

weekly **worker**



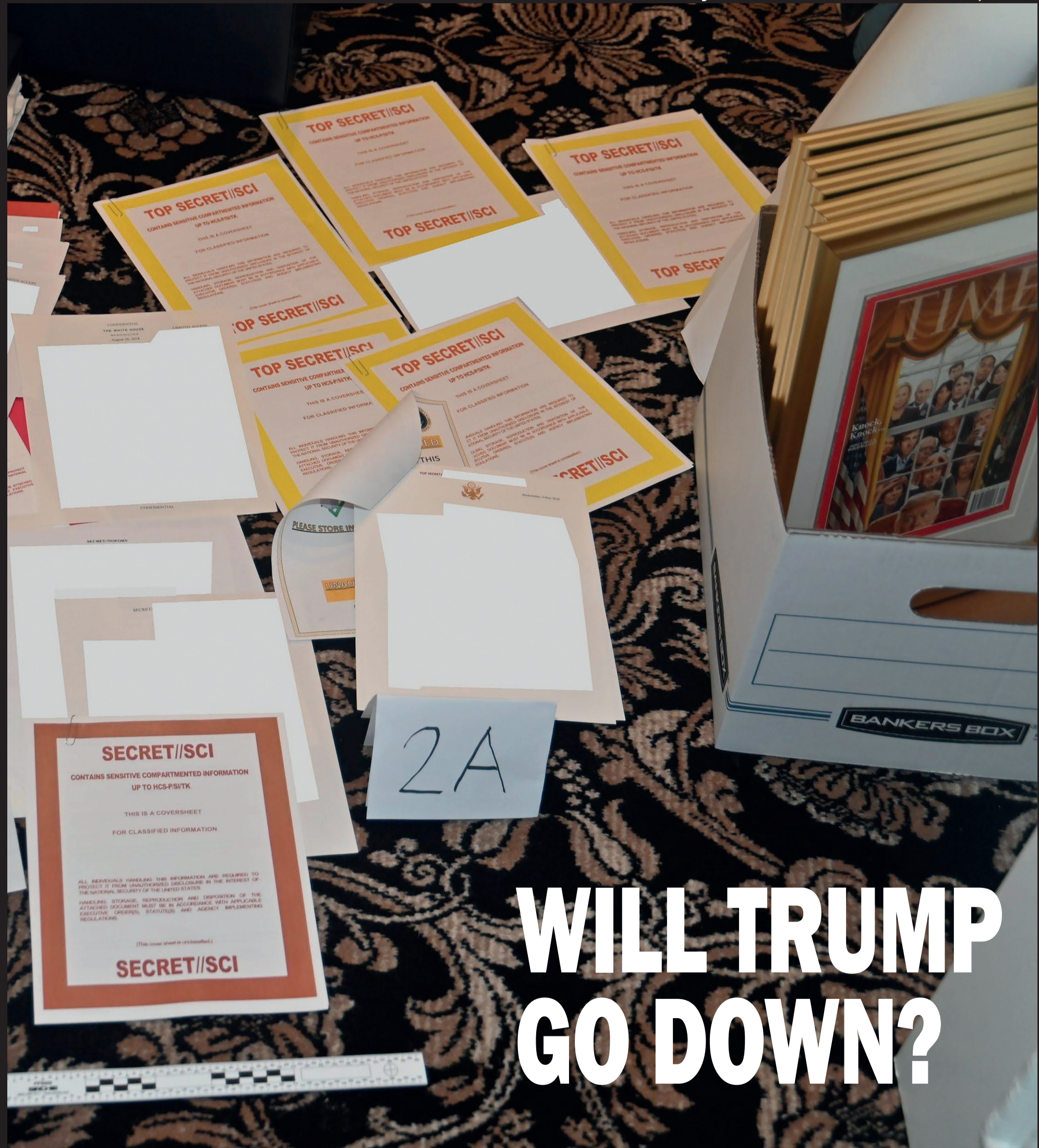
**Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber:
lessons for XR, JSO and all who
despair of majoritarian politics**

- Letters and debate
- USSR: first five-year plan
- Tory honours war
- Fred Carpenter 1952-2023

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Towards a mass Communist Party

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WILL TRUMP GO DOWN?

LETTERS



Letters may have been shortened because of space. Some names may have been changed

Well founded

If, as Steve Cousins claims, Marx made assertions, I'm pretty sure that they were well founded - unlike those of Cousins. In fact, if you take a look at *The poverty of philosophy*, his other early economic and philosophical works, *Theories of surplus value*, as well as *Anti-Dühring*, they show that he and Engels - far from making unsubstantiated assertions - went overboard on writing detailed analysis and critiques of the views of others.

Steve Cousins clearly didn't even read my initial letter, let alone Marx's analysis of inflation as a monetary phenomenon, as set out in *A contribution to the critique of political economy*. If he had read and understood Marx - for example, in the above or in *Capital* - he would know that price is simply a specific form of exchange value: ie, the exchange value of commodities expressed in terms of the general commodity/money commodity or, as it develops, the standard of prices. Prices, therefore, as against values, can change either as a result of a change in the value of the commodity (change in productivity/labour-time required for production), or as a result of changes in the value of the money commodity, or later standard of price.

Where the value of individual commodities may change without affecting the general level of prices at all, a change in the value of the money commodity/standard of prices, inevitably affects the general level of prices, causing it to rise when the money commodity/standard of price falls in value, and vice versa. Marx sets out the effect of gold discoveries on the value of gold as a money commodity, but he also sets out that prices are measured in a given quantity of this money commodity - ie, the standard of prices - and this standard of prices changes not only because of changes in the value of the money commodity, but also because of changes in the quantity of the money commodity represented by the standard of prices. If the pound sterling, as standard of prices, is reduced from representing an ounce of gold to representing only a quarter ounce, the value of the pound falls to a quarter of its previous level, and consequently the prices of all commodities rise fourfold.

Cousins asks where Marx's theory of inflation as a monetary phenomenon resides, yet it's on almost every other page of *A contribution*!

Marx notes, in that work: "As a result of an historical process, which, as we shall explain later, was determined by the nature of metallic currency, the names of particular weights were retained for constantly changing and diminishing weights of precious metals functioning as the standard of price. Thus the English pound sterling denotes less than one-third of its original weight, the pound Scots before the union only 1/36, the French livre 1/74, the Spanish maravedi less than 1/1,000 and the Portuguese rei an even smaller proportion. Historical development thus led to a separation of the money names of certain weights of metals from the common names of these weights" (chapter 2).

Had Cousins read my initial letter, he would also have seen my quote from Marx, setting out that, with fiat currency, the value of the standard of price (and hence its exchange relation to all other commodities - ie, their prices) is determined solely by the quantity of it thrown into circulation: "Whereas, therefore, the quantity of gold in circulation depends on the

prices of commodities, the value of the paper in circulation, on the other hand, depends solely on its own quantity" (*ibid*).

I would point Cousins to Trotsky's analysis of the "socialist inflation" in Russia in the 1920s and 30s, resulting from the same excess liquidity thrown into circulation by the Stalinists (see *The revolution betrayed* chapter 4). That also deals with Cousins' and Michael Roberts' ridiculous claims about the Chinese state being able to determine prices by administrative diktat. However, as a Stalinist, Cousins, if not Roberts, would use any Trotsky reference as yet another opportunity for a rant. So let me go straight to an almost identical statement to that of Trotsky, but this time from Marx and Engels, referring to the rouble under the tsar:

"And for the rest the men with the sword, when they have tried to fabricate a 'distribution value', have reaped nothing but bad business and financial loss. With their monopolisation of the east Indian trade, the Dutch brought both their monopoly and their trade to ruin. The two strongest governments which ever existed - the North American revolutionary government and the French National Convention - ventured to fix maximum prices, and they failed miserably.

"For some years now, the Russian government has been trying to raise the exchange rate of Russian paper money - which it is lowering in Russia by the continuous emission of irredeemable banknotes - by the equally continuous buying up in London of bills of exchange on Russia. It has had to pay for this pleasure in the last few years almost sixty million roubles, and the rouble now stands at under two marks instead of over three. If the sword has the magic economic powers ascribed to it by Herr Dühring, why is it that no government has succeeded in permanently compelling bad money to have the 'distribution value' of good money, or assignats to have the "distribution value" of gold? And where is the sword which is in command of the world market?" (*Anti-Dühring*).

In what is another assertion, Cousins says that he remembers me saying that Marx had a theory of inelastic demand. Well it's news to me, as I have set out the very opposite: that Marx had formulated the concept of price and income elasticity of demand long before the marginalists (See *Theories of surplus value*, chapter 20, on price elasticity of demand for knives), and its importance is precisely in his rejection of *Say's Law* [law of markets], and explanation of crises of overproduction of commodities, as set out in *Theories of surplus value*, chapters 17 and 20!

But that is just typical of Cousins' method of unfounded assertions in place of evidence or rational argument - as with his final comment about what he "fully expects" are my ideas, which have nothing in common with what they are.

Arthur Bough
email

Analyse

I really think Steve Cousins has got Arthur Bough completely wrong.

One of the things about subscribing to a paper is that you can hold copies back and analyse what people had actually said. Bough argues with lots of people and usually wins - with very erudite opponents. From my belated reading and understanding of Marx's *Capital*, Bough has gone beyond Marx and has come up with a clever understanding of the change in the composition of capital (a polemic against two Socialist Party members).

I disagree with Bough, however, that the change in composition of

capital won't stop the decline from a productive to a service form of capitalism. In much earlier articles in the *Weekly Worker*, Bough talks about cooperatives and future workers-from-peasant economies that presumably would keep capitalism going.

Frank Kavanagh
email

Dictatorship

In his argument that Stalin and his group stole the Left Opposition programme, comrade Andrew Northall's conclusion is that: "By 1928-29, the economic conditions for socialist transformation had been created and it had become essential to launch socialist revolutionary transformations in both the industrial and agricultural bases of what then very quickly became a strong and mighty, socialist USSR" (Letters, June 8).

But this begs the question that if the economic conditions for socialist transformation of society were only created by 1928-1929, why did Lenin, with Trotsky's ardent support (basing this on the theory of permanent revolution), launch a socialist revolution back in 1917, when the material conditions for the socialist transformation of society were absent or immature? This was theoretical foolhardiness on the part of Trotsky and political opportunism on the part of Lenin, justified by the need to trigger socialist revolutions in the more advanced capitalist countries - an absurd apology, because no-one with any political wisdom would launch a revolution in one country, particularly a backward country, in the hope of triggering a revolution in another country, especially one which is far more advanced industrially. For instance, we wouldn't expect a socialist revolution in, say, Nigeria to trigger a socialist revolution in Germany, France or Britain, without the ruling class being able to make short work of it.

In the long term this Leninist/Trotskyist experiment has done serious damage to the struggle for socialism worldwide, leading to the mistakes of Mao and the lunacy of Pol Pot - both attempted to bring about socialist transformations in backward, peasant-dominated societies.

All this was compounded by the fact that the revolutionary movement, in the past (and in the present), continued to base itself on the flawed doctrine of Marxism, which argues at the political level that a dictatorship is necessary to bring in socialism - an argument nowhere to be found in the *Communist manifesto*, which argues the case for winning the battle for democracy and was written before Marx was later misled by Blanqui.

Blanqui argued the case for dictatorship - a theory which Marx adopted and modified for his own purposes, and thereby misled the whole communist movement, with Marxists, who instead of arguing the case for democratic socialism, initially based on a mixed economy with a leading socialist sector, arguing the case for a 'dictatorship of the proletariat', and the socialisation of all property, which opens the door to political abuses and strengthens the totalitarian tendencies in modern society.

What the Bolsheviks and Lenin didn't understand consciously was that the next stage of human society is democratic socialism, based on a mixed economy with a leading socialist sector. This is why after the earlier Leninist, Trotskyist lunacy, the New Economic Policy was viewed as a retreat. Of course, I am assuming that an energy crisis doesn't undermine attempts at the socialist transformation of society in the future.

The revolutionary left has

had to pay a heavy price for the mistakes of Lenin and Trotsky in triggering a socialist revolution in a peasant-dominated society, based on the mistaken Marxist view that dictatorship is necessary to bring in socialism. Both Marx and people like Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin and Mao failed to understand that dictatorship, regardless of its class content, is a relic of feudalism, and should only be resorted to in a temporary emergency situation, as under the Roman Republic. Sooner or later, communists will have to choose between Marx's mistake and democratic socialism and win the battle for democracy - which, ironically, means a return to the political standpoint of the *Communist manifesto*, before Marx was led astray by Blanqui.

Tony Clark

For Democratic Socialism

IHRA definition

Mike Macnair's report on the new 'director for free speech' at the Office for Students under the new Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act shows us just how morally bankrupt our government has become. They seem to have found, in appointing Arif Ahmed as the new 'free speech tsar', a suitable stooge to continue their untrammelled support for Israel. He shows in his statement to *The Times* the direction he plans to take: "The IHRA working definition [of anti-Semitism] is an important tool for understanding how anti-Semitism manifests itself in the 21st century. Adopting it sends a strong signal to students and staff facing anti-Semitism."

The report states Ahmed is a Cambridge academic philosopher. That a supposedly educated man could spout such tripe is astonishing, yet shows our government is heading in the exact opposite direction of supporting our freedom of speech. I myself was expelled from my union for criticising Israel under the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition, yet Ahmed would no doubt approve.

One might wonder what Liberty, our very own civil rights body, is doing about the IHRA definition? Precisely nothing, in spite of being persuaded by Jewish Voice for Labour activist and Liberty Committee member Jonathan Rosenhead into adopting a 2018 AGM motion against it. Tony Greenstein subsequently tried to get them to act - see his blog of October 2018, 'Why are the officers and employees of Liberty refusing to implement its policy of opposition to the IHRA?'

In 2019 I myself repeatedly emailed, then struggled at the Liberty AGM to get some action too, with no more success. Virtually all Liberty members who attended the Leeds AGM - some 100 souls - took my flyer, as I stood outside the AGM hall with my banner, and said they agreed it was a matter Liberty should address. But later inside, as I tabled questions whenever I could, the Liberty executive steadfastly refused to respond to my call for action. A succession of Liberty officers lectured us about the dangers of identification technology, yet refused to engage on the greatest attack on our freedom of speech - that of the right to condemn apartheid in Israel (a country which the UK bears absolute responsibility for creating, through the Balfour declaration and subsequent oppression of Palestinian revolt). The Palestine Solidarity Campaign, a body that should lead on the fight, are similarly tragically unwilling to actively oppose the IHRA definition; they even refused to condemn the bogus anti-Semitism attacks on their patron, Jeremy Corbyn.

That Zionism has triumphed in the UK this past seven years is underlined

by the fact that the politicised and fraudulent IHRA definition has been adopted by all major political parties (bar the Greens) and all the major unions (bar the PCS) - and now in the person of our new 'free speech' champion.

With Starmer's Labour Party likely to take over next year, the prospects look gloomy, but we know there are yet many Labourites who are embarrassed at their leader's support for racist Israel. We must redouble our efforts to challenge this awful definition that equates anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism. We encourage Labour and union branches to adopt the model motion which can be found on the IHRA page on our website at www.onepalestine.land.

On Sunday, I attended the AGM of the Jews for Justice for Palestinians, whose treasurer asked for suggestions about how to spend their enormous financial reserves. They too are committed to getting rid of this terrible definition and I suggested they take out a big advertorial against it in the trendy *Guardian* - the newspaper that supposedly champions free speech but, as we all know, refuses to condemn the IHRA definition. I really hope they do.

Pete Gregson

One Democratic Palestine

Top dog?

I don't know if it's just me, but has the *Weekly Worker* gone a bit quiet on revolutionary rapprochement of late? I hope it is just me, because now's not a good time!

Rather, I think it's time to consider two things: (1) it's all well and good to start 'where the class is' at *à la* transitional programme. But if we want workers to change, at some point we'll need to have an antagonistic relationship with the ideas in their heads. I stress 'in their heads', because (2) we must demonstrate that we're serious about a socialist future.

How? I believe we need to pair this antagonistic relationship with actual, material support for their struggles in the here and now, and here we need numbers. I'm not against the transitional programme, but why is it and the min/max programme always treated as mutually exclusive? It doesn't make sense to me.

Regarding the above, I can hear comrades screaming, 'Liquidationism!' Yes, we must guard against this. Here, unity for unity's sake is not a good thing. It may well be necessary to split at some point, but this should be when the outcomes of our various ideas are actually beginning to have consequences in the real world.

Bearing in mind there are a lot of new members on the revolutionary left, I wonder how any of this will resonate with them. I really don't want them to get burned. Right now, the political differences on the revolutionary left exist largely in a vacuum. So, maybe it's time for the lay membership of all the groups to start putting pressure on their leadership.

We need to ask ourselves how is the class to perceive us, with our lack of objective reasons for all our organisational difference? You can't blame them if they conclude that we want power for ourselves - power for power's sake - a bit like different families in the Mafia vying for top dog.

Sian Grech

Swansea

Preparation

John Wake's letter (June 1) on the Harlow Tories' renaming of Allende Avenue implicitly apologises for Salvador Allende's illusions in bourgeois democracy. Allende promoted general Augusto Pinochet as his commander-in-chief of the army and disarmed his own militant

supporters, when the escalating economic chaos and the collapse was at its height. The capitalist state was assisted in this case by Henry Kissinger and the CIA, whose covert actions actively destabilised the government and set the stage for the coup.

That is the missing element here. Of course, in the communist future there will be the superabundance that the socialist mode of production will bring and so no money, no want and no conflict. The capitalists in any state will not peacefully renounce their privileges and rule, because they cannot see the benefits to them from a mode of production based on production for human need and not for profit. In other words, billionaires, and their political representatives in the Tory Party, in rightwing Labour, in the US Republicans and Democrats will never expropriate themselves.

That will take a revolution; they will defend these privileges by force of arms. Remember that serving general who threatened Jeremy Corbyn? And those threats from the US? The working class will have to mobilise to defeat that counterrevolution. We are many, they are few, but they rule primarily ideologically, so we must prepare for that counterrevolution ideologically.

That is what John Wake's letter missed.

Gerry Downing
Socialist Fight

Exceptional

Paul Demarty rightly points out - indeed concedes - that the politics of the Teamsters (surely largely an aggregate of small businesses as well as a trade union, comparable to the cliques who brought down Salvador Allende, not to mention the 2000 fuel duty protestors in the UK, a 'farmer-labour alliance' bizarre enough to turn Bob LaFollette in his grave) are exceptional ('Labour and Lubner's millions', June 5).

But John L Lewis of the then immense miners' union was firm in his allegiance to the Republicans, whose protectionist origin in the likes of Henry Clay has always appealed to sectionalism in the working class. Where is my eagle stamp, proudly proclaiming the independence of American labour from foreign government subsidies?

Jack Fogarty
email

Sexual liberation

Sexuality is a taboo subject in many sectors of the population. It should be part of the discourse of any socialist programme worth its salt - although it would probably be, understandably, a limited part of the overall, non-sexological, political programme.

However, I think sexual liberation is an important analysis - a lofty objective which I don't expect to fully come to pass until after a socialist revolution. As I see it, sexual liberation is a by-product of gender liberation and other struggles: ie, gay, bi, trans, non-binary movements, etc for liberation. This circumstance will happen in the course of a profound cultural and material metamorphosis of society, such as transpired during and after the heady time of the Bolshevik revolution, when there was the collectivisation of housework, childcare and childrearing, canteens, laundry, etc; there was a move away from women's drudgery, dehumanisation and enslavement, and a progression toward gender and sexual freedom.

A big contributor to the revolution was the liberalisation of divorce laws, which made divorce a simple and accessible proposition by either party - in effect abolishing marriage. Abortion was made free and legal. Illegitimacy was outlawed. Only then could sexual liberation be contemplated. Thanks to Alexandra Kollontai and her compatriots, a high level of advancement was furthered

for women's liberation, children's and homosexual rights, etc - advances which haven't been seen since that time.

Unfortunately, the precarious and fledgling revolution was beset with a civil war and imperialist interventionists, as well as male chauvinism and the eventual lack of Soviet state support; the great strides made were cut short and dismantled. Kollontai wasn't naive or impractical and I believe was well aware of the unfolding contradictions of Soviet society which threatened the newly won gains.

Stalin drove the last nails in the coffin of women's rights and human emancipation: communism was a dead letter, fossilised into irrelevance. Sexual liberation was always an elusive reality: women (and others) never had the social option and possibility of sexual emancipation in class society - it's been fraught with danger and requires a degree of power and autonomy that women as a group could never claim to have.

An essential hallmark of gender oppression, which women's rights movements have investigated and seriously tried to change, is the institutionalised connection of sexuality to reproduction (the apparent *raison d'être* of the nuclear family; Shulamith Firestone and radical feminists, among others, sought to analyse the family which has been a challenge). The desire for procreation keeps women tied to the traditional family structure - regardless of the decrease in numbers of nuclear, heterosexual families, and regardless of how many women have now entered the waged workforce.

Many women and others are in gender straitjackets: there's an internalised delusion of power and identity that motherhood-propaganda fosters - an internalisation of false consciousness that operates in the interests of the mercenary, brainless, capitalist robber-barons who rule. Women are characterised as natural, fulfilled breeders in order to exploit their free labour, as well as marginalise and exploit their waged labour. Many women submit to traditional roles out of necessity, pragmatism and survival. The traditional white, heteropatriarchal family remains a forceful structure for the stabilisation and smooth functioning of the social system - maintaining the present labour force, reproducing the future one - an army of wage slaves, and private, non-wage slaves who prop up the nuclear family.

As stultifying as marriage and motherhood can be in the maintenance of the hellish, capitalist synergy of sexuality and reproduction - it's the situation of choice for many people, who are confronted by a desert of empty options. Karl Marx, influenced by a statement by Charles Fourier, said in 1868: "Social progress can be measured by the social position" of the female sex.

The heterosexual family is still the escapist mechanism and sanctuary in an alienating capitalist system and is the socially acceptable way to raise kids; alternatives were devised in the 60s and 70s in the US, but many were short-lived. As long as sexuality is connected to reproduction, sexual liberation is a far-off mirage in a repressive and at the same time permissive and commercially sexualised culture.

Yet women of colour in the US have developed a different definition of the traditional family and sexuality: motherhood has lost its traditional meaning - black women are heads of households, breadwinners, waged workers and leaders in their communities (also notable are the unbearable hardships visited on black women by a white-supremacist, capitalist system: ie, forced sterilisation, legal kidnapping of children, inadequate

medical care, mass incarceration of black men, etc). Claudia Jones, former member of communist parties in the US and UK, pointed out in 1945 that black women are the natural leaders of a communist movement because of their vast experience as leaders. I think her sentiments still apply in the year 2023.

The various political movements of the past which were facilitated and influenced by working class struggles (second-wave feminism apparently arose from working class struggles and the entrance of large numbers of women into the workforce), and also radical feminist and socialist theories and initiatives, did a lot to make women aware of their vulnerabilities. For example, the social oppression and powerlessness of self-sacrifice, the essentialist and idealised myths about the 'maternal instinct', and the role of inferiority in a phallogocentric social system. As a result many women chose to reject and escape traditional motherhood and free themselves from subservient roles. Ironically, the feminists, socialists and other politicians who raised the red flags of warning, who were tribunes of positive change, were blamed when there weren't sustainable alternatives created to provide a refuge for the new political and personal subversiveness. They were scapegoated for various adverse circumstances: ie, many women denied their wishes for motherhood or deferred motherhood for too long. The interregnum between the old world and the new world that was beginning to be born was at the root of the crisis: Antonio Gramsci expressed the concept beautifully.

Friedrich Engels, whose work represents spectacular breakthrough scholarship dealing with women's and gender oppression, contains a number of flaws, which can be forgiven because of inescapable limitations. According to Juliet Mitchell (British psychologist and socialist - see *Women: the longest revolution*, published in 1966), he did not emphasise the function of reproduction in the dynamic of oppression. His emphasis, as put forward by Mitchell, was on the use-value of women's non-wage domestic slavery in the family - seen by her as an inattention to the role of reproduction in women's perennial 'second-class' status in class society (I don't know if she ever modified her view). It is said, I might add, that Engels had a vision of higher forms of the family, but not a vision of its complete abolition (according to Mitchell, in the same publication, abolition of the family is not a productive demand; my view is that Lenin probably would have agreed and called it "phrase-mongering").

In the pseudo-democracies of the west, sexual liberation seems to be a remote dream. The working class has done all it can do to survive and take care of those members of their nuclear and extended families; free and open relationships are no doubt seen as an irrelevant and unrealisable luxury if considered at all, yet sexual liberation is theoretically, in my view, an important aspect of working class, revolutionary ideology.

The overriding imperative is the support for a multiracial, highly disciplined and organised political party with uncompromising principles. The vanguard of the proletariat must lead the way; the working class is the only force with the interest and capability to accomplish the carrying out of an authentic socialist revolution. All allies under the proletarian banner - for example, from the bourgeois intelligentsia - are invited to join this movement.

Pablo Picasso, member of the French Communist Party from 1944 until his death, is worth quoting here: "... it is your work in life that is the ultimate seduction".

GG
USA

ACTION

Support St Mungo's strikers

Friday June 16, 12 noon: Rally, Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley Park, Wembley HA9. Striking Unite members at St Mungo's homelessness charity are demanding a 10% pay rise. Speakers include Dawn Butler MP. Organised by Unite the Union Housing Workers Branch: www.housingworkers.org.uk/readevents.html?event_id=256

What would Marx and Engels say about today?

Friday June 16, 1pm: Online meeting. Globally, the economic crisis deepens, reflected in the cost-of-living emergency in Britain. Were Marx and Engels right about capitalism, and how do we understand today's crisis? Speaker: Michael Roberts - followed by questions and discussion. Registration free. Organised by Arise: A Festival of Left ideas: www.facebook.com/events/987247025792339.

Pay restoration for junior doctors now!

Friday June 16, 2pm: Demonstration. Assemble BMA House, Tavistock Square, London WC1. March to Parliament Square for rally. Support junior doctors striking to reverse their 26% pay cut. Organised by BMA: www.bma.org.uk/juniorspay.

Jarrow rebel town festival

Saturday June 17, 10.45am: Parade, speeches and musicians. Assemble pedestrian tunnel, Tyne Street, Jarrow NE32. Led by Felling Silver Band. Speakers include Kate Osborne MP, Alan Mardghum (Durham Miners' Association) and Alex Gordon (RMT). Organised by The Seven Lads of Jarrow: facebook.com/events/983544752661029.

Orgreave 39th anniversary

Saturday June 17, 1pm: March and rally. Assemble City Hall, Barkers Pool, Sheffield S1. Demand truth and justice for striking miners brutalised by the state at Orgreave on June 18 1984. Organised by Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign: www.facebook.com/events/601193785380443.

Abortion should not be a crime

Saturday June 17, 1pm: March and rally. Assemble Royal Courts of Justice, Strand, London WC2, then march to Westminster. Unless the law is reformed, more women and girls will face the trauma of lengthy police investigations and the threat of prison. Organised by British Pregnancy Advisory Service: www.facebook.com/events/297148849313215.

Stop the rip-off - renationalise energy

Tuesday June 20, 2pm: Protest outside the Future of Utilities conference, Business Design Centre, 52 Upper Street, London N1. With household energy bills hitting record levels, demand an end to excessive profiteering by energy companies. Organised by Unite For A Workers' Economy: www.facebook.com/events/786127149855382.

Why we need peace in Ukraine

Tuesday June 20, 6.30pm: Online meeting. To discuss prospects for peace in Ukraine and the recent University and College Union congress resolution, which has sparked a backlash in the labour movement. Speakers include Lindsey German (Stop the War), Tariq Ali (journalist) and Sean Vernell (UCU national executive committee). Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.facebook.com/stopthewarcoalition.

Why the Met Police must be disbanded

Thursday June 22, 6.30pm: Public meeting, Indian YMCA, 41 Fitzroy Square, London W1. The Met Police is racist, sexist, repressive and institutionally rotten - can it be reformed or should it be disbanded? Registration £5 (free). Organised by Counterfire: www.facebook.com/events/579611230952724.

National Shop Stewards Network

Saturday June 24, 11am to 4.30pm: Conference, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1. Bringing together active rank-and-file trade unionists from across the movement. All union members are welcome to attend and to participate in the discussion. Registration £6. Organised by National Shop Stewards Network: www.facebook.com/events/1595519607615141.

Boycott Puma

Saturday June 24, 12 noon: Day of action, Puma Flagship Store, Carnaby Street, London W1 and stores/stockists nationwide. Demand Puma ends its support for Israeli apartheid. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign UK: www.facebook.com/events/420750110177209.

Defend the right to protest

Saturday June 24, 6pm: Online meeting. People are being sent to prison just for using the terms, 'climate change' and 'fuel poverty', in court, and arrested for publicising the right of juries to decide, based on their conscience. Speakers include Tony Greenstein, who is currently facing prison and who was gagged during his trial. Organised by Labour Left Alliance: www.facebook.com/events/281639277624058.

Marxism 2023

Thursday June 29 to Sunday July 2: SWP annual school, SOAS University of London, Thornhaugh Street, London WC1. Over 100 sessions, including debates, workshops, panels, live music and a culture tent. Tickets: day £22.38 (£11.55), full event £44.04 (£27.80). Organised by Socialist Workers Party: www.facebook.com/marxismfest.

CPGB wills

Remember the CPGB and keep the struggle going. Put our party's name and address, together with the amount you wish to leave, in your will. If you need further help, do not hesitate to contact us.

USA

Never same again

Charging Donald Trump has had far-right Republicans reaching for their guns. Will he go down? Daniel Lazare is sure: maybe yes, maybe no

America's constitutional crisis has been growing for a generation, but there is no doubt that last week's federal indictment, charging Donald Trump with violations of the 1917 Espionage Act, is kicking it up to a whole new level.

"We have now reached a war phase," tweeted Andy Biggs, a Republican congressman from Arizona who heads the House Freedom Caucus and is a true-blue believer that Joe Biden stole the 2020 election. "This is a perimeter probe from the oppressors," added Republican Congressman Clay Higgins, an ex-police captain from Louisiana, who made a name for himself with a series of tough-talking videos about hunting down black "thugs".¹

Kari Lake, a fiery ex-Republican candidate for governor of Arizona, added:

If you want to get to president Trump, you're going to have to go through me and 75 million Americans just like me. And most of us are card-carrying members of the [National Rifle Association]. That's not a threat - that's a public service announcement.

Finally, there was Trump himself - bloodied, but unbowed, as he stood before 3,000 cheering Republicans in Georgia just two days after the indictment was announced: "Together, we stand up to the globalists, we stand up to Marxists, we stand up to the RINOs [Republicans in name only] ... We stand up to the open-borders fanatics, the radical-left Democrats, and their lawless partisan prosecutors ..." He added:

From the beginning, our America First agenda has been an existential threat to the rotten political class that gets rich and powerful at your expense, erasing our borders, cheating on elections, exporting our jobs, and squandering our blood and treasure on endless foreign wars ... they've launched one hoax and witch-hunt after another to try and stop our movement and thwart the will of the American people.

Plainly, the June 8 indictment is yet another dirty trick aimed at stifling the popular will.

It was an eruption of rhetorical violence unprecedented since "the great secession winter of 1860-61," to quote historian Henry Adams. And it is all too likely to lead to real violence, as America continues coming apart at the seams.

Get Trump?

But are the charges truly an act of war? Or are they something that Trump and his movement are trying to elevate into a *casus belli* in an attempt to undermine the rule of law? The problem is that America's superannuated constitutional system is in such tatters after decades of gridlock that it is hard to know.

Trump is as much to blame as anyone, since his attempted coup d'état two and a half years ago brought the entire system to the brink. But Democrats are also to blame since they spent the previous four years trying to mobilise the full power of the state in a plain-as-day



It could happen

effort to drive him out of office.

The big question is whether the latest indictment is an honest attempt to bring an accused malefactor to justice or a continuation of the same old 'get Trump' effort.

Rachel Maddow, an MSNBC TV host who has made a career out of Trump-bashing, let the cat out of the bag when she told viewers a few hours after the indictment:

You have to wonder if the justice department is considering whether there is some political solution to this criminal problem, whether part of the issue here is not just that Trump has committed crimes, but that Trump has committed crimes and plans on being back in the White House. Do they consider as part of a potential plea offer something that would proscribe him ... from running for office again?²

In other words, is the goal to prosecute Trump or use the threat of prosecution to force him to withdraw, now that he is preparing another White House bid in 2024? Dems insist that it is not, but Republicans would not trust them to tell the time of day - which is why so many of them are now reaching for their guns.

If national security is meanwhile at the centre of the storm, it is because the United States is facing a crisis that is simultaneously imperial and constitutional.

With one war on its hands in Ukraine, another brewing in the western Pacific and a struggle for control continuing in the oil-rich Persian Gulf, the US has more on its plate, internationally speaking, than it can possibly handle. It is a prime example of the "imperial overstretch" that Paul Kennedy described so eloquently in his classic study, *The rise and fall of the great powers*, in 1987 - and the strain from all that overreaching is clearly taking a toll.

At the same time, America is facing an unparalleled structural crisis at home. The reason is simple: along with Saudi Arabia, Brunei and maybe even the United Kingdom if you squint hard enough, the US is one of the most retrograde political structures on earth. The US constitution is a museum piece festooned with 18th century relics: a Senate that gives the same weight to underpopulated 'rotten boroughs' like Wyoming and Vermont that it does to urban giants like California and New York; an

Electoral College that is also heavily biased in favour of rural whites; a heavily-gerrymandered House of Representatives; and a hard-right Supreme Court intent on rolling back all the gains of the 1960s and after.

Add to that endemic corruption, baked-in racial inequities, the worst economic polarisation in the advanced industrial world, and a dysfunctional amending clause that effectively rules out constitutional reform - the wonder is not that America is exploding, but that it has taken so long.

Then there is the national-security state - a mini-empire in itself. The US has a bigger defence budget than the next 10 countries combined. It has 17 intelligence agencies dedicated to sniffing out foreign threats. It has dozens of think tanks, many bankrolled by the military-industrial complex, whose speciality is zeroing in on Russia and China and the threat they pose to US hegemony. And it has an endlessly gullible press corps whose mission to amplify and embellish whatever paranoid ravings the foreign-policy establishment manages to come up with.

This is where Trump comes in. Americans had plenty of reasons to despise Trump when he took to the campaign trail in mid-2015: eg, his racism, his sexism, his chest-thumping nationalism, etc. But nothing resonated with the foreign-policy establishment like his failure to toe the line on national security. Alarmed when he refused to condemn Russian intervention in Syria in September 2015, Democrats soon shifted into emergency mode. By April 2016, *Politico* was calling him "the Kremlin's candidate". By May, neocon doyen Robert Kagan was lambasting him for his embrace of "Putinism". When Trump jokingly called on Russia in July "to find the 30,000 [Hillary Clinton] emails that are missing", reporters collectively decided that they had a "Manchurian candidate" on their hands - someone put in place to do the Kremlin's bidding.

Every week saw a sensational new headline. The Kremlin was blackmailing Trump with a secret sex tape! Trump Tower in New York was communicating with a Moscow bank via a secret server! Russian oligarchs were paying off a key Trump advisor!

And so on. It was all either untrue or exaggerated beyond recognition. The real collusion was not between Trump and Putin, but among Democrats, the 'intelligence

community' and an anti-Trump press. Trump was still a bigot. But, given the role that progressivism plays with regard to American 'human rights' imperialism, his intolerance went hand in hand with hostility to foreign interventionism. His opposition was entirely from the right.

Not that the foreign-policy establishment gave a damn. All it knew is that Trump opposed its pro-war plans with regard to Russia, so it was determined to drive him out of office.

Full of holes

Thus, the frenzy went on and on. Years later, the big question is whether the get-Trump campaign has finally succeeded with the latest indictment or whether it will flop too. The answer is unequivocal: maybe yes, maybe no.

On one hand, there is no question that the new charges are more serious than the half-baked Stormy Daniels indictment that Manhattan district attorney Alvin Bragg handed down in March. Conservative legal commentators who dismissed the Bragg indictment out of hand are now taken aback by the evidence that special federal prosecutor Jack Smith has assembled. George Washington University law professor Jonathan Turley says the new indictment "hits below the waterline", while Bill Barr, Trump's own attorney general during his last two years in office, observes: "If half of it is true, then he's toast. It's a very detailed indictment, and it's very, very damning."

But not all are convinced. One of them is Alan Dershowitz, the retired Harvard law professor who represented Trump during his first impeachment trial and who is a ubiquitous presence on Murdoch-owned Fox News. Dershowitz is someone every good leftist loves to despise due to his knee-jerk, pro-Zionist views. But he is undeniably smart, and his views about the latest 'get Trump' effort may be perceptive.

Basically, what he says is that photos of document boxes piled up in Trump's bathroom may not matter in the end, because Trump's attorneys will argue that they are covered by the 1978 Presidential Records Act, which allows a president to claim diaries, notes and other personal jottings as private property. This is highly debatable, to say the least, since some of the documents appear to be intelligence reports that Trump did not prepare himself. But even worse from Trump's point of view,

Dershowitz goes on, is a recording showing him displaying a military document that he describes as "highly confidential" in an interview taped at Mar-a-Lago in mid-2021. "Now maybe he didn't actually allow the person to read it," Dershowitz said. "But that tape recording ... that's a damning piece of evidence."

Still, the indictment does not identify the document that Trump supposedly waved about, so it is unclear whether it is classified evidence covered by the Espionage Act. This may provide him with an out. But something else may provide him with an out as well: the question of selective prosecution. After all, the department of justice has not gone after Mike Pence and Joe Biden - at least not so far - even though both were caught with secret documents left over from their days as vice-president (Biden stored some of his documents in a super-secured location in his garage next to his prized Corvette). To be sure, Pence and Biden returned the papers as soon as the lapse was discovered, whereas Trump hemmed and hawed, holding some papers back and at one point instructing his attorney to lie, according to the indictment.

But, while that does not look good, there is also the Hillary Clinton problem to consider: ie, the fact that she destroyed 33,000 emails, some of which contained classified material, after coming under scrutiny for using a private email account for official business while serving as Barack Obama's secretary of state. If Clinton got off with a reprimand, why is Trump facing charges that could land him in prison for the rest of his life?

Referring to special prosecutor Jack Smith, Dershowitz told Fox News:

He was assigned only one job: to get Trump. So ... let's assume hypothetically that a Democratic prosecutor announces in advance, 'I'm only going to investigate Republicans', and then the investigation produces some evidence of crime. Is that acceptable in America?³

Needless to say, Republicans will answer with a resounding no.

This is not to say that Trump should walk. Neither is it to say that the 1917 Espionage Act - the same law used to prosecute Eugene V Debs and now Julian Assange - should be enforced to the hilt. Obviously, Marxists have zero interest in protecting bourgeois state secrets.

But it is to say that the new indictment contains enough holes to ensure that the constitutional breakdown will intensify, as the battle of Donald Trump versus the national-security state turns white-hot. The 'deep state' is fighting for its life against a Republican candidate who is vowing to rip it to shreds if he regains the presidency in 2024.

Although no-one can say for sure what will happen if he does, it is a sure bet that the American political structure will never be the same ●

Notes

1. www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1lc7i7BaG8&t=148s.
2. www.foxnews.com/media/rachel-maddow-suggests-doj-quid-pro-quo-with-trump-drop-charges-leaves-2024-race.
3. www.foxnews.com/media/alan-dershowitz-slams-trump-indictment-shares-one-damning-piece-evidence-doj-case.

TERRORISM

Death and the cabin

Paul Demarty considers the life and death of Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber. There are lessons for Extinction Rebellion, Just Stop Oil and all who despair of majoritarian politics

In April 1996, agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation descended upon an obscure location, five miles south of the small town of Lincoln in Montana.

Their target was a cabin, without electricity or running water, built to house one man - and ultimately the man himself, Theodore (Ted) Kaczynski, who was photographed on the perp-walk to the feds' car. In the pictures, he looks exactly as you would expect of such a frontiersman: old jeans ripped and faded, beard bushy, rough and unsculpted, affectless in defeat. But, of course, he was not arrested for being a rural eccentric, of which there are a great many in 'Big Sky Country'. He was arrested for a series of mail-bombings, of increasing sophistication, spread over the best part of two decades, which killed three and injured dozens, several of whom were permanently maimed.

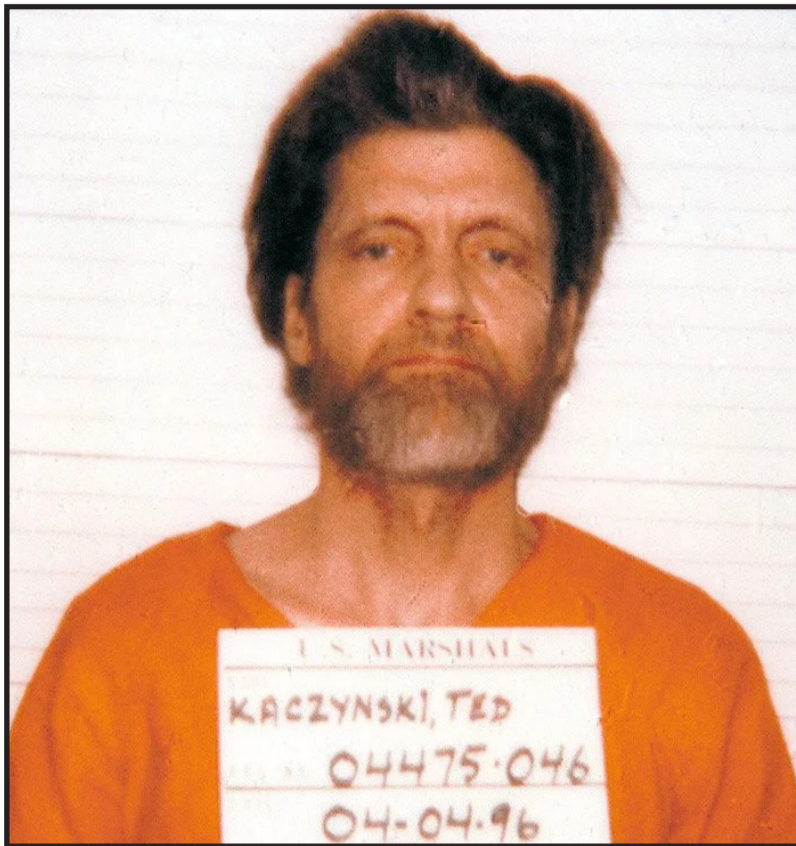
Kaczynski is now dead, at 81. He died in a prison hospital, where he had been moved from a Colorado 'supermax' prison in 2021 after a terminal cancer diagnosis. His death is believed to have been by suicide.

In life, he was always contemptuous of attempts to diagnose him as insane - indeed he sacked his legal team when they proposed such a defence, preferring to make a plea bargain for life in prison without parole. The question of his sanity is interesting, and complicated. Yet more interesting is the way his strange life predicted anxieties that have only become more pronounced over time, especially today. On the left and the right, one finds people prepared to allow him some credit for his worldview - laid out most extensively in the 35,000 word manifesto, *Industrial society and its future*, which he succeeded in strong-arming his pursuers into having published in *The Washington Post*. No doubt, with his terminal return to the front pages, many more will finally get round to reading it.

Online rightists sometimes speak of being 'Tedpilled', when they realise the role modern technology plays in the pervasive alienation they reject. Yet it is not only the right. John Zerzan, the anarcho-primitivist icon, carried on a correspondence with him in prison, though Kaczynski thought little of the primitivist movement himself. His criticisms of the emptiness of industrial civilisation find further echoes in the writings of people like Paul Kingsnorth (who, admittedly, is no longer straightforwardly categorised as leftwing). And his attempts to put his ideas into practice serve, perhaps, as a warning for the contemporary green, direct-action movement - from Extinction Rebellion to Just Stop Oil, to Andreas Malm.

Cabin fever

Kaczynski was born into a working class Polish-American family in 1940s Chicago. From an early age, he demonstrated a fearsome intellect, as a result of which he was put forward a year at school. This seems to have begun a pattern of alienation from his peers - exacerbated when he was admitted to Harvard University at only 16. There he was enrolled in a bizarre psychological experiment, in which the subjects were abusively berated for their personal aspirations, with their humiliations being recorded and played back to them for many years. He nonetheless graduated with flying colours in mathematics, and went on to write a prize-winning PhD thesis;



FBI mugshot

but his career as an academic stalled out quickly, because he was incapable of teaching due to his social impairments.

It was after that, in the early 1970s, that he moved to his famous cabin. Though he hoped to become self-sufficient, he remained reliant on support from his family. Yet, in late-20th-century America, there was so far one could get from civilisation. As it encroached on his paradise, he began to fight back with low-level acts of sabotage; at this time, also, he began to read political writings - especially by the Christian anarchist, Jacques Ellul - that gave his anxieties a more concrete form. The first of his bombings took place in 1978; he stepped up the pace of his campaign after a road was built through a favourite hiking spot in 1983.

His targets had enough coherence to give rise to the FBI codename UNABOM - "university and airline bomber" - that got him his popular soubriquet of 'Unabomber'. Yet they are a slightly strange assemblage. There were academics in various technical fields, yes, and an attempted airline bomb that could have had truly awful consequences; but also the owners of various computer stores, an advertising executive and a timber industry lobbyist. All had flitted across Kaczynski's attention as either pliant servants of the machine or violators of humanity's relationship to nature and itself. He left clues for the authorities deliberately, often red herrings.

Yet he had a problem: if he could see the coherence of his campaign, nobody else could. His motivations were ideological - but nobody had access to his ideology. He thus took his most audacious step, promising to end his bombing campaign if a major news outlet would carry, in full, his manifesto, entitled *Industrial society and its future*. Initially the editors of the pornographic magazine *Penthouse* agreed, but Kaczynski held out for a better offer - *Penthouse* could print it, but he "reserve[d] the right to plant one (and only one) bomb intended to kill", unless a more august periodical stepped in. After more frantic conferences between state agencies

and editors, *The Washington Post* stepped in.

Kaczynski's brinksmanship proved to be the act of hubris that the authorities hoped for. In a bitter twist, his brother and sister-in-law recognised many of Ted's talking points and catchphrases, and realised, to their mounting horror, the identity of the mysterious Unabomber. They tipped off the FBI and, in due course, brought federal agents to the door of that Montana cabin.

Manifesto

Kaczynski's life thereafter - in the bowels of a supermax prison - was necessarily less dramatic than his years as an enigmatic domestic terrorist. Yet they were enlivened by correspondence with many interested parties on the outside. Whatever else *Industrial society and its future* was, it was not the work of a psychotic or a moron. It is a coherent exposition written out in numbered, cross-referenced paragraphs, as if it were an analytical philosophical demonstration. Its focus is narrow - on technological society's deleterious effects on human wellbeing - and the text is all the clearer for it. (Despite his association in the popular mind with 'deep green' causes, he explicitly brackets the question of environmental questions and barely mentions them).

Indeed, the first significant section is merely a series of psychologising criticisms of the left: he characterises leftism, from communists to "politically correct types", as a symptom of a frustrated will to power and in most cases of "oversocialisation" (an overidentification with moral codes that are, in practice, often ignored in social life). He is not simply being mean: indeed, his point is that 'leftists' merely exhibit in heightened form pervasive defects of technological society (in this respect the manifesto can be compared to Christopher Lasch's *The culture of narcissism*, though Lasch's psychology is distinctly Freudian and notably less crude than Kaczynski's).

Why are we all so miserable, then? Kaczynski posits an evolved

psychological need for what he calls the "power process" - the experience of defining a goal, working towards it alone or as part of a small group, and then reaping the benefits, and doing so "autonomously" - not under the domination of others. By satisfying our basic needs, technological civilisation throws a wedge into the "power process": it thereby breaks the link between human needs and the ordinary activity of humans themselves. The result is the proliferation of "surrogate activities", whether they be done for wages or merely as a hobby, that have no meaningful connection to one's needs or wellbeing.

Science, the paradigmatic activity of the age of technology, is the most surrogate of all activities: Kaczynski ridicules the idea that the scientific activity might be motivated by curiosity or philanthropy rather than a pathetic attempt at displacing the anomie of the society that science has built. The natural terminus of technological civilisation is the transformation, by means of social and genetic engineering, of the human individual into something altogether different and wholly pliable to the machine.

Against this he proposes a "revolutionary" struggle in terms that might almost be confused with some toytown Bolshevik sect, but for his *open* contempt for the rabble. The ideology of the 'revolutionaries' must offer a sharp contrast between the masses and the elites, and be strictly internationalist (since national competition is a great spur to technological progress...). Perhaps, in the end, the whole thing might come off without violence (except in the case of the poor sods whose fingers he had already blown off, of course).

An early version of this essay was apparently written in 1971, and it can be assumed that Kaczynski would have encountered student radicalism in his days at Berkeley. The fact that he writes almost like a sub-Maoist urban guerrilla sect member is thus presumably no accident - building castles in the air and (not quite) calling it the "mass line". Taking that into account, the strange incongruity of his anthropological-political speculations and the bombings they sought to justify can be explained: the process is exactly the other way round. At a certain point, Kaczynski despaired of the political prospects of his ideas; he took to living off-grid as best he could; but he could never get far enough from the world.

We have noted his use of the grammar of psychological diagnosis to critique the left, something which must in the end be called out as an illegitimate tactic. That said, we are reduced to the same thing, and must diagnose him not as a paranoid schizophrenic (as his lawyers attempted to do), but a depressive. Individual terrorism - so consistently and laughably ineffective in achieving its aims over its whole existence - can only bespeak despair and consequent nihilism. His assertion that this was the truth of leftism was, alas, so much projection.

Does Kaczynski have inheritors today? We have mentioned certain esoteric figures on the right; his strange pop-psychology categorisation of types and enumeration of human needs reads almost like it might have appeared in an over-ambitious Substack post, and still more his rather snippy

anti-leftism. His identification of technology with bureaucratic tyranny finds an echo in the conspiratorial rightists who are obsessed with the 'great reset', in which some Davos worthy is going to force everyone to live in pods and eat bugs (or whatever it is this week).

But we must draw a connection to elements of the left, roughly speaking. It is undeniable that we are living through another vogue for eco-activism of a direct-actionist stripe: plainly the *actions* involved are not morally comparable to Kaczynski's exploits, but they remain acts of individual terrorism. The ideology behind Extinction Rebellion, Just Stop Oil and the like is avowedly and proudly minoritarian, as in *Industrial society*.

Failure

And there is a logic which drives some such actors towards more dangerous territory: the failure of mainstream greenism and intergovernmental jollies to make even a dent in global warming leads to XR; the failure of XR leads to more aggressive tactics on the part of Just Stop Oil and the like; JSO's inability to attack oil infrastructure leads it to attack ... oil paintings, with no better reasoning than Kaczynski had for bumping off random computer shop managers. That will not work either; the temptation, for some individuals, will be to go the final step (that temptation will be heightened by the dishonest activities of state provocateurs). For those who demur without abandoning the minoritarian, sub-Bakuninist framing of the struggle, the result will be disillusionment and demobilisation - perhaps the purchase of a small cabin somewhere remote!

Fortunately, Kaczynski was wrong about the conditions of political action in 1995, just as Erica Chenoweth was more recently. Of course, all politics *begins* with minorities - somebody has to have the idea first - but the revolutionary moments of the past make perfectly clear that broad masses are quite capable of playing an intelligent, active role in political activity. They are neither the idiotic mob feared by Kaczynski nor the dead weight of complacency that drives climate direct-actionists up the wall.

We said that *Industrial society and its future* was not the work of a madman or an idiot, but it clearly is the work of a man living in a cabin, digesting his favourite books, cut off from any common project that might have disciplined his speculations, or his programme of carefully-planned yet somehow random violence. He is exactly wrong about surrogate activities, which he equates with membership of large organisations - be they mass employers, political parties or whatever else.

Secession from society - to the Montana cabin or to Walden Pond - is the surrogate: *collective action* is the true method of confronting our particular existential needs. Kaczynski ridiculed the idea that 'good' technology could be separated from 'bad', but could only do so by rewriting primitive society as a mirror image of the American frontiersman. It is mass society that allows us to diagnose any problems with any societies at all ●

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TORIES

Misleading parliament should matter

Mike Macnair discusses Boris Johnson's lies, his resignation, his honours list and his media manipulation

On June 8 the House of Commons Committee on Privileges 'Maxwellised' their report on the allegation that Boris Johnson intentionally misled the house over the lockdown parties, sending it to him for comment. Johnson took the opportunity (June 9) to get his side of the story in first by resigning his Uxbridge and South Ruislip seat. He accused the Privileges Committee of being a 'kangaroo court' and part of a campaign by 'the blob' to reverse Brexit, denounced Rishi Sunak for failing to back him against the committee, of reneging on a 'peace deal' and of blocking some of his nominations for peerages in his resignation honours list. The committee has delayed publication of the report.

So far this is just a story of the common-or-garden backstabbing intrigues at the top of the Tory Party - "talk of court news, ... who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out".¹ There are *hints* of Brexiteer demagoguery there, which are reflected in the sympathetic treatment afforded to Johnson's claims by the *Express*, *Mail* and *Telegraph*.² Two of Johnson's rejected nominees for peerages announced their resignations: Nigel Adams, MP for Selby and Ainsty; and Nadine Dorries (who announced she would resign as MP for Mid Bedfordshire, but has not yet actually done so). But this does not actually amount (yet) to a serious Conservative split or "meltdown".

It is hardly news, either, that Boris Johnson tells lies. In his chapter on student politics in his sister Rachel's book *The Oxford myth* (1988) he argued for the importance of dishonesty in political life. In spring 1988 he was sacked as a journalist from *The Times* for making up a quotation, and as Europe correspondent of *The Telegraph* in 1989-94 he made up a series of anti-European Union stories about alleged regulation proposals. The *Mirror* in 2022 listed "Boris Johnson's 50 worst lies, gaffes and scandals".³

There are, nonetheless, more important constitutional issues involved. In the first place, the case helps us to see why 'Maxwellisation' is *as such* an *unfair* procedure (in the name of 'fairness') for the benefit of the rich and of fraudsters. This case is merely the latest example of *undue process* of this sort.

Secondly, the fact that a section of the press clearly does not regard the prime minister lying to parliament as being in any way more serious than lying to the general public tells us something significant about the evolution of the UK constitution: away from the parliamentary sovereignty of the 18th to early 20th centuries, towards parliament as merely an assembly of local ombudsmen for constituent complaints and a theatre in the three-to-five-year process of campaigning for the election of a sovereign government.

Thirdly, the immediate trigger of Adams's and Dorries's resignations is the rejection of their nominations for peerages in Johnson's resignation honours list. The story is tortuous and contested.⁴ But what it points to is the absurdity of the right of the resigning prime minister to award honours in a world which has seen three Tory prime ministers in the last six years - and, behind that in turn, the absurdity of the House of Lords as an institution.

'Maxwellisation' is the most



Led by the nose

immediately obvious issue. The point, in essence, is that giving Johnson advance warning of the findings inherently allowed him to set the timetable and to achieve news management by this means. The practice was named for Robert Maxwell, and arose because he litigated a department of trade and industry investigation which made findings against him as a company director without giving him an opportunity to comment.⁵ The authors of the 2016 *Review of Maxwellisation* comment that Maxwell in fact *lost* his litigation. But what they fail to recognise is that the delays caused by the litigation seriously blunted the effect of the DTI inspectors' report and thereby allowed Maxwell to continue his dodgy financial operations with the assets of public listed companies down to his death in 1991, leaving the Mirror Group pensions fund stripped of £460 million.

What lies behind 'Maxwellisation', then, is that the legal professions routinely sell and deny justice, creating a culture of impunity for those who can afford unlimited expenditure on their services - in particular by creating forms of 'undue process' and excessive procedural protections, which allow the client to endlessly delay proceedings and to exhaust the resources of the (civil) claimant or (criminal) complainant. Until the mid-19th century, this effect was *partially* limited by statutory controls on legal fees (partially because it was still legal to hire multiple barristers).

It was also partially limited by the availability of parliamentary inquiries by select committees, especially into forms of official misconduct. GW Keeton showed in 1960 that in the late 19th century, parliament partially abandoned its responsibility to limit the sale of justice in this area, by replacing select committee investigations with forms of public tribunal and inquiry.⁶ In the 1960s, as the *Review of Maxwellisation* shows, these inquiries became substantially 'judicialised' and 'adversarialised' and thus (this is my

comment, not the *Review's*) subject to the sale and denial of justice - leading to exorbitant costs and intolerable delays.⁷ It should merely be abolished, and the power to run inquiries de-judicialised and restored to parliament.

Democracy?

Johnson's stubborn resistance to resigning over having misled the House of Commons should be contrasted with Amber Rudd, who resigned in 2018 after (she said inadvertently) misleading the home affairs select committee about deportation targets in connection with the Windrush scandal. It is the *general impression* one gets from the literature that for a minister to mislead parliament used to be a resigning matter - but has gradually become less so.⁸

It may well be that modern technology and the creation of paper-trails has the result that ministers are more likely to be *exposed* in misleading parliament than they were in earlier times. Nonetheless, it does seem to be the case that there is a drift towards this mattering less to political careers than it once did.

I suggest that the background to this is that parliament is to a considerable extent less of a *decision-making body* than it was before universal suffrage. Then parliament very approximately represented the possessing classes in proportion to their possessions: the very wealthy were expected to be given seats in the House of Lords; the substantially wealthy could expect to fund member of parliament clients; the small proprietors got a bit of a say in elections.

In this context, after 1689 and before 20th century developments, real decisions were made in parliament - not just in the form of legislation (which was much less likely to be *merely* rhetorical spin than recent government bills are), but also in decisions about foreign and defence policy, and so on, informed by parliamentary debates. The prime minister in this context was the person who could *hold together a*

majority coalition in the House of Commons, although this coalition might be of members of a single party. Among other consequences, in this context misleading parliament *really mattered*. It might affect real decisions. Hence the constitutional convention that ministers who misled parliament should resign.

Universal suffrage has led to moving the decision processes away from the Commons. Instead, MPs do social work as sort-of ombudsmen for their constituents and campaign for re-election. The prime minister is nowadays usually selected by party members in the country, rather than by MPs, and does not have to hold together a coalition; ministers are appointed by prime ministerial patronage (as they were by royal patronage before 1688). *Decisions* are reached in the interactions between ministers, the media, lawyers and lobby firms. In this context, lying to the House of Commons is gradually becoming merely equivalent to lying to electors (which has never been a resigning matter ...).

Communists want to see a fully decision-making elected body, whether this is parliament or some other 'supreme workers' council'. To be fully decision-making it will need effective sanctions against ministers who mislead it.

Johnson's retirement honours list has been at the centre of the press debate after his resignation, because Johnson would prefer this to be the central issue. After all, what he misled parliament about was not any old policy matter. It was that he and his associates in Downing Street assumed that *they* were not bound by extremely onerous Covid lockdown laws, which they imposed on the general public. It can be added that the lockdown laws which they flouted had enormous economic costs, and implications for evictions which are yet to fully feed through. Focus on 'partygate' makes Johnson look bad.

However, the resignation honours list is *also* seriously problematic. Johnson has rewarded or attempted

to reward a series of cronies.⁹ This is not a complete novelty: Liz Truss, who was only in office for 49 days, has been criticised for submitting a list; Theresa May was accused of cronyism over her own list, having herself accused David Cameron of cronyism over his¹⁰; and so on. The practice that the retiring prime minister has the right to submit an honours list is remarkably recent, going back only to 'Liberal imperialist' prime minister Lord Rosebery in 1895.¹¹

A lot of these honours are merely 'gongs', thank-yous for loyal support and service. Peerages, however, give people the right to participate in legislative and governmental decision-making, merely *because*, in this case, they are patronised by a resigning prime minister. It is not just short prime ministerial tenure which makes this look odd (and all the more when the PM is forced out by a coup in their own party). It is also the bloated character of the upper, unelected chamber, with "about 800 members who are eligible to take part in the work of the House of Lords".¹²

The government has, in fact, just forced through new legislation which criminalises walking or driving slowly on the public highway (if it is a protest).¹³ The process was done by ministerial order to avoid scrutiny in the House of Lords. Sir Keir Starmer's Labour MPs backed the measure in order to avoid being seen as soft on protestors. The point, in the present context, is that the House of Lords is *useless* as a 'check or balance' on a government which is backed by the 'fourth estate' - the press barons.

In 1649, "The Commons of England assembled in Parliament, finding by too long experience that the House of Lords is useless and dangerous to the People of England to be continued", abolished the Lords. Because the House of Lords was, in its majority, 'remainder', Andrew Neil revived this idea in 2021.¹⁴

Boris Johnson's resignation honours should provide us with yet another reason to fight for its abolition ●

Notes

1. *King Lear* act 5 scene 3.
2. See the *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *The Daily Telegraph* June 14.
3. www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/boris-johnsons-50-lies-gaffes-26013022 (July 7 2022).
4. There are different versions in *The Observer* June 11, *Daily Mail* June 12 and *The Times* June 14.
5. *Re Pergamon Press* (1970) [1971] chapter 388 and *Maxwell v Department of Trade and Industry* [1974] QB 523; discussion in the 2016 'Review of Maxwellisation' available at committees.parliament.uk/committee/158/treasury-committee/news/98681/the-use-of-maxwellisation-in-financial-inquiries.
6. *Trial by tribunal* London 1960.
7. Some examples of the problem in R Shrimley, 'The never-ending problem with public inquiries' *Financial Times* June 7.
8. 'Amber Rudd resigns hours after *Guardian* publishes deportation targets letter' *The Guardian* April 30 2018. On the convention: www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/article/explainer/ministerial-accountability (September 16 2020).
9. Eg. see above, note 3; H White, www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/comment/boris-johnsons-resignations-honours (June 9).
10. *The Guardian* March 25 2023, September 10 2019 and August 6 2016.
11. www.thegazette.co.uk/awards-and-accreditation/content/103419.
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HEALTH

Not all in the mind

There is likely to be an acute crisis when the Met police stop responding to mental health calls. Ian Spencer takes us from Bethlem to Huntercombe via Enoch Powell

The decision of the London Metropolitan Police to withdraw from attending mental health calls from August 31 has the potential to exacerbate a crisis in mental health provision.

The *Guardian* has reported that it has seen a letter from Met commissioner, Mark Rowley, saying that he will order officers “not to attend the thousands of calls they get every year to deal with mental health incidents”, because, he believes, officers are being “diverted from their core role of fighting crime”. However, the Met has said in a statement that it will continue to respond “where there is an immediate threat to life”.¹ This is likely to be a high proportion of the total mental health calls, given that the police tend to be called where there is a threat to harm oneself or others.

One of the reasons why the police are called is that they - unlike paramedics, for example - have the power, under section 136 of the Mental Health Act, to detain someone, in a public place, without a warrant, who appears to have a mental disorder and remove them to a “place of safety”. They can even remove someone from their own home with a warrant from a magistrate, under section 135. In both cases, detention is for 72 hours.

The Met’s actions have been prompted, in part, by the 2022 decision of Humberside police to divert police resources away from responding to mental health crises in a policy known as ‘Right Care, Right Person’. The argument, which is hard to refute, is that police officers are not the best people to carry out psychiatric intervention.² This is likely to become policy across the country, just as soon as the government can find a way of recruiting thousands of mental health responders for a system which is haemorrhaging staff.

This poses other important questions, such as: how did it come to be the case that the police have become one of the most important “first responders” to mental health incidents? What is the nature of the crisis in mental health? And which agency should be responsible for acute distress in this field?

To assess the changes to mental health provision, we need to examine some of the history of the last 60 years, starting with the decision to close the old psychiatric hospitals. The steady decline of mental health provision accelerated rapidly after the defeat of the healthworkers’ dispute in 1982. Mental health and class struggle are intimately connected.

In 1961, Tory health minister Enoch Powell, in a slightly less well-known speech than his ‘Rivers of blood’, announced the decision to begin the process of closing the asylums, which “stand isolated, majestic, imperious, brooded over by the gigantic water tower and chimney combined, rising unmistakable and daunting out of the countryside”. The aim was a move to mental health inpatient provision in general hospitals and community-based out-patient services. The changes were justified with reference to improvements in mental healthcare and a projected decline in beds required.³ This effectively began the process of ‘privatisation’ of healthcare, even



William Hogarth 'A rake's progress - in the madhouse' (1753)

before the term was coined - Powell was a Thatcherite before Thatcher!

The closure of the psychiatric hospitals was preceded by a sell-off of the associated land. Many of the hospitals were founded to be partly self-sufficient, with patients engaged in agricultural labour. While the oldest of them, the Bethlem Royal Hospital in south London, can trace its history to the 15th century, the great period of asylum building was in the 19th century, when legislation first allowed and later obliged county councils to fund the care of the mentally ill from local rates. The development of the asylums was a corollary to urbanisation, industrialisation and the Poor Law. The mentally ill were seen as a disruptive part of the poor and indigent in workhouses, while asylums were the counterpart to the Poor Law infirmaries in the health system before the NHS.⁴

The asylums were also an important trade union base within the NHS. The first ever nurses’ strike was organised in 1910 by the Asylum Workers Union - except, of course, that those who then cared for the mentally ill were not regarded as nurses from the point of view of the Nurse Registration Act of 1919 and were therefore not recruited by the Royal College of Nursing. In the 1980s, the RCN had few members in mental health. The Confederation of Health Service Employees was made up of a merger between the Mental Hospital and Institutional Workers Union and the Welfare Services Union.

Together with the National Union of Public Employees, the TUC-affiliated unions led a campaign in 1982 for a 12% pay raise for all NHS staff. The defeat of the

healthworkers, after the Royal Colleges of Nursing and Midwifery accepted a separate pay award for qualified nurses and midwives, led to an accelerated campaign of privatisation, particularly of ancillary services, and then hospital closures.

Ideology

When the sociologist, Erving Goffman, published his book *Asylums* in 1961, his analysis of the “total institution” was pushing at an open door.⁵ His facile critique, which equated asylums with concentration camps, found a ready audience among critics of institutional psychiatry and provided a justifying ideology for closure.

This theme was also taken up by what came to be referred to as the ‘anti-psychiatry’ school. People such as RD Laing, Thomas Szasz and Michel Foucault put forward a critique which focused on the supposedly repressive nature of psychiatry. This disparate group did much to popularise the notion that mental ill-health was somehow not ‘real’. Szasz’s book *The myth of mental illness* and Laing’s *Sanity, madness and the family*, for example, tended to locate mental ill-health in the realm of social definition. Peter Sedgwick was one of few identifiably Marxist writers who was able to put forward a critique of psychiatry and the ‘anti-psychiatry school’, and was able to locate illness in a critique of capitalism without diminishing the distress suffered by people with poor mental health.⁶

Those who worked in the asylums did not always actively oppose their closure, but few had illusions that the alternative, if done properly, would be cheaper. Perhaps more importantly, any attempt at making

mental health provision an issue commanding support and sympathy from the left was frustrated by the defeat of the 1982 healthworkers’ dispute and the absence of a coherent perspective on the importance of mental healthcare.

The number of psychiatric hospital beds declined steadily from the 1950s, when community mental health services came to play an increasingly important role. By the time of the 1959 Mental Health Act (MHA) most residents in psychiatric hospitals were ‘informal’: that is, not detained and could discharge themselves, providing they were not a danger to themselves or others.

As an aside, while the mental health inpatient hospital population has declined, the prison population has increased. It is also worth remembering that by the 1980s about two-thirds of psychiatric hospital residents were elderly, either because they had grown old in the hospital or were suffering from organic mental disorders - typically dementia of one sort or another. Another sizable proportion were simply institutionalised with no other home to go to. Even if the facilities were institutional and often fell short of the kind of privacy and dignity that we would demand for ourselves, those with dementia were cared for free by the NHS. The elderly are now increasingly cared for in private care homes, most of which are run for profit, and dementia is now almost unique in being the only form of terminal diseases in relation to which many have to pay for their own care - often by the sale of their home - after a life-time of contributing to the NHS.

While care for the acutely mentally distressed as an in-patient is

not always desirable, the proportion of people detained formally in the old psychiatric hospitals was always low. But we have now reached a situation where, in order to be admitted at all, the likelihood is that the patient will be detained under the MHA.

Transformation

In 2021-22 there were 53,337 detentions recorded under the MHA. This is likely to be an underestimate, as not all providers submitted data and many provided incomplete data. Black people are four times more likely to be detained than white people, and are also 11 times more likely to be subject to Community Treatment Orders.⁷ Psychiatric hospitals have not gone away, but many are now in private hands, carrying out ‘NHS’ services on a contractual basis. Providers such as the Huntercombe Group have been the subject of scandals.⁸

We communists must take mental ill-health as seriously as any other aspect of health. While we acknowledge that psychiatry defines disorders with a social aetiology (the causes or cause) as individual and personal, that is no different to somatic - ie, bodily - disorders. As we are consistent materialists, mind and body are not separate substances. For example, suicide is one of the most significant causes of mortality in the young. We can also identify a clear relationship between class, inequality, morbidity and mortality across the board. The more unequal a society, in terms of the gap between rich and poor, the worse the health outcomes - and this is disproportionately so, the poorer people are.⁹

The withdrawal of the police from being first responders in mental health crises is not going to work in the absence of a significant increase in properly trained and paid mental healthworkers with the facilities to support care. But the ‘mental health crisis’ - like the ‘social care crisis’ - has its roots deep in the nature of capitalism. The NHS meant the nationalisation and rationalisation of a hotchpotch of private, Poor Law and voluntary provision - a scenario to which we have returned step by step.

Health is too important to be the sole concern of health professionals, politicians or the police. It must come under the direct democratic control of workers. The transformation to a truly human society is ultimately the only way to reduce the distress caused by class society and human alienation ●

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USSR



First plan backgrounds

Planning and socialism are synonymous. However, as Jack Conrad argues in a two-part article, there is planning and planning. The Soviet Union's first five-year plan owed more to chaos than plan

There are still those unfortunate souls who look back fondly on the Soviet Union's first five-year plan.¹ The idea being that the economic growth piled on after 1928 proved, beyond a shadow of doubt, the superiority of socialism over capitalism and carried with it the promise that, if emulated, such planning would deliver material "superabundance" across the whole globe.² Aaron Bastani, Nick Srnicek, Alex Williams and the other accelerationists are just the latest variants on this Promethean (ie, productionist) theme.³

Admittedly, every society engages in planning. Our original communist ancestors planned hunting expeditions according to the phases of the moon and the seasons; Chinese emperors planned roads, palaces, cities, canals, ports and treasure fleets; feudal kings planned royal tours, military campaigns, castle building and marriage-bed alliances.

However, none of these societies remotely compare with the Soviet Union. There planning assumed the proportions of an official cult - celebrated for lifting the country out of poverty, delivering miraculous growth rates and providing the wherewithal needed to defeat the Nazi war machine and, going on from there, the guarantee of overtaking the west. Five-year plans came with congress reports, resolutions, workplace meetings, poems, songs and festivities. Each enterprise had its plan and every worker their planned target. General secretaries and prime ministers promised that full socialism - communism itself - was inevitable with the 'planned

economy'.

Yet, as we know, especially from our present-day historical vantage point, nothing could be further from the truth. The first five-year plan re-enslaved workers, re-enslaved peasants, consolidated a self-serving bureaucratic elite and locked the Soviet Union on a course of development that did, and had to, eventually grind to a halt in stagnation. Such were its laws of motion. The final collapse happening in December 1991 with only farcical resistance mounted.

In short, the first five-year plan was neither the vindication of socialism, as celebrated by Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky alike, nor the birth of what Tony Cliff saw as the highest stage of class society prior to socialism, ie, bureaucratic state capitalism. No, in actual fact, the five year-plan was the triumph of counterrevolution within the revolution and the beginnings of an unsustainable, ectopic, social formation.

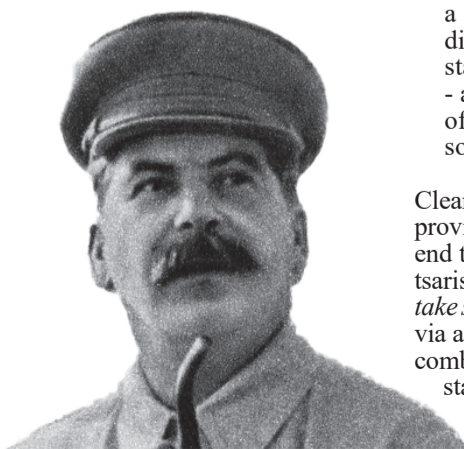
Genesis

Undoubtedly, Lenin's first thoughts on the matter of *practical* planning were inspired by what he had read about Germany's 1916-18 *Kriegssozialismus* (war socialism). After failing to secure a lightning victory over France - the Schlieffen plan - the kaiser state took command over wide swathes of the economy. A temporary suspension of the law of value. Chief of general staff Paul von Hindenburg and his deputy, Erich Ludendorff, were determined to win the 'battle of war materials'.⁴ Max Weber described the result as a "political military *dictatorship* of the

Varvara Stepanova 'The results of the first five-year plan' 1932 (State Museum of Contemporary Russian History, Moscow). That was the revolutionary dream.

The reality was counterrevolution within the revolution

Stalin: abandoned NEP, stole the Left Opposition's economic programme ... then imposed utter irrationality



most comprehensive kind".⁵

Without such emergency measures there would have been ignominious defeat, given that Germany faced war on two fronts. The Oberster Kriegsamt (supreme war office) imposed strict guidelines and much tighter controls on labour, which included importing workers from "occupied Europe".⁶ Some two million women, war wounded and foreign labourers were put to work and arms production - in particular munitions - more than doubled. Obviously, Lenin was impressed by what could be achieved through the concentrated application of state power. Again and again he cited the example of Germany:

Here we have 'the last word' in modern large-scale capitalist engineering and planned organisation, *subordinated to Junker-bourgeois imperialism*. Cross out the words in italics, and in place of the militarist, Junker, bourgeois, imperialist state put *also a state*, but of a different social type, of a different class content - a *Soviet state* (that is, a proletarian state) - and you will have the *sum total* of the conditions necessary for socialism.⁷

Clearly, for Lenin, *Kriegssozialismus* provided not only the means to put an end to economic dislocation in post-tsarist Russia. His intention was to *take steps in the direction of socialism* via a mixed economy, regulated by a combination of binding directives, state purchases, tax incentives, etc. A holding measure which would allow Soviet Russia

to last long enough before socialist Europe came to the rescue. However, civil war, capitalist sabotage and imperialist intervention meant that the emergency 'war communist' measures adopted from mid-1918 to early 1921 were about survival, not steps in the direction of socialism.

Everything that could go to the Red Army went to the Red Army. Money exchange and commodity production disappeared from industry. State officials directed physical products and workers just about kept body and soul together on meagre rations. Everyday items, such as tools, clothing, footwear, household utensils, etc, needed by peasants, no longer came from industry. With nothing to buy, peasants refused to sell. To prevent starvation in the urban areas the authorities turned to forced grain requisitions - a source of huge resentment in the countryside. Nationalist and anarchistic sentiments mushroomed. Revolts broke out.

True, the Goelro plan for the electrification of Soviet Russia was launched in 1920 and eventually proved a great success. However, besides that, planning was crude. Annual targets for each enterprise were the norm. Overall, though - certainly after the introduction of the package of measures known as the New Economic Policy beginning in March 1921 - Soviet Russia "remained fundamentally a market economy".⁸ Forced grain requisitions were abandoned in favour of the NEP's state prices and taxes in kind. Agriculture, note, accounted for around 50% of national income and some 80% of the workforce.⁹

Relations between state-owned

enterprises were once again based on rouble exchange. And, while there was a degree of supervision exercised from above, enterprises were expected to make a profit and lay off workers if they made a loss. There was wage labour. Unemployment too. And, though there were strong trade unions and proposals to include workers and consumers in the running of nationalised enterprises, one-man management soon became the ruling mantra. So, while property relations changed, the workplace hierarchy remained largely unaltered. It should be stressed, therefore, that the *state capitalist planning* being prepared in the early Soviet Union was far removed from what the Marx-Engels team had envisaged (control by the associated producers, the end of money and a materially rich society being taken as a given).

Mixed economy

For planning really to be planning, no matter what the society, over time (ie, with repetition), there has to be a strong, positive correlation between initial aims and final results. Certainly when it comes to complex societies, for planning really to be planning there has to be more than issuing orders from above. Branches, sectors and units must match up and smoothly move forward together. Eg, to produce additional steel requires an extra quantity of pig iron and coal. To increase the output of coal requires the introduction of new machinery. That machinery requires metal, the production of which requires coal, etc. By the same measure, the instillation of new machinery in that mine must see the presence of labour with the requisite skills, the availability of spare parts and regular maintenance. Without that there will be bottlenecks and ever widening circles of disruption.

Under capitalism the supply of new machinery, raw materials, labour, etc, is normally ensured spontaneously - through the market, through the law of value. This is what gives capitalism its relative coherence. At a micro level, within the factory, mine, warehouse, call centre, etc, there often is planning down to the smallest details. Capitalists go to great lengths to save on workers, time, raw materials, etc. After all, profits are at stake. However, at the macro level, even with government intervention, giant banks and transnational monopolies, capitalism is characterised by overaccumulation and periodic crises. The credit bubble bursts, sales dry up, means of production are destroyed and the reserve army of labour assumes massive proportions. In short, with capitalism, planning has severe limitations.

What about the Soviet Union? Instead of celebrating Gosplan's initial draft five-year plans as the "mighty historical music of the progress of socialism" (Trotsky's somewhat purple phrase),¹⁰ it is perhaps better, less fanciful, more accurate, to describe them as blueprints for the post-reconstruction period ... and taking steps in the direction of socialism. This involved proposals to boost existing industry and agriculture, locating sources of investments, recommending new projects and so on and so forth. The dream was, yes, of an economy that functioned like a single enterprise. Nepman merchant trade and petty peasant agriculture were, however, to put it mildly, problematic. In fact, while they could be nudged this way or that through taxation policy, legal restrictions, etc, they were inherently unplannable.

It ought to be emphasised therefore that, while Yevgeny Preobrazhensky, Trotsky's chief economic theorist, sought to achieve "a certain

coexistence" between the two main systems operating in the USSR - ie, the socialist-commodity sector and the petty commodity capitalist sector - he insisted upon their "antagonistic" nature, their "two different economic laws".¹¹ Following Lenin, he nodded in the direction of new forms of agricultural and consumer cooperatives. However, at the end of the day it would either be capitalism or socialism which triumphed - the law of the plan and the law of value were fundamentally incompatible.

By the way, the claim that the Left Opposition wanted to launch something like the 1928 five-year plan, in "1922-23", is not just nonsense: it is triple nonsense.¹² Firstly, Trotsky, actually proposed a "very guarded" - that is a weak - variant of the 1921 NEP ... in 1920: ie, rouble payments for grain and a "correspondence" between the goods supplied to peasants and the grain they deliver.¹³ Secondly, the Left Opposition only formed in 1923. Thirdly, and surely leaving no room for doubt whatsoever, in *The new course* (1923), Trotsky, writes that the state and private peasant sectors coexisted side by side - sometimes allied, sometimes not - and that it would be "many years" before a "single" plan directed the entire economy.¹⁴ The bone of contention being the direction of travel: towards socialism or towards capitalism?

It should also be understood that Gosplan, the state planning committee, was in its infancy. Initial five-year plans drafted by its small staff of economists, accountants, mathematicians and political leaders were a vast, but imprecise, statistical exercise. Only in 1927 had the quality improved sufficiently to the point whereby republics and regions could be assigned distinct control figures (targets). Gosplan also managed to build in a range of variants. At the maximum end, there would be high-tempo growth rates because of favourable conditions (eg, foreign loans and bumper crops). Such circumstances result in the five-year plan being fulfilled early. At the minimum end, unfavourable conditions might lead to the five-year plan lasting six or seven years.¹⁵

There was, true, amongst the Left Opposition the suggestion of *voluntary* collectivisation - but only on the basis of the introduction of the appropriate agricultural technology: ie, tractors, combines, threshers and the like. Evidently that too would take a whole number of years. Either way, the starting point of any five-year plan had to be industry. And, unable to count on any meaningful aid from abroad, Gosplan would therefore have to siphon off surplus product, via unequal exchange and increased taxation from "pre-socialist economic forms - first and foremost the petty capitalist peasant sector (ie, tribute gained from the countryside) to pay for what Preobrazhensky, borrowing from Marx, called "primitive socialist accumulation".¹⁶

Grand theft

Though previously he had been committed to NEP as a long term strategy and had attacked the Left Opposition for endangering the alliance with the peasantry in pursuit of their madcap "superindustrialising", Stalin was forced to change direction.

The fact of the matter was that the mixed, NEP economy was, even by the mid-1920s, already showing its limits. The nationalised industrial sector and the peasant agricultural sector were disengaging - to use a phrase, the "scissors" between town and country were diverging. Crucially, when there was nothing worth buying from industry, the rich peasants, the kulaks, refused to sell their surplus grain at the prices set

by the state. They could without too much sacrifice fall-back onto self-sufficiency. To feed the cities prices had to be raised again and again, thus depriving the state of the roubles that would otherwise have been used to restore, update and expand industry. Tribute was being paid by the town to the countryside. Matters became particularly acute in 1927 and 1928. Once again there were forced grain requisitions. NEP was visibly malfunctioning.

Stalin, in effect, decided to steal the economic programme of the Left Opposition. Here he is addressing the July 1928 plenum of the central committee:

In the capitalist countries industrialisation was usually effected, in the main, by robbing other countries, by robbing colonies or defeated countries, or with the help of substantial and more or less enslaving loans from abroad.

You know that for hundreds of years Britain collected capital from all her colonies and from all parts of the world, and was able in this way to make additional investments in her industry. This, incidentally, explains why Britain at one time became the 'workshop of the world'.

You know also that Germany developed her industry with the help, among other things, of the 5,000 million francs she levied as an indemnity on France after the Franco-Prussian war.

One respect in which our country differs from the capitalist countries is that it cannot and must not engage in colonial robbery, or the plundering of other countries in general. That way, therefore, is closed to us.

Neither, however, does our country have or want to have enslaving loans from abroad. Consequently, that way, too, is closed to us.

What then remains? Only one thing, and that is to develop industry, to industrialise the country with the help of *internal* accumulations But what are the chief sources of these accumulations? As I have said, there are two sources: firstly, the working class, which creates values and advances our industry; secondly, the peasantry.

The way matters stand with the peasantry in this respect is as follows: it not only pays the state the usual taxes, direct and indirect; it also *overpays* in the relatively high prices for manufactured goods - that in the first place, and it is more or less *underpaid* in the prices for agricultural produce - that is in the second place.

This is an additional tax levied on the peasantry for the sake of promoting industry, which caters for the whole country, the peasants included. It is something in the nature of a "tribute", of a supertax, which we are compelled to levy for the time being in order to preserve and accelerate our present rate of industrial development, in order to ensure an industry for the whole country, in order to raise further the standard of life of the rural population and then abolish altogether this additional tax It is an unpalatable business, there is no denying. But we would not be Bolsheviks if we slurred over it and closed our eyes to the fact that, unfortunately, our industry and our country cannot *at present* dispense with this additional tax on the peasantry.¹⁷

The plagiarism was clear to everyone at the time. However, despite the frank admission about "additional tax" - "tribute" - being

an "unpalatable business", Stalin's version of primitive socialist accumulation was sugar-coated, surely cynically, with the promise of raising "further the standard of life of the rural population".

There remained, though, the partisans of NEP as a long term strategy. Despite still being in charge of Comintern and editing *Pravda*, with allies dominating the trade unions, topping the government and the Moscow party apparatus, Nikolai Bukharin hardly suffered from overconfidence when he began to criticise the call to "preserve and accelerate" the industrial growth rates notched up during the NEP period of reconstruction. His polemics were Aesopian and seemingly directed against Trotsky and the so-called "superindustrialisers" of the Left Opposition. The real target was, of course, his fellow duumvirate member, Stalin himself.

Incidentally, there is no mystery about how the impressive growth rates were achieved during reconstruction. If the production of coal had, for example, been thrown back to a tenth of what it had been prior to World War I, as it had, all that was required to double output in the space of a single year was to repair and put mines back into operation.

But, so argued Bukharin, attempts to extract "tribute" from the countryside with a view to building numerous, new, gigantic enterprises, risked finally snapping the already tenuous link with the peasantry. Certainly these projects would "give nothing" in return for ages, but would "take enormous quantities of the means of production ... and the means of consumption".¹⁸ Instead of pursuing the illusions of accelerated growth, better results would be gained through optimal growth. Bukharin advocated establishing a positive, "unstable equilibrium" - ie, expanded reproduction - which would rest, almost by definition, on maintaining the link with the peasantry, on serving the peasant market, on industry and agriculture interlocking during the long transition to socialism (which, of course, eventually dispenses with the market and the law of value).¹⁹

Needless to say, Bukharin's ideas were subject to concerted attack ... along with the positions he and his comrades occupied. Stalin controlled the apparatus. Even those supposedly at the very apex of power could be assaulted from the middle and below, with the full blessing and connivance of the real apex of power: ie, the general secretary and the heads of the party apparatus.

Things began with denunciations of anonymous rightists - in the press, in the trade unions, in party branches. Subordinates in Comintern, the trade unions and Moscow rebelled on cue. Stage-managed meetings, resolutions and exposures were then used to undermine, demote or straightforwardly remove targeted individuals. The whole exercise was deftly orchestrated from Stalin's office. Rumours of armed rightist plots served as accompanying mood music. Arrests by the GPU followed.

Stalin's coup de grâce came in January 1929. Despite impassioned, tearful objections from Bukharin, Tomsky and Rykov, the politburo agreed to Trotsky's deportation. He was to be exiled to Kemal Atatürk's Turkey in order to end his "counterrevolutionary activities".²⁰ Almost immediately afterwards, so-called left oppositionists handed out leaflets in Moscow. They, conveniently, reproduced the text of the conversation between Bukharin and Lev Kamenev from July 1928 - quite conceivably a provocation directed by Stalin. The GPU had, after all, "an extensive network of agents among the oppositionists".²¹

Whatever the truth, Stalin got what he wanted. Bukharin and the right could be accused of factionalism - now, bizarrely, a sin of the first order - with those who were found guilty officially being branded as counterrevolutionaries.

It was not only the right that was politically neutered. The ruling party which had previously functioned - albeit to a diminishing degree - as a political organisation, with debate, with majorities and minorities, was remade into a rigidly hierarchical structure resembling a military formation. 'Command and obey' became the mode of operation - not 'Propose, attempt to convince and vote'.

Gosplan's plan

But let us not run ahead of ourselves. Back to Gosplan.

The minimum variant of its 1927 draft five-year plan proposed slightly reduced growth rates, compared with what has already been achieved under the NEP. In its maximum variant, growth rates were higher - quite considerably so for the last year of the five-year plan. But Gosplan officials clearly lent in the direction of the minimum variant. The draft called for the development of "industries concerned with national defence" at the fastest possible rate; however, a "moderate approach" to appropriating resources from agriculture was adopted. Indeed Bukharin's warning against the danger of "excessive" investments in large-scale projects seems to have been recognised ... they would tie up huge resources and only come on stream after many years of hugely costly construction.²²

The "definitive text" of the first five-year plan came in three hefty volumes: volume one, general outline; volume two, part one, programme for construction and production; part two, social problems, problems of labour, distribution and cultural problems; volume three, regional subdivisions of the plan. Over their 2,000 pages the plan's objectives were presented in hard, exact figures that had allegedly been carefully calculated, taking into account the manifold interconnections and technical potential of every branch and unit of the economy. The projections were certainly impressive. In the maximum variant industrial production was to increase by 179% (the minimum variant was 135%). In line with that trajectory, pig iron was set to reach 10 million tons from a 1928 base of 3.3 million tons; steel was to follow a similar upward course. Besides the arms sector, particular emphasis was placed on agricultural machinery, chemicals and machine building. There was to be import substitution, when it came to wool, leather and cotton. Proposed investments were accompanied by sources of taxation, credit facilities, production surpluses, etc.

Branch by branch, region by region, the authors - chief amongst them being Gleb Krzhizhanovsky, Grigory Grinko, Emanuel Kvirning and Stanislav Strumilin - describe known or potential natural resources, the possibility of applying new techniques and achieving substantial production increases. There are general estimates of other necessary balances: eg, the chapter on electric-power-linked coal mines, power stations and projected levels of consumption. In the section on labour there are estimates of the optimal distribution between agriculture and towns, the distribution of workers by branch and a "precise computation of labour productivity by sector". There is also an assessment of national wealth, national income and its distribution, as well as the rouble flows between the state and

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the countryside. The market for consumer goods and the supply of production goods are discussed with a view to achieving a sustainable balance. Interestingly, the aims for fuel production were set rather low. Coal output was targeted to go from 35 to 75 million tons and oil from 11.6 to 22 million tons. Somewhat amusingly, coal was favoured over oil: supposedly oil would not have the same importance "as over the last 15 to 20 years".²³

Collectivisation would progress, but with studied caution - just as the Left Opposition had recommended. By the end of the first five-year plan 12.9 million people were to be organised in *kolkhozy* and *sovkhozy* out of a total rural population of around 134 million. So individual peasant farms would still account for the great bulk of agricultural production even by the end of 1933. Private trade therefore continues. Moreover, the expansion of industry would not be achieved at the expense of consumption levels. The five-year plan promised to increase living standards by between 77.5% and 85%.²⁴

Doubtless, especially to the untrained eye, the "definitive text" of the first five-year plan appeared well founded, thoroughly researched and thrillingly audacious. But would it result in efficient, coordinated and speedy development? Serious doubts were raised by a number of prominent economists. Eg, Vladimir Groman and Vladimir Bazarov - the first a former Menshevik; the second, a co-thinker of Alexander Bogdanov. Both occupied responsible positions in Gosplan.* In tandem they warned of bottlenecks, inflation and how rising incomes could not be reconciled with high rates of growth in plant, machinery and overall output. Events were to prove them more than right.

While its maximum variant was surely not fulfillable, conceivably, given favourable conditions, the minimum variant might have been. The party's two principal spokespersons in Gosplan, Sigizmund Krzhizhanovskiy and Stanislav Strumilin, were, implicitly, willing to accept some inflation and coercive measures in the countryside "for the sake of promoting industrialisation".²⁵ Secondary problems, such as bottlenecks, could be dealt with by muddling through.

Maximum and more

However, having attained near autocratic status, Stalin ensured that the party's 16th Conference (April 23-29 1929) and then the 5th Congress of Soviets (May 29 1929) voted unanimously to approve the maximum variant. And Stalin was determined to go still further and still faster. He had the annual plan for 1929-30 drawn up, with targets that effectively rode roughshod over even the maximum variant. Catching up with the west had to be achieved in the "shortest possible time".²⁶

*Vladimir Groman apparently retained his allegiance to Menshevism, but in 1922 joined the staff of Gosplan. He regularly contributed to the journal *Ekonomicheskaya zhizn* and in 1928 was appointed chair of Gosplan's internal economy section. His close collaborator, Vladimir Bazarov, applied his knowledge of chemical processes to develop the theoretical foundations for planning by way of analogy. Bazarov's most important work was *Capitalist cycles and the economic restoration process in the USSR* (1927). For a useful discussion of Bazarov, see Elizaveta Burina's 'Natural science analogies in economic modelling: Vladimir Bazarov's restoration process model': historyofeconomics.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Paper_Burina.pdf. There is also Francis King's PhD thesis: 'The political and economic thought of Vladimir Aleksandrovich Bazarov (1874-1939)' University of East Anglia 1994. For a general overview of early Soviet economists, see N Jasný *The Soviet economists of the twenties* Cambridge 1972.

All available resources were to be mobilised in an "offensive" on all fronts.²⁷

During the course of 1929-31, the leadership relentlessly upped targets in the name of achieving "the maximum capital investment in industry". One "high-tension" figure leapfrogged another till initial targets were nearly doubled.²⁸ It was a case of superindustrialising on steroids.

Norms expected from workers inevitably followed the same trajectory. All this was only partially due to impatience. Shortages occurred everywhere. Instead of reining back the pace in one sector, in order to bring it into line with another, Stalin urged higher targets in every industry and in every enterprise in the attempt to overcome backlogs. Predictably, this approach of maximising everything without taking into account who was a tortoise and who was a hare created chaos.

Enterprise managers, including the well-connected, responded to the higher targets, firstly, by feeding back exaggerated reports; secondly, by reducing the quality of output to a bare minimum; and, thirdly, by insistently demanding more allocation of raw materials and labour. It was always better to have too much in the way of inputs than just enough.

Stalin, we can be sure, knew, even if only by gut instinct, that there were endless lies, but, simultaneously, he needed to accept them (well, in the main), if his five-year plan was to be credited as being a roaraway success. Meanwhile, Gosplan would have had only the vaguest idea of the true picture. And, of course, any notion of this being an example of balanced, rational planning is risible.

Adding to what was already pandemonium, total collectivisation suddenly appeared as an immediate objective. Dragooned into the *kolkhozy* and *sovkhozy* peasants would thereby be robbed of their market power. To all intents and purposes they were re-enslaved.

Stalin drew a parallel with Peter the Great. The tsar whom Alexander Herzen described as a "crowned revolutionary" ruthlessly subordinated the whole of society to his will in the attempt to modernise the Russian state and its armed forces. But, whereas Peter and the "old classes" failed to "break out of the grip of ... backwardness", Stalin was determined to succeed.²⁹ The country would be transformed from above using what he called Bolshevik methods.

Industrialising and collectivising were to overcome both the "external conditions" of being surrounded by technically and militarily more advanced capitalist countries and the "internal conditions" of resentful rural and urban basic producers.³⁰ Through industrialising and collectivising, the Soviet Union would build an unbeatable Red Army. Through industrialising and collectivising, the rural and urban workforce would become disciplined, cultured and their productivity greatly enhanced. Such were the stated goals.

The first five-year plan triggered a genuine wave of popular enthusiasm - most notably amongst the firebrands of the younger generation of workers - each new chemical plant, each new engineering factory, each new blast furnace being greeted as a victory over counterrevolutionary "dogs" and "enemies" (Demyan Bedny).³¹ The soaring targets, the scientific aura, the promise of national glory appealed to socialistic, patriotic and voluntaristic sentiments. But whether it was through some misplaced collectivity or, more prosaically, a chance to get a foot onto the first rung of management, the most 'advanced' workers willingly overcame the 'normal' intensity of labour.

Others, however, complained of sweated labour, pressure to sign up as shock workers and growing managerial privileges. Workers, including former kulaks and other refugees from collectivisation, quietly connived with go-slows, messing-up orders and undermining shock brigades. On occasion they even gained support from rank-and-file communists and Komsomol members. And it was these people who often took the lead in escalating actions.

Rightless workers

Given the chaos, there was a short-lived, but intense, outbreak of wildcat strikes. Textile workers, building workers, engineering workers, miners, dockers and shipyard workers were all involved. In Moscow, Leningrad, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Gorky, Minsk and Odessa strikers from different workplaces joined together in protest marches. In Odessa "a portrait of Lenin" was carried at the "head of the procession". Shortages of bread and bad food were common grievances. Sometimes the authorities conceded, sometimes strikes were defeated using force, sometimes ringleaders were arrested and disappeared.³²

Strikes were as much against the trade union secretary as against the enterprise director. Over the course of the first five-year plan, trade unions became ever more an arm of management. The idea of trade unions defending workers against a so-called workers' state was now denounced as a petty bourgeois deviation. And, to ensure that trade unions did not defend workers, there came legislation, directives and other such measures. Trade unions lost any right to have a say over the appointment of personnel (February 2 1929); management was given powers to punish or dismiss workers without consulting trade unions (March 6 1929); the Central Trade Union Council ordered local branches to respect the right of managers to exercise full and unfettered control (March 17 1929); the Central Trade Union Council resolved that it would not defend workers' rights in the courts (March 26 1929); and on and on.³³

Within the enterprise, the director was expected to exercise supreme power and set rouble rates without the least reference to the trade unions. Piece work individualised the labour process, reduced productivity, prematurely wore out machines and increased accidents. But it blocked any tendency of workers to look towards collective solutions to their problems. By the mid-1930s the workforce "had been both reconstituted and politically broken".³⁴ To call the Soviet Union any kind of workers' state, degenerate or otherwise, under such circumstances, is a travesty, is to rob words of accepted meaning.

As already mentioned, Bukharin responded to the first stirrings of the 'second revolution' cryptically, with renewed criticisms of Trotskyist 'superindustrialising'. Not surprisingly, this line of attack suited Stalin to a tee. Bukharin's polemics both missed their intended target and secured Stalin gifted allies from amongst the conciliationist wing of the Left Opposition - Yevgeny Preobrazhensky, Karl Radek and Georgy Pyatakov among many others. More recruits to the living dead. Stalin could afford to treat them with contempt.

If Bukharin ever seriously had a right-left bloc in mind, he played his hand with extraordinary ineptitude. Firing at the left, and not directly at the Stalinites, ensured that the rapprochement Bukharin seemingly attempted with Lev Kamenev came to nothing (along with Grigory Zinoviev and Leon Trotsky, he helped form the short-lived United Opposition in the mid-1920s). Bukharin's line of

attack also assisted Stalin in another way: he agreed that there needed to be a struggle against the left. But, stating the obvious, it had been very much weakened not least due to their joint efforts. However, with food shortages in the towns and turmoil in the countryside being blamed on the kulaks, Stalin could, quite logically, claim that the main danger now came from the right.

Bukharin, therefore, found himself completely outmanoeuvred. The NEP had reached its limits, yet the right had no genuine alternative - except, maybe, constituting the Nepmen and kulaks as a social base and offering the apparatus (or, as in post-Mao China, their sons and daughters) the prospect of becoming capitalists. At the time such a programme probably lacked traction. The apparatus was committed to socialism ... albeit socialism in one country. That included Bukharin (as evidenced by his *Philosophical Arabesques* written in 1937 while he languished in the dungeons of the Lubyanka³⁵). The restoration of capitalism, by the apparatus for the apparatus, though it logically flowed from the right's overall pro-market approach, was, at the time, unsayable and perhaps unthinkable for them ●

Notes

1. Naturally, there is Robert Griffiths, general secretary of the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain. He credits the first five-year plan with introducing a new - socialist - mode of production. Neither the "limited possibilities for mass-scale participative democracy and workers' control" can "negate its profound significance" (R Griffiths *Marx's 'Das Capital' and capitalism today* London 2018, p62). There are also unashamed rebels against the CPB's 'protocol', banning "adulation of Stalin". Andrew Northall writes the occasional letter to this paper, not least in defence of the first five-year plan (Letters, June 8 2023). However, more or less the whole gamut of orthodox Trotskyism takes a similar position, with just one or two minor variations. Take Ted Grant and Roger Silverman, leading figures in the *Militant/Socialist Appeal* tradition: "Fifty years of planned economic progress in the USSR tell us, in the irrefutable language of iron and steel, more than all the theoretical treatises put together about the need for society to exercise complete control over production" (T Grant and R Silverman *Bureaucratism or workers' power* London 1982, p27). The first outing of this panegyric, it should be added, was in 1967.
2. T Grant and R Silverman *Bureaucratism or*

- workers' power London 1982, p43.
3. A Bastani *Fully automated luxury communism* London 2020; N Srmicek and A Williams *Inventing the future: postcapitalism and a world without work* London 2015; P Mason *Postcapitalism: a guide to our future* London 2015.
4. See M Kitchin *The silent dictatorship: the politics of the German high command under Hindenburg and Ludendorff, 1916-1918* Abingdon 2020, pp62-88.
5. P Lassman and R Speirs (eds) *Weber: political writings* Cambridge 1994, p127.
6. J Horne (ed) *A companion to World War I* Chichester 2012, p439.
7. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 27, Moscow 1977, p339.
8. EH Carr and RW Davies *Foundations of a planned economy* Vol 1, Harmondsworth 1974, p835.
9. See A Markevich and M Harrison: www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/staff/mharrison/data/greatwar/appendix.pdf (p6).
10. L Trotsky *The challenge of the Left Opposition 1923-25* New York 1980, p324.
11. EA Preobrazhensky *The new economics* Oxford 1965, p138.
12. A Northall 'Trotskyist error' Letters *Weekly Worker* June 8 2023: www.weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1446/letters.
13. www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1930/mylife/ch38.htm.
14. L Trotsky *The challenge of the Left Opposition 1923-25* New York 1980, p119.
15. See E Zaleski *Planning for economic growth in the Soviet Union, 1918-1932* Chapel Hill CA 1971, pp50-73.
16. E Preobrazhensky *The new economics* Oxford 1967, p88.
17. JV Stalin *Works* Vol 11, Moscow 1954, pp165-67.
18. SF Cohen *Bukharin and the Bolshevik revolution* New York, p302.
19. KJ Tarbuck *Bukharin's equilibrium* London 1989, pp19, 153.
20. I Deutscher *The prophet unarmed* Oxford 1982, p468.
21. M Reiman *The birth of Stalinism* London 1978, p100.
22. E Zaleski *Planning for economic growth in the Soviet Union, 1918-1932* Chapel Hill CA 1971, p56.
23. *Ibid* p60.
24. *Ibid* p61.
25. *Ibid* pp69-70.
26. JV Stalin *SW* Vol 13, Moscow 1955, p41.
27. *Ibid* p15.
28. *Ibid* p256.
29. *Ibid* p258.
30. JV Stalin *SW* Vol 11, Moscow 1954, pp262-63.
31. D Bedny, 'Enemies of the Five-Year Plan': nurses.com/demyan-bedny/enemies-of-the-5-year-plan.
32. See D Filtzer *Soviet workers and Stalinist industrialisation* London 1986, pp81-87.
33. M Reiman *The birth of Stalinism* London 1978, p110.
34. D Filtzer *Soviet workers and Stalinist industrialisation* London 1986, p102.
35. N Bukharin *Philosophical Arabesques* Delhi 2007.

Online Communist Forum



Sunday June 18 5pm

A week in politics - political report from CPGB's Provisional Central Committee and discussion

Use this link to join meeting:
communistparty.co.uk/ocf-register

Organised by CPGB: communistparty.co.uk and Labour Party Marxists: www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk
For further information, email Stan Keable at Secretary@labourpartymarxists.org.uk

A selection of previous Online Communist Forum talks can be viewed at: youtube.com/c/CommunistPartyofGreatBritain

OBITUARY

Still with us in our hearts

Fred Carpenter December 28 1952 - May 18 2023

In the days before Covid, when the CPGB held its weekly Communist Forums face to face, Fred Carpenter would often show up (sometimes a few minutes late) with his backpack. He would listen quietly, sometimes making a comment, often not.

It was when we went for a drink afterwards that Fred came alive. He loved being among political friends, even if not in the same organisation. Fred had friends in different political groups, and was always calm and polite. But on questions that he considered critical for a good communist, he was implacable. He expressed his ideas with passion, and was always easy to follow. But he was not tolerant of renegades or people he considered to have 'sold out'.

I remember once sitting next to him, both of us drinking tea, when he told me angrily what so-and-so said about a certain issue. He got more and more angry and finally said: "I'm never going to have another conversation with him. I've had it. Never again!" But, of course, by the following week he would indeed have another conversation with the same person and all would be well. He was never angry for very long.

Fred was not raised in a leftwing family and his relationship with his father - a working class Tory - was not a good one. They were on different sides, when it came to the Vietnam war, for instance. Because he was of working class stock, his schools did what was usual, even if pedagogically stupid, in those days - treating the boys as if they were unintelligent and only fit for factory fodder.

Fred was noticed by his peers though. When he felt strongly about something, his was a voice to reckon with. He was a strong and impromptu speaker and was elected president of his student union at the FE college he went to.

Jack Conrad recalls how he first met Fred in a sociology A-level class back in the early 1970s, where the lecturer, a former member of the International Socialists, was talking about class. Jack remembers him



A partisan, but always willing to criticise

saying: "There are only two classes - the working class and the middle class." Two hands immediately shot up - Jack's and Fred's - and both made a similar comment: "What about the ruling class?" The answer was "Oh, you can forget them - there are so few of them." The same two hands went back up ...

Fred wanted to join a group on the left back in the days when it was a little more influential than it is today. He spoke to someone from the 'official' Communist Party, but was not impressed by what he was told, and he ended up joining the International Marxist Group (those of a certain age will remember the IMG). The fact that the IMG was the British section of Ernest Mandel's Fourth International was very important for Fred. He was above all an internationalist.

One difficulty for Fred was that

he felt many groups, not least the IMG, were 'middle class'. He was genuinely working class without being a workerist. Fred did not go to university, choosing instead to immerse himself in a job in the local Apsley paper mill, where he was elected shop steward and represented his union on Hemel Hempstead trades council.

One of his finest hours came during a visit to the town by a certain Roland Moyle, Labour's health minister in the late 1970s. Despite some initial opposition from Reg Dearing - trades council secretary and a member of the 'official' CPGB opposition - Fred managed to convince other delegates that a good idea would be to call a one-day strike against Moyle's proposal to close the existing, dilapidated, local hospital ... and build another one in another town. The strike was a brilliant success. Thousands came out and thousands attended an open air protest meeting.

At that time, in towns such as Hemel Hempstead, the different left groups would often inhabit the same pubs, albeit sitting at different tables. There was much debate. Fred was able to recruit not a few from other organisations. Bringing over a small group from the SWP was a real feather in his cap.

The differences were interesting, Fred recalled. During the Vietnam war, for instance, the 'official' CPGB carried posters saying 'Peace in Vietnam', while the IMG's read 'Victory to the Vietcong'. While the troubles were at their height in Ireland, similarly, the IMG was saying 'Victory to the IRA', while the 'official' CPGB called for 'Peace in Ireland'.

Of course, the CPGB was much bigger than groups such as IMG, SWP and Workers Revolutionary Party. It had plenty of shop stewards and convenors, even factory branches. But revolution was fashionable in the late 1960s and well into the 1970s. A trend-setting minority wanted to appear to be very r-r-revolutionary. But besides the poscurs there was a layer of real revolutionaries. Amongst them Fred Carpenter.

The times themselves were formative: abroad there was Cuba, Civil Rights in America, Vietnam, Palestine and Ireland. At home striking against Labour's Industrial

Relations Bill, derailing the Tories' Industrial Relations Act, the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders work-in and two miners' strikes - the last of which brought down Ted Heath's government. Britain was said to be 'ungovernable'.

Fred was always his own man and was no-one's yappdog. In the IMG he was an oppositionist. After the IMG fell apart, in 1982 Fred eventually found his way to Socialist Resistance (today's Anticapitalist Resistance).

Apart from politics, Fred's passion was music. Not so much classical (although he knew the major classical composers), but music he considered to come from working people - blues, jazz, folk, punk, rock, etc. He knew more about groups and individuals in those genres than anyone I have ever met or heard speak as an 'expert'. He could give chapter and verse on who was influenced by whom (the Beatles by early blues, South African jazz being a melding of early jazz and African rhythms, etc). He could tell you who entered and left which group or band during the 1970s-90s. He listened to music constantly and would hand me CDs with his favourites on them. Even professional musicians were impressed by his knowledge.

Someone once said to him, with a certain disdain, that, since most jazz did not come with words, it could not be political. After an incredulous 10 seconds, Fred tried to explain the historical role of jazz. It is not easy to explain such questions to someone who does not understand much about music, but Fred certainly showed his expertise. I am not sure that the person involved was convinced, but I was certainly impressed.

A little while back it was suggested that Fred present a session at the CPGB's Communist University, he was very much up for that. The only difficulty we foresaw was that he knew so much and was so enthusiastic that we would have difficulty getting him to stick to an hour for his talk.

He did not like living in London and wanted to live in the country or somewhere near the sea. I would take him for rides in my car, especially in his last few years, so he could at least see outside the city. But Fred's health began to fail in the last couple of years of his life.

His closest friend, Gerry Downing of Socialist Fight, visited him regularly, brought him food and was a constant help, especially when he was in hospital. But Fred died very suddenly. I had spoken to him a couple of days earlier and, while he sounded a little tired, he was still happy to talk - as usual, mostly about music. Gerry was the person who found Fred in his flat after he died.

Fred Carpenter was a close friend of mine and someone I was in awe of and admired so much not only for his dedication to Marxist politics, but for his passion for and knowledge of music. Jack recently described him as a working class intellectual - someone with a passion for ideas who could motivate people. We will soon have an event celebrating his life and achievements, to which all of his friends of whatever political persuasion will be invited.

Where I come from, people sometimes use a Spanish phrase which declares that a stalwart fighter may have gone, but will not be forgotten. The phrase is "Presente!" - still here! That is how I and many of his friends will always see Fred: someone who will always be present in our hearts - and with us in our political struggle.

Fred Carpenter, *presente!* ●
Gaby Rubin

What we fight for

■ Without organisation the working class is nothing; with the highest form of organisation it is everything.

■ There exists no real Communist Party today. There are many so-called 'parties' on the left. In reality they are confessional sects. Members who disagree with the prescribed 'line' are expected to gag themselves in public. Either that or face expulsion.

■ Communists operate according to the principles of democratic centralism. Through ongoing debate we seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support agreed actions, members should have the right to speak openly and form temporary or permanent factions.

■ Communists oppose all imperialist wars and occupations but constantly strive to bring to the fore the fundamental question - ending war is bound up with ending capitalism.

■ Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of working class and progressive parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of national sectionalism. It is an internationalist duty to uphold the principle, 'One state, one party'.

■ The working class must be organised globally. Without a global Communist Party, a Communist International, the struggle against capital is weakened and lacks coordination.

■ Communists have no interest apart from the working class as a whole. They differ only in recognising the importance of Marxism as a guide to practice. That theory is no dogma, but must be constantly added to and enriched.

■ Capitalism in its ceaseless search for profit puts the future of humanity at risk. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, exploitation and crisis. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally.

■ The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote.

■ We will use the most militant methods objective circumstances allow to achieve a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, a united, federal Ireland and a United States of Europe.

■ Communists favour industrial unions. Bureaucracy and class compromise must be fought and the trade unions transformed into schools for communism.

■ Communists are champions of the oppressed. Women's oppression, combating racism and chauvinism, and the struggle for peace and ecological sustainability are just as much working class questions as pay, trade union rights and demands for high-quality health, housing and education.

■ Socialism represents victory in the battle for democracy. It is the rule of the working class. Socialism is either democratic or, as with Stalin's Soviet Union, it turns into its opposite.

■ Socialism is the first stage of the worldwide transition to communism - a system which knows neither wars, exploitation, money, classes, states nor nations. Communism is general freedom and the real beginning of human history.

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Fighting fund

Do the necessary

After an excellent first week for our June fighting fund, unfortunately things have slowed right down again in week two.

This week a total of £265 was donated, compared to £641 in week one. That means we are currently standing at £906 after 14 days, while the target that we need each month is £2,250. In other words, we must raise another £1,344 in the remaining 16 days of the month.

That is far from impossible - especially as we are approaching that time of the month when several substantial standing orders usually come our way. But they won't be enough unless quite a few other comrades help us out too.

For example, in the last seven days the £265 that came in resulted from just nine donations - which shows you what could happen if just a few more comrades decided to put their money where their mouth is and match their words of praise

for what they read in the *Weekly Worker* with material support.

The biggest donation this week was from comrade PB, who came up with her usual £70, while other standing orders came from NH (£30), DV (£25), LG and CC (£10 each). Then there were three very handy PayPal payments from RL (£50), US comrade PM (also £50) and MZ in Italy (£10), while comrade IR sent us a cheque for £10.

But after the failure of recent months to reach that £2,250 target, we really do need to get there this month - as well as the following months too. So please help our paper fulfil its essential role in campaigning for the united, principled, democratic Marxist party that is so essential for the working class movement. We need our supporters to do the necessary! ●

Robbie Rix

Fill in a standing order form (back page), donate via our website, or send cheques, payable to *Weekly Worker*

weekly Worker

**Labour left
whimpers but
dares not fight
back**

Putting capital and careers first

Starmer's purge of left candidates shows he is serious about governing 'responsibly', says Kevin Bean

Although much of the focus lately has been on the psychodrama playing out amongst the Tories, on the other side of bourgeois politics Labour leaders have been giving some clear pointers about the shape of the next Labour government, should they win the next election.

If the opinion polls are to be believed, this seems increasingly likely and certainly most commentators and many Tories appear to think that within 18 months Sir Keir and his team will be seated around the cabinet table in Downing Street. It seems that, in this one aspect of bourgeois politics at least, the conventional wisdom that governments lose elections rather than oppositions winning them still appears to hold. Although Labour's lead over the Tories could well narrow as the election campaign heats up, and there are a number of uncertainties which could impact on the actual result, such as new constituency boundaries, most recent polls point to a Labour majority, with some even suggesting a "landslide".¹

Another barometer will be the forthcoming by-elections caused by the resignations of Boris Johnson and Nigel Adams - probably followed by another in the autumn, when Nadine Dorries times her departure to cause maximum political embarrassment to Rishi Sunak. Although the unusual circumstances of the by-elections will probably encourage protest votes and so maximise an anti-government vote, which may benefit the Liberal Democrats, the Labour leadership will undoubtedly play up their successes and stress that the electoral momentum now lays with them.

It is important to remember that it is this electoral perspective which dominates the politics and the strategy of Sir Keir Starmer - shaping both his recent policy shifts and the continuing attacks on what remains of the Labour left. As a fully paid-up member of the British bourgeois political class, with a long record of loyal service in the law, Starmer has shown he will always act in the interests of the state, and of capitalism more generally. Reinforcing this image and reminding his main audience - the capitalist class in Washington and London, and their allies in the media - of his proven record as a reliable, safe pair of hands has been absolutely central to Sir Keir's leadership from day one.

The Labour leadership has also carried out a charm offensive, targeted at the City and 'the markets', to dispel any lingering fears that a Labour government would be 'fiscally irresponsible' and would undermine the public finances by either raising taxes on the wealthy or borrowing extravagantly to fund its manifesto commitments. The Starmer project has generally been positively received by the key sections of the capitalist class, although, as ever, they want the Labour leader to go further in order to make the party even more 'electable' in their eyes.² So close has this relationship become that shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves rowed back last week on a major plank of Labour's



Luke Akehurst: a man with many connections

economic policy - the £28 billion 'green prosperity plan' - because of hints that it was unacceptable to 'the markets'.³

Purgers

If Sir Keir's main audience - the capitalist class - are more than happy to see him as prime minister (especially after the bizarre chaos and farcical musical chairs at the heart of the Tory government since 2017), his other audience - the electorate - seems less than impressed by what is on offer. The coming election is unlikely to set anyone on fire, so we can expect both lacklustre political campaigning and widespread apathy on the part of voters. Given this, one possible outcome could still be a Labour victory, but, rather than the predicted landslide, it could instead be a much more modest majority which, some commentators have suggested, would make a Starmer government potentially susceptible to pressure from left MPs.⁴

The model for this scenario is the role of the Labour parliamentary left during the late 1960s and 1970s and its ability to restrict some of the more anti-working class policies proposed by the Labour governments in this period. Whilst there are obvious and striking differences between that period and today - not least the considerable influence exercised by the 'official' CPGB over the *Tribune* group in parliament, the trade union left and rank and file activists in the

CLPs - Starmer is not leaving anything to chance. He is getting his retaliation in first by ruthlessly purging the left during the candidate selection process.⁵ Changes in constituency boundaries and thus the possibilities of 'deselecting' existing left MPs are also being used to weed out anyone deemed unreliable by the leadership, as the recent examples in Birkenhead, Merthyr Tydfil and Upper Cynon show. Reports also suggest that a similar stitch-up will be attempted to get acceptable candidates in place for the by-elections caused by Johnson and co's resignations.

After the Corbyn years, it seems to be a case of 'never again'. The selection of candidates has been handed over to Matt Faulding and Matt Pound - with able assistance provided by NEC member Luke Akehurst. Faulding was once deputy director of the Blairite think tank Progress, while Pound used to run Labour First under Akehurst. These three are the Machiavellis of the Labour Party. Behind the scenes they are deciding the composition of the PLP in the next parliament.

Akehurst is a driven man. A fervent Zionist, he is a director of British Israeli Communication and We Believe in Israel. Combining stints with being a Hackney councillor, working for the Labour Party and the BBC and running Weber Shandwick, a global PR company, it is clear that he enjoys extraordinarily good connections... presumably including

with Mossad, the CIA and MI5. But what really marks him out is his deep, enduring almost visceral animosity towards the left. The IHRA so-called definition of anti-Semitism has been a weapon wielded with the greatest passion. As a current NEC member - he topped the poll in 2022 - Akehurst, of course, chairs many of the panels which bar the objects of his hatred.

Naturally, Labour First is pro-Nato, pro-Israel, pro-nuclear weapons, pro-constitution and pro-Ukraine - so Paul Mason would find himself at home. Labour First is not just rightwing, it is militantly rightwing and considers the left an obstacle to achieving what it calls 'Clause one socialism'; ie, a Labour government fit to serve capitalism and which puts good career politicians like themselves first. Labour as a broad based party has no place for the irresponsible, unpatriotic, left.

Right unite

Directly after the election of Sir Keir as party leader, Labour First combined with Progress to found Labour to Win, and under that umbrella they dominate the NEC politically and, naturally, promote their pals as parliamentary, assembly, mayoral, etc, candidates.

More than that, Labour to Win is attempting to "fundamentally reshape" the culture and politics of the Labour Party. Take that to be something like completing the Blairite counterrevolution,

delabourising Labour, repairing the split in liberalism.

Sadly, Sir Keir, Labour to Win, Akehurst, Faulding, Pound and the Labour right are having it easy - because of the supine nature of the official Labour left. During the Corbyn period there was a willingness to sacrifice leftwingers to appease the pro-capitalist right in the PLP. This resulted in waves of suspensions and expulsions. Perhaps more importantly, it provided the ideological ground for Starmer's current purge by conceding what should have not been conceded: the big lie that anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism.

The record of the official left in the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs in collaborating with the witch-hunt and generally keeping their heads down does not inspire us with confidence that they would do very much to resist Starmer's pro-capitalist agenda, even if the parliamentary arithmetic were to give, say, 30 determined MPs a greatly enhanced leverage.

Starmer can probably rest easy on that score, although it seems he is taking no chances when it comes to parliamentary or other selection contests. In the new north-east region mayoral constituency, Labour's long list excludes current Labour mayor for North Tyneside, Jamie Driscoll - a pretty mild municipal socialist who supports the IHRA and whose only crimes are to be tagged 'the last Corbynista in office' and to appear at an arts event in a Newcastle theatre with that 'non-person' Ken Loach.

It is possible that the SCG really is keeping its powder dry and waiting for the day when it can call the shots in parliament. Perhaps its MPs are secretly a very disciplined and highly organised group who are only awaiting the right moment to strike and sound the clarion call for socialist politics. We all may yet be surprised, but, if their record and narrow Labourist politics tells us anything, I would not hold my breath! ●

Notes

1. www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/jun/07/labour-landslide-election-victory-poll-keir-starmer-rishi-sunak-conservatives-constituency-boundaries.
2. www.ft.com/content/fbc55e2c-6757-4270-af87-88fd39425cb9; www.economist.com/leaders/2023/04/27/is-keir-starmer-ready-for-office.
3. www.cityam.com/economic-stability-must-come-first-labours-reeves-backtracks-on-28bn-green-prosperity-plan.
4. www.thetimes.co.uk/article/starmer-quiet-purge-of-his-would-be-mps-cwnm8xspf.
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