The Libertarian Communist

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A Discussion Bulletin:

Aiming at a Critique of the Rule of Capital in all its forms and to Aid the development of an emancipatory movement that goes beyond the State and the Market

Commodity Society and the Housing Crisis
The purpose of The Libertarian Communist is to encourage discussion to aid a critique of the capital system in all its forms and to promote the development of an emancipatory movement that is capable of moving beyond the concepts of value, the state and the market. If you have disagreements with an article in this or any other issue, wish to offer comment or want to contribute something else to the discussion then please get in touch with your articles, letters and comments. You can do this by contacting libcom.bulletin@yahoo.co.uk.

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**Letter**

**Issue 29 and some other Comments**

Thanks for the Libertarian Communist, much appreciated! Awful lot of food for thought in the last issue and (if I'm not mistaken) something of a change in emphasis. I notice the masthead now reads "and for the development of an emancipatory movement", which is rather more ambitious than providing a space for discussion within "our sector"!

Personally, I have been having reservations about a lot of what I have been reading lately (present publication accepted). I’ve noticed a tendency to say, regarding capitalism in “all its forms”, “its all capitalism init”, which along with being a tad tautological isn’t exactly illuminating. Now it’s true that there is a widespread failure to grasp that much of what is described as "socialism" is actually the left-wing of capitalism, but that rather establishes that capitalism is anything but uniform in its manifestations. Chihuahuas and Rottweiler’s are both dogs but they are self evidently not the same (and if that isn't self evident a simple test springs to mind) and capitalism is every bit as phylogenetically plastic. Keynesianism, Hayekism and the for mentioned nominal brands of "Socialism", are not identical (though each of these in dominance modifies the other by conforming/converging to homogeneity) and when we conflate them we fail to grasp the actual lived experience of individuals within these different ways of managing capitalism (Norwegian capitalism would be the case in point, albeit a rather clichéd one). I’m not sure what this elision signifies, but I suspect it may be deforming our analysis. Just because we oppose capitalism in "all its forms", doesn't mean we have to be unsubtle regarding these differences.

I assume the "Jihadist and Muslim on the Couch" was included for provocation. Words like conjectural, suppositional, hypothetical, putative and notional come to mind!

The critique of Varoufakis is interesting though a little like criticizing a cow for not being a horse. Syriza is a hodgepodge party, an opportunist fusion very rapidly devolving into a mainstream social-democratic party, but it may represent Greece’s only hope for a diminution in austerity. And in Greece austerity means folk picking through trash for food.

Regards  **Mike Young**
**Work: why a critique of it is Necessary**

In our last issue we carried a notification of the "Never Work conference" which was due to be held in Cardiff in July.

We had some comments to the effect that this could be taken by some to indicate that we were advocating that in a society beyond the capital system we would all lay around all day whilst robots attended to our every need and thus our main problem would be dying through boredom. A re-reading of some of the text we included with the notification of this event should be enough to dispel this interpretation. Of course the main point is that what the conference is about is offering a critique of work in the context of present day society. Not only is Work or labour in present day society not about creating useful items or supplying needs but its main purpose is to keep the value expanding system afloat, there is also the point that work comes to dominate our lives. Yes in a society that has gone beyond the capital system people will still come together to work on necessary projects and help to keep society ticking over, people will still want to be creative and complete useful and fulfilling tasks but without the compulsion that operates within the capital system. With its focus on higher wages, rights for the labouring classes and all the nonsense about the "right to work“, the left and beyond have failed to analyse the meaning of work/labour and how things will change in a society freed from the constraints of capital accumulation. A critique of work can make a valuable contribution to the development of an emancipatory movement that is genuinely anti capitalist in spirit and purpose and therefore such a critique is to be welcomed.

Take a look at this:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4-3TKy2A28](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4-3TKy2A28)

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**The Black Death Stalks the USA** By Joe Hopkins

There is a spectre stalking the United States; it has become known as “The Black Death by White Cop”. In “The Land of the Free” police forces are behaving like occupying military forces fighting an insurgency. The main target of lethal police action seems to be dark skinned American citizens. There truly is a racial aspect to what is happening which upon closer examination, it can be argued, is a popularly conceived interpretation that thwarts, without deliberate intention, the recognition of its more deeply rooted class origins.

This essay will first focus on the racial targeting idea that meets the eye and is reported by the media. Then we’ll pull the curtain aside to see how politics in general and the politics of fear in particular have developed from the conditions that not only allowed but generated the repressive police practices that are being used to intimidate, dominate, and pacify primarily the lower stratum of the working class.

In February, 2012, Trayvon Martin was killed by George Zimmerman in Sanford, Florida at around 9:00 pm on a rainy evening. Zimmerman, a “wanna be” cop, had volunteered to be part of a neighbourhood crime-watch programme. The evening Trayvon Martin was shot to death by Zimmerman Trayvon was only seventeen years old and returning to his Father’s home in one of Sanford’s gated communities from the store where he had brought a package of Skittles Candy and a can of Nestea Ice tea to rinse it down with. Trayvon had pulled his hoodie up to protect his head from the drizzling rain. Zimmerman, it turned out, had made a number of calls to "911" over the previous months to report on suspicious characters in this same neighbourhood and the common denominator was, like Trayvon Martin, they had black skin. Zimmerman began to follow Trayvon in his private SUV; he crept down the street at about two miles (three kilometres) per hour behind Trayvon while speaking to "911 dispatch" on his personal mobile phone. Trayvon had called his girlfriend on his mobile phone too – to tell her he was frightened that a white guy was following him in a truck.

Trayvon took off running, and Zimmerman told 911 dispatch that he was going to chase down the black man wearing the hoodie who was fleeing the area. 911 dispatch told Zimmerman not to chase or follow the suspect and to wait for the police. Zimmerman chased Trayvon down - there was a struggle – and Zimmerman shot Trayvon Martin to death. (Info on the 911 phone call from Zimmerman taken from the actual recorded call broadcast on 89.1 WUF – National Public Radio).

On August 9th 2014 Michael Brown was walking in the street in a neighbourhood he frequented in his home town, Furgeson, Missouri, with a friend named Dorian
Johnson. A police van pulled up and the lone cop who is driving tells the men "Get the fuck on the sidewalk". Michael Brown retorts, "Fuck what you say", as they walk on. Officer Wilson then zooms his truck next to the two "black" men and in his effort to dismount the vehicle opens the driver's door so violently that it strikes Brown hard enough to bounce closed again before Wilson could exit. Within seconds Brown is running away and Wilson is shooting him. A bullet from Wilson's gun strikes Brown in the back and Brown stops, turns, raises his hands and says, "Hands up don't shoot". Officer Wilson then shoots Michael Brown six more times. Michael Brown had in fact shoplifted a package of Cigarillos cigarettes from a store earlier but nothing indicated (including Officer Wilson himself) that officer Wilson knew anything about the shoplifting when he gave Michael Brown and Dorian Johnson the order to "Get the fuck on the sidewalk". Michael Brown was 18 years old and going to begin his first year of college two days later when he was shot to death by Darren Wilson.

Eric Garner was 43 years old in July of 2014 when he was strangled to death by a white New York cop (while three other white cops helped hold Mr Garner down on the sidewalk) for selling loose cigarettes. The cop who strangled Eric Garner to death was using a "Choke hold" that was and still is a forbidden practice throughout the NYC police department. A passer-by video recorded the entire episode on a "Smart" Phone. The video/audio recording proves Eric Garner gasped "I can't breathe" more than eleven times before he was killed. Eric Garner was black.

Tamir Rice, a 12 year old child playing with a toy gun at a public park in Cleveland Ohio during the first weeks of 2015 was shot to death by a police officer within two seconds after the police officer got there. All mainstream media outlets – from National Public Radio to Fox News – have agreed on the "two second" part of the report I make above. Little Tamir was dark skinned.

John Crawford, III – a 22 year old "black" man was shopping in a Walmart store in Minnesota. He had selected a toy BB gun which he cradled in the crook of his arm, muzzle downward in the store aisle as he made a call on his mobile phone. Three young children played with each other on the floor nearby while their mother watched over them as she shopped. Neither the mother nor her children seemed in any way disturbed by- or even to take note of – John Crawford. Some unidentified customer in the store had noticed John Crawford and become presumably very disturbed at the presence of a black man holding a toy rifle and speaking on a cell phone; they called 911. When the police stormed the Walmart store they shot John Crawford III dead on sight without a single word being exchanged between the cops and Mr. Crawford. The tragic death of this innocent black man – being slain without reason – is compounded by the fact that the mother of the three playing children died at the scene from a heart attack: the cops were white.

Akai Gurley, a 28 year old black man was killed by white police as he entered a darkened stairwell to walk up to his flat because the elevator was out of service; the stairwell was dark because the light bulbs had been removed and not been replaced.

According to National Public Radio (NPR) it has been reported that on March 15th, 2015, in Madison Wisconsin, Tony Robinson, an unarmed black youth 19 years old, was shot to death by a white Madison policeman named Matt Kenney. Officer Kenney has been placed on paid leave pending the results of an investigation that should be concluded by the end of March.

How has it come to be that white cops can kill the black men and child named above and get away with it while none of the victims were armed or breaking the law when they were killed?

This essay is a study in compromise between the need to cover such a wide swath of ground and the fear of saying too little, too narrowly, given the topical immensity and analytic complexity needed to suss out the historical causes and their contemporary consequences for the black racial experience in the U.S.

There is really no ready- made and coherent ideology that can explain why black Americans are dying at the “business end” of white policemen’s guns with such regularity and rapidity. This condition, these circumstances, did not spring fully formed from the head of Zeus; they are the product of a particular historical development. It can be shown through the historical record that the internally coherent ideology of religion had a strong influence on the class and “Race” relations of today.
During the middle ages, 400-1400ce the Catholic Church had “realpolitik” power and influence. Feudalism was codified as the social, economic, and political arrangement by the church’s “Decree of the Three Orders” – during the Eleventh century –

... It is the will of the creator in heaven and in earth, the higher shall always rule over the lower. Each individual and each class should stay in its place, perform its tasks and enjoy the favours and rights proper to it ... To rebel against this rule is a grievous sin.

The practical result of the “Decree of the Three Orders” can perhaps be most clearly seen in France’s “Three Estates”; 1) Priests, 2) Nobles, 3) Peasants. The realpolitik power of the church was expressed externally in the time between the eleventh and the fourteenth century by the seven crusades it launched to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims. The Muslims, on the basis of religious belief and culture represented the most defined “Other” of the day.

Creating the Dunce, the Devil, the Dangerous, the Dastardly – The “Other”

It is of paramount importance to understand that the formation of a distinct identity is a process, at once simple and complex. Its simplicity is derived from the fact that the “self” – the social self as a community or society – (that which is to become defined as an “us”) does not actually exist. In a stratified – that is – class based society, the distributions of the social product are skewed toward the dominant class creating frustration, resentment and discontent between the “have not’s” and the “haves” within that society. These conditions are symptoms of an internal material conflict between people of the same country or region – a proximate strife that can compose a domestic threat resulting in violent conflict between the classes. To assuage these social tensions the historical choice made by the dominant elite – primarily the church in the case being analysed – was to forge a single identity by constructing an external “Other” as an obnoxious, evil, dangerous threat. The “politics of fear” is the favourite tool of choice of the dominant class to create the illusion of unity, solidarity, and homogeneity amongst the actually divided domestic classes. The “Self” in fact becomes defined by that which it is not, a product of ideology.

About a thousand years later Louis Althusser would epigrammically describe cases similar to this by writing: “Ideology is a representation of the imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions of existence”. This is one key, an invariant, to the birth of all types of nationalisms, the construction of “Race”, and its divisions.

The Catholic Church, Religious myth, the Enlightenment and imperialism as factors in creating a “Race” based world of “Others”

One way the European imperialists, who would commit genocide and on-going ethnocide against the aborigines they encountered on the continent Amerigo Vespucci would name America, came to believe that African slavery was natural is that it had been divinely sanctioned by God. The most ancient manuscripts of Genesis, the first book of five in the Pentetuch (also called the Law of Moses), in Ch.; 9 –VV.s; 18-26, tells that God cursed Noah’s son Canaan to be “a servant of servants shall he be unto his breather”. The gravamen of the curse was that Ham, Canaan’s younger brother, had viewed their father Noah drunk and naked. Why God chose to curse Canaan for what Ham is said to have done is not mentioned.

Jan n. Pieterse (1) writes that “It seems that it was the medieval Arabs who initially shifted the curse from Canaan to Ham". The Catholic Church interpreted the curse to extend to all future generations of Ham. As it turned out Cush, the first born son of Ham is said to have settled the “land of Cush” which is identified by biblical scholars and the church as Ethiopia. By whatever turn, according to the standard exegesis of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Cush is the actual progenitor of the African “Race” of people.

The curse tended to operate on the level of popular belief and mythology as it entered history. Karl Marx wrote that: “Theory becomes a material force once it has reached the masses”. Myths have been studied by anthropologists and found to embody clues to a society’s dominant values and function as a social charter setting forth the aims and principles of a united group. Considered analytically this could apply even to a nation, or “merely to its rulers.

‘Race’

In the context under consideration the myth came to operate at the level of a theory; an ideologically constructed theory that provided a justification for subjecting black-skinned people to servitude. “Race” had been invented by a myth; it then became an ideology as it was promoted by the dominant
social, political and religious elite i.e. The Catholic Church – the prime exemplar of a "United Group". As Marx noted in The German Ideology, "The class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force". Implicit racism became accepted as doxa. This prevalent racially based doxa infiltrated the philosophical movement known as the Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment, a race based world, and Imperialism

James M. Blaut (2), taking rationality as the overarching theme of the Enlightenment, has made a persuasive argument that its essence was that it positioned all peoples along a mental continuum. Under that rubric Western (European) "Man" was privileged as fully rational in a mental and mature sense; consequently, all other peoples of the world fell short of this by varying degrees. This "Finding" substantiated the implicit racism that had been founded upon religious myth. The easiest way to arrive at an ideology it seems is to start with a conclusion and then seek affirmation. In this instance the "Finding" is clearly the result and product of circular reasoning; i.e. it is ideological. Though Althusser described ideology as: "A representation of the imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions of existence", that in no way obviates the consequences of ideological belief. William I. Thomas (3) (1863-1947), a Professor of Sociology at the University of Chicago, developed the theory of the "Definition of the Situation" that suggests that "when people define situations as real they are real in their consequences.

One way that Thomas explained social reproduction of the status quo rested on his "definition of the situation". In 1928 he wrote: "Our picture of how the world works is integrally tied to how we work in the world. By acting in accordance with our conception of the way things are, we concertedly make them the way they are". (4)

Victor Kiernan (5) convincingly argues that if there was an essence to imperialism it lay in the Enlightenment; that the British took the rational continuum thesis and applied it to the lesser "Races" in a structured and codified scheme. They thought it was the climate of the region where the different "Races" lived that produced their retarded state. The warmer and drier their locale, the lower the "Race" stood on the Rational Continuum". The codified scheme resulted in The "Civilisational League Table". (CLT) (See End of Article)

The British rulers believed it to be their Christian duty to civilise i.e. colonise the backward, loathsome peoples of other races. It was considered "The White Man's Burden" to do so long before Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) used the phrase as a title for one of his poems in 1899.

The Most Stigmatised Race of All

The black Savage, being "natural man in the state of nature", was thought to be one step removed from the ape. Richard White (6) cites William Dampier (a renowned British explorer of the time) as writing that he was "astonished at the natural deformity" of the natives in Australia when he arrived in the late seventeenth century; that the natives had "the most unpleasant looks and the worst features of any people that I ever saw, tho’ I had seen a great variety of savages", Peter Cunningham (great grand uncle of Sir Alan Gordon Cunningham) is cited in white, supra, asking if the aborigines would not be better placed "at the very zero of civilisation, constituting in a measure the connecting link between man and the monkey tribe? – for really some of the women only seemed to require a tail to complete the identity". These ideas, it must be noted, depend entirely on appearances.

"Race", with its negative connotations had till the eighteenth century been implicit, merely based on the "self- as- superior" view held by white skinned western Europeans, including the British, of the different coloured "Others". It was the "Great chain of being" articulated by Carl Linnaeus in his book Systema Naturae of 1735, and ensuing editions, that sought to place "Race" on a secure and explicit scientific basis.

Originally Linnaeus divided "Man" into four "Races" – white at the pinnacle of the hierarchy followed in a descending by yellow, red and black "Races". In the 1758 edition of Systema Naturae Linnaeus divided genus homo into two: the second group included the orang-utan and certain "wild men who could not speak but none the less had emotions". Because the blacks were placed one notch above the "tail-less" orang-utan, and because the gradations between each member on the scale was small, the conclusion was that the Negro was at the
bottom of human civilisation standing only one notch above the “tail-less” orang-utan!

(The self- fulfilling prophesy of circular reasoning.

**The Presentation of an Ideology in a Scientific Form**

At the moment when a new order of phenomena becomes the object of a science they are already represented in the mind, not only through sense perceptions, but also by some kind of crudely formed concepts ...(8)

Nietzsche has rightly in my view expressed the view that “Concepts are the greatest enemy of truth”-

The most difficult subject can be explained to the most slow-witted man if he has not formed any idea [concept] of them already; but the simplest thing cannot be made clear to the most intelligent man if he is firmly persuaded that he knows already, without a shadow of a doubt, what is laid before him.  
- Leo Tolstoy, 1897 –

Because by believing that the truth is firmly in hand there is no longer any reason to look further into matters. Carl Linnaeus provided the intellectual scaffolding for chattel slavery.

Because interpretation cannot put forward any other proof of its truth than its capacity to account for the facts in a coherent way the materialist-structuralist method has been employed to organise discursive information that is extensive though not exhaustive into a system of intelligible relations. I do not believe it necessary for one to be an historian or sociologist to understand the influence of the connexions established in this essay....

To be continued...

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**An Abbreviated Representation of the CLT**

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<th>Civilised World (Div 1)</th>
<th>Barbaric (Div 2)</th>
<th>Savage (Div 3)</th>
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<td>“Second World”</td>
<td>“Third World”</td>
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<td>Ottoman Empire</td>
<td>Africa, Australia</td>
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<td>Chrysler, Siam, Japan</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
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<td>Natural Man in the state of Nature</td>
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<td>The British as the Chosen People or Master Race</td>
<td>The Fallen People</td>
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<td>Political Legitimating Principles</td>
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<td>Terra Nullius</td>
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<td>Non-Sovereign Require Indirect Colonial Rule (Borderless Populated Space)</td>
<td>Require Direct Colonial Rule</td>
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<td>Deviant</td>
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<td>Deviant</td>
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<td>Paternal/ masculine Independent Innovative Rational</td>
<td>Adolescent/ Feminine, Imitative, exotic and Irrational</td>
<td>Child-like/ Irrational</td>
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</table>
Moscow, Kiev, and the West European Far Right  By Vladislav Bugera,

On January 7 [2015] I was watching the TV channel Rossiya-24. They were talking about the terrorist act that had just taken place at the editorial office of [the French satirical weekly] Charlie Hebdo. They were broadcasting the first interviews with famous people, who were giving their interpretation of the tragedy and its causes.

So who were those people who first explained to Russians what had happened?

Jean-Marie Le Pen [former leader of the French National Front] and Natalia Narochnitskaya [a Russian nationalist politician]. Narochnitskaya went on about the “threat” to Christian Europe posed by Moslem immigrants and praised the anti-Moslem demonstrations organized in Germany by the PEGIDA movement. It is futile to call these demonstrators fascists, she said; they are no fascists...

Let me remind you: this is the very movement whose leader Lutz Bachman likes to take photos of himself with an Adolf Hitler forelock and moustache and post them on the internet – a man who is being dragged through the courts not only for inciting interethnic hatred, at which he is a past master, but also for publicly displaying these photos.

Since 2013 Le Pen, Senior and his daughter Marine [successor to her father as leader of the National Front] have often appeared on Russian TV. Especially since 2014 they have received constant publicity, both as personalities and as representatives of the National Front. Over the past year Marine Le Pen has never been far away from our TV screens.

For many years the National Front had very close and friendly relations with the Ukrainian fascist party Svoboda [Freedom]. This party was founded in 1991 under the name “Social-National Party of Ukraine” (SNPU). At that time they were proud to call themselves Nazis, simply reversing the order of the two words in the traditional “national-socialist” brand. The party’s name was changed to Svoboda in 2004 in a quest for greater respectability.

The Svoboda website displays a curious selection of party documents reflecting various stages in the friendship between the French and Ukrainian neo-fascists. Their paths diverged in autumn 2013, when Svoboda was one of the organizers of the Maidan uprising. After Yanukovych was ousted a number of its people (starting with Andrei Parubii, a founding father of the SNPU and commandant of the Maidan) filled top posts in the Ukrainian state apparatus. However, the French National Front suddenly took Russia’s side and supported the annexation of Crimea.

In March 2014 I saw on the Svoboda website a number of letters and appeals from the party leadership to the leaders of the National Front and some other European neo-fascist organizations that had likewise taken Russia’s side. A most amusing correspondence in a plaintive tone: “Why are you abandoning us? Don’t be friends with the Kremlin, be friends with us!” And yet the reorientation of the National Front toward Russia has had no impact on the rest of their politics – they remain neo-fascists.

However, the National Front has paid no heed to the entreaties of their former party comrades in Ukraine. They prefer the junta in Moscow to the junta in Kiev. And in turn the Kremlin junta has joyfully embraced the French Nazis.

Official propaganda is now contradictory to an astonishing degree. It tells us that Russia is
fighting a fascist plague that comes from the West and has infected Ukraine. And yet at the same time it sings the praises of those Western fascists who only yesterday were the friends of the Ukrainian fascists. It rejoices at each electoral success of the National Front in France – Russian TV (especially Rossiya-24) hails even their smallest advances in municipal elections as glorious triumphs.

Evidently, for the Kremlin junta only a fascist who is against Russia can be called a fascist. Those fascists who declare their friendship for Russia do not count as fascists at all.

And indeed: how can the term “fascist” be applied to the organizations that gathered in St. Petersburg on March 22 for the “Conservative Forum” when the forum was hosted by the Rodina [Homeland] party? After all, one of the founding fathers of Rodina is none other than current deputy prime minister Dmitrii Rogozin, who among other leading posts oversees the military-industrial complex.

Several European neo-Nazi parties were represented at the forum, including the Greek Golden Dawn, which murders its political opponents (i.e., it is a terrorist organization), the Party of Swedes (it originally called itself the National-Socialist Front, but like the SNPU decided to rebrand itself), and the Spanish and German National-Democratic Parties. For some reason these friends of Russia turned out to be 100% political twins of the Banderite Svoboda and Right Sector. According to a report broadcast on Radio Biznes FM on the morning of March 23, even Le Pen’s National Front was embarrassed to appear in such openly Nazi company and in order to preserve its respectable image sent no representatives to the Conservative Forum.

Many West European neo-Nazis call themselves “national-democrats.” This tradition, which some Russian neo-Nazis have borrowed, originates in Germany, where a small regional organization was formed in the immediate postwar period under the name of the National-Democratic Party of Hessen. When one reads about this party and other neo-Nazi organizations of that period, one is astonished at how similar they were to Ukrainian and Russian extreme rightist groups of the post-Soviet period:

One of the first extreme right parties to appear in West Germany was the German Right Party, created as early as 1946. It was headed by old Nazis... In 1947 the German Right Party merged with the Conservative Party...

Soon a split took place in the party. In 1949 one of its leaders, Dorls, together with a former major general in Hitler’s army, Roemer, and the old Nazi Kruger, created the Socialist Imperial Party, whose action program was openly neo-Nazi in character... A ruling to prohibit this party was issued in October 1952 and its members went over to other organizations that more cunningly concealed their neo-Nazi character.

One such party was the German Imperial Party, which absorbed some of the members of the German Right Party... They merged with the so-called National-Democratic Party of Hessen to form a new party... While in terms of domestic policy the German Imperial Party differed little from the governing CDU/CSU parties [the CDU is again today the governing party in Germany; Chancellor Angela Merkel belongs to it – V.B.], in their foreign policy slogans the neo-Nazis advocated open revanchism and a policy of annexations (History of Fascism in Western Europe [in Russian], Moscow 1978, pp. 503–504).

Observe how easily these blocs and alliances of postwar German neo-Nazis brought together organizations whose names included the words imperial, democratic, right, socialist, and conservative. Observe how easily “democrats” morphed into “imperialists” and “conservatives” into “socialists.” What was then already characteristic of one of the segments of the German political spectrum – namely, the extreme right – is now characteristic of practically the whole political spectrum (with isolated and microscopic exceptions) in Russia and Ukraine, where practically any “leftist” you may care to choose is allied not just with rightists but with extreme rightists, where “democrats” have no qualms about joint action with rank authoritarians, where “socialists” and even “communists” are happy to collaborate with imperialist or ethnocratic ultra-rightists. I analyze why this is so and what follows from this in my forthcoming book Contemporary Fascism in Russia and Ukraine.

But let us return to the German national-democrats. In 1964 the German Imperial Party, the German Party, and the Pan-German Party merged to form the National-Democratic Party of Germany.

The neo-Nazis openly sought to rehabilitate the crimes of the fascist regime. They demanded that the prosecution of war criminals be halted and that Germany be freed of the responsibility for starting World War
Two. “The glorious and courageous conduct of German soldiers of all times must serve as an example for the Bundeswehr. For so long as the fathers are openly branded as criminals the sons will not be able to become good soldiers” – said the manifesto adopted at the founding congress (History of Fascism in Western Europe, p. 505).

And it is these dear people – people who demand restoration of the “Great German Reich” – who get invited to a forum in Russia by a party whose founder is in the government, busy organizing the rearment of the Russian armed forces. And at the same time all our mass media are full of hosannas to the great feat of the Soviet soldiers and toilers who defeated German Nazism. So with one hand the Kremlin loudly thanks our grandparents for crushing Nazism, while with the other hand it pulls those Nazis who somehow escaped our grandparents’ clutches out of the political dung heap and welcomes them to Russia.

In World War Two the Nazis never managed to take Leningrad, but now our rulers invite them to that very city, settle them in a luxury hotel, and treat them with all honour and respect. Then they have the gall to tell us that they are confronting Hitler’s heirs in Kiev and lecture us on the need to fight against extremism and terrorism.

Such are the paradoxes of patriotism.

Dmitrii Rogozin – one of the rulers of today’s Russia. I am leafing through a collection of old newspapers. For the Homeland [Za Rodinu!] was the organ of the Moscow City Branch of the Rodina party. The issue dated November 24, 2005 came out when Rogozin was chairman of this party, during a campaign for elections to the Moscow City Council. This was just after the scandal provoked by Rogozin’s demand that Moscow be cleared of “trash,” by which he very clearly meant migrant workers from the Central Asian republics.

The very first page of the issue features a defence of this statement of Rogozin’s. Use is made of the favourite alibi of all those European neo-Nazis who try to prove that they respect the criminal code – the claim that “we are against only illegal immigration; we are only upholding the law.” They also present themselves as defenders of “traditional values” against “erosion of the true cultural identity of our nation” – a fog of words to hide the fact that essentially they are using ethnic Russians to beat up the “aliens” as they did in Kondopoga and Biryulevo.

Over half of this issue of the paper is devoted to the theme of illegal immigration. On page 3 Narochnitskaya also has her say on this topic, wholly in line with the orientation of the paper. If now she defends the German neo-Nazis from PEGIDA, that is because she shares the same principles. Alexei Mitrofanov has said that Narochnitskaya writes Putin’s programmatic articles (on February 9, 2012, on the program Open Studio, broadcast on the Fifth, i.e., St. Petersburg, Channel). I wonder if he is right.

In the late 1990s Narochnitskaya’s articles appeared in the magazine National Interests, published by the Institute for a National Reform Strategy. The director of this institute, Baburin, brought together on the editorial board of the journal such well-known individuals as Shafarevich, Zinoviev, Panarin, Glazyev, and Zatulin [all prominent Russian nationalists]. One of her articles appeared in the second issue of the journal in 1999, and alongside it articles by the outright fascists Kozhinov and Kondratenko.

In the same issue we find an article by a certain Vasilyev, entitled “General De Gaulle and the Collapse of the French Empire.” The author not only pays tribute to the myth of the Masonic conspiracy but praises the Vichy regime that collaborated with the Nazis. Let me emphasize this point: an article that praises the humanism and lofty spirituality of allies of the Nazis appeared in a journal published by fervent Russian and Soviet patriots – the same people who constantly glorify the Soviet victory over Germany and its allies in 1945.

As we see, it is no coincidence that the Kremlin should have made friends with the French National Front: the Russian fascists have for many years been demonstrating their sympathies for the French fascists.

In 2013 Russian TV showed great sympathy for a French neo-fascist – Dominique Venner, one of the founders of the New Right movement – when he committed suicide as a mark of protest against the legalization of same-sex marriages in France. The TV commentators did not mention that in the 1960s Venner belonged to the OAS (Secret Army Organization) and spent three years in jail for his activity in its ranks. After his release Venner cooperated with Alain de Benoit – one of the most prominent ideologues of European neo-fascism – in establishing the New Right.

What sort of organization was the OAS?
The French fascists obtained support from international neo-fascism. With the latter’s help the fascist-terrorist Secret Army Organization (OAS) was created in Madrid in February 1961.

OAS leader General Salan received support from right extremist organizations in West Germany and Switzerland. A special OAS school was set up in Spain, headed by former SS colonel Otto Skorzeny (History of Fascism in Western Europe, p. 526).

Otto Skorzeny was a legendary figure—one of the main undercover operators of the Third Reich, a favourite of Hitler. It was he who on the personal order of the Fuhrer led a team of SS paratroopers to free Benito Mussolini on September 8, 1943, thereby giving the Italian fascist regime a new lease of life. After the war Skorzeny continued fighting for his Nazi ideals and Dominique Venner was his young comrade-in-arms.

And so the propaganda of the Putin regime angrily denounces the Ukrainian neo-Nazis and at the same time mourns a French comrade-in-arms of the old Nazis (no need for the prefix “neo-“here!), of a celebrated SS man and favourite of Hitler.

Thus the Russian rulers do exactly the same as their Ukrainian counterparts. The Ukrainian rulers make heroes of the Banderites and hush up their wartime collaboration with Hitlerite Germany, while the Russian rulers make heroes of the French fascists and hush up their collaboration with Hitlerite Germany. And at the same time they cooperate (for example, through Rodina, one of the Kremlin’s puppet parties) with direct German pupils of the Hitlerites. And they do all this under the cover of celebrating May 9 [Victory Day] and extolling the feat of the Soviet soldiers who defeated German Nazism.

The Ukrainian and Russian rulers and the propagandists in their service call one another fascists. Both sides are right—when they gaze at one another they see their own mirror image.

Vladislav Bugera, Ufa April 10, 2015

Taken from StephenShenfield.NET

See also Stephen Shenfield talk on Globalisation and Nationalism at http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVh9o-sVDHV9X...

Climate Change (Global Heating) Notes

Recently, Avaaz, the online campaigning group reported that a G7 Summit meeting of leading world powers made a commitment to get the global economy off fossil fuels forever!!! And Avaaz also is hopeful that at a forthcoming December summit in Paris the entire world could follow this lead.

The online campaign group claims that its membership’s campaigning on this issue can claim some of the credit for this decision and sights the follow activities:

- spearheading the gigantic, momentum-changing, 700,000 strong climate march last year
- a 2.7 million person petition for 100% clean/0 carbon delivered to dozens of key leaders
- scores of rallies, high-level lobbying meetings, opinion polls, and ad campaigns, all funded by our community
- a 3 month all-out push for the G7 summit leadership, especially German Chancellor Angela Merkel, to put this on the agenda and agree to this goal

However don’t start celebrating too early as the G7 declaration is just a commitment. We would be slightly sceptical that this commitment will become a reality. We need to ask, for example, what is the time scale for the world’s capitalist powers, (there are no others) to come off fossil fuels completely? Still, we suppose, we can live in hope but definitely not give up on our own commitment to help the development of a non sectarian emancipatory movement that is capable of bringing about a sane world.

Sources:
https://secure.avaaz.org/en/paris_here_we_come/?baPFobb&v=60188

Merkel convinces Canada and Japan on CO2 (Politico)

G7 leaders bid ‘Auf Wiedersehen' to carbon fuels (Reuters)
http://in.reuters.com/article/2015/06/08/g7-summit-idINKBN00O025120150608
Not such good News

Avaaz also reported that The US government has given Shell the go-ahead to drill in the pristine Arctic, putting our climate and the ocean’s majestic wildlife under grave risk. But, it adds that this can be prevented as before Shell can get to the Arctic, their monster ship needs to gear up in Seattle. And But one man has the power to turn Shell away -- Seattle’s green mayor Ed Murray. He’s already told Shell that they don’t have permission. As Avaaz suggest: "it takes real guts to stand up to one of the most powerful companies in history

https://secure.avaaz.org/en/shell_drilling_9/?baPFeb&v=58364

Experts are clear that drilling the Arctic is extremely dangerous and far too hazardous for our fragile climate. The closest Coast Guard station is more than 1,000 miles away. If anything goes wrong, which Shell's own plan says is likely, there would be literally nobody to help and nothing they could do about it.

But what's really incredible is that they're even considering unlocking a whole new form of extreme oil that scientists say is 100% incompatible with preventing runaway global warming. The fight in Seattle is getting red-hot right now. Last week, after mounting pressure from local organizers, Mayor Murray told Shell their permits don’t cover their planned activities. But Shell’s ships have set sail for Seattle anyways in gross violation of the democratic process. Avaaz add: “Profits for Shell or a safe climate for the whole planet -- it should be an easy choice.” However, we should add, in the capital system the profit motive has priority and that is what we need to change.

As Avaaz state: "This is not just about protecting polar bears and other magnificent Arctic species. This is about drawing a red line around drilling in one of the earth’s last untouched places..."

Sources:
Shell to resume Arctic drilling off Alaska as green groups warn of disaster (The Guardian) http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/may/11/shell-arctic-drilling-alaska-oil-gas


Mayor: Port needs new permit to host Shell oil-drilling fleet (The Seattle Times) http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/mayor-port-needs-new-permit-to-host-oil-drilling-fleet/


If you have any updates on the above articles, comments or information on climate change please contact us at: libcom.bulletin@yahoo.co.uk.

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When somewhere to live is a commodity

By Ricardo Monde

In Britain the general election has come and gone and we are still trapped in a society where the very act of living is dominated by the commodity form. Of course that is no surprise and has little to do with the election of a Conservative government for whatever party came out on top the system of capital accumulation and thus the commodity form would have continued because in this part of the world as in all others thinking is confined to that mind-set. Talk to most people about an alternative and you will be told that, “you have to live in the real world”. This is merely the excuse of a lazy mind; the so-called “real world”, they mean capitalism of course, is nothing more, in terms of its inevitability, than a social construct. There is nothing more natural and permanent about capitalism than the systems that have preceded it, any doubt then read or look up some history. Nor is there any fundamental barrier why the human race cannot move beyond the outdated
system based on (economic) value expansion other than the barrier that resides in the heads of so many.

With the commodity form as dominant as it has become today, life for many is about survival rather than living and this is no more apparent than in what should be one of the basic necessities of life, having a decent roof over your head. Of course in many parts of the so-called undeveloped world having any roof over your head at all is a major problem but in countries such as Britain having decent housing was thought to be some sort of fundamental right, in theory at least. That there is, what is described as a "housing crisis" in Britain is not denied by anybody not even the gloaty Conservative government who claim to be able to cure all ills until you dig beneath the surface.

The Governor of the Bank of England Mark Carney believes that the problems with housing is a major risk to the UK economy whilst the CBI described it as a brewing storm and said the time for action is now. From Bankers to Revolutionary Communists there is agreement that a housing crisis exists in Britain. There is a shortage of homes and they cost too much and this crisis is damaging lives and can lead to families breaking up amongst other problems [The Guardian 14th March 2015] Yet little hope was to be found in the recent general election as all the major parties policies on this subject were described as "piecemeal, gestural and unambitious" [ibid]. An activist on the issue told the Red Pepper magazine in August 2014 that in terms of helping tenants who, for example, are facing cuts to their housing benefit, the Labour Party in Merseyside are doing next to nothing

The Housing Crisis: Cost

Unsurprisingly in this commodity driven system one of the major stumbling blocks to obtaining what, in a more humane system would be described as a home, is cost and as well as affecting families and individuals this factor also impacts on government spending. As has been noted the price of housing cuts across social classes. In places such as London, the South East, many chunks of rural Britain and many cities even if you are young, in a reasonably well paid job you can still have little chance of being able to afford your own home [The Guardian March 14th 2015]. In Britain the cost of a house is five times greater than the average personal annual income (let alone that of people below this average) and house prices are still rising. From December 2013 to 2014 house prices rose by 10% and in addition the cost of renting property (a more realistic commodity term) has also risen steeply. The latter is where it impacts on government spending as it has to help the less well off with their rents via subsides. It is estimated that housing costs the average family 20% of their weekly outgoings and this is compared to the figure of 16% in 2000 [Independent February 9th 2015]. This cost factor in housing has been described as an "accelerating human disaster". One that has created exploitative landlords, overcrowding and poor conditions. It is estimated that people who have to rent privately can spend up to 40% of their income on housing and a large percentage of people in their 20s have come to accept that they will never be able to afford a home of their own [The Guardian Op.cit]. In reality (our old friend) the commodity system has little in the way of answers because it is not about putting need before profit. For example there is conflict and confusion between availability and affordability as a dominant view is that the only way to persuade those who build houses to build more of them is via prices, letting them rise even more but this is no help whatsoever if you cannot afford to pay the already too high prices. The old commodity form based argument that the market has the solution given the right conditions is unsupported by the evidence as it is noted that at no time since the end of World War 2 has the private sector built at the rate that is currently required and the one time the total housing numbers was greater than what is needed now was the 1950s and 60s, a period when council housing accounted for 50% of the figure [The Guardian March 14th 2015].

The Road to the present crisis.

There is little doubt that one of the major causes of the crisis in housing today was the policy under various conservative administrations under Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s of selling off council houses. This policy gave people living in council homes the right to buy them at vastly reduced prices with the further sting in the tail that the councils were not allowed to use the money raised by the sales to build more council homes. This led to a decline in affordable housing; some were sold as investments and rented out for profit. This led to the current situation where councils are forced to pay high rents to private landlords in order to provide accommodation for the homeless in properties that once belonged to those same councils. This decline
in the number of council properties has led to a vast increase in the waiting list for social housing and pushed many of the less well off into the hands of private landlords who could not lose as the state were forced to subsidise the rents via benefits which led to a rising housing benefit budget. Where is the paradise offered by the Thatcher governments which claimed that there would be a reward for those who worked hard? The situation we have today is one where property owners can make more money by holding on to their properties than they can from getting a job whilst there are many who can work hard but will never be able to get on the property ladder.

The policies of the present government with their help to buy scheme is likely to lead to yield similar results and worsen the already dire situation. Such a policy, many argue, will encourage many who are keen to own their own homes to enter into an already overvalued housing market by offering them state equity loans. This policy is unlikely to lead to a correction in house prices. This help to buy scheme finds little support from economists and whilst the government predicted that it would increase the level of house building there seems little evidence that it is having such an effect. The scheme to help people buy their housing association homes seems destined to repeat the mistakes of the 1980s regarding the selling off of council property as it will once again diminish the amount of social housing stock and create problems for housing associations who rely on their housing stock (their assets) to raise money. Meanwhile, compared with many other parts of Europe where renting is more common, in Britain it is discouraged as tenants have fewer rights and the odds are stacked in favour of landlords. Firstly most contracts are short-term and secondly there are fees for credit checks and estate agents which are costly. So those who have to rent are left in a state of insecurity. Some argue that one way to tackle the housing crisis would be to increase the rights of those who rent as against landlords as this would mean that less people would be convinced they have no choice but to try and own their own home with all the financial costs involved. However not only is such a change in policy very, very unlikely it is likely lead to less rented private property being available as renting out property would not be such a profitable exercise. This takes us back to the need for more social housing to be made available but as suggested before we are witnessing a trend in the opposite direction.

The policy of encouraging people to own their own homes, including many people who will struggle to keep up with the payments is tied to the commodity society. Homes become not just places to live but investments where people who see the value of their property rise think they are on to a winner but unless they sell their homes and live in a tent or whatever they are going to have to pay ever increasing sums to buy an alternative home, they are caught in a circle of ever increasing costs and those who cannot keep up with such rising costs find themselves in dire straits. One of the major aims of this policy of encouraging home ownership is to tie people more deeply into this mad commodity system as they are led to believe they have a real stake in the system.

Other factors relating to the housing crisis

Immigration: As with other issues such as jobs, many blame high levels of immigration for the crisis in housing; the argument being that there are simply too many people who need to be housed and Britain is not a country with large amounts of land such as the U.S and Australia for example. However the major impact on housing due to immigration is due to wealthy people coming from places such as the Middle East, Asia, America and other parts of Europe who are buying up the most expensive and luxurious properties in places such as London which is forcing prices to go even higher. At the lower end of the scale there is little evidence that immigration is having a major impact nor is there much evidence for the claim made by anti-immigration groups that immigrants and their families are given preferential treatment for social housing [Independent, February 9th 2015].

Buy to let Landlords: This is another factor that fits in with the continuing commodification of having a roof over your head. The continuing rise in the price of houses over the several decades has led to a situation where they are regarded as financial assets rather than places to live in. In this situation many people, (well off and mostly around middle aged) have purchased second or even third homes in order to let them out and found this more secure than sticking their money in savings accounts or other investments. The buy to let brigade have the advantage in finding and purchasing
properties over first time buyers as they are more financially secure. Whilst some argue that the rise of buy to let has not effected first time buyers that much as those intent on buying to let are looking for larger properties to develop into flats there is the factor that this trend has aided the continuing rise in property prices and this has made things more difficult for those trying to get a foothold on the property market.

**House Builders and Investment companies:** There is the obvious point, but one that is not clearly emphasised, that in a society based on the commodity form homes are not built for people to live in but to make money, accumulate ever more capital, increase economic value, make a profit call it what you like it is all the same concept. House builders are often accused of not building enough houses, because then what new homes they do sell are more expensive and this increases their profits. It is argued that there is evidence that “Land Hoarding”, unsurprisingly, is a practice companies engage in [Independent Feb 9th 2015]. This means firms acquire more land and sit on it while it goes up in value, but this is evident mostly amongst investment companies. However who are the real culprits matters little if you are struggling to afford a place to live in and secondly this is just inherent in a system dominated by the commodity form.

**Nimbies:** Who? This is the name for well off mostly retired people living in scenic rural areas who have a lot of support amongst local politicians. Such people often object to new construction projects around where they live, including the building of new homes. They object because they feel that such developments will obstruct their view of England’s green and pleasant land but much more importantly from the commodity form viewpoint they aspire to, such processes will lead to decreasing the value of their properties.

**Commodification of housing leads to social Cleansing**

The dire situation for many less well-off people and families due to the ever increasing commodification of housing is highlighted by events in London in the last few years. Last year a group known as Focus E15 Mothers highlighted the fact that councils in London were practising a policy of Social Cleansing by prising existing tenants out of their homes to replace those homes with expensive private housing and using property guardian companies to carry out this policy. The property guardian schemes are where councils pay property management companies to install short-term live in guardians, people who pay to stay in disused properties to keep out squatters after social housing tenants have been pushed out. For example Lambeth Council use Camelot who are a ‘vacant property management company’ for this purpose and many other London councils are also using property guardians with the aim of replacing social housing tenants with affluent renters. In the Lambeth area a three bed roomed property was sold in May for £979,000. Very often councils offer priority re-housing to those who agree to leave properties in areas the council wish to develop, jumping ahead of people who are already on the waiting list. The tenants who refuse to accept the new houses they are offered are then classed as having made themselves voluntarily homeless and are effectively left on the streets [Open Democracy September 2015].

This process of social cleansing has been highlighted by many of those who have been affected but instead of putting and shutting up have actively campaigned against the process; Groups such as Focus E15 and Sweets Way residents. The Sweets Way estate has virtually been wiped out as a decision was taken to demolish 150 family homes on that estate. Around a couple of months ago one of the last families on the estate was forced to move to Luton, a place that, according to The Independent, has received many homeless families from London due to the social cleansing policies of the London councils [Sweets Way Residents Campaign Group]. Members of the Focus E15 Mothers Group had been living at a specialist hostel for homeless women but this was then sold by Newham council to private developers who then turned it into luxury flats. The women were then informed by Newham Council that they would not be re-housed in the area but would have to move well away from the area to places such as Manchester, Birmingham and Hastings. It is reported that there are 24,000 households on the social housing waiting lists. The same process is taking place in other boroughs. Social housing tenants are being turfed out and the properties are turned into expensive private housing as local council’s cash in on London's inflated property prices. [Open democracy, op; cit]. One interview with an activist from the Focus 15 Mothers Campaign Group was conducted in the middle
of an estate surrounded by building cranes and newly developed high-rise apartment buildings. The interviewer commented: "This is aggressive property development at the government’s behest and the tenants’ cost. By comparison, the estate is made to look like the last chance saloon, as the council has boarded up the properties from which tenants have been decanted." [Red Pepper August 2014] As the Sweets Way campaign group noted the problem is not confined to their area and Barnet’s “ultra-Tory housing policy, London is clearing out poorer and working class people at a rate hard to contemplate. There is a battle to be won or London is going to become just one great big investment property for the rich. That analysis was confirmed by a report in The Independent a while ago based on leaked figures from London Councils that over a three year period 50,000 homeless families have been forced out of London by local authorities [Sweets Way Campaign Group]. It should be added that this figure is likely to increase substantially over the next few years.

To their credit groups like Focus E15 and Sweets Way Campaign group (SWCG) are not accepting their situation nor are they relying on politicians either national or local to come to their aid. Just a day before the recent General Election members of the SWCG noted that both of the main parties were committed to the destructive policies that had led to the mess they were fighting against and that whilst some members of the group will vote and some will not they would be back together the day after the election fighting for their homes and trying to prevent London from becoming just a place for the rich who can afford the kind of properties that Sweets Way estate is being destroyed for.

So one afternoon at around 4pm in May the SWCG organised a blockade of the A 1000 London’s main commuter road outside of Barnet’s Homes offices to protest against the whole process of social cleansing whereby – "...families are being driven out of the capital and being put through extreme stress so that companies such as Annington Properties can destroy perfectly decent homes in order to build high-end flats!" Following this, members of the group and their supporters, many from a highly successful online campaign, marched through Sweets Way thereby defying the undemocratic injunction against political protest that Annington had been granted. The campaign group also discovered just how limited the present democratic process is when they went to deliver, along with their colleagues from West Hendon, a combined 200,000 strong petition to the Barnet Council AGM. After handing the boxes over they were denied entry to the “Public” galleries at Hendon Town Hall. Instead they were faced with police vans and metal barricades and police and security guards blocked them from entering. It appears that the “Public” galleries were for pre-selected invitees only and whilst Cllr Richard Cornellius, the head of the council, agreed to accept the petitions he would only see two members from each campaign group. He then failed to present the petition to the AGM which meant that it was ignored and not discussed by the elected councillors. A member from the West Hendon Group raised the question: Is this what constitutes democracy and accountability in 2015? Unfortunately the answer to that question is yes, but then meaningful democracy and the commodity system are strangers who will never meet.

The focus E15 group have likewise refused to accept what is happening to them and have joined forces with other groups to keep up their fight, including Carpenters Against Regeneration Plans (CARP), and also UK Uncut and the People’s Assembly. CARP was set up originally to ensure that that tenants were returned to the Carpenters’ estate after its proposed development, but then, a campaigner commented, “the Olympic Games happened, the Olympics turned this area into prime real estate, and the council are trying to get us out fast”. So much for the Olympics being assigned the name Peoples’ Games, or benefiting the people around where it is held, everywhere it has been held the story is much the same, it is the people, unless you are mega rich of course, who lose out when such events are held in the areas where they live.

It was also reported that in February this year six people were arrested when activists clashed with riot police when protests took place against the social cleansing of London’s poor. The Aylesbury Estate in Southwark had become a focal point for campaigners who are strongly opposed to the regeneration schemes around London. The estate is due to be demolished as part of a £1.5 billion regeneration scheme led by Southwark Council. Early in February activists occupied flats on the estate in protest at the proposed development but then Southwark council moved to evict the protesters and following a
court order Metropolitan Officers were called in to assist the local authorities eviction order.

The left and beyond have for years viewed the struggle against the capital system as taking place in the workplace, a struggle between labour and capital. Modern capitalism has changed that analysis. In countries such as Britain there is little in the way of conflict within the workplace that is likely to lead to a struggle against the system, such struggles as there are in this field are merely over wages, jobs and other conflicts that are about gaining something within the system and there is little doubt that capital is winning that battle. So-called organised labour in countries such as Britain is weak and is likely to get weaker still. In recent years the meaningful opposition to the capital system has been based on movements outside the workplace; the so-called anti-capitalist movement, greener based movements trying to defend the planet against the ravages of the commodity based system and the Occupy movement are ones that spring to mind in particular. Such struggles have unfortunately failed to get to the core of what the capital system is and have to a large extent still been confined to a type of reformism that whilst often revolutionary in rhetoric has been basically seeking to solve the various issues within the limits of the system. However from a more positive point of view the problems these movements are dealing with will not go away and the movements themselves will not so easily be bought off as the labour movement has but in truth from the beginning that movement was based on reformism in a way that the movements dealing with wider issues cannot be, they will surface again because the issues remain.

The Housing Crisis, this article has focused on, is another sign of how in the modern capitalist system the major conflicts are taking place on fields outside of the workplace, and although this may be another issue, it may well be the case that if what are termed as trade unions at present are to survive, albeit in a revised form they will have to be based on communities and deal with organisation based on community issues. Groups such as focus E15 and the Sweets Way Residents campaign are showing the way forward in the way they are refusing to be cast aside as mere victims of the commodity system and should be encouraged and supported in every way people can support them. We should neither argue that they should accept their fate because they are failing to take on capitalism, nor can we ignore the fact that what lays at the root of their problem is that same system. Certain comments from the activists in these groups fighting to keep a roof over their heads show that they know that their fight is not just against certain individuals but against something much greater and what is also positive is the way that they have joined forces with other groups so that people can come together and see how issues are linked and can move forward from that point. As with all such struggles the basic issue is how we can encourage such developing movements to keep up with their campaigns and help them to do so and at the same time also encourage them to realise that their ultimate battle is with the commodity system itself.

The Prison Industry in the United States: Big Business or a New Form of Slavery?

By Vicky Pelaez  Global Research, March 31, 2014

Human rights organizations, as well as political and social ones, are condemning what they are calling a new form of inhumane exploitation in the United States, where they say a prison population of up to 2 million – mostly Black and Hispanic – are working for various industries for a pittance. For the tycoons who have invested in the prison industry, it has been like finding a pot of gold. They don’t have to worry about strikes or paying unemployment insurance, vacations or comp time. All of their workers are full-time, and never arrive late or are absent because of family problems; moreover, if they don’t like the pay of 25 cents an hour and refuse to work, they are locked up in isolation cells.

There are approximately 2 million inmates in state, federal and private prisons throughout the country. According to California Prison Focus, “no other society in human history has imprisoned so many of its own citizens.” The figures show that the United States has locked up more people than any other country: a half million more than China, which has a population five times greater than the U.S. Statistics reveal that the United States holds 25% of the world’s prison population, but only 5% of the world’s people. From less than 300,000 inmates in 1972, the jail population grew to 2 million by the year 2000. In 1990 it was one million. Ten years ago there were
only five private prisons in the country, with a population of 2,000 inmates; now, there are 100, with 62,000 inmates. It is expected that by the coming decade, the number will hit 360,000, according to reports.

What has happened over the last 10 years? Why are there so many prisoners?

“The private contracting of prisoners for work fosters incentives to lock people up. Prisons depend on this income. Corporate stockholders who make money off prisoners’ work lobby for longer sentences, in order to expand their workforce. The system feeds itself,” says a study by the Progressive Labor Party, which accuses the prison industry of being “an imitation of Nazi Germany with respect to forced slave labor and concentration camps.”

The prison industry complex is one of the fastest-growing industries in the United States and its investors are on Wall Street. “This multimillion-dollar industry has its own trade exhibitions, conventions, websites, and mail-order/Internet catalogs. It also has direct advertising campaigns, architecture companies, construction companies, investment houses on Wall Street, plumbing supply companies, food supply companies, armed security, and padded cells in a large variety of colors.”

According to the Left Business Observer, the federal prison industry produces 100% of all military helmets, ammunition belts, bullet-proof vests, ID tags, shirts, pants, tents, bags, and canteens. Along with war supplies, prison workers supply 98% of the entire market for equipment assembly services; 93% of paints and paintbrushes; 92% of stove assembly; 46% of body armor; 36% of home appliances; 30% of headphones/microphones/speakers; and 21% of office furniture. Airplane parts, medical supplies, and much more: prisoners are even raising seeing-eye dogs for blind people.

**CRIME GOES DOWN, BUT THE JAIL POPULATION GOES UP**

According to reports by human rights organizations, these are the factors that increase the profit potential for those who invest in the prison industry complex:

- Longer sentences.
- The passage of laws that require minimum sentencing, without regard for circumstances.
- A large expansion of work by prisoners creating profits that motivate the incarceration of more people for longer periods of time.
- More punishment of prisoners, so as to lengthen their sentences.

**HISTORY OF PRISON LABOR IN THE UNITED STATES**

Prison labor has its roots in slavery. After the 1861-1865 Civil War, a system of “hiring out prisoners” was introduced in order to continue the slavery tradition. Freed slaves were charged with not carrying out their sharecropping commitments (cultivating someone else’s land in exchange for part of the harvest) or petty thievery – which were almost never proven – and were then “hired out” for cotton picking, working in mines and building railroads. From 1870 until 1910 in the state of Georgia, 88% of hired-out convicts...
were Black. In Alabama, 93% of “hired-out” miners were Black. In Mississippi, a huge prison farm similar to the old slave plantations replaced the system of hiring out convicts. The notorious Parchman plantation existed until 1972.

During the post-Civil War period, Jim Crow racial segregation laws were imposed on every state, with legal segregation in schools, housing, marriages and many other aspects of daily life. “Today, a new set of markedly racist laws is imposing slave labor and sweatshops on the criminal justice system, now known as the prison industry complex,” comments the Left Business Observer.

Who is investing? At least 37 states have legalized the contracting of prison labor by private corporations that mount their operations inside state prisons. The list of such companies contains the cream of U.S. corporate society: IBM, Boeing, Motorola, Microsoft, AT&T, Wireless, Texas Instrument, Dell, Compaq, Honeywell, Hewlett-Packard, Nortel, Lucent Technologies, 3Com, Intel, Northern Telecom, TWA, Nordstrom’s, Revlon, Macy’s, Pierre Cardin, Target Stores, and many more. All of these businesses are excited about the economic boom generation by prison labor. Just between 1980 and 1994, profits went up from $392 million to $1.31 billion. Inmates in state penitentiaries generally receive the minimum wage for their work, but not all; in Colorado, they get about $2 per hour, well under the minimum. And in privately-run prisons, they receive as little as 17 cents per hour for a maximum of six hours a day, the equivalent of $20 per month. The highest-paying private prison is CCA in Tennessee, where prisoners receive 50 cents per hour for what they call “highly skilled positions.” At those rates, it is no surprise that inmates find the pay in federal prisons to be very generous. There, they can earn $1.25 an hour and work eight hours a day, and sometimes overtime. They can send home $200-$300 per month.

Thanks to prison labor, the United States is once again an attractive location for investment in work that was designed for Third World labor markets. A company that operated a maquiladora (assembly plant in Mexico near the border) closed down its operations there and relocated to San Quentin State Prison in California. In Texas, a factory fired its 150 workers and contracted the services of prisoner-workers from the private

Lockhart Texas prison, where circuit boards are assembled for companies like IBM and Compaq.

[Former] Oregon State Representative Kevin Mannix recently urged Nike to cut its production in Indonesia and bring it to his state, telling the shoe manufacturer that “there won’t be any transportation costs; we’re offering you competitive prison labor (here).”

PRIVATE PRISONS

The prison privatization boom began in the 1980s, under the governments of Ronald Reagan and Bush Sr., but reached its height in 1990 under William Clinton, when Wall Street stocks were selling like hotcakes. Clinton’s program for cutting the federal workforce resulted in the Justice Departments contracting of private prison corporations for the incarceration of undocumented workers and high-security inmates.

Private prisons are the biggest business in the prison industry complex. About 18 corporations guard 10,000 prisoners in 27 states. The two largest are Correctional Corporation of America (CCA) and Wackenhut, which together control 75%. Private prisons receive a guaranteed amount of money for each prisoner, independent of what it costs to maintain each one. According to Russell Boraas, a private prison administrator in Virginia, “the secret to low operating costs is having a minimal number of guards for the maximum number of prisoners.” The CCA has an ultra-modern prison in Lawrenceville, Virginia, where five guards on dayshift and two at night watch over 750 prisoners. In these prisons, inmates may get their sentences reduced for “good behavior,” but for any infraction, they get 30 days added – which means more profits for CCA. According to a study of New Mexico prisons, it was found that CCA inmates lost “good behavior time” at a rate eight times higher than those in state prisons.

IMPORTING AND EXPORTING INMATES

Profits are so good that now there is a new business: importing inmates with long sentences, meaning the worst criminals. When a federal judge ruled that overcrowding in Texas prisons was cruel and unusual punishment, the CCA signed contracts with
sheriffs in poor counties to build and run new jails and share the profits. According to a December 1998 Atlantic Monthly magazine article, this program was backed by investors from Merrill-Lynch, Shearson-Lehman, American Express and Allstate, and the operation was scattered all over rural Texas. That state’s governor, Ann Richards, followed the example of Mario Cuomo in New York and built so many state prisons that the market became flooded, cutting into private prison profits.

After a law signed by Clinton in 1996 – ending court supervision and decisions – caused overcrowding and violent, unsafe conditions in federal prisons, private prison corporations in Texas began to contact other states whose prisons were overcrowded, offering “rent-a-cell” services in the CCA prisons located in small towns in Texas. The commission for a rent-a-cell salesman is $2.50 to $5.50 per day per bed. The county gets $1.50 for each prisoner.

STATISTICS

Ninety-seven percent of 125,000 federal inmates have been convicted of non-violent crimes. It is believed that more than half of the 623,000 inmates in municipal or county jails are innocent of the crimes they are accused of. Of these, the majority are awaiting trial. Two-thirds of the one million state prisoners have committed non-violent offenses. Sixteen percent of the country’s 2 million prisoners suffer from mental illness.

http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-prison-industry-in-the-united-states-big-business-or-a-new-form-of-slavery/8289

The Pentagon and Slave Labor in U.S. Prisons

By Sara Flounders
Global Research, February 04, 2013

Prisoners earning 23 cents an hour in U.S. federal prisons are manufacturing high-tech electronic components for Patriot Advanced Capability 3 missiles, launchers for TOW (Tube-launched, Optically tracked, Wire-guided) anti-tank missiles, and other guided missile systems. A March article by journalist and financial researcher Justin Rohrlich of World in Review is worth a closer look at the full implications of this ominous development. (minyanville.com)

The expanding use of prison industries, which pay slave wages, as a way to increase profits for giant military corporations, is a frontal attack on the rights of all workers.

Prison labor — with no union protection, overtime pay, vacation days, pensions, benefits, health and safety protection, or Social Security withholding — also makes complex components for McDonnell Douglas/Boeing’s F-15 fighter aircraft, the General Dynamics/Lockheed Martin F-16, and Bell/Textron’s Cobra helicopter. Prison labor produces night-vision goggles, body armor, camouflage uniforms, radio and communication devices, and lighting systems and components for 30-mm to 300-mm battleship anti-aircraft guns, along with land mine sweepers and electro-optical equipment for the BAE Systems Bradley Fighting Vehicle’s laser rangefinder. Prisoners recycle toxic electronic equipment and overhaul military vehicles.

Labor in federal prisons is contracted out by UNICOR, previously known as Federal Prison Industries, a quasi-public, for-profit corporation run by the Bureau of Prisons. In 14 prison factories, more than 3,000 prisoners manufacture electronic equipment for land, sea and airborne communication. UNICOR is now the U.S. government’s 39th largest contractor, with 110 factories at 79 federal penitentiaries.

The majority of UNICOR’s products and services are on contract to orders from the Department of Defense. Giant multinational corporations purchase parts assembled at some of the lowest labor rates in the world, then resell the finished weapons components at the highest rates of profit. For example, Lockheed Martin and Raytheon Corporation subcontract components, then assemble and sell advanced weapons systems to the Pentagon.

Increased profits, unhealthy workplaces

However, the Pentagon is not the only buyer. U.S. corporations are the world’s largest arms dealers, while weapons and aircraft are the largest U.S. export. The U.S. State Department, Department of Defense and diplomats pressure NATO members and
dependent countries around the world into multibillion-dollar weapons purchases that generate further corporate profits, often leaving many countries mired in enormous debt.

But the fact that the capitalist state has found yet another way to drastically undercut union workers’ wages and ensure still higher profits to military corporations — whose weapons wreak such havoc around the world — is an ominous development.

According to CNN Money, the U.S. highly skilled and well-paid “aerospace workforce has shrunk by 40 percent in the past 20 years. Like many other industries, the defense sector has been quietly outsourcing production (and jobs) to cheaper labor markets overseas.” (Feb. 24) It seems that with prison labor, these jobs are also being outsourced domestically.

Meanwhile, dividends and options to a handful of top stockholders and CEO compensation packages at top military corporations exceed the total payment of wages to the more than 23,000 imprisoned workers who produce UNICOR parts.

The prison work is often dangerous, toxic and unprotected. At FCC Victorville, a federal prison located at an old U.S. airbase, prisoners clean, overhaul and reassemble tanks and military vehicles returned from combat and coated in toxic spent ammunition, depleted uranium dust and chemicals.

A federal lawsuit by prisoners, food service workers and family members at FCI Marianna, a minimum security women’s prison in Florida, cited that toxic dust containing lead, cadmium, mercury and arsenic poisoned those who worked at UNICOR’s computer and electronic recycling factory.

Prisoners there worked covered in dust, without safety equipment, protective gear, air filtration or masks. The suit explained that the toxic dust caused severe damage to nervous and reproductive systems, lung damage, bone disease, kidney failure, blood clots, cancers, anxiety, headaches, fatigue, memory lapses, skin lesions, and circulatory and respiratory problems. This is one of eight federal prison recycling facilities — employing 1,200 prisoners — run by UNICOR.

After years of complaints the Justice Department’s Office of the Inspector General and the Federal Occupational Health Service concurred in October 2008 that UNICOR has jeopardized the lives and safety of untold numbers of prisoners and staff. (Prison Legal News, Feb. 17, 2009)

Racism & U.S. prisons

The U.S. imprisons more people per capita than any country in the world. With less than 5 percent of the world population, the U.S. imprisons more than 25 percent of all people imprisoned in the world.

There are more than 2.3 million prisoners in federal, state and local prisons in the U.S. Twice as many people are under probation and parole. Many tens of thousands of other prisoners include undocumented immigrants facing deportation, prisoners awaiting sentencing and youthful offenders in categories considered reform or detention.

The racism that pervades every aspect of life in capitalist society — from jobs, income and housing to education and opportunity — is most brutally reflected by who is caught up in the U.S. prison system.

More than 60 percent of U.S. prisoners are people of color. Seventy percent of those being sentenced under the three strikes law in California — which requires mandatory sentences of 25 years to life after three felony convictions — are people of color. Nationally, 39 percent of African-American men in their 20s are in prison, on probation or on parole. The U.S. imprisons more people than South Africa did under apartheid. (Linn Washington, “Incarceration Nation”)

The U.S. prison population is not only the largest in the world — it is relentlessly growing. The U.S. prison population is more than five times what it was 30 years ago.

In 1980, when Ronald Reagan became president, there were 400,000 prisoners in the U.S. Today the number exceeds 2.3 million. In California the prison population soared from 23,264 in 1980 to 170,000 in 2010. The Pennsylvania prison population climbed from 8,243 to 51,487 in those same years. There are now more African-American men in prison, on probation or on parole than were enslaved in 1850, before the Civil War began, according

Today a staggering 1-in-100 adults in the U.S. are living behind bars. But this crime, which breaks families and destroys lives, is not evenly distributed. In major urban areas one-half of Black men have criminal records. This means life-long, legalized discrimination in student loans, financial assistance, access to public housing, mortgages, the right to vote and, of course, the possibility of being hired for a job.

State Prisons contracting slave labor

It is not only federal prisons that contract out prison labor to top corporations. State prisons that used forced prison labor in plantations, laundries and highway chain gangs increasingly seek to sell prison labor to corporations trolling the globe in search of the cheapest possible labor.


Major corporations profiting from the slave labor of prisoners include Motorola, Compaq, Honeywell, Microsoft, Boeing, Revlon, Chevron, TWA, Victoria’s Secret and Eddie Bauer.

IBM, Texas Instruments and Dell get circuit boards made by Texas prisoners. Tennessee inmates sew jeans for Kmart and JCPenney. Tens of thousands of youth flipping hamburgers for minimum wages at McDonald’s wear uniforms sewn by prison workers, who are forced to work for much less.

In California, as in many states, prisoners who refuse to work are moved to disciplinary housing and lose canteen privileges as well as “good time” credit, which slices hard time off their sentences.

Systematic abuse, beatings, prolonged isolation and sensory deprivation, and lack of medical care make U.S. prison conditions among the worst in the world. Ironically, working under grueling conditions for pennies an hour is treated as a “perk” for good behavior.

In December, Georgia inmates went on strike and refused to leave their cells at six prisons for more than a week. In one of the largest prison protests in U.S. history, prisoners spoke of being forced to work seven days a week for no pay. Prisoners were beaten if they refused to work.

Private prisons for profit

In the ruthless search to maximize profits and grab hold of every possible source of income, almost every public agency and social service is being outsourced to private for-profit contractors.

In the U.S. military this means there are now more private contractors and mercenaries in Iraq and Afghanistan than there are U.S. or NATO soldiers.

In cities and states across the U.S., hospitals, medical care facilities, schools, cafeterias, road maintenance, water supply services, sewage departments, sanitation, airports and tens of thousands of social programs that receive public funding are being contracted out to for-profit corporations. Anything publicly owned and paid for by generations of past workers’ taxes — from libraries to concert halls and parks — is being sold or leased at fire sale prices.

All this is motivated and lobbied for by right-wing think tanks like that set up by Koch Industries and their owners, Charles and David Koch, as a way to cut costs, lower wages and pensions, and undercut public service unions.

The most gruesome privatizations are the hundreds of for-profit prisons being established.

The inmate population in private for-profit prisons tripled between 1987 and 2007. By 2007 there were 264 such prison facilities, housing almost 99,000 adult prisoners. (house.leg.state.mn.us, Feb. 24, 2009)

Companies operating such facilities include the Corrections Corporation of America, the GEO Group Inc. and Community Education Centers.
Prison bonds provide a lucrative return for capitalist investors such as Merrill-Lynch, Shearson Lehman, American Express and Allstate. Prisoners are traded from one state to another based on the most profitable arrangements.

**Militarism and prisons**

Hand in hand with the military-industrial complex, U.S. imperialism has created a massive prison-industrial complex that generates billions of dollars annually for businesses and industries profiting from mass incarceration.

For decades workers in the U.S. have been assured that they also benefit from imperialist looting by the giant multinational corporations. But today more than half the federal budget is absorbed by the costs of maintaining the military machine and the corporations who are guaranteed profits for equipping the Pentagon. That is the only budget category in federal spending that is guaranteed to increase by at least 5 percent a year — at a time when every social program is being cut to the bone.

The sheer economic weight of militarism seeps into the fabric of society at every level. It fuels racism and reaction. The political influence of the Pentagon and the giant military and oil corporations — with their thousands of high-paid lobbyists, media pundits and network of links into every police force in the country — fuels growing repression and an expanding prison population.

The military, oil and banking conglomerates, interlinked with the police and prisons, have a stranglehold on the U.S. capitalist economy and reins of political power, regardless of who is president or what political party is in office. The very survival of these global corporations is based on immediate maximization of profits. They are driven to seize every resource and source of potential profits.

Thoroughly rational solutions are proposed whenever the human and economic cost of militarism and repression is discussed. The billions spent for war and fantastically destructive weapons systems could provide five to seven times more jobs if spent on desperately needed social services, education and rebuilding essential infrastructure. Or it could provide free university education, considering the fact that it costs far more to imprison people than to educate them.

Why aren't such reasonable solutions ever chosen? Because military contracts generate far larger guaranteed profits to the military and the oil industries, which have a decisive influence on the U.S. economy.

The prison-industrial complex — including the prison system, prison labor, private prisons, police and repressive apparatus, and their continuing expansion — are a greater source of profit and are reinforced by the climate of racism and reaction. Most rational and socially useful solutions are not considered viable options.

http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-pentagon-and-slave-labor-in-u-s-prisons/25376

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From Page 15

"God's lunatics" are advancing everywhere. Where do they come from? Certainly not from another planet. They come directly from the heart of the capitalist world itself. In reality, neo-liberalism knows little about humans. Today nobody can deny that social misery spreads like wildfire in the liberal world of the market. No only in Brazil, but also in the whole world, Western freedom and tolerance shows itself cynically as a "democracy of apartheid", as it was aptly labelled by Jurandir Freire Costa (The University of Rio). At the same time, social relations are disintegrating not only in slums, but also in all classes of society. Both the real processes of the market and neo-liberal ideology have the tendency to resolve all human relationships into the economy. In 1992, the U.S economist Gary S. Becker was awarded the Nobel Prize for the theorem that even outside the market, all human behaviour is aligned with cost-benefit viewpoints and can be mathematically depicted, even love.
Anti State, Non Market Sector Groups

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Promotional Material for the World Socialist Movement: See previous issues or contact veronica.clanchy@hotmail.co.uk or phone 01202 569826

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Andy Cox’s website looks at how socialism might be developed:
http://socialistmatters.webs.com/. See issue 27, page 2 In memory of Andy Cox
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