quaker belief in the "inner light", but while the Quakers simply stood up to authority by refusing to remove their caps when in the presence of supposed social superiors, the Ranters brazenly swore, got drunk and rioted.

Red Square Memorial

Capp stated that these various groups continue to be remembered if only as rich material for writers, playwrights and film directors. Their influence has extended well beyond this country as is indicated, for example, by the memorial to Digger leader Gerard Winstanley that was erected in Red Square by the Bolsheviks following the Russian revolution of 1917.

Bernard Capp delivered his talk to a packed meeting at Marx House on 18th July. The SHS was honoured to host such a distinguished historian.

David Morgan



Andromache for Historians

or Engels's *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*: New thoughts on an old theme

Andromache walks up to the ramparts before Troy with Hector at her side. As a daughter of the Queen of Thebes she naturally has knowledge of military strategies and gives Hector her advice on how best to defend Troy,

“Stand the people near the fig tree where the town can most easily be climbed over the wall. Already three times the best of them came here to try to gain entrance to the town, Aias and the famous Idomeneus, and the two Atreus sons and the quarrelsome son of Tydeus; maybe someone has told them, who knows the language of the Gods, or their own courage has driven them.”

Her husband Hector, the son of Priamus, however, dismisses her advice, “War is the business of men.”

He is slain in the fighting that ensues, as is their son Astyanax. This conversation is part of Homer's VI Song (433-439) and illustrates Andromache's powerful role in that she is shown as capable of suggesting military tactics to the warriors. Curiously, these seven verses of Andromache's speech are omitted from many researchers' discussions of The Iliad. It is suggested that the extirpation of the verses suggests a conscious refusal to accept that the role of women in Antiquity may have been anything other than one of inferiority to men. The historian Sarah Pomeroy says: *“The arguments supporting a theory of matriarchy...exist... and have been systematically neglected by researchers.”*

Possibility of Matriachy

In 1951 Erich Fromm commented: *“Envisaging the possibility of a matriarchy leads to intense instinctive rejection in our patriarchic civilisation.”*

The Sarah Pomeroy finds a systematic exclusion of indices that suggest matriarchal societies have existed is endemic among researchers of Antiquity. The exclusion of the seven verses in Andromache's story is but one of many such narratives which are in fact attempts to airbrush the power and prestige of women in Antiquity out of existence. Andromache is accused of practising witchcraft by Hermione who is Neoptolemos's wife and who, in turn, is jealous of Andromache because her husband has taken the Trojan woman as a prisoner and concubine. Hermione accuses the Trojans of exercising incest and polygamy. The Greeks arrived on the scene with patriarchic customs.

Aeschylus vividly illustrates in The Orestia how patriarchic customs are overturning a previously matriarchic society.

Out of the wealth of studies, Aeschylus's Oresteia stands out as offering a short guide to the spirit of the Greek mind at the cusp of change from matriarchy to patriarchy. For him civilisation is the ultimate product of a conflict between opposing forces, such as the Olympian forces over the chthonic, the Greek over the Barbarian, and the male over the female. Froma Zeitlin comments:

“But the male-female conflict subsumes the other two, for while it maintains its own emotive function in the dramatization of human concerns, it provides too the central metaphor which ‘sexualises’ the other issues and attracts them into its magnetic field,” (Zeitlin in Beate Wagner-Hasel, *Matriarchatstheorien der Altertumswissenschaft*, 1989, p.225). Engels declared the struggle between matriarchy and patriarchy as the first class struggle in human history.

Social Norms

The Oresteia traces the evolution of early Greek civilisation by placing the polis at the centre and endowing it with the power to coordinate human, natural and divine forces. The events follow a straightforward story: Woman rises up against male authority. By slaying her husband and choosing her own sexual partner she shatters the social norms of the patriarchic/patristic culture. Her son slays her in revenge for the father/husband. In turn he is pursued by the Erinyes. After the matricide, Orestes's ritual rebirth takes place at the ‘omphalos’ (womb) in Delphi. At an earlier stage Omphale was Queen of Lydia in Asia Minor. She was dressed in lion skin and carried an olive-wood club, as can be seen on a Roman mosaic in Spain from the third century. Over the course of time, the ‘omphalos’ was appropriated by the rising patriarchy, when Apollo received it as a birthday gift. Thus, Orestes is reborn from the male.

“Cross-cultural ethnographical data confirms that one of the most consistent themes of puberty rites is, in fact, the notion that the first birth from the female is superseded by a second birth, this time from the male,” says Zeitlin, (above, p.243).

The second birth is a patriarchic investment into future progeny who are to possess the father's

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Andromache for Historians - continued

rights over kettle, women and land. As Aeschylus's plays unfold Clytemnestra, the female principle in the first play, rebels against the masculine regime by asserting her sexuality. By the time that the last play is enacted her representatives, the Erinyes, become mere archaic, primitive creatures, whereas the male principle is portrayed in the young god Apollo, champion of society, conjugality and progress. The shift from matristic to patristic society has been concluded.

Antiquity

Engels's discussion of Johann Jakob Bachofen's investigations into Antiquity offers a rich polemic against the 'taken for granted knowledge of patriarchy as the one and only system that human societies have known. He declares the change from

thousands of years of matriarchy to the approximately two to three thousand years of patriarchy as 'the first class struggle in human history,' (Liz Kelly, *What little girls and little boys are made of: The gendering of childhood*, Educational and Child Psychology, 1993).

Affirmation of Women

One example of a society that continues to live along matristic gender relations is the Minangkabau in Sumatra. While Minangkabau women cook and wash up, they are the ones who own the land and the rice fields. The daughters inherit the wealth from their mothers. When a wedding takes place the bridegroom moves into the family home of the bride and from then on belongs to her family. The men only have caretaker roles. They hold meetings, but the decisions have been previously agreed by the women.

The above offers a brief glimpse of the powerful roles women can hold or have inhabited in Antiquity, when they were revered and participated at all levels of society. This is indicative of the postulation that human society and perceptions of gender and sexuality have evolved, similar to nature, through stages and that myths play an important part in informing us about our anthropological past. The assumption that Abraham and the patriarchal form of social organisation have reigned since the beginning of human existence needs to be discarded.

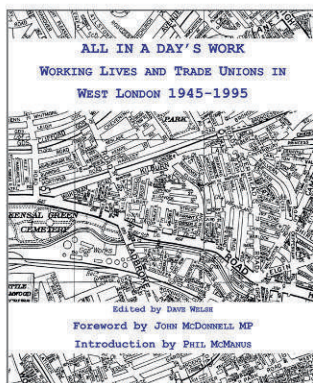
Full and Equal

The ancient myths suggest an affirmation of women as full and equal persons and this needs to be built into a revitalised epistemology to inform a more assertive and powerful paradigm within which to view the place of women.

Greta Sykes

(This is an excerpt from an article, 'Andromache for psychologists' which can be found on academia.edu)

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK: Working Lives and Trade Unions in West London 1945-1995



"This book helps us to learn from past lives and past struggles. For that, we owe it and all its participants a debt of thanks."
John McDonnell MP

All in a Day's Work is a 250-page book featuring over 100 oral history interviews carried out by the Britain at Work London Group. It chronicles the working lives and trade union activities of people who worked in West London during the years 1945-1995. A unique snapshot of many types of work and workplaces in both the private sector and public services, covering an area stretching from Hayes in the west to Paddington and from Harrow in the north to the River Thames.

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For more information or to contact the Britain at Work London Project, contact rima@britainatworklondon.com, phone 020 7272 7649 or write to Britain at Work, 15 Wellington Road, Norwich, NR2 3HT.

Britain at Work
London project

Campaigns for Decent Housing Past and Present **Socialist History Society Public Meeting with speaker Duncan Bowie**

2pm, 21st November 2015 at Marx Memorial Library, Clerkenwell Green, EC1R 0DU

Duncan Bowie will give a talk on radical and socialist campaigns for decent housing, land nationalisation and town planning in the 19th century and seek to relate them to the current housing crisis and contemporary struggles. Duncan's book, *'The Radical and Socialist Tradition in British Planning: From Puritan Colonies to Garden Cities'* is to be published by Ashgate later this year.

Duncan is a member of the SHS committee and of the committee of the London Labour Housing Group. He is a lecturer at the University of Westminster. He is the author of SHS OP No 34, *Roots of the British Socialist Movement*.

Free to attend - all welcome.

The British Business of Slavery

A series of Tuesday evening talks starting on 6 October, running to 8 December 2015. Presented by Conway Hall Ethical Society and curated by Deborah Lavin. Supported by the Socialist History Society and the Freethought History Research Group.

Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1R 4RL. All talks start at 7.00 p.m.

Tickets: Individual tickets £5, participating society members £3.
 Series ticket £30, participating society members £21.

Tuesday 6 October 2015	Freedom's Debt, the Politics of the Atlantic Slave Trade (1672- 1752) Dr William Pettigrew , University of Kent
Tuesday 13 October 2015	First Prime Minister of the London Empire, William Beckford, Jamaican Planter & Lord Mayor of London (1709 – 1770) Dr Perry Gauci , University of Oxford
Tuesday 20 October 2015	The Law's Ambiguous Struggle with Slavery Prof Satvinder Juss , King's College London
Tuesday 27 October 2015	George Hibbert M.P. (1757-1837) and the Defence of British Slavery Dr Katie Donington , University of Nottingham
Tuesday 3 November 2015	The Unfortunate Colonel Despard, "Govenor of Belize", Anti-racist, Democrat, Executed as a Traitor 1803 Mike Jay , author
Tuesday 24 November 2015	Slavery and the Shaping of British Culture James Walvin , Professor Emeritus, University of York
Tuesday 1 December 2015	A British-Owned Congo, Roger Casement's Battle with Slavery in Peru (1910-1914) Prof Jordan Goodman , University College London
Tuesday 8 December 2015	Identifying Unfinished Business, the UK Modern Slavery Act (2015) Prof Gary Craig , Durham University & University of Hull

London Socialist Historians Group

12 October

Generations: the impact of the personal and political on children born in Britain to refugees from Nazism

Merilyn Moos

26 October

British Counter Insurgency. A history

John Newsinger

9 November

Politics, theatre and history

Chris Jury

Seminars start at 5:30pm
 Room N304

Institute of Historical Research,
 North block, Senate House,
 Malet Street,
 London WC1E 7HU

The London Mayor a poem

If Khan can't

It will simply mean

Khan really can't

Not that Corbyn couldn't

David Morgan