

## SHS and the Russian Revolution

The Socialist History Society came about as a direct result of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. In Britain, as in many other countries, the success of the revolution created a realignment of socialist organisations. This was inevitable given the collapse of the Socialist International at the outbreak of the war.

The Third or Communist International was created with its 21 points or terms for affiliation, drawn up with the express purpose of ensuring that its adherents would not make the same mistakes that their predecessors had in 1914 when war was declared.

In Britain, even before the CI was formed, steps were under way to unite some of the revolutionary socialist groups. Chief among these were the British Socialist Party and the Socialist Labour Party.

Unification occurred at two Congresses in 1920/21 and the Communist Party of Great Britain was formed. Twenty six years later in 1946 the Communist Party Historians Group came about. After the CPGB ceased to exist in 1991, the group, after a ballot, renamed itself the Socialist History Society and opened its doors to all those within the socialist tradition.

### The International

Back to the International, this survived until 1943 when it was disbanded. As an organisation it had some very positive successes not least being the initiator of the International Brigades in Spain who were the first to fight against fascism before the outbreak of World War Two.

While the social democratic parties vacillated, they left the communists to take up arms against the threat from the far right.

Not just on the international stage, but on the home front too it was the communists who were to the forefront in fighting fascism.

Now heralded as part of our history, let's not forget that it was the Communist party and Communist East Enders that organised and prepared to stop Mosley's march through the East End in 1936. The Labour party urged their supporters to stay away, as did the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

The Communist International too had a



proud record in garnering international solidarity sending its emissaries to all corners of the globe. Many of the leaders of the national liberation movements, particularly in Africa, had been at one time associated with the CI. South Africa and India both had communist agents sent there from Britain in order to develop the labour movements in those countries.

### Flexibility

While the CI was not perfect and made mistakes the accusations levelled against it by those who wish to rewrite history just don't hold up.

A common complaint that has now become folk lore, a bit like Mussolini made the

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**William A. (Bill) Pelz  
1951-2017**

An appreciation of his life and work will appear in the next newsletter.

## SHS and the Russian Revolution

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trains run of time, is that the International was a regimented body with little flexibility allowed by affiliated parties.

### National Circumstances

Below is a decision of the CI's Third Congress in 1921:

*"There can be no absolutely infallible and unalterable form of organisation for the Communist Parties...The conditions of the proletarian class struggle are subject to change in a continuous process of evolution, and in accordance with these changes the organisation of the proletarian vanguard must be constantly seeking for the corresponding form. The peculiar conditions of every individual country likewise determine the special adoption of the forms of organisation of the respective parties."*

So much for rigidity. If anything, the CI fell over itself to make sure that Communist parties operated in accordance with their own national circumstances.

*"Being the united world party of the proletariat, the Communist International makes it incumbent upon sections carefully to weigh all the peculiarities of the situation in their respective countries. Only by studying these peculiarities is it possible to conduct a real Marxian policy."*

The above was part of the decisions of the Fifth World Congress of the CI in 1924.

So in celebrating the anniversary of the Russian Revolution we must applaud its achievements as well as its shortcomings. One of the most significant of these was the creation of the Communist International.

Without that body we would have no Socialist History Society, no Marxist historians of the stature of Eric Hobsbawm or Christopher Hill, no meeting place like the Marx Memorial Library, no daily socialist paper like the *Morning Star*, no mass trespass of Kinder Scout without which our National Parks may never have been created.

When the workers, soldiers and peasants stormed the Winter Palace a hundred years ago they could never know what repercussions their heroism would have on a European offshore island nearly a thousand miles away.

For us in the Socialist History Society we should never forget that without them our society would not exist.

*Mike Squires*

## Chasing a Cromwell Portrait on eBay

A previously undiscovered portrait of the Lord Protector came up for grabs on eBay the other day

What an amazing find that's all I could say Provenance validated by a long lost episode of The Antiques Road Show

It's the truth, kid you not

A new portrait of England's great revolutionary leader

Available to the highest bidder

Quite genuine, early 18th century,

Prospective bidders were told,

*"Quite probably of Cromwell"*

The seller said straight faced

100% satisfaction guaranteed

A positive rating from all his buyers

Conveniently a torn parchment

Pasted on the reverse stated in clear handwriting

*"A Portrait of Oliver Cromwell"*

Proof positive then, more than enough to

whet the appetite of any die-hard

republican and avid historian

Let the bidding commence

Three long days to place your bets

To win the prize with no regrets

An addictive entertainment

Like gambling, snorting coke

With hidden dangers like MPs' sexting

Or sending PA out to buy sex toys for wife

and mistress - on expenses

This compulsion is self-financed

A drain on well-earned cash

Maybe it's real, maybe it's trash

An original Cromwell on my kitchen wall

Or bedroom, my own National Portrait

Gallery

But not one from the Royal Collection

Cromwell is mine at fifty quid, a hundred

A hundred and fifty... That's my limit

Out bid at two hundred and fifty

Thank God my republicanism doesn't run too deep

At least I can pay the rent this week

*David Morgan*

# Sanitizing history on the 400-year anniversary of Mayflower voyage

*There's no better way of forgetting something than by commemorating it.*

- Irwin in "The History Boys" (2006) by Alan Bennett

In 1620 the Mayflower sailed from Plymouth, UK and in 2020 the 400-year anniversary of the sailing is being commemorated, centred in Plymouth, UK. This has involved the revamping of the local Mayflower Museum in 2015, the publication of a series of worksheets, and a writing competition for local Plymouth schools. Now the Mayflower 400 organisers have published the The Mayflower 400 Scheme of Work.

This scheme has been prepared for Plymouth schools and follows several years of planning of a trans-Atlantic international commemoration of the sailing of the Mayflower in 1620. Though this planning has emphasised the education role of telling the 'story of the Mayflower' in schools and elsewhere, the focus has been primarily tourism.

## **Tourist Industry**

Education and history are framed to service a tourist attraction, emphasizing the details of the 1620 journey and the make-up of the passengers rather than its colonial character and context. The scheme of work centres on the Puritan half of the Mayflower passengers. Consequently the plan of study it details relegates the story of the Indigenous Nations of North America to a subsidiary place and sanitises the Mayflower Story. The Plymouth UK Mayflower Museum, and the Mayflower 400 website's education section, are currently the principal publicly available education materials for the Mayflower commemorations.

Opposition to the Mayflower 400's promotion of a sanitised version of the 'Mayflower Story' is needed NOW! By 2019 it could be tried, tested and on every school's timetable across all 11 of the partner 'Mayflower Destination' towns/cities in the UK, and possibly beyond.

Indigenous American organizations are currently campaigning over water and land rights and there are ongoing campaigns targeting commemorations, such as Columbus Day. Indeed, the history of recent related

commemorations could provide lessons for the Mayflower ones.

## **Questions**

Consequently, it is necessary to ask the following questions of the planners of the Mayflower 400 commemoration about the creation of NEW or revised education materials which do not sanitize the Mayflower story:

Will the promotion of the story of the Mayflower colonists be contextualized in pre-1620 history including: a) colonization in Virginia; b) the slave raids on the Atlantic coast of North America; c) the financial arrangements of the 1620 expedition; d) the slaving expeditions by England and other European powers already established by 1620?

Will the promotion of the story of the Mayflower colonists be contextualised in the 17th century post 1620 history of New England, including: a) The large scale increase in colonists and the expansion of the number and size of the colonies from 1630 onwards; b) The early wars with Indigenous American Nations, e.g. The Pequot war of 1637 and King Philip's war 1676; c) The enslavement of Indigenous Americans, the importation of African slaves and the passing of the first slavery law in North America in Massachusetts in 1641?

## **Context**

Will the promotion of the story of the Mayflower colonists be contextualised in the longer post 1620 history of North America, including: a) the extension of the patterns established in 17th century New England of colonisation, warfare, genocide and enslavement of Indigenous North American nations across North America in the 18th and 19th centuries; b) the 90% decline in population of indigenous Americans?

To what extent will the story of the Mayflower colonists be told drawing on the scholarship of Indigenous and African Americans?

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## Sanitizing Mayflower history

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Will the contextualisation of the story of the Mayflower colonists include the telling of ongoing and current debates, etc. over land rights, resources, treaty disagreements and civil rights that have their roots in the events in the North American sea board in the 17th century?

### Recent Commemorations

To what extent will the 400-year anniversary 'celebrations' of the Mayflower colonists journey draw upon the lessons of recent related commemorations? For example: the 1970 350-year anniversary of the Mayflower; the 1988 William of Orange 300-year anniversary commemoration in Exeter; the 1992 Columbus quincentenary anniversary commemoration; the 2007 Jamestown colony 400-year anniversary commemoration; the 2007 200-year anniversary commemoration of the abolition of the slave trade law in the UK.

The story of the early years of New England is a tale of loss of indigenous land, life and culture on a scale only seen by earlier colonisation in the Americas in the years following Columbus' fateful journey in 1492.

It is a tale of economic growth through slavery and slave trading linking the Caribbean and the North American sea board.

But it is a tale that isn't being told.

*Danny Reilly*

More details from <https://mayflower-mavericks.wordpress.com/>



## Memories of a Battle by *Shahram Parvin*

The white mist over the lake  
and the Water anchored trees  
Rays of light that break  
through the glowing red leaves

The words that wisdom spake  
murmured by the autumn breeze  
The tired branches that rake  
the memories of the fallen grieved

The quacks of a hurried drake  
and the omens borne on the wind  
The opened eyes that wake  
to the moments that must be seized

The brotherhood among the arms  
in flight by night, as is the way of the owls  
The two armies meet in lines  
to fight, to travel beyond life's blinds

The swords start to cross  
as swans pass in a row  
Sounds of metal in clatter  
and blood that spills on the water meadow

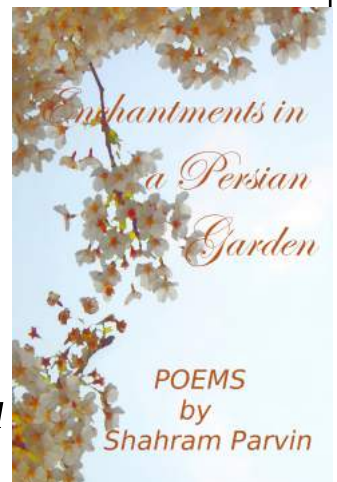
The shouts of vanity clamour,  
cries follow, of limbs under hammer  
The pleas of mercy for life, a left behind  
family  
and the dagger that pierces with no  
sympathy

The shouts, the shouts, the shouts  
of putting the light of once-a-blossom out  
The shouts, the shouts, the shouts  
as blood from wounds spouts

The alive have left -  
the dead - lay bare  
as the ground takes the  
warriors into its care  
In the still mist, swans  
swim in a row  
and tired branches  
slump over the water  
meadow

*Shahram Parvin is a member of the SHS and this poem is from his collection titled, **Enchantments in a Persian Garden.***

The book can be obtained from the website:  
<https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/734931>



# Karl Marx Museum in Trier

Notes from a summer visit by *Greta Sykes*

Not only was Karl Marx a famous resident of Trier, but so also was Emperor Constantine who had the oldest and largest basilica north of the Alps built here. Emperor Constantine and his mother Helena brought Christianity to Trier. Using her own house in the position where the cathedral now stands Helena started the first Christian church of the Roman Empire. Emperor Constantine turned it into one of the three most famous churches in Christianity, the other two being Hagia Sophia in Istanbul and St Peter's Dome in Rome. Founded 15 BC by Emperor Augustus Trier boasts other Roman buildings.

## Karl Marx Strasse

The Porta Nigra – so named because of its blackened sandstone – towers over the narrow, medieval streets behind it. It is the last one of four great gates into the town. A few streets away through the old town centre you reach Karl Marx Strasse with a Karl Marx bus stop. This is where Marx was born on 5th May 1818. The small house, which includes a Karl Marx sculpture, offers an excellent exhibition of his life, political ideas and activities and, as they state 'the stations of his life'.

## Exhibition

On three floors the visitor can study and read personal documents and portrayals of his life, a display of his most important written work and his biography. Photos, statues, excerpts from newspapers and cartoons as well as other original material from his life engage the visitor in a thought provoking perusal of the life of this revolutionary, learned person and journalist. The story of his friends and collaborators, such as Friedrich Engels as well as his opponents and the effects he has had on the political developments of the 20th century are illustrated with photos, commentaries and materials.

The exhibition lets you wander from room to room, past screens and walls taking you back into the fascinating age of revolution-

ary fervour from the 1840s onwards. Marx's emigration to Paris and finally to London with his various abodes in Soho and Kentish Town are all recorded here.

## German Democratic Republic

For us the only - however expected - disappointment was the top floor where Marx work was placed in the context of the GDR as a "failed state". Notwithstanding this error we thoroughly enjoyed the display and felt that it was a very worthwhile exhibition.

Next summer 2018 will be the celebration of the 200th centenary of Marx's birthday. The centenary programme will include an updated exhibition, scientific symposia at the University of Trier under the auspices of UNESCO and many theatre and music productions. It should certainly be well worth a visit.



# 50 Years of the North East Labour History Society

In 2017, a year of anniversaries, a modest one which deserves to be remembered is the 50th anniversary of the North East Labour History Society, inspired by the growth of interest in labour and social history during the 1960s and in particular by the establishment of the National Society for the Study of Labour History in 1960 (which, remarkably, has no Wikipedia entry). The NELH is the oldest regional labour history society in Britain – assuming that the Scottish Labour History Society (which is a year older and developed from the even older Scottish Society for the Study of Labour History) is regarded as national rather than a regional society.

## Newcastle

The NELH is centred in Newcastle, not least because of the excellent facility which exists in the centre of that city, the Literary and Philosophical Society. Known popularly as the Lit & Phil, this is located in a listed building, a venue for all manner of intellectual endeavour, promoting lectures, hiring out its rooms to various societies and housing a splendid library. It was founded in the 1790s by progressively-minded bourgeois who at that time wanted an intellectual forum that avoided any political discussion in order to escape the attentions of the reactionary government. The NELH has made a great deal of use of it, though it also uses other venues when appropriate.

## Membership

Society membership isn't restricted to Newcastle but includes participants from all over the North East: working men and women, young and elderly, academic historians and people simply interested in labour history and keen to participate. Eminent members include and have included the SHS's own Archie Potts, currently the NELH President. In his later years Raymond Challinor was an active member – eventually the society's President, and also chair of the Society for the Study of Labour History.

Annually the NELH produces a journal, North East History, of high quality both in content and presentation. Towards the end of last century the society was somewhat in the doldrums, but in 2001 the energetic John Charlton was elected secretary and the NELH increased its range of meetings and activities as well as participation by members.

## Activities

Activities in addition to meetings and discussions included 'radical walks' – guided tours around sites and buildings in Newcastle associated with development of labour and democratic movements, and boat trips on the River Tyne pointing out the industrial and mining establishments (including a large Co-op factory), which once lined its banks. The NELH also presents an annual Memorial Trophy (in the shape of a miner's lamp) in memory of foundation member Sid Chaplin. The winner is selected from essays submitted on a North East labour movement theme (chosen at the author's discretion) by anyone not a history professional - in practice usually a student. In this anniversary year the Society together with Northumbria University sponsored a well-attended conference on the theme of 'The History of Activism', mainly in relation to the North East.

## Optimism

There is strong reason for optimism at the way in which the society is developing, now led by an excellent combination of longstanding and recent members. The NELH is pleased to have reached its fiftieth anniversary in a flourishing condition. Current developments both in the North East and on a wider scale make its educational and agitational work more necessary than ever.

*Willie Thompson*

More details of the  
North East Labour History Society

<http://nelh.net/>

## One Woman's Struggle In Iran; A Prison Memoir

*Nasrin Parvaz is a poet and a member of the Socialist History Society.*

Nasrin was a civil rights activist when the Islamic Republic of Iran was established in 1979. She was arrested in 1982, tortured and was to spend a full eight years in prison. In 1993, she fled to England and now lives in London. Her memoir, *One Woman's Struggle in Iran*, is the story of her imprisonment for those eight years by the Islamic government of Iran.

As she states, "In 1979, at the age of 20, I returned from England, where I had been studying. I became a member of a socialist party fighting for a non-Islamic state where women would have exactly the same rights as men. In 1982, while waiting to meet a fellow comrade, I was exposed and arrested by the regime's secret police. In prison, under torture, I refused to reveal my contacts' names and addresses".



"In prison I was brutally and systematically tortured, threatened with execution, starved and forced to live in appalling, horribly overcrowded conditions. Many of my fellow prisoners were executed; some were driven insane by torture and what we had to endure. Others repented their political beliefs only to find they were left to remain in prison for years before their release. I became seriously ill, and was only saved from dying by the help of a fellow prisoner who was a doctor".

"Although I was imprisoned and in the hands of my enemies, they could not arrest my resistance, and neither could torture vanquish my struggle. In resisting the Islamic regime, I was not alone, all the other men and women, imprisoned like me, we were all part of what will be the ultimate victory of humanity."

See how you can help fund Nasrin's book here:

<https://unbound.com/books/womans-struggle-in-iran/>

### Surreal parody of Coleridge

In Spandau Jail did Courbla Klan  
A grim high-pressure doom decree  
Where Alf the scary river ran  
Through caravans measureless to man  
Down to a pot of tea  
So twice five miles of scary ground  
With Walls ice cream were girded round  
And there were accountants using feather  
quills  
Where blossomed many a magic money tree  
And there were florists ancient as the hills  
Unwrapping funny sprouts of greenery  
*Willie Thompson*

SHS member **Deborah Lavin** will be one of the speakers at a day-long conference on Anna Kingsford (1846-1888) who is described as a "neglected figure in western esotericism who inspired individuals and organisations in many fields".

Saturday 17th February 2018, 10am - 6pm.  
50 Gloucester Place, London, W1E 8UA.

The conference, organised by the Theosophical Society, will see Deborah speak on "**Anna Kingsford vs Vivisection and Annie Besant**" where she will argue that vivisection was a major divisive issue among socialists as well as radicals in the 19th century; and that those divisions had their influence on the Socialist revival.

For further information contact the organisers [office@theosoc.org.uk](mailto:office@theosoc.org.uk)  
[www.theosophicalsociety.org.uk](http://www.theosophicalsociety.org.uk)

## Awakening a Passion for Theatre

**When I was growing up in my working class family in Manchester, I heard my parents use the phrase, "that's not for the likes of us". It was said in reference to the opera or quite possibly the theatre. That phrase always jarred with me and I determined never to adopt such a self-deprecating attitude.**

My earliest experience of visits to the theatre really began when I was at Eccles College although I had seen at least one pantomime and a production of *Dad's Army* with the full original cast when I was at school. We also had a holiday in London when I was about 14 and on my insistence we saw a play about Sherlock Holmes, *The Crucible of Blood*, whose cast was headed by Keith Michell and Susan Hampshire. Almost the only aspects of that play I now remember were that we were high up in the gods and that Hampshire wore a stunning red dress in one scene. The plot is entirely lost in the memory bank.

Almost every month at college the tutors used to organise local theatre trips for the students. As I was studying for an English A level and had long ago started to watch plays on television, I was keen to go along. The teachers had use of a coach that would pick us up and take us to theatres as far afield as Bolton Octagon, the Library Theatre in St Peter's Square and, my favourite, the Royal Exchange, Manchester.

### Real Actors

It was an entirely new experience to see real plays with real actors and some who were well known. Some of the productions I recall are *Roll on Four o'Clock* set in a rough comprehensive school. It was written by Colin Welland who started work as a teacher. I only remember one line which involved two teachers in the staff room gossiping about a third. "He spends all his money on birds" - "I know, custard!" not very funny at all but I recall it brought a big laugh at the time.

Of the classics, I saw *Volpone The Fox* by Ben Jonson, which I could barely understand, *Richard the Third*, which I had studied for O Level, *The Changeling*, which starred the late Pete Postlethwaite and an actress who ended up playing a barmaid in *Coronation Street*. I also saw *Dr Faustus* with Ben Kingsley but I'm sure on this occasion I went

on my own, just like I did for *The Duchess of Malfi* with Helen Mirren: I went twice because I was a little obsessed with her.

One ambition born at this period was to see all Shakespeare's plays but I don't think I saw *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* or *King Lear* until much later. In fact, I can only remember the production of *Richard the Third* which I saw in Salford. And at the Exchange I saw *A Winter's Tale* with that extraordinary ending where the queen is a statue that comes to life. But I most vividly recall the "rustic scenes" with Harry Landis as one of the rustic clowns. There was lots of straw strewn about the stage.

### Memories

Then there was *The Three Musketeers* with Trevor Peacock, Derek Griffiths and Robert Lindsay, which involved a lot of slapstick capers and swinging from ropes. Again at the Exchange, there was *The Second Mrs Tanqueray*, Victorian comedy by Arthur Wing Pinero with Patricia Routledge and Felicity Dean (who was a striking beauty at the time and had played Guinevere on TV). I don't recall the plot at all or the humour. There were many other plays I saw over the course of those two years spent at Eccles College but sadly I cannot remember much about them at present. Perhaps some Proustian moment will eventually stir the memories.

After Eccles College I went up to Bangor for three years where there was only one accessible theatre. Over the entire three years I only saw one play called *Shaw in Love* which consisted of two short dramas by George Bernard Shaw. I had previously seen *Widower's Houses* as one of those college trips.

My more regular theatre visits really began when I moved to London. This was an entirely different league. Often I would go

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twice a week to all sorts of plays and venues of which there were hundreds. Pub theatres were burgeoning in the eighties promoted through London's weekly culture guide, *City Limits* magazine. After a few months in London I began to be asked to write theatre reviews for the *Morning Star* which enabled me to go to press nights, occasionally speak to directors and write up my impressions of the various productions.

I saw legends of stage and screen such as Sir John Gielgud, Alan Bates, Paul Eddington, Peggy Ashcroft, Judi Dench, Daniel Day Lewis, Jeff Nuttall, Steven Berkoff, Tilda Swinton, Harold Pinter, far too many to mention. Fortunately, I have kept most of the programmes and one day I shall do a more detailed inventory of all the wonderful moments at the theatre. It's a real passion and remains undiminished after forty years.

David Morgan

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## ***The Destruction of Reason***

There are times when societies start to fall apart. Trains cease running, the flow of clean water dries up, the lights won't switch on, and hospitals can no longer even patch up the sick.

We endured a deep financial crash less than a decade ago, while we have witnessed almost continuous wars for two decades or more: truly bloody wars like Iraq and Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Ukraine, the Balkans and Cambodia a little earlier; millions maimed and killed; still more displaced and suffering permanent mental scars. Children live with the memory of a sister raped by a neighbour or a mother sliced by a machete-wielding school boy. Little acts of brutality all pile up into a festering genocide. Death of the innocents; so many casualties it's impossible to count them.

### **Corporate Killing**

After the killings, the smart suits, touting for corporate interests, move in to make a financial killing by grabbing newly depop-

ulated blood drenched land and ostensibly to invest in reconstruction. They'll ship out the inconvenient poor who have somehow survived the carnage. Replace the traditional settlements with bright new luxury flats built as an investment option not as places to live in as the alienating architecture demonstrates.

Meanwhile, back in our increasingly un-governable advanced democracies, the political game is all about managing expectations, using IT and social media addiction to intoxicate the millennial masses into accepting less than their parents did; unfair shares for all as the wealth gap widens; hope becomes a never-never, not entirely abandoned simply put it on hold for a generation or two, while austerity bites hard enough to become the new normal. The unfortunates who, following the acquisition of a perfectly respectable degree are in debt to the tune of £40k, may find themselves sleeping on a friend's sofa for weeks, months, years- sofa surfing as a way of life - or the downcast who become down and out huddling in a squalid space laying their head on a cardboard box in the street. To them the housing ladder becomes as elusive as Jacob's.

### **Irrational**

A barely unnoticed casualty of the crisis we face is the destruction of reason, the gradual erosion of a precious human faculty to think things through. When Georg Lukacs completed his immense volume called *The Destruction of Reason* in 1952 it was intended as a critique of the roots of fascism in bourgeois thought and its lingering post-war presence. Fascism undermined reason and rationality, substituting the irrational, the emotional, the prejudiced and superstitious. We face a similar danger of the irrational now; not just coming from fascism but from the intolerance of the liberal.

Today this destruction comes in several guises. There is the marked reluctance of students to engage in open debate who have orchestrated the no-platforming in

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universities of respected scholars who are treated as pariahs and must be silenced for fear of offending the delicate sentiments of protected minorities.

The most trivial matter and the most way out fringe issues have been elevated to the status of a great struggle of the age. There is the campaign for gender neutral toilets which has become a virtual moral crusade of concerned liberals and radical journalists who would once have devoted all their energies to ending child poverty or marching to ban the bomb.

The loss of reason means that we now no longer show the capacity to separate wheat from chaff or to get right our priorities.

A senior cleric writes to urge us all to pray that an infant prince grows up to be gay all the better to improve the status of gays in a bigoted society. Child abuse is forgotten in this rush to promote the cause of the day.

A couple dismiss their nanny for presuming to treat their male child like a boy. They then advertise for a gender neutral nanny who will drill the modern dogma of "transgenderism" into the child, which seems perilously close to child abuse. Children must be given the right to choose their own gender. It's a matter of personal whim, confound biology.

The very foundations of civilisation, art, culture and literature are assaulted head on in this war on masculine-feminine.

### **Bread, Land and Peace**

We can all agree on the absolute need to respect human rights and when we build a new society everyone will have their place. But we won't be any nearer to building it by putting fringe issues centre stage. Lenin won a revolution on the platform of bread, land and peace. By neglecting the bread and butter issues of the day which are jobs, homes, education, healthcare and security, the much cherished and sought new society will ever remain elusive beyond our grasp. We need to learn once again to use our heads. Halt the destruction of reason before it is too late. Put our thinking machines into operation. It's urgently needed.

*David Morgan*

## **SHS 2018 Meetings**

### **Cult and anti-cult: Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky in the 1920s**

Speaker - *Prof Kevin Morgan*

Kevin Morgan is Professor of Politics and Contemporary History at the University of Manchester. Former editor of *Socialist History*, Kevin is author of numerous studies on the history of Communism, including *Labour Legends* and *Russian Gold*, *Harry Pollitt (Lives of the Left)*, *Against Fascism and War: Ruptures and Continuities in British Communist Politics, 1935-41*. He is an editor of the journal, *Twentieth Century Communism*. Kevin is a trustee to the Communist Party of Great Britain Archives Trust and the Working Class Movement Library, Salford.

*2.00pm, Saturday 27th January 2018*

### **Billy Strachan 1920-1998 RAF Officer, Communist, Civil Rights Pioneer, Legal Administrator, Internationalist and above all Caribbean Man**

Speaker *David Horsley*

David is a retired teacher who worked for thirty years in Lambeth and Jamaica. He is a member of Caribbean Labour Solidarity, and Cuba Solidarity Campaign with a particular interest in Caribbean, African American and South African Communists.

*2.00pm, Saturday 17th March 2018*

This is a joint meeting with *Caribbean Labour Solidarity*

### **Dramatising the revolution: Marx, Paris and the 1848 Revolution**

Speaker *Katherine Connelly*

Katherine is a writer and historian. She has just completed a PhD on Marx and Parisian culture and is the author of *Sylvia Pankhurst: Suffragette, Socialist and Scourge of Empire* (Pluto Press).

*2.00pm, Saturday, 12th May 2018*

***All meetings at the  
Marx Memorial Library***

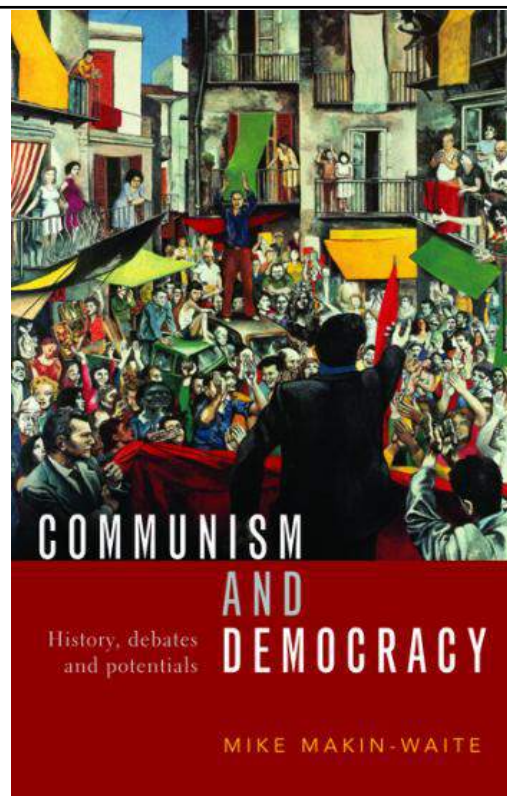
## ***Communism and Democracy: History, debates and potentials by Mike Makin-Waite***

On the centenary of the Russian Revolution of 1917, Mike Makin-Waite surveys the history of the communist movement, tracking its origins in the Enlightenment, and through nineteenth-century socialism to the emergence of Marxism and beyond.

As we emerge from the long winter of neoliberalism, and the search is on for ideas that can help shape a contemporary popular socialism, some of the questions that have preoccupied socialist thinkers throughout left history are once more being debated. Should the left press for reform and work through the state or should it focus on protest and a critique of the whole system? Is it possible to expand the liberal idea of democracy to include economic democracy? Which alliances require too great a compromise and which can help secure future change?

The aim of *Communism and Democracy: history, debates and potentials* is to recover some of the hard-won insights of the critical communist tradition, in the belief that they can still be of service to the twenty-first-century left.

<https://www.lwbooks.co.uk/book/communism-and-democracy>



## **Letters**

### ***The Best Brexit***

It is clear that the Brexit talks are not going well. This does not surprise me. In 2016 I voted that Britain should leave the EU but I knew that Brexit would not be easy; the EU Commission would see to that. I do not believe that a negotiated exit is likely to be achieved. There are too many obstacles and variables in the way, not to mention a lack of goodwill on the part of the EU negotiators and the ineptitude of Theresa May's government.

However, the failure to negotiate an exit deal with the EU need not be disastrous for Britain. It would mean that Britain would fall back on the World Trade Organisation (WTO) terms. This would mean that British goods would face a tariff of 3% when entering the EU market; China, Russia and the USA trade with the EU under WTO terms and manage well enough. We could do the same. We already trade with 111 countries, including the USA, on WTO terms. Once we have left the EU we shall be free to negotiate our own free trade deals with other countries.

The worst outcome of the Brexit negotiations would be a fudged agreement with the EU under which Britain retained entry to the EU single market but in turn had to accept free movement of labour, the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice and had to make an annual contribution, likely to be substantial, to the EU budget. As a non-EU member Britain would have no say in any EU decision-making activities. This will be the so-called 'soft Brexit', but to me it is no Brexit at all and I fear that the Labour Party seems to be heading down this road to the Eagles' Hotel California where you can check out but never leave.

*Archie Potts*

# Grenadian Revolution 1979- 1983

## ***By Our Own Hands:***

### ***A People's History of the Grenadian Revolution***

Between 1979 and 1983, the people of the Caribbean nation of Grenada made a courageous attempt to overcome the legacy of slavery, British colonialism and a viscosly corrupt post-colonial dictatorship. The Grenadian Revolution ended with an internal dispute that resulted in the killing of a number of its leaders, including Prime Minister Maurice Bishop; these tragic events gave the US government the excuse to invade.

The subsequent focus on the last few days of the Revolution has obscured the remarkable achievements of the Grenadian people during the previous four years. In the face of the unceasing hostility of the United States government and its continual destabilisation campaign, the people of Grenada rebuilt their economy with an emphasis on social justice and economic stability rather than mere profit for, mainly foreign, capitalists; they established a remarkable education system and improved their health service; they started a house-building and housing repair programme that addressed the needs of the poorest members of society.

In order to rescue the achievements of the Revolution, Caribbean Labour Solidarity has produced a pamphlet that concentrates on the successes and challenges of the Grenadian Revolution.

*By Our Own Hands: A People's History of the Grenadian Revolution* can be obtained from [info@cls-uk.org.uk](mailto:info@cls-uk.org.uk) price £2 + 50p p&p.

The authors will be speaking at a meeting of the London Socialist Historians' Group on 22nd January at 5:30 pm in the Institute of Historical Research

## ***The Grenada Revolution: setting the record straight***

A Socialist History Society  
Occasional Publication by *Richard Hart*

Having been out of print for a long time, this important memoir of the Revo' is now available to download from

<http://www.socialisthistorysociety.co.uk/?p=303>

## ***Book Launch***

Bernard Coard, Deputy Prime Minister of Grenada during the four and a half years of the Revolution and one of the leaders of the New Jewel Movement (NJM) will formally launch his book *The Grenada Revolution: What Really Happened?*

Tuesday 13 March 2018, from 6:30 To 8:30 pm, at The National Education Union, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD

This publication, written from the perspective of an insider and participant in the October 1983 events, details the successes and challenges faced by the Revolution. *What Really Happened* also charts the tragic culmination of lack of trust between friends and comrades that would lead to the fracturing of the NJM prior to its collapse, the disintegration of the Revolution, shooting dead members of the Revolutionary Army and the killing of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop.

Bernard Coard will answer questions and go into details on issues outlined in his book as well as expand on the matters beyond its cover.

More details:

<http://grenada-revo-full-story.net/>

