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Britain

Was Brexit a Working-Class Revolt?

- Debate - European Union -

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On June 23, the British electorate voted to leave the European Union (EU) by 17,4120,742 (52%) to 16,141,241 (48%) with a high turnout of 72%. The referendum gave voters the simple choice of whether the UK should "Leave" or "Remain" in the EU. It was called by Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron, as a result of pressure from "Eurosceptic" Tory (Conservatives) Members of Parliament (MPs) and the growing right-wing, anti-EU, anti-immigrant United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP, pronounced U-kip).

Although the Conservatives split between Remain and Leave factions, most of the other parties supported Remain. [1] Cameron and most politicians assumed a Remain victory. Instead a significant majority voted for Brexit (Britain + exit), as leaving the EU has become known.

From left to right, many have seen the large working-class vote for "Brexit" as a revolt against the elites responsible for the devastation of many working class communities and who have ignored the plight of the victims. On the left the British Socialist Workers Party weekly paper Socialist Worker declared the vote "A Revolt Against the Rich," while the right-wing tabloid Daily Mail crowed that June 23 "was the day the quiet people of Britain rose up against an arrogant, out-of-touch political class and a contemptuous Brussels elite."

That working-class people feel anger at these conditions and the politicians who are partly responsible for them is beyond doubt. That the EU referendum was a rare chance to stick it to the politicians in Westminster and "elites" in general also seems clear. But the forces that have left so many working-class communities without work or hope go back at least to the Thatcher era when mines were closed, shipyards and steel mills abandoned, council (public) housing sold off and "home grown" neoliberalism introduced with no intervention from the then European Economic Community.

This reality, of course, was largely absent from the current debate since both sides harbored some of the culprits in these crimes. There is, nevertheless, a strong feeling that Britain's political and social elites have left these communities to rot. The political elites who bear responsibility for this and who are the objects of frustration and anger today, however, are typically beyond the reach of unorganized ordinary people â€" insulated by institutions, wealth and/or distance.

More convenient targets are the immigrants who, we are told over and over in the daily press, are flooding the schools, public housing and National Health Service (NHS), "taking our jobs," or alternatively luxuriating on welfare benefits that hard-working people (other than migrant workers, of course) pay for. (Sound familiar?)

These themes, more recently combined with fear of "terrorism" and anti-Muslim rhetoric had already appeared in the 2010 general election and the recent London mayoral contest â€" where, in fact, the city elected its first Muslim mayor, Labour candidate Sadiq Khan. The Brexit campaign further mined and encouraged this blame-the-other-victim mindset.

The concerted effort to direct middle- and working-class anger away from the ruling elites began well before the referendum. As Owen Jones wrote in his book *The Establishment*:

"Ever since Britain was plunged into economic disaster in September 2008, there has been a concerted attempt to redirect people's anger â€" both over their own plight, and that of the nation â€" away from the powerful. Instead, the

British public are routinely encouraged to direct their frustrations at other, often more visible, targets, who have long been vilified by elite politicians and the media alike: immigrants, unemployed people, benefit claimants, public sector workers, etc." [2]

The malevolent genius of the Leave campaign was that it managed to go one step further and direct the anger of many previous working-class targets of derision at the even more vulnerable immigrants.

The findings of the major polls taken during and after the referendum vote reveal strong xenophobic and anti-immigrant currents among Leave voters. When asked in the largest poll if they felt something was a force for "good" or "ill," of those Leave voters who answered the question two-thirds thought multiculturalism a "force for ill" and 82% found immigration also "ill." [3]

The YouGov exit poll revealed similar attitudes, though slightly less severe, with 65% of Leave voters saying immigration was "bad" for the country, while 62% of Remain voters thought it "good." Whatever the shortcomings of polls, the margins make it clear that anti-immigration sentiment was a major factor in the Brexit vote and not entirely absent among Remain voters.

Dave Prentice the head of UNISON, the UK's largest public employee union, argued that the entire campaign was "typified by hatred, vitriol and misinformation." Weeks before the vote, Unison condemned the official (mostly Conservative) "Vote Leave" campaign for the "racist, xenophobic rhetoric employed by some leading campaigners for Brexit." This included the claim that Turkey was about to join the EU, meant to stoke anti-Muslim prejudice.

UNISON also condemned UKIP leader Nigel Farage for his "outright racist claim that women are at risk of sexual assaults from immigrants." Almost as outrageous a piece of Brexit campaigning was UKIP's "Breaking Point" poster featuring a photograph of thousands of Middle Eastern migrants â€" who were actually trying to enter Eastern Europe, not the UK â€" with the slogan "We must break free of the EU and take back control of our borders."

Anti-immigrant hate crimes soared in the wake of the Brexit vote, many directed indiscriminately at non-EU foreigners. Nationally, police reported that hate crimes increased by five times the weekly average in the seven days after the referendum. The Metropolitan police registered nearly 600 such crimes in London alone in the week after the vote.

There have also been demonstrations around the country in support of immigrants and opposed to the hate crimes. Nevertheless, the dramatic post-Brexit rise in anti-immigrant and racist abuse and assaults reported on TV, in the press and by the police, like the pre-Brexit nasty campaigning of UKIP and Tory right-wing demagogues, make it clear that immigration and xenophobia were at the heart of this campaign â€" not "democracy vs. Brussels' bureaucracy" or free trade, much less big bucks for the National Health Service (NHS) as the Leave Campaign promised if the UK could stop its payments to the EU.

Who Voted for Brexit?

Who were the Daily Mail's "quiet people of Britain" who voted for Brexit? Of the four nations that make up the UK, England (53.4%) and Wales (52.5%) voted Leave, while Scotland (62%) and Northern Ireland (56%) chose Remain.

London favored Remain by almost 60%, as did other English cities with significant or large working-class populations, including Liverpool, Manchester, Leicester, and Leeds. A couple narrowly squeezed by for one side or the other,

such as Newcastle for Remain (50.5%) and Birmingham for Leave (50.4%). Perhaps most interesting, however, is the social breakdown of the Brexit vote.

Table I
 % Brexit Vote & Adult Population by Social Class*

 https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/Social_Class1-page0001.jpg

Source: Lord Ashcroft Poll, Table 2; Lambert & Moy, Social Grade Allocation to the 2011 Census. GfK NOL. Totals don't equal sums due to rounding of samples.

Polling showed that the "Blue Collar," skilled and unskilled lower-paid working class voted by 64% in favor of Leave compared to 51% of "Middle" class and 43% of "Upper" and "Upper Middle" class voters. This is usually the basis for seeing this as a working-class rebellion. But while the working class, defined here as manual skilled, unskilled and unemployed workers, make up 46% of the adult working-age population, they composed only 41.7% of the Leave vote.

Economically well off upper- and upper-middle-class voters compose less than a quarter of the adult population, but counted for over a third of the Leave vote â€" not that far behind "the workers." The "Middle Class" made up a quarter of Brexit voters, slightly less than their 31% of the adult population, but possibly enough to tip the balance toward "Brexit."

In short, the so-called "Revolt Against the Rich" came heavily from the "Upper" and richer social stratum itself, reinforced by much of the "Middle" class. Together, those from the upper half of society composed almost 60% of the Leave vote.

Left commentator Paul Mason explained the role of middle-class voters when writing about the Brexit vote in Sheffield. This was formerly a northern steel producing city, but for some time its employment has been dominated by universities, big teaching hospitals and so on â€" much like Pittsburgh in the United States.

As Mason wrote in The Guardian (July 5, 2016), "Once the former steel city voted 51% for Brexit it was clear that the anti-EU camp had broken out of its heartland of poor, suburban and ex-industrial towns â€" and was going to win." As he summarized, "Leave got into the mindspace of a middle class that we assumed would be endemically pro-EU." In other words, it was professionals and service workers who put Sheffield's Leave vote over the top.

Perhaps the sharpest social divisions in the referendum vote were those between generations and races, as 73% of those 18-24 years old and 62% of those 25-34 years old voted Remain, while majorities of all the older groups voted Leave.

The vote also split sharply along ethno/racial lines. While whites voted by 53% in favour of Brexit, Asians voted 67% to remain, as did 73% of those classified as black, 70% of Chinese, 70% of Muslims, and 65% of "other" ethnic minorities.

Although the plight of white working-class communities across Britain is real and levels of unemployment high, it should be borne in mind that blacks and Asians on average are still significantly worse off. While 20% of whites live in low-income households (60% or less of median household income, or £15,360), the percentage of Indians and Caribbean blacks is 30%, those of black Africans 50%, Pakistanis 60%, and Bangladeshis 70% â€" most of them working class. [4]

Role of Immigration and Elites

Forty-nine percent of Leavers said having decisions made in the UK ("taking back control") was their number one reason for voting Brexit, while 33% put immigration at the top. Issues of EU "powers" and expansion got a poor 13% and the economy and trade only 6%.

Clearly, neither the internal affairs of the EU itself nor the economy and trade had much weight for Leavers. This is ironic considering that the Remain camp pushed hard on the negative effects of Brexit on the UK economy, and that free trade is a central policy of neoliberalism.

Free trade was certainly responsible for job losses in steel, shipbuilding and other industries in the heavily Brexit north of England and elsewhere. And the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) was being negotiated between the EU and the United States even as the Brexit campaign unfolded.

Mention of the TTIP, however, was absent from the debate, despite the fact that it would further strip some British industries of jobs and impose privatization on the very public services on which the economically devastated communities of Wales, the Midlands, and Northern England depend, including the NHS.

Brexit could have been argued as a way of avoiding the TTIP and its consequences. As it turns out, however, the UKIP and Tory leaders who pushed for the referendum in the first place and determined the focus of the Brexit campaign are among "the strongest TTIP supporters," as one executive committee member of the big public sector union UNISON pointed out.

As Table II shows, concerning the importance of immigration alone the combined 1st and 2nd priority results show a strong tilt toward immigration by all groups of Brexit voters. As the UKIP poster described above reminds us, however, even the "take back control" slogan meant control of immigration and borders for many.

A majority of all those who voted Leave ranked immigration and border control as their 1st or 2nd reason. Those in the top social rank were less likely to give this as their first reason than others, but all groups were the same for 2nd choice and all Leave voters put immigration high on their list. Anti-immigrant and xenophobic views were prevalent in all social groups. This is not meant to be a comforting conclusion.

Table II
 "Best chance for the UK to regain control over immigration and its own borders" as 1st or 2nd Priority for Voting Leave

 https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/Reasons-page0001.jpg

Source: Lord Ashcroft Poll, Table 59.

The centrality of immigration in the campaign should come as no surprise given the roles of UKIP leader Nigel Farage, the erratic former Conservative mayor of London Boris Johnson, and Tory "Eurosceptic" and "Little England" Members of Parliament in initiating and shaping the Brexit campaign &emdash; people who are disproportionately privately educated and definitely not working class.

Ruling classes and their hangers-on are always divided by various interests and political views and the Brexit supporters among them represent the right-wing, more xenophobic faction of Britain's social and political elite. The Remain campaign itself was not only initiated but also organized by members of Britain's elite.

Most banks and high profile multinational corporations advocated remaining in the EU. Nevertheless, a substantial minority of British business leaders favored and funded "Brexit." A letter signed by over 300 business leaders argued "Outside the EU, British business will be free to grow faster, expand into new markets and create more jobs. It time to vote Leave and take back control."

A frequently cited March survey by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) found that 78% of those surveyed favored Remain. However, this survey of 400 businesses employing 1.5 million workers, averaging nearly 4000 workers per firm, clearly overrepresented the UK's largest businesses. In contrast, a survey taken by the British Chamber of Commerce in May found that 37% of "senior" business people favored a Leave vote, while a BBC poll of 2200 business leaders found that 33% of exporters and 43% reliant on the domestic market would vote Leave.

When it came to funding the referendum campaigns, the role of the rich is even clearer. The Leave campaign outspent the Remain campaign by over Â£3million: Â£17.5 million to Â£14.2 million, according to the Electoral Commission. This does not even include money spent by the political parties or the Â£9.3 million the government spent on its pro-EU brochure. Small donations were not reported, but there is no evidence of "crowdfunding." Funding was overwhelmingly by the "in-crowd."

Theoretically, each campaign had spending limits: Â£7 million for the two officially designated campaigns, "Vote Leave" and "Britain Stronger in Europe." This, however, was easily circumvented by registering other campaign organizations such as "Leave.EU Group Ltd," "Brexit Express," "Grassroots Out Ltd," or "Conservatives In Ltd," each of which could spend up to Â£700,000. The donations reported by the Electoral Commission include those from companies, organizations and individuals to all registered campaigns.

Nearly half of the Remain campaign's Â£14.2 million came from two billionaires and five U.S. financial firms. British supermarket mogul Lord David Sainsbury contributed Â£4.2 million, billionaire financier David Harding kicked in Â£1 million, and U.S. financial giants J.P. Morgan, Morgan Stanley, Citigroup, Goldman Sachs and Bloomberg together gave Â£1.75 million, totaling almost Â£7 million. Notably absent were the big British, European and American industrial corporations that function in the UK.

The bigger bundle of Â£17.5 million for the Leave campaign came from a somewhat broader array of Britain's millionaires and billionaires. Topping the list was Peter Hargreaves, a financial services billionaire worth Â£2.4 billion, who contributed Â£3.2 million to Brexit. Jeremy Hosking, a private equity investor worth Â£330 million, gave Â£1.5 million to various Leave campaign organizations. He was followed by Diana Van Nievelt Price, a Midlands manufacturing millionaire who donated Â£1 million to the Leave campaign, while International Motors, Ltd., which imports Asian-made cars into the UK and EU, gave Â£850,000.

Another MidÂ-lands millionaire, Gladys Bramall, donated Â£600,000. Hedge fund manager Crispin Odey, personally worth Â£1.1 billion, kicked in Â£356,000, followed by property developer Michael Freeman at Â£348,000. In fact, three of the five donors who gave Â£1 million or more in a single contribution supported Brexit, while of the 76 individuals and businesses who contributed Â£100,000 or more in a single donation, 40 gave to the Leave campaign. Several of these donors gave multiple contributions.

One could go on, but the point is clear. With the exception of Â£30,000 from one trade union (National Union of Rail, Maritime, and Transport Workers) for Brexit, Â£7,320 from the liberal Roundtree Charitable Trust (Remain), and Â£600,000 in public funds for each side from the Electoral Commission, the referendum campaigns were paid for by members of Britain's capitalist class, feuding among themselves, with a little help from U.S. finance capital for the Remain side.

The Leave "revolt" was initiated within the elite itself, organized by its more xenophobic public figures, generously funded by many of its richer members, and propagandized for by a majority of its daily press. Its voting base was a cross-class coalition of convenience mobilized by nationalist, anti-immigrant and even openly racist appeals.

While most multinationals backed Remain verbally, when it came to putting their money where their mouths were, on average Britain's rightward-leaning and ideologically motivated rich gave even more generously to Brexit than their pro-EU class mates did to Remain.

One section of British corporate capital that threw its majority weight loudly behind Brexit was the daily press. Despite the decline of the print media in recent years, this is still a £5 billion a year industry that reaches millions of people every day. The major British daily newspapers are national in circulation with right-wing papers far outstripping those on the liberal or center-left of the political spectrum.

The Daily Mail, Daily Express, Daily Star, Daily Telegraph, and Sun, all known for their anti-immigrant bias and with a combined daily circulation of just over 5 million, supported Brexit. On the other side, The Guardian, Daily Mirror and Financial Times with a total circulation of 1.3 million supported Remain. It is the five pro-Leave dailies with nearly four times the circulation of the pro-Remain papers that reach most working- class readers daily.

The idea that this "revolt" was somehow progressive or an opportunity (as opposed to a serious challenge) for the left in any way doesn't hold water â€" even though the anger of white working-class voters at some of their "betters" was real.

Not surprisingly Donald Trump, who benefits from similar downwardly mobile middle- and working-class anger, and who happened to be in Scotland during the referendum visiting one of his landscape-wrecking golf courses, praised the Brexit outcome. Far more ideologically consistent than Trump's erratic "populism," however, are the growing far right and neo-fascist movements in Europe hailing Brexit as the beginning of the end of the EU.

Already far right parties in France, Italy, the Netherlands, and elsewhere have called for similar referenda. In response to the UK vote Marine Le Pen, leader of France's far right National Front said, "I would vote for Brexit, even if I think that France has a thousand more reasons to leave than the UK." She called for a French referendum on the "decaying" EU. The Netherlands' anti-immigrant political leader Geert Wilders called for "Nexit," saying "Now it's our turn."

A leader of the right-wing German Alternative für Deutchland hailed Brexit, as did Greece's neo-fascist Golden Dawn which welcomed "the victory of the nationalist and patriotic forces in Great Britain against the European Union."

Similar statements came from the Sweden Democrats, the Danish People's Party, and Italy's Northern League, all far right groups. Some on the European far left welcomed Brexit as a slap at the EU and the devastation it has wreaked on Greece and others on the "periphery," but it is the right that is leading the charge against the EU and is certain to reap the benefits.

The Positions of the Unions

Most British unions urged members to vote to remain in the EU in order to protect workers' rights such as limits on working time to 48 hours a week; equal treatment of full-time, part-time and agency workers; mandated paid vacation days; and paid maternity and paternity leave all currently guaranteed by EU directives or laws.

A letter from the leaders of ten of Britain's largest unions warned, "If Britain leaves the EU, we are in no doubt these protections would be under great threat. After much debate and deliberation we believe that the social and cultural benefits of remaining in the EU far outweigh any advantages of leaving."

The threat was that the Conservative government would move to eliminate these and other labor rights once EU standards no longer applied, as well as advancing their proposed "Trade Union Bill" that would make strikes even more difficult. To what extent these union leaders actually campaigned among their members for a Remain vote is not clear, and the unions did not appear central to the national debate.

Three unions usually associated with the political left, however, supported Brexit: two railroad workers' unions and the bakers. The joint statement from these unions argued, "The EU is anti-worker and cannot be reformed. We support a Leave vote in the forthcoming referendum because we believe the EU acts overwhelmingly in the interests of big business and against the interests of workers."

At the same time, referring to the mounting immigrant crisis on the borders of the EU, they opposed the idea of "fortress Europe," stating, "We profoundly regret that children and families fleeing poverty, persecution and war are not being allowed in to Europe." They also distanced themselves from the mainstream Leave campaign, saying "Unlike UKIP and others we don't believe Britain should be an island unto itself. Our country, and indeed many countries, are nations of immigrants."

Both the pro- and anti-EU positions of the unions assumed that the vote was really about economic issues and EU policies, good or bad, pro- or anti-worker. In fact for most Leave voters immigration per se had become a central or even the central issue.

Most unions did respond to the rise in hate crimes in the wake of the vote. Unite, Britain's largest union with 1.4 million members, said "it will be redoubling its efforts in workplaces and communities to challenge those seeking to spread fear and hate." Soon, however, most union leaders turned their attention to the political crisis that quickly emerged after the unexpected majority for Brexit.

Political Aftershocks

The political fallout of Brexit was fast and dramatic. David Cameron, who had been cock-sure that the "quiet people of Britain" would vote to remain in the EU, resigned as Prime Minister and Conservative Party leader. This precipitated a leadership struggle within the already deeply divided Tory Party. The bitter contest, however, rapidly turned into a coronation of Home Secretary Theresa May as opponents were stabbed in the back or dropped out.

Theresa May became the new Prime Minister on Wednesday July 13, delivering an out-of-character "populist" speech in which she expressed her concern for the masses. As Home Secretary she presided over immigration matters for the last six years. Although she supported the Remain campaign, she has been harsh on non-EU immigrants.

Unless the Conservatives call a general election in the fall and lose, under the prevailing five-year term rule put in place by the Conservatives themselves they will be free to impose their policies for nearly four more years. As the union leaders warned, May will no doubt impose the Tories' anti-union, austerity and creeping privatization agenda as soon as possible.

Just what sort of relationship she will negotiate with the EU is unclear. Membership in the Single Market, without political EU membership, á la Norway is frequently mentioned, but this would involve the continued free movement of labor. In any case, May seems determined to put off invoking EU article 50 which would officially initiate negotiations with the EU over exit. Whatever the new relationship with the EU is, increased reliance on the United States is almost certain.

An even more severe crisis has struck the Labour Party. Last November the membership of the Labour Party surprised its mainstream leaders when left-winger Jeremy Corbyn was elected party leader by 60% of the membership along with the support of most trade union leaders. Thousands joined or rejoined the party to vote for Corbyn in hopes of turning Labour away from the Tory-lite, "Third Way" (Clinton-like) policies of Tony Blair and his fellow modernizers.

The "Blairite" majority of sitting MPs, however, never accepted Corbyn as a viable party leader capable of winning the next general election in 2020. For months they attacked Corbyn sometimes openly, undermined his leadership as best they could, and plotted his political demise. Brexit offered the plotters the opportunity to make their move.

Corbyn's less than aggressive campaign for Remain was blamed for the Brexit vote. While this was highly unlikely as two-thirds of Labour voters voted to remain, it nevertheless became the excuse to attempt a coup. Within four days of the referendum 20 of Corbyn's "shadow cabinet" had resigned.

Barely a week after the referendum, Labour MP's voted "no confidence" in Corbyn by 172 to 40. The vote, however, is non-binding. Only a vote of the membership can unseat the party leader.

In response to earlier attacks, Corbyn supporters formed a grassroots organization known as Momentum to defend the leader and advance left politics in the Labour Party. Momentum, which claims 100,000 members, has held rallies around the country and is preparing for the coming leadership election by "mobilizing supporters using technology with help from those who were involved in the campaign for Bernie Sanders," according to The Guardian (July 6, 2016)

As of July 11 Corbyn was officially challenged to a leadership contest by "shadow" business secretary Angela Eagle, sparking an official leadership election. Eagle claims not to be a Blairite, but she voted for policies that Blairites voted for, including the Iraq War, university tuition fees, and the renewal of the Trident nuclear submarine.

Owen Smith, a newcomer elected to parliament in 2010 also threw in his hat. In the end a vote by Labour MPs convinced Eagle to withdraw, making Smith the "official" anti-Corbyn candidate. Amid bitter disagreements, on July 12 the Labour National Executive Committee (NEC) finally agreed to a leadership election with Corbyn on the ballot.

Of the thousands who have joined the party recently, only those who joined before January can vote. Supporters can sign up for £25 to vote, compared to £3 last fall. To further reduce any "movement"-like aspect of the election, the NEC also banned party branch meetings during the election period â€" a rule some have already ignored. Actual voting by paper ballot or online will take place between August 22 and September 21, with the outcome to be announced at the party conference on September 24.

Uncertainty is the crowning achievement of the EU referendum. No one really knows what the outcome of Brexit will be in terms of Britain's relationship to the rest of Europe or the future of its economy. Nor is the resolution of Labour's crisis at all clear. Even if Corbyn wins the new leadership election, which at least seems likely, it is difficult to see how that party can be united to be an effective opposition or win the next general election. There is talk of a split.

The hope, of course, lies with the movement from below that Corbyn helped to spark against the Blairite neoliberal agenda. The bull-headed determination of the Tories, despite Theresa May's "populist moment" upon taking office, to plow ahead with their plans to do what even the EU couldn't may in turn provide further fuel for resistance on the ground.

There was a left case for Britain leaving the EU, known â€" you might have guessed â€" as "Lexit." As one writer recently summarized a common left view of the EU, "No one disputes that the EU is currently organized as an undemocratic oligarchy, which has helped both national and transnational elites impose punishing neoliberal policies on an entire continent." [5]

The institutions of the EU are indeed undemocratic, neoliberal at their core, hostile to unions and workers, vicious toward weaker economies, and probably beyond reform. In so far as there ever was a broader "social dimension" it was killed in 1992 with the Maastricht Treaty, largely at the behest of the UK government.

The problem for "Lexit," however, was that the actually existing referendum campaigns, slogans and arguments on both sides as well as the major concerns of most voters were not about the workings of the EU or its neoliberal policies. They were far more focused on the fate of Britain and the fear of immigration that infects significant sections of its population â€" as it does many countries these days.

The left's anti-EU voice, focused on the problems of the EU itself, was drowned in the noise of the reactionary UKIP and Tory Leave campaigns.

What About the EU?

While an analysis of the EU itself is beyond the scope of this article, it was clearly in trouble long before the UK referendum. As one writer sceptical about the EU's future argues, "The European union cannot manage any of the present crises it faces." [6] These include the EU economy as a whole, the financial crisis of several "euro-zone" member states and possibly of the Euro itself, the deep inequality between and within its member nations, the refugee crisis at its doors, and the political polarization and rise of the far right spreading across the continent.

If the EU is moving toward disintegration, so far at least it is doing so on the basis of a resurgence of rampant nationalism not a socialist or even social democratic future.

Whether or not the EU can be reformed is beside the point. The left and the labor movements of Europe have little choice but to fight for gains, oppose neoliberal anti-worker national and EU policies, recruit immigrant workers, provide hope through struggle for abandoned working class communities, and form a counter force to racism and the far right, while preparing for bigger fights down the road.

There is a greater chance of success if they work together across Europe rather than splintering off into their separate national back yards. In or Out, on this matter there is no choice.

Against the Current

[1] Labour, the Liberal Democrats, the Scottish National Party, the Greens, Sinn Féin, the Social Democratic and Labour Party of Northern Ireland, the Ulster Unionist Party, and Plaid Cymru (the Welsh nationalist party) supported Remain, while UKIP and the Democratic Unionist Party of Northern Ireland favoured Leave.

[2] Owen Jones, *The Establishment: And how they get away with it* (London: Penguin Books, 2015), xi.

[3] Unless otherwise noted, the survey figures cited are from the Lord Ashcroft polling organization which polled over 12,000 people on June 21, 22, and 23.

[4] The Poverty Site, "Low income and ethnicity,".

[5] Peter Hallward, "The Will To Leave?" *The Brexit Crisis: A Verso Report* (London: Verso, 2016), 31. This is an ebook available as a free download.

[6] John R. Gillingham, "The European Idea Has Turned Rancid," *The Brexit Crisis*, 69.