

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity

# weekly **worker**



**Tomáš Tengely-Evans' puff piece for 'We Demand Change' and SWP's third generation of left Labour opportunism**

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Towards a mass Communist Party

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# A SEA OF RED AND WHITE



## LETTERS



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

## SPEW and CPGB

I thank the *Weekly Worker* for printing my last letter (March 20) and Jack Conrad for taking the time to respond ('Zionism opens gates of hell', March 27).

Nonetheless, I must address the accusation (which I do not take personally, as it refers to the strategy of the whole of the Socialist Party in England and Wales) that to have a willingness when forming a new mass party to *initially* accept a programme which is not explicitly revolutionary is "utterly unprincipled".

I would say it is simply a recognition of the reality that even most workers who are prepared to break from Labour are not yet revolutionaries. There is an appetite for a new working class party, which, if it is created, could have hundreds of thousands of members. If that happens, we would join it and argue that it should change its programme. We would not hide who we were or what our own preferences for the programme would be at all. How is that "unprincipled"?

We are not "naive" about the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition either. If something better came along, we would support that instead. Socialist Party representatives have been part of negotiations for Collective, in case it turned out to go anywhere, which it doesn't look like it will. Therefore we have decided to carry on with Tusc for the time being, to contest the council elections this year. Ideally Tusc would already have been superseded by a new mass organisation (with a better name!) by now, but that hasn't happened.

Comrade Conrad's characterisation of the type of mass party we wish to see being an alliance between ourselves and the trade union 'bureaucracy' is also odd. It is the union leadership, not the bureaucracy, which we wish to see replaced with a different leadership - one which is prepared both to democratise the unions (ie, fight the bureaucracy) and build a new party of the working class. That is why we participate in union elections and the political battles within unions extensively in our paper. The unions have the money and authority to start a new mass party more than any other working class organisations.

It is not "economistic" to recognise their social power exists beyond the workplace. We don't simply support "routine trade unionism" in the hopes it will magically lead to revolution, as comrade Conrad suggests. Unions have money and can get things done, which is why we work within them to win them over to our positions - not out of "tailism", which implies that we just follow along blindly behind whatever rightwing union leaders decide without challenging them or starting any initiatives of our own.

Comrade Conrad asks me directly why Israelis and Palestinians would remain in separate states, before concluding his own article by saying that the "Hebrew nation" should be offered self-determination and voluntary federation in an Arab Socialist Republic, "even if it is in the process of realisation". So he would have what SPEW describes as a "socialist Israel ... as part of the struggle for a socialist Middle East". Yet, confusingly, he had previously said that this part of the wording of SPEW's position was irrelevant in my argument that the CPGB's position is not that different to our own. This is far from a clarification

of the differences in the strategic approach or an explanation of how we come from "exactly opposite directions".

As for this part - "SPEW ... blurs the national division of the working class in Israel-Palestine. In fact, it insists upon treating Israel as a 'normal' country. The idea of it remaining a settler state is dismissed out of hand" - no argument or evidence is offered to justify these assertions.

Just as we recognise that not all workers in England and Wales are currently revolutionaries, we also recognise that not all Israelis are currently internationalist. Even if the United Arab Republic was created and it was genuinely run by the working class, Israeli workers would not give up generations worth of indoctrination to fear Arab workers overnight. It would take many years and there would be many transitional state forms along the way. We can argue about what the precise order of events or sequence of transitional state forms might be, but disagreements about these hypothetical questions are not worth maintaining separate organisations over.

My original letter was aimed more at asking the CPGB-PCC to clarify exactly why you think SPEW's general approach towards building a mass working class party in order to win it over to revolutionary positions is so flawed that you seemingly have no plans of moving towards more unity with us.

I look forward to continuing the debate.

**Joseph O'Connor Meldau**  
SPEW member (personal capacity)

## Backward Arabs

With wry amusement I find myself in support of Jack Conrad's path to a solution *vis-à-vis* Israel/Palestine/Zionism - only via a socialist active dominance of the Middle East.

Looking at communist intoxication with sarcastic imprecation as the preferred mode (see Mike Macnair), we see that JC's outlook - using offensive, and probably intentional, insulting corroborative detail - pretends to understand the Israeli public, throwing around the odd Hebrew term, such as '*mamlachtiyut*' (there is a better, well-understood, accurate English translation - 'serving the kingdom, not the king').

His overall review of the Arab world well illuminates another characteristic of communist (and leftwing) inability to address current reality. Looking back through many issues of the *Weekly Worker* and associated online stuff, I find no serious discussion of tribalism. The Arab world, and with it much of the Islamic world, has been and is (I posit) thoroughly dominated by tribalism. How many communists (or member of the masses) will force their teenage daughters off to be wed to strangers? Or throw acid over them for 'family honour'? Or participate in their murder for the maintenance of good standing with tribal custom? Not many, I hope. The closest English analogue is the anaemic 'What will the neighbours say?' The closest tribal analogy in the UK context could perhaps be support for a football club.

The study of tribalism is long, constantly being updated, and is currently a flourishing research field. The literature is fascinating and compelling, with new tools for measuring 'tribal loyalty'. So compare and contrast tribal identification with working class identification across multiple societies. I think that the 'masses' (a disgusting, ruinous word) come out a far and distant second to tribal loyalty.

It is here that I can passively smile upon JC's proposal that a working class socialist revolution is the essential event needed across the Arab and Muslim world for evil Zionism to fall. Cos it ain't gonna happen.

**John Davidson**  
email

## Not clear

When the We Demand Change 'summit of resistance' on Saturday March 29 was first announced, many assumed this was just a new Socialist Workers Party front. Having attended the event and had some conversations with some of the organisers, I think it certainly isn't merely a new SWP front, but what exactly it is still doesn't seem completely clear.

Clearly it was an attempt to address the vacuum of joined-up political organisation for the left in Britain, and our inability to present an effective political opposition. The original statement announcing the event said that it was intended to "begin to construct through debate and discussion a network of activists across sectors". Subsequent communications were much more vague and seemed to abandon the suggestion that a new organisation would be built at the summit.

The original initiative for the conference seems to have come, if not from the SWP directly, certainly from the sections of the left where the SWP and Counterfire have strong links - particularly, for instance, with many signatories and speakers from unions such as the National Education Union and the University and Colleges Union, and with the summit officially sponsored by groups like Stand Up to Racism and Stop the War Coalition.

However, there does seem to have been a recognition that the event needed to be much broader than this. The full list of partner organisations is available on their website. From what I understand, the key lead organisers for the event itself were drawn from Corbyn's Peace and Justice Project, from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and from SUTR (itself famously an SWP front). But the official partners also included groups like Disabled People Against the Cuts and Just Stop Oil, and the event itself featured stalls and speakers from an even wider array of groups.

Clearly there was also a recognition that the event needed to be more dynamic than your standard lefty rally - not just the same old top-table speeches from the same old top-table speakers. There were still rallies to open and to close the event, but the bulk of the event consisted of 12 'workshops' on different topics spread across the day. I think the organisers made a creditable attempt to make the event more dynamic, more participatory, more practical - and to some extent they succeeded - but there are limits to what you can do when you're trying to fit in so many speakers from so many different groups, and when you have more than 2,000 people in attendance (meaning each 'workshop' has hundreds of participants). In many ways, the event was reminiscent of The World Transformed festivals from the Corbyn years.

What was it all for? Did it succeed? What did we achieve from it? What happens next? I'm not sure.

I think the spectre of the party and the question of political organisation hung over the entire event. It came up repeatedly, whether from the floor or from the panel, at all of the sessions I attended. But there was only an hour and a half of the day dedicated to discussing it directly - clearly not enough time. Ben Beach, one of the organisers of last year's Party Time events, did an admirable job of trying

to chair that discussion and to draw out some points of agreement, but the allotted time was nothing like sufficient. There seemed generally to be consensus that we need some kind of new organisation - probably it should be some kind of party, probably it should be engaged in social movement campaigning rather than focusing purely on electoralism, and it should be democratic, and it would at least need some sort of electoral agreement with the Greens (although Greens Organise made some spirited arguments for entryism), but that was about as far as we got.

It was encouraging that several of the keynote speakers emphasised the necessity of any new organisation being meaningfully democratic - including Richard Boyd Barrett (of People Before Profit, but also a cadre of the SWP's Irish sister organisation) and Andrew Feinstein - but there wasn't really any more detailed discussion about what this might mean in practice.

Several comrades argued from the floor throughout the day that We Demand Change needed to become the new organisation, and in some cases even expressed their intentions to start local branches or to stand as candidates under that banner (several local We Demand Change social media pages have already been set up). By contrast, most of the panellists' contributions were expressed in totally abstract general terms. The national organisers have since announced somewhat vaguely that "summits" are planned "across the country", that there should be "a mass campaign calling for Welfare not Warfare and taxing the rich, to win a fairer society for all", and that there must be "a set of demands from the movement, for the movement - shaped by people like you".

The other spectre haunting the event was the SWP itself. Clearly their cadres provided the organisational backbone of the event - helping with stewarding, promotion, etc - and they were the only significant tendency visibly intervening from the floor. They had their stalls outside the event, but not inside. Presumably they weren't listed as an official sponsor of the summit, because the other sponsors understand that their reputation is poor enough that it would have seriously damaged the event to be directly associated with them.

Much of the discussion was focused on the need for a new socialist party, but there was almost no acknowledgement during the day of the socialist parties that already exist and were present and involved in the event. A naive participant might wonder, why don't we all just join the SWP? Even the SWP's own members didn't seem to be arguing openly for this - as if even they recognise the inadequacy of their own organisation.

For anyone new to the left, understanding the political dynamics of this conference must have been impossible. A front that isn't a front, trying to build a party that might not be a party, or might be a front for a front for another party - and everyone politely agrees not to talk about these peculiar details!

Perhaps the most useful intervention in the whole day was one comrade arguing from the floor about the necessity of a delegate congress, bringing together different organisations of the left (including the SWP, Greens Organise and others) to discuss concrete programmes and to start building a pre-party formation. This would probably be an enormous step forward from the current model, where public rallies and 'workshops' end up talking round in circles with platitudes and generalities, while

the practical discussions about programmes, structures and strategy happen in the utmost secrecy.

**Archie Woodrow**  
email

## Stalin fanboy

Gerry Downing's letter (March 27), apart from being a classic example of Trotskyist ultra-leftism, claims that we are seeing the construction of a fascist state in the US, which will be followed by the AfD in Germany, if we don't stop it. Before I comment on Downing's interpretation of events, I would like to say something about the Trotskyist world view.

It was born from ultra-leftism. This can be seen in Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, which wasn't the result of a concrete analysis of the situation in each country, but the most generalised, abstract theorising, devoid of concrete content, which is then applied to all backward countries with belated capitalist development. It is this lack of concrete analysis which constitutes the methodology of ultra-leftism - or Trotskyism in general.

All ultra-leftists have one thing in common which forms the foundation of this tendency in communism. This is the failure to recognise that the class struggle of the working class goes through two interrelated, but distinct, stages: the stage of reform and the stage of revolution - or defensive and offensive struggles. Ultra-leftists confuse the two stages.

For the ultra-leftists the only stage of the class struggle is the offensive. This is why Bukharin wanted a revolutionary war against Germany in World War I, when the Bolsheviks were facing a potential collapse of their regime if they didn't make peace with Germany. What was Trotsky's position? 'No peace, no war' - a position devoid of a concrete analysis of the situation. The German army continued to advance, and it was only then that Trotsky capitulated. I bring this up because the 'No peace, no war' position contains the very essence of Trotsky's methodology, which nearly brought the defeat of the regime. Communist officials had their suitcases packed, ready to flee at a moment's notice.

Confusing the two stages of the class struggle - ie, reform and revolution, or the defensive and the offensive - is at the heart of Trotskyism past and present. This is why they attack the wartime Labour Party and CPGB for forming an alliance with Churchill to defeat Hitler and the Nazis.

Facing a Nazi invasion, no sensible communist would have opposed the British government locking up the Trotskyist leaders, whose ultra-leftism was objectively serving the interest of Hitler. After all, Churchill had Moseley and his wife, Diana, who was one of the Mitford sisters, interned. Hitler fan Unity Mitford was persona non grata, when she returned to England from Germany. The other sister, Jessica, was a communist and was free to come and go as she pleased.

Stalin's alliance with America and Britain to defeat the Nazis was totally correct. While it is true that a popular front arrangement can lead to opportunist mistakes, this doesn't mean the arrangement in itself is wrong. Nor does it follow that, if Stalin was wrong on this or that question, it means Trotskyism was right.

The popular front, coming after the disastrous Comintern third period, when social democracy was denounced as social-fascist, represented a defensive stage of the class struggle. Trotsky had previously fought this ultra-left mistake, but he did so from another ultra-left stance,



which would have strengthened fascism.

After the fascists were defeated, with the Soviet side losing about 20 million dead, we can debate whether Stalin went too far in making concessions to his western allies, but no-one can deny that what the Americans did to Hiroshima and Nagasaki with the atom bomb must have concentrated Stalin's mind. There was no need to use the atom bomb - it was done to terrorise the Soviet leadership, and it worked. Stalin was effectively blackmailed with nuclear attack if he supported communist uprisings outside of the Soviet zone of occupation. All this the ultra-left ignore. After this blackmail, the race was on under Lavrenty Beria for the Soviet bomb, to prevent this happening again.

On the question of fascism what Gerry Downing and most of the left fail to see is the new contradiction between finance capital and old-style fascism. Today, finance capital has a globalist agenda. What they want is a world government. Old-style fascism, based on a nationalist and racist narrative and the strengthening of the nation-state, is the opposite of the globalist agenda of finance capital today.

I am not saying that finance capital is opposed to fascism: what I am saying is that they are opposed to old-style fascism, based on nationalism and racism. Donald Trump can pose as an anti-globalist, America First and Make America Great Again campaigner, but if he does anything which seriously opposes the agenda of finance capital, or doesn't come to heel, they will get rid of him. This is why the left needs to understand the new contradiction between finance capital and old-style fascism.

**Tony Clark**

For Democratic Socialism

## Dermot's Korea

Recently, the US imperialists and south Korean puppets staged the 'Freedom Shield 2025' war exercise against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The war exercises ran from March 10 to March 20. These aggressive and provocative war exercises, which are nothing but a rehearsal for the invasion of the DPRK, took place despite talk of "improved relations"

by Trump and some speculation about DPRK-US summits or negotiations. It shows that the talk of peace by the new administration of the US is just talk!

The DPRK foreign ministry commented on March 10: "Lurking behind the above-said war exercises, traditionally staged by the US and the Republic of [South] Korea, is the persistent and unchangeable aggression ambition of the US, which seeks to propagate the American-style view on value and the Yankee-style liberal democracy into the inviolable territory of a sovereign state and finally to overthrow the DPRK government and its social system, just seen through the operational name, 'Freedom Shield', and of the ROK following the US."

What was noteworthy about 'Freedom Shield 2025' was that it was greater in depth and scope than before. Also included a joint special warfare drill to destroy the DPRK's alleged "secret underground tunnel network" and remove the DPRK's nuclear weapons by mobilising armoured and special warfare forces, reconnaissance drones and artificial-intelligence attack-robots from March 17 to 20.

Moreover, 10 pro-US countries that were members of the so-called 'UN Command' in south Korea participated in the exercises. These countries were Belgium, Canada, Colombia, France, Greece, Italy, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand and - to our shame - Britain.

At a time when Britain is facing spending cuts and council tax is being increased, it is shameful that taxpayers' money is being wasted on a military exercise on the other side of the world which has nothing to do with Britain and is directed at a socialist country, People's Korea.

Britain should not be a party to US aggression against People's Korea. The shameful past of the UK with regard to Korea should not be repeated!

**Dermot Hudson**  
email

## State money

The issuing of currency is an act of the state, which is literally the creator of all money. As a sovereign state with its own free-floating fiat currency, the United Kingdom has as much of

that currency as it chooses to issue to itself, with readily available fiscal and monetary means of controlling any inflationary effect - means that therefore need to be under democratic political control. The responsibility of the government is to ensure the supply of goods and services to be purchased with that currency.

It is impossible for the currency-issuing state to run out of money. Money 'lent' to the treasury by the Bank of England is money 'lent' to the state by the state; such 'debt' will never be called in - much less will bailiffs be sent round (call this the 'magic money tree' if you will). There is no comparison between running the economy and managing a household budget, or even a business. There is no 'national credit card' to 'max out'. 'Fiscal headroom' is only the gap between the government's tax and spending plans and what would be allowed under the fiscal rules that it sets for itself (and changes frequently).

That is what both fiscal policy and monetary policy are for: to give the currency its value by controlling inflation to a politically chosen extent, while discouraging certain politically chosen forms of behaviour, and while encouraging others, including economic equality, which is fundamental to social cohesion and thus to patriotism. The treasury, which is the state, has issued bonds to the Bank of England, which is also the state. Even if those bonds were held by anyone else, then the state could simply issue itself with enough of its own free-floating fiat currency to redeem them. Say it again that there is no debt.

Taxation is not where the state's money comes from. Nothing is 'unaffordable', every recession is discretionary on the part of the government and there is no such thing as 'taxpayers' money'. Within and under that understanding, a tax of one to two percent on assets above £10 million could abolish the two-child benefit cap 17 times over, while merely taxing each of Britain's 173 billionaires down to one billion pounds per head would raise £1.1 trillion - an entire year's tax take. The taxation of unearned income at the same rate as earnings, as was the case under Margaret Thatcher and Nigel Lawson, could easily abolish the two-child benefit cap, as advocated by Nigel Farage and Suella Braverman, restore the £20 per week uplift to the two in five universal credit claimants, and extend that uplift to disability benefits, all of which would inject money directly into the consumer economy. And so on.

There is no case whatever for cutting the benefits of the sick and disabled (as if that would cure them or find them jobs); for retaining the two-child benefit cap; for withdrawing the winter fuel payment from anyone; for increasing workers' bus fares by 50%; for failing to freeze council tax; for threatening to abolish the single-person discount; for increasing employers' national insurance contributions, so as to destroy charities and small businesses, while making it impossible for big businesses to take on staff or to increase wages; for forcing working farmers of many decades' standing, who formally inherited their parents' farms, to sell them to giant American agribusinesses; or for any other form of austerity.

There is an unanswerable economic and moral case for the full compensation of, among others, the victims of Orgreave, Grenfell Tower, the Windrush scandal, the post office scandal, and the contaminated blood scandal, as well as the WASPI women.

**David Lindsay**  
Lanchester

# ACTION

## Censorship, democracy and the right to protest

**Friday April 4, 7pm:** Public meeting, Canterbury Baptist Church, Saint George's Place, Canterbury CT1. Defend peaceful protest and independent journalism. Speakers include Asa Winstanley (Electronic Intifada) and Chris Nineham (Stop the War). Organised by Canterbury and Whitstable Stop The War: [www.facebook.com/events/657657443450224](http://www.facebook.com/events/657657443450224).

## Trump's new world (dis)order

**Saturday April 5, 11.30am:** Public meeting, Friends Meeting House, Ship Street, Brighton BN1. The rules-based world order is collapsing. What is Trump's plan? Main speaker: Lindsey German. Organised by Brighton and Hove Stop the War Coalition: [x.com/BrightonStopWar/status/1907024729837289744h](http://x.com/BrightonStopWar/status/1907024729837289744h).

## Censoring Palestine

**Monday April 7, 7.30pm:** Film screening, Carlton Club, 113 Carlton Road, Whalley Range, Manchester M16. This new documentary reveals how speaking out on Palestine is being suppressed and criminalised. Followed by a discussion with relatives of the Filton 18 jailed Palestine Action members. Ticket reservations free. Organised by GM Friends of Palestine: [www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=1253912859665417](http://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=1253912859665417).

## Collective decision-making

**Thursday April 10, 6.30pm:** Online session in the series, 'Our history'. Speakers Mike Macnair and Moshé Machover discuss 'Collective decision-making in the transition to communism' Organised by Why Marx?: [www.whymarx.com/sessions](http://www.whymarx.com/sessions).

## The cult of personality in The Faerie Queene

**Thursday April 10, 7.30pm:** Public meeting, Quaker Meeting House, 43 St Giles, Oxford OX1. Organised by Oxford Communist Corresponding Society: [x.com/CCSoc/status/1904189896077537408](http://x.com/CCSoc/status/1904189896077537408).

## End the genocide - stop arming Israel

**Saturday April 12, 12 noon:** East London march for Palestine. Assemble Altab Ali Park, Whitechapel Road, London E1. March to Wennington Green, London E3. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: [www.stopwar.org.uk/events/east-london-march-for-palestine](http://www.stopwar.org.uk/events/east-london-march-for-palestine).

## Stop racist hate in Bournemouth

**Saturday April 12, 12 noon:** Counter-protest. Assemble Town Hall, Bourne Avenue, Bournemouth BH2. Ukup leader Nick Tenconi is planning an anti-immigration event calling for mass deportations. Organised by Stand Up to Racism Bournemouth: [www.facebook.com/events/1207747164261905](http://www.facebook.com/events/1207747164261905).

## Welfare, not warfare

**Saturday April 12, 1.30pm:** Public meeting, Tyneside Irish Centre, 43 Gallowgate, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1. Public-sector cuts and increased arms spending have nothing to do with peace. Organised by Newcastle Stop the War and Durham Stop the War: [www.facebook.com/events/1237097354737519](http://www.facebook.com/events/1237097354737519).

## How to beat your landlord

**Wednesday April 16, 6pm:** Workshop, Holbeck WMC, 3 Jenkinson Lawn, Leeds LS11. Learn how to organise against landlords, letting agents and bailiffs, and how to respond to unfair rent hikes, repairs not being done and eviction threats. Organised by Acorn the Union: [www.acorntheunion.org.uk/leeds\\_how\\_to\\_beat\\_your\\_landlord](http://www.acorntheunion.org.uk/leeds_how_to_beat_your_landlord).

## Liaison Committee - rank and file organisation

**Thursday April 17, 7pm:** Online lecture with professor Roger Seifert. The Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions was a Communist Party-inspired organising body set up in the mid-1960s to strengthen rank-and-file militancy within the unions. Registration free. Organised by General Federation of Trade Unions: [www.facebook.com/events/1584733909089646](http://www.facebook.com/events/1584733909089646).

## Bristol's radical history

**Saturday April 26 and Sunday April 27:** Festival. Saturday venue: M Shed, Wapping Road, Bristol BS1; Sunday venue: The Cube Microplex, Dove Street South, Kingsdown, Bristol BS2. Talks, walks, exhibitions and stalls. All activities free except for the evening films. Organised by Bristol Radical History Group: [www.brh.org.uk/site/event-series/bristol-radical-history-festival-2025](http://www.brh.org.uk/site/event-series/bristol-radical-history-festival-2025).

## Do workers need protecting from AI?

**Wednesday April 30, 7pm:** Talk followed by discussion, Working Class Movement Library, 51 Crescent, Salford M5. Speaker: Adam Cantwell-Corn (Connected by Data). Registration free. Organised by Working Class Movement Library: [wcmll.org.uk/event/do-workers-need-protecting-from-ai](http://wcmll.org.uk/event/do-workers-need-protecting-from-ai).

## London May Day march and rally

**Thursday May 1, 12 noon:** Assemble Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. March to Trafalgar Square for rally. Organised by London May Day Organising Committee: [www.londonmayday.org](http://www.londonmayday.org).

## Revolution! May Day weekender

**Saturday May 3 and Sunday May 4:** Conference, SOAS, University of London, 10 Thornhaugh Street, London WC1. A weekend of discussions on the political crisis and how to organise. Registration £20 (£7.50). Organised by Counterfire: [www.facebook.com/events/1572236653477897](http://www.facebook.com/events/1572236653477897).

## Nakba 77: free Palestine, end the genocide

**Saturday May 17, 12 noon:** National demonstration, central London, venue to be announced. Commemorating the 1948 Nakba expulsion of Palestinians. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: [stopwar.org.uk/events/national-demonstration-for-palestine-nakba-77](http://stopwar.org.uk/events/national-demonstration-for-palestine-nakba-77).

## 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.

## Fighting fund

# Success!

Let's start the month with some very good news! Thanks largely to a brilliant contribution from Turkish activist AU, we went soaring past the *Weekly Worker* fighting fund target for March.

Comrade AU sent us a cheque for no less than £450! Added to the other donations - a fabulous £114 from comrade ST, as well as other bank transfers/standing orders from BK (£50), MW (£30), JT (£25), AB (£20), IS, JD and MD (£10 each), not to mention a PayPal gift of £50 from comrade DB and the usual £5 note from comrade Hassan - last week's contributions of £774 took us up to no less than £2,902!

Don't forget that March was the last month with a target of £2,250, but, starting from April 1, it is now £2,750 - so we've gone shooting past that too. As I say, it's very good news that augurs well for the coming period, when we need to raise that extra cash in order to cope with the huge increase in costs we've recently suffered!

Now let's see if we can keep it

up. In fact, with just two days of the month gone, as I write, we've already received a very useful £266 to start us off towards that new target. Thank you, comrades LC (£50), MM (£31), TG (£30), DL, MT, II and SJ (£20 each), CP (£16), BG (£15), MR (£13), MM (£11) and, last but not least, comrades AN and DI (£10 each).

Don't forget that we've also had to increase our monthly subscription charges - up from £5 (UK) and £10.90 (international) to £8 and £14 respectively. So, if you haven't already done so, please increase your payments accordingly - and, of course, we'd be delighted if you can afford to add a bit more on top.

Let's make sure that last month's success wasn't a one-off! ●

**Robbie Rix**

Our bank account details are name: Weekly Worker sort code: 30-99-64 account number: 00744310 To make a donation or set up a regular payment visit [weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/donate](http://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/donate)



## TURKEY

# A sea of red and white

It was to be a test of strength. As it was, some 2.2 million turned out in Istanbul's Maltepe Park. **Esen Uslu** reports on the latest and biggest anti-regime protest yet

**P**olitical protest continues ... and it continues to grow. This is, of course, in response to the arrest of Ekrem İmamoğlu, the Republican People's Party (CHP) mayor of Istanbul and president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's only serious rival. Already some 2,000 have been arrested.

Last Saturday, March 29, was to be a test of strength. The CHP opposition had announced its rally at an officially authorised site, Maltepe Park, located on the Asian side of the Bosphorus Strait, on the far outskirts of the city. In response Erdoğan's government declared a nine-day holiday to celebrate the Eid Al-Fitr, which marks the end of fasting month of Ramadan. This was meant to see students and many workers leave the city and return to their home areas. The hope was to limit the number of demonstrators. Nonetheless, some 2.2 million turned out. The park was a sea of red and white (the colours of the Turkish flag).

Incidentally, Maltepe Park is an artificial land extension created by dumping excavated earth and rock from the city's newly constructed metro lines. Taksim Square, the traditional focus of political demonstrations in the heart of the city, has been denied to the left for some time now - especially when it comes to May Day. Maltepe Park was created very much with politics and social control in mind. It is designed to push the masses out from the centre of Istanbul and put them not just into a recreational 'open space', but into a 'safe space' that can be policed, monitored ... and contained. Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann, the counterrevolutionary architect of modern Paris, would have been proud.

## Cool it

Compared to the last few weeks' spontaneous demonstrations that took place in Saraçhane Square, in the middle of the city over four nights despite repeated bans, the decision by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) governor to allow the Maltepe Park rally was a clear attempt to lower the temperature, when it comes to the growing public anger at the arrest of Erdoğan's main presidential rival, İmamoğlu. Something the CHP leadership clearly welcomed.

The stated aim of the Maltepe demonstration was to protest against the fact that Ekrem İmamoğlu is being kept in indefinite detention until a trial is organised at a convenient time in the future. The demonstration, which was called under the slogan of 'Freedom to İmamoğlu', was a far cry from the spontaneous Saraçhane 'Government should resign' slogans shouted by the new generation of youth now taking part in street politics.

The different composition of the Saraçhane and Maltepe demonstrations is also revealing. The CHP needed to keep the support of mobilised youth for its political ambitions, but also to keep them under strict control in order to prevent the upswell of anger gaining the upper hand and start running the political show. The Maltepe demonstration had a traditional CHP feel - orderly, mainly middle-aged, and transported from all corners by CHP organisers. It was big, but lacked the dynamism of youth.

While the size of the crowd disguised the lack of dynamism and the conservatism, the Turkish flags, Atatürk posters, the CHP's nationalism, the anti-Kurdish slogans and the absence of a single youth speaker on the podium were indicators



**Erdoğan and Trump: autocrats**

of how the CHP is afraid of losing control to fresh and dynamic forces. Normally a social democratic party is given a certain oomph by its youth organisations, but in the case of the CHP various parties to its left are now fulfilling this role.

At the end of the demonstration two resolutions were adopted. One of them was to start a petition campaign for İmamoğlu and for an early election. The text to be signed is as follows:

I am one of the tens of millions of patriots whose hearts beat for the republic, democracy and justice. I am the national will!

On March 23, 15.5 million citizens chose Ekrem İmamoğlu as the presidential candidate in the primary election organised by the Republican People's Party. Ekrem İmamoğlu, who became the presidential candidate with the will of millions, is kept in prison by a political decision against the law, reason and conscience.

I have never for a moment stopped believing in the good days to come for my country. I want Ekrem İmamoğlu to regain his freedom; I want the ballot box to be set up as soon as possible, where there will be a democratic, fair and honest race.

I want this unjust and unlawful regime to end. I am signing to see my candidate by my side and the ballot box in front of me.

As readers can well appreciate, the text had very limited aims, but it is

designed to channel the anger of the masses into a safe signature collection campaign. The stated aim is to collect more signatures than the number of votes Erdoğan won in the last presidential election.

## Boycott it

Meanwhile, a CHP resolution was publicised to extend support for the boycott campaign initiated by the university and high-school students, who are boycotting their lectures until imprisoned students are released. This will be combined with the consumer boycott called by the CHP leadership to protest against the industrial and commercial groups that control the mainstream media closely linked to the Erdoğan regime. After the Eid al-Fitr, the three-day celebration marking the end of the fasting month of Ramadan, April 2 was declared the day of consumer boycott, when people were called upon to make no purchases on that day.

After some initial confusion, the representatives of some state-controlled business associations and trade organisations began to object to the boycott call. What was said by one of them is telling: "The idea of calling for a consumer boycott is part of global imperialism's operations against national states and national attitudes - a new generation of actions based on violations of law."

As you can see, our bourgeoisie is quite anti-imperialist when its sales revenues are threatened! The ministry of the interior called on businesses to sue those who call for boycotts.

Maybe prosecutors will take the hint to open criminal cases.

AKP rhetoric in defence of the 'national and local' goes hand in hand with its defence of 'law and order'. As expected, the most venomous attacks in this regard came from Devlet Bahçeli, the ailing leader of the Nationalist Action Party (MHP):

The streets are not the solution. If those who are called to the streets are confronted by others, as was the case on July 15, how will the inevitable confrontation be prevented, how will incidents be avoided? Would the provocateurs, who are calling people to streets, be found at that time or would they have already left the country?

An obvious threat of calling out the armed AKP militia and Grey Wolf gangs onto the street to counter the opposition demonstrations, as happened during the coup attempt on July 15 2016. Not that the judiciary will be moving against these people who are "inciting public hatred and anger."

The CHP made only a few attempts to involve other forces which have also been alienated by the AKP's recent policies. One of the attempts involved holding a public *Iftar* - the ritual evening meal that ends the daily fast during the month of Ramadan. The *Iftar*, held in Saraçhane Square, was an attempt to bring pious people into the ranks of the opposition. It was held on March 26, which was the *Laylat*

*al-Qadr*, the holiest night of the Ramadan. However, it remained a half-baked attempt, hardly differing from large public *Iftar* meals organised by many municipalities.

Where is the left in all this? It should be able to stand out, well apart from the CHP, and provide a different leadership. However, as it requires different politics and forms of organisation, the task ahead is quite daunting ●

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# IRAN

# Escalation on the cards

After the exchange of letters, maximum pressure sanctions and the almost comical revelations of 'Signalgate', **Yassamine Mather** warns that Trump might soon give the green light for a punishment war against Iran

The constant toing and froing in the Iran-US conflict over the last few weeks has once again raised the possibility of war. It all started with Donald Trump's letter to Iranian supreme leader Ali Khamenei in early March, trying to negotiate a new agreement with Tehran to limit its fast-growing nuclear programme, and replacing the deal he pulled the US out of during his first term.

On the day he sent the letter he claimed: "We have a situation with Iran that something's going to happen very soon. Very, very soon. Hopefully, we can have a peace deal, I am not speaking out of strength or weakness. I am just saying I would rather see a peace deal than the other. But the other will solve the problem."

In the era of instant messaging and the internet, the letter took more than a week to reach Tehran - presumably because the content was to remain secret. More than three weeks later, the exact content of the letter remains unknown, although there have been several alleged leaks. One thing is clear though: Trump has promised economic and political rapprochement if Iran ends or reduces its nuclear programme and stops supporting what the US claims to be its 'proxies'.

According to Iranian officials, the written reply by ayatollah Khamenei himself was sent on March 30. It is assumed a letter was delivered to Oman's representative, reflecting Iran's choice of Oman as a long-standing intermediary, rather than the United Arab Emirates - a country that has normalised diplomatic ties with Israel. While Tehran has rejected 'direct negotiations', it is clear that the supreme leader favours negotiations via a third party.

On the same day, Khamenei told crowds gathered for Eid Fitr (end of Ramadan) that "external actors were threatening the country with malicious acts". However, he downplayed the likelihood of open aggression, claiming that any external intervention would result in a "devastating blow to the perpetrator". On the same day, Trump repeated threats of military action if diplomacy fails to secure a new nuclear deal.

The response to Trump's threats came from brigadier general Amir Ali Hajizadeh, the commander of the Revolutionary Guards' aerospace force: "Someone in glass houses does not throw stones at anyone." He added: "The Americans have at least 10 bases with 50,000 troops in the region, meaning they are sitting in a glass house."

Before we look at the potential risks of another war in the Middle East, it is essential to remember that Iran's nuclear bases are mainly installed underground and last week the country unveiled an underground 'missile city'. I have not watched the full propaganda video, but, according to the website of the 'Foundation for Defence of Democracies' (FDD), the Iranian government "showcased multiple types of medium-range ballistic missiles". The video also showed a land attack cruise missile, some of which had "featured in the April and October 2024 Iranian missile attacks against Israel".

In the same article, Ryan Brobst a senior research analyst in FDD, tells us:

While the United States and Israel have demonstrated an impressive ability to shoot down Iranian ballistic missiles, the depletion of interceptors remains a risk. The Pentagon should ensure that any



**B-2 bomber refueling over Indian Ocean**

troops sent into harm's way deploy alongside air defences to protect them against Iranian attacks, whether conducted by ballistic missiles, cruise missiles or drones. The deep craters and destroyed sleeping quarters at Al-Asad Airbase after Iran's 2020 attack should serve as a potent reminder of the dangers facing US forces.

Given a punishment war - there will be no ground invasion - we should expect the sustained use of bunker-buster bombs, such as the precision-guided 30,000-pound GBU-57, presumably delivered by US B-2 stealth bombers (they can carry two of them). Such bombs are designed to penetrate layers and rock, steel and concrete. The USAF only has 20 of these hugely sophisticated aircraft - ominously six of them openly on display on Diego Garcia. In the last few months the USAF has used them against underground Houthi targets in northern Yemen. Israel, of course, has no such planes.

## US-EU conflict

Meanwhile, European Union leaders have been reminded of the significant economic losses they incurred after severing ties with Iran. These followed the EU's failure to uphold commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, when member-states directed their banking, industrial and financial sectors to cut off engagement. Of course, European countries would have faced secondary sanctions by the US, had they continued economic deals with the Islamic Republic.

When it comes to Ukraine, Iranian state television and radio have covered the Oval Office meeting between Ukrainian president Vladimir Zelensky and Donald Trump and JD Vance, relaying the facts, while emphasising Zelensky's "humiliation".

The coverage also highlighted Russian reactions to the dispute, quoting former president Dmitry Medvedev's remark that Zelensky had been "slapped hard" and foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova's accusation that Zelensky's claim of Kyiv being "alone" in 2022 was the "biggest lie". The hard-line Tasnim News Agency, affiliated to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, echoed this narrative, framing the event as "Russia's delight and Europe's anger"

over Zelensky's treatment.

Iranian newspapers seized the opportunity to critique US diplomacy. The state-aligned *Jaam-e Jam* daily portrayed Zelensky's reported "expulsion" from the White House as emblematic of Washington's "unreliability." Hard-line news agencies Student News Network and Fars repeated this line, with the former calling the confrontation a "historical lesson on why trusting America is a mistake". Fars specifically targeted advocates of direct US-Iran negotiations, insisting that the supreme leader's insistence on indirect talks with Washington was the right approach. Khamenei had reiterated his stance in February after Trump reinstated "maximum pressure" sanctions on Iran.

Iranian 'reformist' figures, including former vice-president Mohammad Ali Abtahi, also cautioned against directly engaging with Trump, with Abtahi posing a rhetorical scenario: "Imagine president Pezeshkian sitting across from him [and facing similar treatment]." The debate underscores ongoing tensions within Iran's political landscape, as Pezeshkian (often described as a moderate) faces hard-line resistance to any US engagement amid renewed sanctions.

## Two articles

Last week a significant security breach dubbed 'Signalgate' erupted after *The Atlantic* published two articles by American journalist Jeffrey Goldberg. These revealed confidential discussions involving senior US officials, including Vance.

The breach originated when Goldberg was accidentally added to a restricted communications group, granting him unauthorised access to classified operational plans such as US bombing strategies, drone strike protocols and target selection data. The lapse intensified scrutiny over the government's reliance on unsecured platforms and its protocols for safeguarding sensitive information.

Internationally, the disclosure of military intelligence has damaged diplomatic trust, with allies questioning US operational security. Critics argue that the administration's defensive posture - prioritising damage control over systemic reforms - has exacerbated the crisis.

Iran has inevitably joined the fray. Foreign minister Abbas Araghchi wrote on X: "People around the globe

- including Americans - now see how US officials look at world affairs. Some highlight severe incompetence and, more importantly, total disregard for human life in decision-making."

There is another reason to take the recent political overtures with a huge grain of salt. Iran's leaders are hoping that the regional consequences of a Iran-US war will deter the Trump administration from launching a military attack. In my opinion, they are mistaken, as the Trump administration is not exactly known for acting with caution. However, it is important to consider these risks:

■ Escalating regional instability in the Middle East:

Iraq - Likely to re-emerge as a primary conflict zone. With continued US military presence and Iran's entrenched influence over Shiite militias, confrontations, proxy warfare and widespread destabilisation are anticipated.

Syria and Lebanon - A risk of renewed escalation. Iran-aligned groups, such as Hezbollah, could renew strikes against Israeli or US targets, potentially triggering broader regional hostilities.

Yemen - The conflict may escalate further, with Iran-supported Houthi forces expanding attacks on Gulf states and US-linked infrastructure.

■ Global energy markets at risk:

The Strait of Hormuz - a critical chokepoint for 20% of the global oil trade - faces heightened risks of disruption via blockades or assaults. Such events would trigger immediate oil price surges, destabilising economies worldwide. US allies like Saudi Arabia and the UAE could face retaliatory strikes from Iran or its allies, jeopardising their oil production and export capabilities.

■ Surge in proxy warfare and asymmetric threats:

Iran's regional supporters (I refuse to call them 'proxies') - including Haste Shaabi, Kataib Hezbollah (Iraq), Hezbollah (Lebanon) and the Houthis (Yemen) - are poised to mobilise. Attacks on US diplomatic missions, military installations and allied nations would likely escalate.

■ Israeli military engagement:

Israel could enter the conflict if directly targeted by Hezbollah rocket attacks or Iranian missile strikes.

A multi-front war involving Israel, Hezbollah and potentially Iran would exacerbate instability, spilling over into Palestinian territories, Jordan and Egypt.

■ Humanitarian catastrophe:

Civilian populations in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Iran would endure intensified bombardment, resource shortages and mass displacement. Refugee crises would worsen, straining neighbouring states like Turkey and Jordan, with ripple effects reaching Europe.

Iran is hoping it can exploit perceived US isolation (eg, European resistance to Trump-era confrontational tactics) to erode international adherence to sanctions. However, the EU's antagonism with China and Iran's close association with Brics might hamper such plans.

We can envisage several scenarios. For example, the current stalemate might be maintained. Although this looks unlikely, it could be that the continuation of the war in Ukraine, the situation in Gaza and the economic consequences of tariff wars will delay a war on Iran: we have witnessed an extended deadlock, marked by intermittent clashes (cyber operations, maritime confrontations, etc), but without large-scale escalation.

There is a possibility that, faced with crippling sanctions and war, leaders of the Islamic regime, known for their pragmatism, will accept some of Trump's demands - we currently have a temporary negotiated resolution, which has been helped by indirect diplomacy, facilitated by EU/Omani mediators.

We might witness targeted military action to force Iran to accept all of Trump's demands: eg, a limited US strike (against nuclear infrastructure, say), provoking calibrated Iranian retaliation, although this scenario might escalate into regional conflict.

The US administration is also relying on internal collapse: intensified US sanctions could well worsen Iran's economic crisis, encouraging mass protests that threaten the regime's stability ●

## Notes

1. [www.fdd.org/analysis/2025/03/29/iran-unveils-latest-massive-underground-missile-facility](http://www.fdd.org/analysis/2025/03/29/iran-unveils-latest-massive-underground-missile-facility).

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**DAVID MILLER**

# From SWP to Iranian asset

He calls for Iranian nukes and spouts anti-Semitic nonsense - but we should continue to fight for his right to free speech, says Carla Roberts

The vast majority of leftwingers accused of being 'anti-Semitic' are, as we know, anti-Zionists. In Labour Against the Witchhunt, we saw time and time again how even the most minor criticism of the actions of the Israeli government were falsely labelled 'anti-Semitic' and used to kick out one socialist after another from the Labour Party - at the behest of Jeremy Corbyn's general secretary, Jennie Formby, we should remember (and under Iain McNicol).

However, we also saw a small number of cases where somebody had indeed written something anti-Semitic - or reposted a daft conspiracy theory about the Rothschilds running the world. Most comrades (though admittedly not all) took it well when we pointed that out. LAW correctly insisted that, in order to effectively fight the witch-hunt, we would have to be tough on *actual* anti-Semitism. We even had to expel a few people from LAW for that reason.

This is one of the most disappointing, though perhaps not surprising, aspects of the witch-hunt: it has led some socialists into very dodgy political territory. Full of rage against Israel's genocidal campaign, they are incapable of seeing how global imperialism works and have ended up believing that 'the tail wags the dog': ie, the Zionists (or even 'Jews') run the world. In other words, they have ended up doing exactly what they were once wrongfully accused of.

Sadly, David Miller is such a case. LAW defended him when he was sacked by Bristol University in October 2021 after a campaign by the pro-Zionist lobby. This was very much an example of the *real* 'cancel culture' threatening free speech today, with the government fully and openly supporting the witch-hunt against Miller, thereby revealing the hypocrisy of their position against 'cancel culture' around trans issues. We organised a number of protests, including outside the university itself.

But Miller has since made quite a political transformation. His initial George Galloway-type admiration for the Brics countries, and in particular Iran and Hezbollah, has grown to bizarre levels of sycophancy. His reporting about the funeral of Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut is excruciating: "You do not see anything like that in this country, this level of militancy and unified voice. If that ever existed in this country, it is long gone," he enthuses in *Palestine Classified*, egged on by Chris Williamson, admiring "how the axis operates and the loyalty to it by millions of people in the Levant".<sup>1</sup>

## Journey

Some might be surprised to hear that he is a former long-time member of the Socialist Workers Party. However, his views are actually consistent with the line of the SWP during the high period of the Stop the War Coalition and Respect, when the organisation excused and prettified its Islamist allies, equating criticism of the Islamists with pro-war politics in a typical application of the post-1935 Comintern's popular front approach: thou shall not criticise, but subordinate yourself politically to your coalition partners on the right.

Miller's latest output on X and the Iranian state channel *Press TV* represents another fateful step for the former academic. We should say from the outset that this does not lead us to demand that Ofcom investigates X, let alone that the police should take action against him, as the despicable pro-Zionist Board of Deputies does.<sup>2</sup>



**Not the church, not the state: for unrestricted free speech**

Let us look at some of Miller's rantings. He now believes that the "Axis of Resistance is the only serious anti-Zionist, anti-imperialist force in the world (he sometimes refers to it as simply "the resistance") and that "the Islamic Republic of Iran desperately needs to develop nuclear weapons". In another post, he says that "any political dissent, but especially that coming from Muslims, tends to be more coherent, universalistic and material than other varieties." Like Marxism?

He has clearly lost any hope in the global working class and now has only contempt for the left: "The global left is occupied and infiltrated by Zionist fanatics who cloak themselves in socialist and 'pro-Palestinian' garb, which has caused deep confusion among gullible white leftists in particular." Instead he is looking for leadership from religious reactionaries and the Iranian theocracy. After all, they are the only true opposition to imperialism, which is led by the nose by, you guessed it, Zionists.

On March 27, he tweeted: "On behalf of the Zionist movement and at its express direction, the US empire is slaughtering the pioneers of this humanitarian intervention [in Yemen]." The \$100 million donation to Donald Trump's election campaign from the pro-Zionist billionaire, Miriam Adelson, "was clearly on the condition that the operations in the West Bank and the annexation go ahead". Oh and "Geert Wilders can be said to be a creation of the state of Israel and its foreign intelligence assets."

He has been soft on conspiracy theories for some time - which now have descended into outright anti-Semitism. We got a first whiff of it in August 2023, when he wrote that "Jews are overrepresented" and thereby have the "power to make economic, political and cultural decisions" - implying a collective Jewish control over "all areas of British public life". He apologised for the tweet as part of his campaign to get his job back, and changed "Jews are overrepresented" to "Jews are the most privileged minority group".<sup>3</sup>

But since then he has only hunkered down on his original train of thought: "For too long, we have all misunderstood the scale of the threat

emanating from *Jewish supremacism* and the genocidal ideology of Zionism. It is time to act. Europe is already occupied by both this ideology and the financial networks that underpin it." And: "The answer is not just to be pro-Palestinian, whatever that means. The challenge is to be anti-Zionist, to materially contribute to the global struggle against *Jewish supremacism*. Your war is right where you are."

Even the most fervent supporters of Miller would struggle to claim that this is not open anti-Semitism (as well as utter nonsense).

## Anti-Zionists

This month then, we saw the next logical step in Miller's increasingly bizarre world view:

It's tiring to even have to say this, but there are no 'Israeli' anti-Zionists... It is doubtful whether there are more than a handful of Jewish anti-Zionists anywhere. After all, how many Jewish martyrs have there been in the past 140 [sic] on the path to liberate Palestine from Zionism? How many Jews have engaged in military action against Zionist targets in that period? We can talk about 'Jewish anti-Zionism' once there are organisations at war with the Jewish state.<sup>4</sup>

This whole tweet is bonkers, ignoring as it does many brave struggles of anti-Zionist Jews, including in the Battle of Cable Street or indeed the witch-hunt in the Labour Party. Tony Greenstein has done a good job critiquing Miller<sup>5</sup> (although Miller has apparently stated that Greenstein is one of the above-mentioned "handful" of decent Jews on the whole planet). Not that even this part makes much sense, as Greenstein - just like Miller himself - has to our knowledge not "engaged in military action against Zionist targets", let alone blown himself up as a "martyr".

To back up what he says, Miller has repeatedly posted the results of a survey conducted by the Institute of Jewish Policy Research,<sup>6</sup> according to which "between 63% and 80% of British Jews identify as 'Zionist'. Even higher numbers say that they feel 'very or somewhat attached to the country' (73%) or 'personally connected' to Israel (97%)." Almost

all Jews are Zionists, you see.

You do not have to be an academic to understand how such results are achieved and why - you formulate the questions according to the results you want. The skewed survey is designed to serve the political agenda of the Zionists who commissioned it. Funnily enough, it also suits Miller's agenda. As Tony Greenstein writes, "Miller is not only going down an anti-Semitic rabbit hole, but a Zionist one too. Zionists claim that all Jews, bar a handful of 'self-haters', are Zionists." The other side of the Zionist coin.

A few days later, on March 20, Miller topped all this off with another unhelpful rant: "Every genuinely anti-Zionist Jew can count on being kept safe by the movement, when the time comes. Every Zionist Jew must be held accountable and de-Zionised." And remember, there are only a "handful" of "genuine anti-Zionist Jews" globally! And then: "And let's be clear, there are Zionists everywhere. In every town and city. Find out where they are."<sup>7</sup> It was this tweet that led to the Board of Deputies complaining to the police. Should this be taken up by the police and go to court, we suspect they will not find it too difficult to claim that Miller is "directly inciting violence against Jewish individuals and institutions in this country".<sup>8</sup>

Miller's mind seems to have been increasingly clouded by his illusions in the Brics countries and the various reactionary militias they support. Yasmine Mather has pointed out numerous times that none of those countries could be described as anti-imperialist in any meaningful way, and even the description as 'non-imperialist' does not apply to all. Countries like China and Russia might, for lack of a better word, even be described as wannabe- or proto-imperialist. They certainly have absolutely no interest in helping or even 'liberating' the Palestinians, as comrade Mather explains: "The anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist, pro-Palestine rhetoric that has come from the Islamic Republic over many decades is in actual fact cynical window-dressing".<sup>9</sup>

But that is, in any case, of secondary importance to Miller, whose hatred of Zionism now trumps everything. For him, it is not capitalism that is the problem and it certainly is

not socialism that he wants. Worse than that: Miller's writing about the "privilege" and "overrepresentation" of Jews (a revival of the classic anti-Semitic trope) serves really only one side: US imperialism. Since the supposed reason for US policy support for Israel was the threat of anti-Semitism, the fact that the policy produced anti-Semitism is a positive feedback loop: the more anti-Semitism the US can point to, the more it can justify its policies in the Middle East.

## Controls

So why on earth do we defend his right to free speech? Almost the entire left is united in its insistence that he has become persona non grata and shall not be touched. The Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Jewish Voice for Labour<sup>10</sup> and the SWP<sup>11</sup> all agree with the Board of Deputies and the government on that issue: Miller has "crossed the line" and must be banned from all meetings henceforth. JVL even believes his views are not acceptable "within the terrain of academic freedom" - a dangerous anti-free speech concession to official cancel culture, which will inevitably be used against JVL itself.

The PSC leadership has published a useful internal four-page 'guidance document'<sup>12</sup> after its Chelmsford branch invited Miller to speak at a meeting. The leadership forced the branch to cancel the meeting and, in response, Chelmsford PSC has resigned *en bloc*, without much of a fight (we suspect it is a rather small 'bloc').

The document outlines some good arguments against Miller and finishes with this operative conclusion: "The language deployed by Miller is fundamentally destructive to our political organising for Palestine and the only answer is to exclude it from our movement. We are not a state banning free speech nor a court imposing sanctions."

That is right. Organisations, all organisations, have their boundaries, which decide who is on the inside and who is on the outside. What is true of a chess club is also true of LAW, PSC, SWP and the CPGB.

However, when it comes to academia and society at large, we are for unrestricted freedom of speech. We certainly do not trust the government, the courts or big tech telling us who is allowed to speak and who can say what. Yes, we support laws making it illegal to incite murder. But that is not freedom of speech.

Meanwhile, let him have his platforms on X, Spinwatch, Al Mayadeen and *Press TV* ●

## Notes

1. All quoted tweets and contributions are freely accessible on David Miller's feed on X ([x.com/Tracking\\_Power](https://x.com/Tracking_Power)).
2. [bod.org.uk/bod-news/board-of-deputies-writes-to-home-office-over-incendiary-comments-by-david-miller](https://bod.org.uk/bod-news/board-of-deputies-writes-to-home-office-over-incendiary-comments-by-david-miller).
3. [x.com/Tracking\\_Power/status/1689359912437006336](https://x.com/Tracking_Power/status/1689359912437006336).
4. [x.com/Tracking\\_Power/status/1896655137030217897](https://x.com/Tracking_Power/status/1896655137030217897).
5. [azvsas.blogspot.com/2025/03/david-miller-has-gone-from-asset-to.html](https://azvsas.blogspot.com/2025/03/david-miller-has-gone-from-asset-to.html).
6. [www.jpr.org.uk/reports/jews-uk-today-key-findings-jpr-national-jewish-identity-survey](https://www.jpr.org.uk/reports/jews-uk-today-key-findings-jpr-national-jewish-identity-survey).
7. [x.com/Tracking\\_Power/status/1904174607588061515](https://x.com/Tracking_Power/status/1904174607588061515).
8. [bod.org.uk/bod-news/board-of-deputies-writes-to-home-office-over-incendiary-comments-by-david-miller](https://bod.org.uk/bod-news/board-of-deputies-writes-to-home-office-over-incendiary-comments-by-david-miller).
9. 'Part of the establishment' *Weekly Worker* March 21 2024: [weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1483/part-of-the-establishment](https://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1483/part-of-the-establishment).
10. [www.jewishvoiceforlabour.org.uk/statement/david-miller-has-crossed-a-line](https://www.jewishvoiceforlabour.org.uk/statement/david-miller-has-crossed-a-line).
11. [socialistworker.co.uk/sw-view/why-david-miller-is-wrong-about-antisemitism](https://socialistworker.co.uk/sw-view/why-david-miller-is-wrong-about-antisemitism).
12. [drive.google.com/file/d/1CqjYNU5ogCxuDzRjUHSd3AdZY02A/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CqjYNU5ogCxuDzRjUHSd3AdZY02A/view).



# ECONOMICS



Money for warfare, not welfare

# No sign of spring

Cuts, cuts and more cuts. **Michael Roberts** examines Labour's continuation of the last government's programme of austerity, with one notable exception - spending on war

The UK government's spring statement on spending was as expected - really awful. First, chancellor Rachel Reeves had to accept that the 2025 real GDP growth estimate will be half the rate previously forecast - down to 1% from the 2% predicted by the government's official forecaster, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR). In addition, Reeves had to admit that the government's inflation target rate of 2% a year would not be met until 2027 - and that assumes that Trump's tariff measures do not drive up costs in the meantime.

The UK economy remains in stagnation. Real GDP contracted 0.1% month over month in January 2025 - worse than market expectations of a 0.1% gain. The largest downward contribution came from the production sector, which fell 0.9%. The services sector also slowed to just a 0.1% rise. Real GDP per person growth in the UK in the first half of this decade is set to be the weakest of any comparable period in a century.

Despite this, Reeves sought to claim that the OBR has confirmed that real household disposable income will grow "at almost twice the rate" that had been anticipated in the autumn. She said households will be "on average" £500 better off "under this government". This claim is flatly denied by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in a new study that reckoned *all* British families will be worse off by the end of this decade, with those on the lowest incomes hit twice as hard as middle- and high-earners. That would mean the average real disposable income in the UK would have fallen for 10 years: "We estimate that average household disposable incomes after housing costs (hereafter 'disposable incomes') will remain £400 a year below 2020 levels in April. By April 2030 households will be a further £1,400 worse off on average than they are today, a 3% point fall."<sup>1</sup>

The JRF forecasts that real gross earnings will fall by £700 a year between 2025 and 2030. This is due to firms passing on most of the costs of the recent increase to employer National Insurance Contributions (NICs) through lower nominal

wages, smaller staff counts and higher consumer prices. Fiscal drag also continues to squeeze post-tax income through to 2028, because income tax thresholds have been frozen until 2028.

Middle- and higher-income households would have a fall in real disposable incomes of around 3% between 2025 and 2030, with real net earnings falling at the same time as housing costs rise. For the lowest-income families, incomes are falling twice as fast as for the middle and the top, with a 6% fall in real disposable incomes between 2025 and 2030. These families will be £900 worse off by 2030, compared to today.

This Labour government has followed the previous Conservative government in imposing fiscal austerity - but this time on steroids. Reeves claims that there is a 'fiscal hole' between government revenues and spending now equivalent to £10 billion a year, which must be filled. But it a hole that she has dug herself. The government promised no income tax changes, including no rise in corporate profits tax. It opposed significant borrowing to bridge any gap. It has ignored calls for a wealth tax on the super-rich. Instead, it has introduced a range of welfare cuts that affect the poorest in Britain, although polling shows two-thirds of the British public (64%) support a wealth tax on those who have over £10 million. A wealth tax of 2% a year on those with more than £10 million would raise £24 billion a year - easily covering the so-called 'fiscal hole'.

## Benefits

Instead, the cuts pour in. First, there was the cap on child benefit to two children per family. Then there was the abolition of winter fuel payments made to the elderly. And, more recently, the government announced swingeing reductions in benefits to the disabled and those unable to work.

The UK's Resolution Foundation think-tank estimated that this would leave as many as 1.2 million people worse off by £4,300 a year by 2029, because they would not receive "daily living" payments. Tougher eligibility for personal independence payments

and incapacity benefits will mean some people now in line to receive £15,000 a year, excluding housing support, will instead receive just £5,400 - a drop of 64%. Ayla Ozmen, director of policy and campaigns at welfare charity Z2K, said three quarters of people on universal credit and disability support already struggled to afford the essentials: "Evidence from our advice services shows that those who will lose out include people with psychosis and double amputees," she added.

## Living standards

This is a horrendous hit to the living standards of the poorest. Right now, three million UK households are £3,000 a year worse off than the poorest households in Germany and £1,500 a year worse off than the lowest earners in France. They are also poorer than people in the poorest parts of Slovenia (where average disposable income is almost £900 a year higher), Malta (£1,000 higher) and Ireland (£2,300 higher). This is according to a new report on British living standards by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research.<sup>2</sup>

Districts in Birmingham were ranked as the poorest in the UK, according to the study, and below the poorest areas of Finland, France, Malta and Slovenia, it found. The UK now has some of the least generous welfare across countries in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Welfare payments covered the cost of essentials in only two of the past 14 years - both of them during the pandemic, after the £20 a week increase to universal credit.

But now Reeves plans a further cut in UC. The 'health' element will be cut by 50% and then frozen for new claimants. Reeves also plans to cut central government spending by up to 15% over this parliament, thus halving any real rise each year - with big cuts, yet again, for local councils, prisons and the courts.

But there is more money to be spent in some areas - namely 'defence'. The Starmer government, with its arms race strategy in full blast, has already announced a hike in defence spending from 2.3% of

GDP to 2.5% by 2027 - and on to 3% as soon as possible. The first hike has been paid for by cutting foreign 'aid' to the poorest countries in the world. And the much-heralded National Wealth Fund will now be allowed to make investments in defence: ie, to arms manufacturers. So less on productive investment and more on unproductive destructive investment. The reason the British economy is in such a mess is that productive investment growth is very low - lower than in comparable economies.

The government says it is going to change that and boost investment and economic growth. But its plan to do so rests entirely on encouraging the capitalist sector to increase spending. Apparently this will be done by 'deregulating' the economy - in effect ending environmental and climate controls, ending restrictions on monopolies and giving a free hand to the financial sector to do what it wants. It was 'light-touch' regulation of the City of London that was the mantra of the last Labour government under Blair and Brown. Now it is doubled down upon by Starmer and Reeves. According to Reeves, the City of London is the "crown jewel" of the British economy and the main generator of growth - not a centre of fictitious capital waiting for another accident to happen, as in 2008-09.

Through the mist of the government claims, the OBR finds that business investment to GDP - the lowest in the G7 states at about 10% - will be little changed by the end of this parliament and government investment will be lower at the end of the Labour government's term than at the start.

## More misery

Labour's policy to boost growth is to get rid of 'planning'. Take housing. Reeves and deputy prime minister Angela Rayner claim that deregulating local planning will take house building to a 40-year high (which is not actually saying much). But their measures really open the door for private developers like BlackRock and landlords to build, sell and rent homes at unaffordable levels. So-called *affordable* homes are not that at all - at 80% of the market rate, where house prices have risen to nine

times average wages in England and Wales.<sup>3</sup> Hardly any 'social housing' for those in need is promised.

Reeves says she has to make these cuts in government spending to 'fill' her fictional fiscal hole and to control fast-rising government debt. It is true that government debt to GDP is rising faster in the UK than in the rest of the G7 or Europe. But that is because economic growth is so weak and interest costs on debt are so high as a result of inflation. The UK now spends more than £100 billion a year on debt interest - a post-war high.<sup>4</sup> This is money straight into the hands of the banks and financial institutions, paid for by welfare cuts. So the Labour government has decided to keep the financial sector happy with fiscal austerity and hope that economic growth will emerge from deregulation.

There are to be no taxes on the rich and the corporate sector. There is to be no public takeover of the productive sectors of the economy - nor the financial sector, nor the big investment funds. There is to be no public ownership of the corrupt energy and water utilities.

The scandal of these privatised utilities is there for all to see, where shareholders have got billions in dividends, while debt and utility prices rise. The total collapse in the water infrastructure has reached the point where the UK's water supply, rivers and beaches are no longer safe to drink or touch. Meanwhile, Britain's roads are falling apart with unfilled potholes needing something like £17 billion to fix.

So yet more misery for most British households.<sup>5</sup> Spring has not come: the winter will continue ●

Michael Roberts blogs at [thenextrecession.wordpress.com](https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com)

## Notes

1. [www.jrf.org.uk/cost-of-living/starmers-missed-milestone-the-outlook-for-living-standards-at-the-spring-statement](https://www.jrf.org.uk/cost-of-living/starmers-missed-milestone-the-outlook-for-living-standards-at-the-spring-statement).
2. [niesr.ac.uk/publications/uk-living-standards-review-2025?type=report](https://niesr.ac.uk/publications/uk-living-standards-review-2025?type=report).
3. [www.theguardian.com/money/2022/mar/23/house-price-growth-outstrips-wages-england-wales](https://www.theguardian.com/money/2022/mar/23/house-price-growth-outstrips-wages-england-wales).
4. [commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06167](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06167).
5. See [thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2024/07/02/broken-britain](https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2024/07/02/broken-britain).



## FUSION

# Minimum demands are maximal

Let us not understate our radicalism or drive ourselves into sterile propagandism. Mike Macnair reports on the latest meeting of Forging Communist Unity

**F**orging Communist Unity met online on March 30, for a fairly short meeting. Ed Potts and Nick Wrack attended for Talking About Socialism, Jack Conrad and myself for the CPGB, and Sam Turner for the pro-talks wing of *Prometheus*. Comrade Farzad Kamangar took notes for the CPGB.

The main subject of the meeting was a continuation of our discussion at the March 8 meeting of the possible programmatic basis for unity. We had already identified at this meeting that both the length of the CPGB's *Draft programme* and indeed the need for a minimum programme as such, as opposed to a general statement of aims, were contentious issues.

Comrade Conrad gave a brief introduction to the CPGB's conception. We follow the approach of classical social democracy, in combining demands for political democracy with immediate economic and social demands. These are not minimum, in the sense of the minimum that can be achieved under capitalism: they are rather the *maximum* that can be achieved under capitalism. We distinguish this from the trade unionist/workplace/sectional approach, on the one hand, and the idea that the party urges *only* the taking of political power, on the other. It is vital to prepare the working class as a future ruling class - not just fighting for proletarian interests, but also addressing the state it lives under and its place in global politics. We also aim to neutralise or win over sections of the middle classes. As far as the design of the minimum economic demands is concerned, these aim neither for current popularity nor for 'affordability'. They pose the question of workers having the right under capitalism to a real life and cultural development. They are in this respect demands for minimum based on *needs*.

## Questions

Comrade Turner raised two short questions. The problem is how to decide what goes in to a minimum programme. On the one hand, he thought that the role of lobbyists in capitalist rule was an absence; on the other, reading the CPGB's *Draft programme* tended to lead to suggestions to add things (though we had in previous discussions thought it was too long).

Comrade Wrack made a much longer contribution against the CPGB's minimum programme. In the first place, he argued that it was unclear what was meant by 'minimum programme'. On the one hand, Marc Mulholland in the *Why Marx* series on partyism had said that it was the programme on which the working class took power. This seemed (in comrade Wrack's view) to be close to Trotsky's idea of the transitional programme as a programme of *revolution*, though not to subsequent Trotskyists' use of the idea of the 'transitional method' as a mere reason to adopt currently popular ideas. On the other hand, Marx had said that the demands of the 1880 *Programme of the Parti Ouvrier* had emerged from the workers' movement itself. (The quotation is actually "the economic section of this very short document consists ... solely of demands that have, in fact, arisen spontaneously out of the workers' movement itself": "the economic section", not the political section.)

The terminology is, he argued, inherently confusing; thus my own argument in the article, 'Trans liberation and Marxism', that some aspects of trans liberation relate to



Power at the point of production

the maximum, not the minimum, programme<sup>2</sup> would be an obstacle to "a clear idea of what a communist party stands for".

The same issue, he argued, arises in relation to "winning the battle for democracy" - it obscures our aim. We seek the means of production being held in common, not some sort of capitalist state holding them on trust for the workers. The general weakness of communist ideas means that we have to focus on this point. The question of 'democracy' is posed rather to show that we do not propose to repeat Stalinism.

On the other hand, the substantive demands of the CPGB's minimum programme in comrade Wrack's view "look like they are sucked out of our thumbs". Proposals for life under capitalism, he argued, should not be put in the programme. Rather, what we fight for is for the working class to expropriate the means of production generally. We should merely say that in the here and now communists will fight for every improvement that can be wrested from the capitalist class against their wishes.

In his view we should reject the argument that I made in 2007 that (to quote it more precisely than he did in the meeting) "between the working class seizing political power and the disappearance of classes, supersession of state, nation, family, etc is a substantial period of transition. The transition, and the communist outcome, will be shaped by the choices made by the working class when it has attained political power."<sup>3</sup> The development of science and technology since Marx's time means that in his view this is false: we should not suggest a "substantial" period of transition.

Comrade Potts added that the political strength of the working class is very closely linked to its industrial strength. Periods of extreme militancy show factory occupations, which amount to the expropriation of the means of production. It is a mistake to suppose that the working class can attain full political power without the

socialisation of the economy.

The CPGB's approach to minimum demands is in his view mistaken because of this error of method: thus, the idea that the minimum wage should be set at the reproduction needs of the worker and *one* child in the *Draft programme*, or the call for a maximum five-day working week and seven-hour day, with reduction to four days and six hours for dangerous or unusually demanding jobs, are both too minimalist relative to what is presently possible.

The *Draft programme* also in his view contains a 'stages' schema. If the minimum programme is implemented as a whole, that tells us nothing about what we would do about the economy; it displays an excessive focus on the political. It thus leaves open the possibility that the transition period would be indefinitely prolonged.

## Transition

In response to these points, Jack Conrad accepted comrade Turner's point that there were very many issues not included in the *Draft programme*. On these we adopt separate theses - as, for example, on Labour, the Arab Spring and Israel-Palestine.<sup>4</sup> We are currently working on drafting theses on trans liberation. The general principle of the *Draft programme* is - as short as possible, as long as necessary.

On comrade Wrack's points, he argued that in the first place, the minimum programme (as a whole) is the minimum basis for participating in a government. But that does not imply that we do not fight for the individual demands of the programme prior to coming to power. Leaving aside Trotsky, the 'transitional method' has become the 'common sense' of much of the left in Britain.

Both comrades Wrack and Potts had raised the issue of the economic demands. Hopefully, comrade Conrad said, this was just a misunderstanding. The *Draft programme* does not start with what UK capitalism can afford, but with what workers need in order to have a full life - determined culturally:

thus, for example, overseas holidays were once a prerogative of the upper classes, but are now a need for a full life. Equally, on the question of state ownership, the *Draft programme* calls for the nationalisation of the natural monopolies and of big pharma. Also we fight *immediately* for workers' control measures.

Socialism *emerges* in the form of working class gains under capitalism, like limits on working hours or public health services. When the working class takes political power, this transition continues in a more accelerated form towards the self-abolition of the class, towards labour as a form of human self-fulfilment. There is still a transition: as quickly as possible, but nonetheless involving continued class struggle under conditions of democracy (as opposed to today's plutocracy).

Comrade Turner asked if it was really the case that TAS imagined immediate collectivisation and no period of transition to communism? On this point, he agreed with the CPGB that workers' power does not equal communism, and there would still need to be a transition.

I said in response to comrade Turner's earlier point that in my own view the issue of lobbying was an important one; we should argue for payments for private access to public officials to be treated as bribes, and for the funding of media by commercial advertising to be banned. But this is merely my own view. The *Draft programme* was not "sucked out of our thumbs", but came from two discussion processes in the 1990s and in 2008-11, leading to extensive debate and votes on amendments; the minimum demands drew to a considerable extent on demands already raised in the labour movement. The primary point of its being a 'minimum' is to refuse to take governmental office without a commitment to implement the whole.

There does nonetheless have to be a transition. To take the example of the trans question, state oppression, like the requirement to put sex/

gender on official documents, could be abolished immediately (minimum programme). Queer-bashing, on the other hand, is a performance of competitive heterosexual masculinity, which is driven, in turn, by the dynamics of relationship formation as a competitive market, resulting from market society as such (in contrast to family formation under feudalism); it will only disappear under whatever mode of relationship formation develops under full communism.

Lenin made the point in 1917 that, as long as capital is still in power, the minimum programme is necessary.<sup>5</sup> It is a mistake to argue for immediate socialisation *in Britain alone*: this would be rapidly strangled by sanctions. *On a European scale*, we could take power and defeat sanctions - but would need to take account of the substantial subsisting peasantry and petty bourgeoisie. Before that point, we will need to continue to fight for minimum demands.

## Fudge?

Comrade Potts responded to comrade Turner on the issue of transition, that there is a danger of being too cautious. The working class has gained skills and capabilities that allow dispensing with the middle classes. Comrade Wrack argued that the idea of a transition "as quickly as possible", as comrade Conrad put it, fudged the differences between us. The question of coming to power will only be posed when conditions have ripened for the mass of the working class to impose its will on society. In this context, it would be unacceptable to create political democracy, but still accept tyranny in the workplace. The CPGB's emphasis on neutralising the petty bourgeoisie amounts to popular frontism: in contrast, he argued, we can only *take* political power when we have won over the vast majority to immediate general collectivisation.

We agreed that this discussion will inevitably continue, both at the next meeting and at Communist University in the summer.

In that context, it was reported that the *Prometheus* editorial board as a whole has agreed to co-organise; comrade Cat Rylance is to be the 'point person'. For TAS, comrade Potts is the 'point person' and for the CPGB comrade Carla Roberts. We also reported that we now have confirmation of a booking in central London where the event will be held.

This was a friendly discussion in spite of the significance of the differences. However, I think - and this is merely my own opinion - that there is some danger of a 'negative dialectic' in which we in the CPGB understate the radicalism of our *Draft programme*, while, on the other hand, the TAS comrades drive themselves, in opposition to it, towards the position of the Socialist Party of Great Britain that all that can be done is to make propaganda for socialism until there is a clear majority for immediate general collectivisation. We need at least to try to avoid this dynamic ●

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## Notes

1. Marx to Sorge, November 5 1880: K Marx CW Vol 46. In the same letter is the first use (that I am aware of) of the expression, 'minimum programme'.
2. *Weekly Worker* November 14 2024: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1515/trans-liberation-and-marxism.
3. 'For a minimum programme' *Weekly Worker* August 30 2007: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/686/for-a-minimum-programme.
4. Several can be seen at communistparty.co.uk/resources/theses-resolutions.
5. www.marx2mao.com/Lenin/RPP17.html.



# Labourism without Labour

Strikes and streets are not the be-all and end-all of class politics, agrees **Jack Conrad**. But, when it comes to ‘We Demand Change’ and standing in elections, the SWP has nothing that resembles a principled programme



**W**riting an “in-depth” article in *Socialist Worker*, editor Tomáš Tengely-Evans says the left “should break from Labourism” and “build an alternative based on struggle”.<sup>1</sup> Hurrah! If true, this would represent progress. Alas, comrade Tengely-Evans’s article amounts to little more than a puff piece for the latest ‘We Demand Change’ soft-left wheeze.

The list of headline speakers for the March 29 talking shop, held at The Cause in London’s Docklands, gives the game away: Daniel Kebede (NEU general secretary), Grace Blakeley (Lexiteer and *Tribune*), Jeremy Corbyn (Independent MP), Weyman Bennett (SWP), Yanis Varoufakis (former Greek finance minister), Owen Jones (*Guardian* columnist), Sarah Wooley (Bakers’ Union general secretary), Andrew Feinstein (former ANC MP), Zack Polanski (Green Party) and Lindsey German (Counterfire).

WDC touchingly declares that it is committed to a “mass campaign, calling for welfare, not warfare, and taxing the rich, to win a fairer society for all”. Perhaps this “network” is, for the SWP, its alternative to the largely stalled “mass party of the left” touted by former Labour left insiders Pamela Fitzpatrick and Karie Murphy

(joint directors of Collective). Who knows? Either way, WDC amounts to a popular front that, at least when it comes to comrade Tengely-Evans, stresses being outside the Labour Party. Meanwhile, the political content is, paradoxically, an unmistakable variety, or strain, of left Labourism.

## Nation

Comrade Tengely-Evans is right when he says that Sir Keir’s welfare cuts, the priority given to Britain’s war machine, the blind eye turned to the Gaza genocide, the scapegoating of illegal migrants, stem from the very DNA of Labourism. It is not simply the result of the centrality given to the election of a Labour government (what might be called electoralism).

Besides treating the Labour Party as a lucrative career ladder, receiving all manner of juicy bribes and fear of falling foul of a vengeful mass media, there is, amongst Labourites, a thoroughly internalised commitment to the existing state and its constitution. When it comes down to it, that means subordination to what is commonly called the national interest (ie, the continuation of capitalist exploitation).

Time and again this has seen Labour governments junk radical election promises in the name of fiscal responsibility and restoring national

**When it suits the SWP poses as very r-r-revolutionary. However, when it stands in elections it poses as very r-r-reformist**

economic fortunes. So it was with the first two minority governments of Ramsay MacDonald. So it was with Clement Attlee’s majority government and those of Harold Wilson, James Callaghan, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown that followed.

However, the problem with comrade Tengely-Evans’ account is that, while he sees the Labour right as committed to the nation-state, he sees the Labour left as committed to the working class: “the contradiction between class and nation within Labour leads to the party’s left-right divide”. A categorical blunder. The Labour left is just as committed to the nation-state as the Labour right.

Their socialism, if you can call it that nowadays, remains very much of the national sort. Jeremy Corbyn’s *For the many, not the few* (2017) promised and promoted the illusion that the country could be taken back to a future where the social democratic consensus once again reigns. But, while Corbyn dressed up his programme with countless references to peace and justice and the occasional reference to class, there can be no doubt about his commitment to the nation.

Comrade Tengely-Evans either does not understand that salient fact or he wants to flatter, make excuses, provide cover for the SWP’s allies

in WDC - crucially Jeremy Corbyn himself. After all, his politics are 100%+ Labour left.

Comrade Tengely-Evans is living proof of the severe decline in the SWP’s political culture. Hence, we find him turning being outside the Labour Party into a principle, presumably because that describes the SWP and Corbyn ... for now. And, yet, surely, he must be aware, no matter how dimly, that the first generation of SWP leaders, under the guise of first the Socialist Review Group, then the International Socialists, were to be found deeply ensconced in the bowels of the Labour Party throughout the 1950s and well into the late 1960s.

Anyway, he complains that no Labour MP has broken with Starmer “to join Jeremy Corbyn”. True, but if he - that is, Jeremy Corbyn - were given the chance to rejoin by Sir Keir, there can be little doubt that he would not hesitate for a single second. Corbyn would be back in the Labour Party like a shot. What keeps him out, as far as Corbyn is concerned, is not any change of mind on his behalf, but the stubbornness, the intolerance, the unreasonableness of Sir Keir.

Not that comrade Tengely-Evans fails to recognise the ideological grip of Labourism - and not only when it comes to Labour MPs, councillors,



# SWP

trade union officials and rank-and-file activists ... he includes those who have broken *organisationally* from the Labour Party too.

His puff piece cites the Independent Labour Party. Formed in 1893, with Keir Hardie as its first chair, the ILP disaffiliated from Labour in 1932, having been thoroughly discommodated by the dire experience of MacDonald's second government: in the aftermath of the great crash it slashed spending, including armed force's pay and unemployment benefit. MacDonald resigned from the Labour Party and joined Tories and Liberals in the 1931-40 national government.

While at its height the ILP had around 30,000 members, it remained wedded to the Labourism. True, there were a number of left splits, crucially to the CPGB. And in 1932, when the ILP collectively thought that capitalism stood on the edge of the abyss, it rejected "gradual change" and insisted that socialists must be "prepared to organise mass industrial action as an additional means to the attaining of their objectives and realise that the development of a capitalist dictatorship may compel the resort to extra-constitutional methods".<sup>2</sup> Yet, despite this dizzy moment, the ILP went into "irreversible decline", because - well, according to Ralph Miliband - it could compete neither with the Labour Party nor the Communist Party.<sup>3</sup> Basically though the ILP remained a centrist organisation committed to a left Labourism, albeit without the Labour Party. It formally winked out of existence in 1975.

## Elections

However, it has to be admitted that, compared with the 1930s ILP, the third generation of SWP leaders - comrades Tomáš Tengely-Evans, Lewis Nielson and Joseph Choonara - stand significantly to the right, certainly when it comes to standing in elections. Look at the platform which their Maxine Bowler stood on as an *independent* candidate in the July 2024 general election: Palestine, Palestine, Palestine ... that and vague opposition to government "anti-migrant racism, attacks on working class people, and all their rotten policies".<sup>4</sup> Diluted left Labourism in other words.

It not just the third generation of SWP leaders. The second generation - John Rees, Lindsey German, Alex Callinicos and Martin Smith - ensured that the Socialist Alliance of the early 2000s limited itself to almost entirely economic demands, when it came to our "priority pledges".

Indeed, whereas we in the CPGB wanted democratic questions - such as a federal republic, self-determination for Scotland and Wales, the abolition of the monarchy, a united Ireland, upholding free speech, replacing the standing army with a popular militia and opposing calls for a British withdrawal from the EU - in order to *distinguish* ourselves from bog-standard left Labourism, the SWP used its majority to present the Socialist Alliance as 'old Labour' during election campaigns.

Officially it characterised the Socialist Alliance as a "united front between revolutionary socialists and left Labourites".<sup>5</sup> Suffice to say, there were precious few actual 'old Labour' exiles. 'Independent' comrades, such as Mike Marqusee, Dave Church, Nick Wrack and Anna Chen, generally self-identified themselves as Marxists of one sort or another. But the largely imaginary 'old Labour' exiles set the programmatic limits of the Socialist Alliance.

Worse was to come. In the Respect "united front between revolutionary socialists and Muslim activists" the SWP once again used its majority - this time to vote down motions advocating international socialism,

republicanism, replacing the standing army with a popular militia, abortion rights, opposition to migration controls, etc. The electorate must not be put off. Such was the SWP's almost Blairite argument. This time it was, though, George Galloway, Yvonne Ridley, Salma Yaqoob, the Muslim Association of Britain and various British-Asian businessmen who set the programmatic limits ... the result being that Respect stood on a left Labourite platform in elections.

Will WDC stand in future elections? It seems likely.<sup>6</sup> True, the Green Party is not going to throw in its lot with WDC - that much is for certain. Nor will Counterfire ... John Rees tut-tuts about "short cuts" and attempts to "cut across existing social movements".<sup>7</sup> But, if WDC does decide to offer voters an "alternative" to Labour, we can expect the SWP to do its damndest to ensure that the politics are a *carefully calculated* version of left Labourism. After all, nothing will be permitted that might possibly upset Corbyn and stop him coming on board. So, even if he stays aloof - and that should be expected - it will be Corbyn who sets WDC's programmatic limits.

Meanwhile, in the pages of *Socialist Worker*, chosen SWP writers will, when it suits, pose as r-r-revolutionaries by proclaiming that the *real* struggle of the working class lies outside parliament. Frankly, either such comrades lack organisational self-awareness, that or they are out-and-out hypocrites. The reader can judge.

## Tribunes

For communists, standing in parliamentary elections and using our MPs as 'tribunes of the oppressed' to expose government lies, secrets and intrigues is definitely a *real* form of the class struggle. Our forces can thereby be educated, organised ... and "multiplied".<sup>8</sup>

If we were to rank different forms of the class struggle in terms of their importance, we would place routine economic struggles at the bottom and making revolution at the top, elections coming somewhere in the middle. Meanwhile, Tweedledum-Tweedledee elections, where voters are asked to choose between lesser evils, serve the ruling class to fool most of the people, most of the time.

But, if we can get our act together, if we can form a real, as opposed to a fake, Communist Party, elections can become one of our most effective weapons, especially in non-revolutionary times.<sup>9</sup> Hence we "consider it obligatory for the Communist Party" to stand candidates, not least because we want to use "every avenue" to propagate our ideas, in the struggle to form the working class into a class for itself, a class that is ready to take state power.<sup>10</sup> Indeed elections could quite conceivably be the antechamber to revolution.

It has to be said that many on the left today either spectacularly fail to grasp this basic Marxist proposition - that or they pay mere lip service. Of course, most class-conscious workers still instinctively vote Labour, because it is the only realistic way to 'get/keep the Tories out' (true) and because 'the worst Labour government is better than the best Tory government' (untrue). Not surprisingly, very few find the idea of forming a Labour Party mark 2 as either attractive or convincing.

While at the moment we - that is, the Provo CPGB - are barred by the electoral commission from standing candidates under our own name, that was not so in the recent past. Either way, we consider it necessary - resources permitting, opportunities given, real progress happening - for even a Proto-CPGB to stand candidates, including in direct competition with the Labour Party. While we put building a Mass

CPGB and enhancing the political consciousness of the advanced part of the working class above who administers Britain, we can do no better than by examining matters historically.

## Parliament

Let us begin with parliament itself.<sup>11</sup> Like the French *états-généraux*, Sweden's *riksdag*, the *Landstände* of Germany and the Spanish *cortes*, the English parliament had its origins in feudalism's endemic contradiction between what was later called the "divine right" of kings and the barons' "right of resistance".<sup>12</sup>

During the 13th century this "right of resistance" grew to the point where baronial magnates could, through concerted rebellion or collective pressure, require "their kings to promulgate acts of self-limitation".<sup>13</sup> The Charter of Ottokar in Syria, England's Great Charter, the Golden Bull in Hungary, the Pact of Koszyce in Poland all had the common purpose of 'restoring' the supposed 'ancient freedoms' of the nobles, and thus securing a greater share of the meagre surplus squeezed from the downtrodden peasants.

Dual power, though sealed and sanctified in meticulously drafted charters, proved inherently unstable. Between the irresistible barons and immovable kings there ran the ever-present threat of civil war. Both sets of heavily armoured thieves therefore had a pressing interest in courting the nascent class of merchants, guildmasters and gentlemen farmers. The wealth and power of these parvenus had grown such that they deemed contributions to state coffers "aid that they had conceded rather than a tax imposed upon them".<sup>14</sup>

This swelling self-confidence fully explains the famous decision in 1265 by Simon de Montfort's baronial party to summon to council for the first time representatives from the cities, boroughs and Cinque Ports - namely "the more upright and discreet citizens or burgesses".<sup>15</sup> Ironically the passive entry of the burgesses into the political arena worked to the eventual advantage of the individual aspect of the state.

Ranking as first in the land, holding central power, recognised by the church, and in charge of diplomacy, the treasury and the mint, the monarch was able to offer a more reliable social contract than could any selfish baronial outfit - especially after their leading families fought each other, often to the point of extinction, in the Wars of the Roses. The stage was set for the Tudor and then the Stewart autocracies and their creation of a new, much tamer nobility.

Constitutionally, integrating the burgesses into the state and widening the political 'class', had immediate consequences. Crucially it meant the bifurcation of the king's council. One branch consolidated around itself executive functions through a permanent salaried staff and meetings of privy counsellors and judges in the Star Chamber. The other evolved as a broad, usually annual, two-house parliament: the upper chamber of peers, the lower of commoners.

It hardly needs saying that this last named house was a plutocratic affair. A world removed from 'one person, one vote', the House of Commons consisted of and represented rich and well connected squires and those merchants organised in highly oligarchic and exclusive corporations. Labourers and peasants did not get a look-in.<sup>16</sup> Lords, merchants, guildmasters and gentlemen farmers alike considered our ancestors fit only for toil, tithes and, if need be, the gibbet.

Despite its narrow social base in the propertied classes, it will be understood that the feudal parliament had no right to direct policy, let

alone the power to transform society. Criticism was tolerated - at least of the cringing variety. But the granting of extra tax demands, though expected, was sometimes withheld - the king wanted to fight wars, bestow generous gifts on courtiers and hangers-on, secure international alliances by marrying off sons and daughters. So the invention of parliament in medieval times was not the beginning of democracy, as many modern historians would have us believe. This parliament had nothing to do with popular sovereignty - everything to do with the manoeuvring between crown and barons.

However, while in most parts of Europe the representative institutions which grew up with feudalism tended to decline or disappear with the decay of feudalism, in England that decay "only strengthened the position of the commons as the non-feudal part of parliament".<sup>17</sup>

The English Revolution which began in 1640 saw the execution of Charles I, the abolition of the Star Chamber and the founding of the Commonwealth, but failed to fundamentally transform the country. It was the compromise of 1688, the Glorious Revolution, that opened up the road for capitalist development and created the parliamentary monarchy. Today the 'king in parliament' is the sovereign power of the land. True, the monarch has largely been sidelined for everyday purposes, but the House of Commons and House of Lords function as "major constitutional instruments".<sup>18</sup>

Throughout there were, of course, constant struggles from below: the 1381 Peasant's Revolt, the Lollards, Kett's rebellion, etc. The Levellers, a movement of the historically doomed lower middle classes, demanded freedom of religion, frequent convening of a new parliament and a wide electoral franchise. Their *Agreement of the people* (1647 and 1648) excluded Catholics, those who served Charles I ... and wage-earners (about half the working population). Eduard Bernstein reckons that to have extended the franchise to labourers would, under the circumstances, "have strengthened the reactionary party".<sup>19</sup> A questionable proposition. The Levellers wanted a petty bourgeois parliament, not democracy (considered akin to a swear word by their most prominent leader, John Lilburne). Nonetheless, there would be elections every two years by all right and proper men over 21 years of age (women, naturally, went completely unconsidered).

Yet, though dominating the New Model Army, the Levellers were unable to match the power of Oliver Cromwell, the upper middle class grandees and wealthy merchants. Having refused to champion the interests of the broad mass of the people, even on paper, they had too narrow a social base. Their leaders were arrested, many executed and their mutinies were suppressed with relative ease. Either way, there can be little doubt that the *Agreement* greatly influenced the American Revolution, the London Corresponding Society and the People's Charter.

The 1838 People's Charter marked the arrival of the working class as a real force for itself and was based on these six points:

- A vote for every man aged 21 years and above, of sound mind, and not undergoing punishment for a crime.
- A secret ballot to protect the elector in the exercise of their vote.
- No property qualification for MPs, to allow the constituencies to return the man of their choice.
- Payment of MPs, enabling tradesmen, working men or other persons of modest means to leave or interrupt their livelihood to attend to the interests of the nation.
- Equal constituencies, securing the

same amount of representation for the same number of electors, instead of allowing less populous constituencies to have as much or more weight than larger ones.

■ Annual parliamentary elections, thus presenting the most effectual check to bribery and intimidation, since no purse could buy a constituency under a system of universal manhood suffrage in every 12 months.

Though confined to reconstitution of the House of Commons, if won, especially by the physical-force wing of Chartism, the implementation of these seemingly modest proposals would have amounted to a social revolution. Engels wrote that the six points were "sufficient to overthrow the whole English constitution, Queen and Lords included". Whereas for the radical bourgeoisie the six points were considered a final goal, a finishing point, he writes that, for the proletariat, they are "a mere means to further ends. 'Political power our means, social happiness our end', is now the clearly formulated war-cry of the Chartists."<sup>20</sup>

A House of Commons which champions the will not of the landed aristocracy and industrial capitalists, but the broad mass of the people, would quickly dispense with the House of Lords, the monarchy and go on to decisively deal with the bourgeoisie by taking up the tasks of socialism.

## Mystification

Establishment historians often boast that, apart from annual parliaments, all the points of the People's Charter have been fully realised. That is undoubtedly true - indeed since 1928, when women were finally given the vote at the age of 21, something like 96% of those legally defined as adults have had the right to vote. But, while this gives the appearance of majority rule, the essence of our parliamentary monarchy is no different from any other form of the bourgeois state, including abominations such as apartheid, fascist corporatism or a military junta.

Although in our society the ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas, this does not mean that there is no discontent. There most certainly is. Even in 'normal' times - times not characterised by economic and political crisis - huge numbers, if not the majority, are unhappy with their lives. Needs are never fully met. Low pay, price rises, long hours, sexual discrimination, sackings, new tax burdens, war, pollution and global warming - all provoke movements which have the potential of going beyond the proscribed limits of bourgeois legality. But without their own party the working class is powerless to exert its will, let alone to take up the tasks of socialism.

This is where the two-party system, with its ever-present alternative party of government ready in the wings, comes in.<sup>21</sup> As Lord Balfour, Tory prime minister over the years 1902-06, noted in his introduction to Walter Bagehot's much quoted 1867 classic, *The English constitution*:

Our alternating cabinets, though belonging to different parties, have never differed about the foundations of society. And it is evident that our whole political machinery presupposes a people so fundamentally at one that they can safely afford to bicker; and so sure of their own moderation that they are not dangerously disturbed by the never-ending din of political conflict.<sup>22</sup>

Through the two-party system, discontent can be safely syphoned off in the hope, and maybe the reality, of putting the alternative party into office. When that party forms a government, it does not, of course, mean the overthrow of the system and



an end to its evils. All that happens is that the ideological veil changes colour: the capitalist reality remains as before, as does the inevitable, ever-present danger of economic crisis, war and climate breakdown.

Yes, since 1900, we have had the Labour Party. Its voter base is in the working class, it is constitutionally linked with the trade unions and it has a working class name. However, the Labour Party is politically a bourgeois party. To confirm that old thesis of Lenin's have a quick look at Sir Keir's front bench. It cannot be seriously disputed that, when it comes to their given portfolio, Rachel Reeves, David Lammy, Yvette Cooper and Wes Streeting are barely distinguishable from their Tory counterparts. Alike they are pro-business, pro-Nato and pro-monarchy.

Indeed, the extension of voting rights to the point of universal suffrage has been used to considerable effect by the ruling class, its politicians and paid persuaders in academia, the media and the arts. Capitalist states - well, in the so-called west (ie, those countries at the top of the imperialist pyramid and its exploitative pecking order) - call themselves democracies and, as compared with the regimes in China, Russia and Iran, they can easily claim, for good reasons, to be better places to live (an approach with its origins in the immediate aftermath of the October Revolution and taken to perfection during the cold war).

This ideology of 'capitalism equals democracy' is widely accepted and serves wonderfully as part of the dense thicket of mystification behind which the capitalist reality of the present-day state in Britain is concealed. Parliamentary elections and parliamentary votes are used to gain popular consent for what is, in fact, the rule of the many by the few. Meantime, despite the fact that the effective power of the civil service, the courts, army generals and MI5 far outweighs that of the average MP, not least because of their own internal contradictions, big business, the very rich, consider that money spent on lobbying, sponsoring, buying up and bribing even pretty obscure MPs is money well spent.

First and foremost parliament, however, is a performance space, a talking shop, a sham. Effective power lies elsewhere ... in the cabinet, in the civil service, in the army top brass, in the boardrooms, in the stock exchange. Understandably then, William Morris thought a fitting fate for Charles Barry's rather fine building would be to serve as a "dung market".<sup>23</sup> Although most people take some interest in general elections to its lower chamber, and even in the gladiatorial exchanges which characterise its set-piece debates, parliament does not empower the masses, that is for sure. Who "owns and controls the means of production is worth any number of general elections".<sup>24</sup> Marx was absolutely right then, when he said bourgeois democracy (an oxymoron) gives the mass of people the opportunity to decide "once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent" them.<sup>25</sup>

## Civil war

The state is, as Marx argued, an organ of class rule, consisting of "special" bodies of people: ie, the armed forces, prisons, bureaucracy ... normally fronted nowadays by an elected chamber. The state exists for the suppression of one class by another and operates through providing a legal framework for organising, bounding and moderating the struggle of one class against another. Arising when and insofar as class antagonisms cannot be reconciled, the very existence of the state proves that class antagonisms are irreconcilable.

Before and after the realisation of universal suffrage, the history of

Britain shows there has existed a permanent, undeclared and incipient civil war in this country. For example, following the French revolution, soldiers were barracked in every strategic industrial city and town. They were there not to save them from possible invasion, but to guard against possible insurrection. One hundred and fifty years later Field Marshall Lord Carver owned up, in a rare act of official honesty, that until just before World War II the "army saw its main function as being to maintain law and order at home and regarded the fighting of foreign wars as its secondary role".<sup>26</sup>

Brigadier Frank Kitson's 1971 opus on civil unrest shows that little has changed. Written against a background of rising industrial militancy, economic stagnation and a revolutionary situation in the Six Counties, Kitson's infamous *Low-intensity operations* to all intents and purposes popularises the army's counterrevolutionary plans. The whole thrust and tone of his book is designed to garner middle class public support for army action against "subversion". Revealingly, by "subversion" he means "all illegal measures short of the use of armed force ... political and economic pressure. Strikes, protest marches, and propaganda ... taken by one section of the people of a country to overthrow those governing the country at the time, or to force them to do things which they do not want to do."<sup>27</sup>

Between the army, as a line of last resort, and the House of Commons, as the first line of defence, the bourgeoisie has a minefield of other establishment institutions, laws and traditions in place to protect its power and privilege. The House of Lords, the courts, the civil service, the Bank of England, the mass media, the police and the army<sup>28</sup> are all available to 'check and balance' any democratic right. Moreover, the unwritten British constitution gives it the perfect legal device to quickly change form. Using its powers of prerogative, the crown can dismiss any government and dissolve any House of Commons, at any time.<sup>29</sup>

After all, Britain is a monarchical state.<sup>30</sup> Cabinet ministers, MPs, members of the armed forces, the police, the judiciary - all swear oaths of loyalty to the crown rather than the elected government or the people. That is why cabinet ministers constitutionally derive their authority from being appointed to the crown's privy council, not from being leaders of the majority party in the House of Commons.

Frankly, had Jeremy Corbyn led the Labour Party to a stunning electoral victory in December 2019 - highly unlikely, true - he would have fallen at the first hurdle. The Parliamentary Labour Party, dominated as it was by the right, was hardly likely to agree a vote of confidence in him. Therefore he would not have been invited to Buckingham Palace to form a government. Even if the privy council had thought things too dangerous to choose any other prime minister, a counterrevolutionary storm would have followed: obstruction and delay by the House of Lords, a run on the pound, wall-to-wall media lies, army generals refusing to obey orders, MI5 black ops - all coordinated by American "pushback".

Of course, the form through which the bourgeoisie chooses or is forced to rule is not crucial. What fundamentally concerns us is the fact that because of capitalism the mass of the population, being wage slaves, live in permanent dissatisfaction, while a tiny minority grows fabulously rich through the exploitation of their labour-power. That does not mean we are indifferent when it comes to demands for the abolition of the monarchy, the House

of Lords and the introduction of proportional representation. Far from it.

Our purpose, though, in making such demands, is not to modernise Britain, to complete the bourgeois revolution or some such nonsense. No, it is to take forward the struggle of the working class into the realms of high politics in preparation for the "critical moment, the decisive combat" of taking state power - the salient from where alone we can expropriate the expropriators.<sup>31</sup> That is exactly what our electoral work should be designed to achieve.

There is, therefore, the possibility - the aim, surely - of winning not merely a House of Commons majority, but a clear majority of votes. Because we do not suffer from that incurable reformist malady, parliamentary cretinism, we would expect a counterrevolutionary storm - the slave-owners' rebellion, the civil war. Communists would respond by unleashing a *revolutionary* storm: mobilise the popular militia, split the standing army, disband the police and the secret state, abolish the monarchy and the House of Lords, nationalise the commanding heights of the economy - above all reach out to Europe, America and beyond to make our revolution international.

Though it might enrage some latter-day 'revolutionary communist' boycottists, Marx and Engels were also of such a view.<sup>32</sup> They too considered communist electoral work obligatory. Indeed in his introduction to Marx's *Civil war in France*, Engels praised in the highest terms the "astonishing growth" in the votes gained by the revolutionary workers' party in Germany, the Social Democratic Party, after universal male suffrage was granted by Otto von Bismarck in 1866.

Yes, Bismarck's democracy was a sham; however, so successful was the SDP's electoral work that "the bourgeoisie and the government came to be much more afraid of the legal than of the illegal action of the workers' party, of the results of elections than those of rebellion." Thus, for Engels, the way the SDP had made use of universal suffrage to steadily increase its strength had "supplied their comrades in all countries with a new weapon, and one of the most potent, when they showed them how to make use of universal suffrage".<sup>33</sup> ●

## Notes

1. T Tengely-Evans 'Why the left must break from Labourism' *Socialist Worker* March 26 2025.
2. ILP annual conference report 1932, quoted in R Miliband *Parliamentary socialism* London 1960, p194.
3. R Miliband *Parliamentary socialism* London 1960, p195.
4. *Socialist Worker* May 31 2024.
5. See J Conrad *Towards a Socialist Alliance party* London 2001, p25.
6. 'What we think' (April 2 2025) asks *Socialist Worker* readers to "imagine if there were independent socialist candidates - who championed struggle in the streets and workplaces - to vote for instead of Labour".
7. www.facebook.com/johnwilliam.rees.
8. J Conrad *In the enemy camp* London 1993, p18.
9. Despite the absurd claims of this, that or the other confessional sect, there is, of course, no real Communist Party today (certainly not the *Morning Star's* CPB, the Brarite CPGB-ML or the Woods-Sewell RCP).
10. J Conrad *Which road?* London 1991, p97.
11. Until the 12th century 'parliament' merely meant a 'parley' of anybody from kings to lovers.
12. M Bloch *Feudal society* Vol 2, London 1965, p452.
13. JC Holt *Magna Carta* Cambridge 1992, p26.
14. R Butt *A history of parliament* London 1989, p111.
15. *Ibid* p110.
16. There were a few places in Europe - Sweden, Denmark, West Friesland and the Tyrol - where the peasants did gain admittance to parliament. But even in these countries, where the traditions of primitive communism still lingered and the state was weak, "election was by a peasant elite" (AR Myers *Parliaments and estates in Europe* London 1975, p26).
17. AL Morton *A people's history of England* London 1974, p101.
18. I Jennings *The queen's government* Harmondsworth 1965, p67.
19. E Bernstein *Cromwell and communism* London 1930, p87. A gloomy assessment, echoed by AL Morton: "Their exclusion from the franchise was ... regarded as necessary to prevent employers from having undue influence, and there is reason to think that this judgement was correct" (AL Morton *A people's history of England* London 1974, p253).
20. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 4, London 1975, pp518, 524.
21. The "greatest contribution of the 19th century to the act of government", said Harvard professor Lowell in his "pre-1914 treatise" on the British constitution, was "that of a party out of power, which is recognised as perfectly loyal to the institutions of the state and ready to come into office without a shock to the political traditions of the nation" (J Gollan *The British political system* London 1954, pp19-20).
22. W Bagehot *The English constitution* Oxford 1974, ppxxiii, xxiv.
23. W Morris *News from nowhere* London 1973, p257.
24. J Conrad *Which road?* London 1991, p8.
25. Sometimes translated as who will "represent and oppress" them in parliament.
26. Interview by Desmond Wilcox in 'Profile', BBC TV, August 14 1979, as paraphrased by Tony Benn in *Arguments for democracy* London 1982, p7.
27. F Kitson *Low-intensity operations* London 1971, p3.
28. See *MoD Land operations* Vol 3 - *Counterrevolutionary operations* part 3: *Counterinsurgency* London 1970. Marked 'restricted' on the front cover, it provides a chilling insight into the extent to which the army has been trained to deal with "civil disturbances resulting from labour disputes, racial and religious antagonism and tension of social unrest, which savour revolt or even rebellion". In the event of uncontrollable social unrest the military would join the police and civil authorities in a "triumvirate". It would follow these six guidelines to prevent a successful revolution.
29. (a) the passing of emergency regulations to facilitate the conduct of a national campaign; (b) various political, social and economic measures designed to gain popular support and counter or surpass anything offered by the insurgents; (c) the setting up of an effective organisation for joint civil and military control at all levels; (d) the forming of an effective, integrated and nationwide intelligence organisation, without which military operations can never be successful; (e) the strengthening of indigenous police and armed forces, so that their loyalty is beyond question and their work effective. This is often easier said than done; (f) control measures designed to isolate the insurgents from popular control" (extracts published in *Time Out* January 10 1975).
30. In 1975 Australia's Labour prime minister, Gough Whitlam, was dismissed by the queen's representative, the governor general.
31. Until 1977 the Central Office of Information described the UK as a "monarchical state". That is why Sir Ivor Jennings writes that what is thought of as state property in this country is often in reality crown property, why income tax demands are sent on "Her Majesty's Service", why criminal prosecutions are made in the name of "The Queen", and why there is no national flag or anthem - only a union flag and a royal hymn (I Jennings *The queen's government* Harmondsworth 1965, p32).
32. The main butt of Engels' polemics on this question were the anarchists, then led by Mikhail Bakunin, who advocated abstention from all politics that did not have as its aim the "immediate and complete" liberation of the working class. Engels ridiculed such pseudo-revolutionary posturing: "At quiet times," he said, "when the proletariat knows beforehand that at best it can get only a few representatives to parliament and have no chance whatever of winning a parliamentary majority, the workers may sometimes be made to believe that it is a great revolutionary action to sit out the election at home, and, in general, not to attack the state in which they live and which oppresses them, but to attack the state as such which exists nowhere and which accordingly cannot defend itself. This is a splendid way of behaving in a revolutionary manner, especially for people who lose heart easily" (K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 23, London 1988, p583).
33. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 27, London 1990, pp515-16.

18. I Jennings *The queen's government* Harmondsworth 1965, p67.
19. E Bernstein *Cromwell and communism* London 1930, p87. A gloomy assessment, echoed by AL Morton: "Their exclusion from the franchise was ... regarded as necessary to prevent employers from having undue influence, and there is reason to think that this judgement was correct" (AL Morton *A people's history of England* London 1974, p253).
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22. W Bagehot *The English constitution* Oxford 1974, ppxxiii, xxiv.
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33. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 27, London 1990, pp515-16.

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# 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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# weekly worker

Despair  
is not  
unfounded

## They just stopped

Just Stop Oil is shutting up shop, and declaring victory - but the truth is that it has been thoroughly and predictably defeated by the state, argues Paul Demarty

So farewell then, Just Stop Oil. The noisiest and most controversial spin-off of Extinction Rebellion has decided to take the course of extinction itself. After a few years of go-slow protests and baffling assaults on works of art, co-founder Hannah Hunt showed up at Downing Street to declare victory:

Just Stop Oil's demand to end new oil and gas is now government policy, making us one of the most successful civil resistance campaigns in recent history. We've made fossil-fuel licensing front-page news and kept over 4.4 billion barrels of oil in the ground, while courts have ruled new oil and gas unlawful.

To describe this as an optimistic spin on the course of events since JSO began its series of stunts would be quite an understatement. Indeed, it is so embarrassingly obvious that it is a lie that one is tempted merely to pass over it in silence, like a drunken uncle's racist table talk. That, alas, would be irresponsible. We shall see why later on.

### Back-story

What actually is the story of JSO? That requires the Extinction Rebellion back-story - XR burst onto the scene with a series of eye-catching direct actions, freezing up traffic and so forth. It came with a ready-made hero at the helm (though in reality semi-detached from this specific movement), in the person of the Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg. XR had an avowedly minoritarian theory of political change, allied to anarchistic internal norms (an apparent contradiction, but in fact a well-established combination in the history of progressive political struggle). It deliberately recruited some members as 'arrestables' - people who were happy to go out and break the law and, if necessary, face the music.

XR ultimately retreated into more narrowly legal forms of political activity, and in so doing merely became one of many such climate ginger groups, like Greenpeace and Climate Camp (both of which, of course, had themselves begun as direct-action radicals...). JSO span off with a couple of distinguishing features. One was a more narrowly focused political aim - just stop oil, leave it in the ground, etc. The other was a renewed commitment to non-violent direct action. The most prominent individual associated with it was probably Roger Hallam, currently serving a long stretch at his majesty's pleasure for "causing a public nuisance", and an infamously irascible old-timer in the radical green movement.

JSO's actions initially targeted oil refineries, but these were found to be hard targets, and quickly abandoned. They then started sabotaging petrol



"Not here to make friends"

stations; but these were too small in terms of making a media splash. (Remember Hunt's victory claim above - "we've made fossil-fuel licensing front-page news"). So they reverted to XR type and organised major traffic disruption in London - that'll get the media to take notice! - and began to attack works of art with tomato soup and orange paint. (Orange was important; according to the operative theory of political change here, branding is everything.)

There followed, inevitably, the arrests. Last year, Hallam and four others received stiff sentences of four to five years (some later reduced slightly) for blocking the M25 in 2022. Phoebe Plummer, who doused a Van Gogh sunflower in orange paint a month earlier, got 27 months for that and other offences. Already in reaction to XR's previous protests, draconian new laws against direct action had been passed. They were duly exercised in the case of the JSO people.

That need not necessarily have happened, of course. Convictions in these cases were handed out by juries, not judges. A jury, it will be remembered, acquitted a group of anti-racist activists for the destruction of a statue of slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol - a "crime" of which these people were plainly guilty. Nullification is a fine thing, so far as revolutionaries are concerned. It was not forthcoming in these cases. Why not?

It is impossible to know what was in this or that juror's mind at the moments of decision. We can still say, with some confidence, that this is where minoritarianism can badly let you down. During the furore over Plummer's attack on the Van Gogh painting, a JSO activist told *The Guardian*: "We are not trying to make friends here: we are trying to make change." In the dock, however, you need friends; unless your strategy involves making martyrs out of people.

The activism that JSO alighted upon seems almost *intended* to lose friends and alienate people. Traffic obstructions tend to alienate those who must - *really* must - drive for a living. Nobody who got their pay docked or was late for the birth of their child is going to thank JSO for raising their consciousness. Instead, they will complain to the press, or the internet, and give the enemy ammunition to fire at the activists. What is their response? "We're not here to make friends." Attempted vandalism of great works of art does not decisively *inconvenience* anyone, but invites the accusation of nihilism. What reply can be given? "We're not here to make friends."

### Infiltration

Though direct-action politics is very vulnerable to this sort of dead-end pseudo-activity, not *all* direct action politics reaches it. Though it has sometimes flirted dangerously with souping-Van-Gogh-type idiocy, Palestine Action has largely remained focused on precisely the sort of hard targets abandoned by JSO - Israeli arms operations in the UK, operated by the likes of Elbit Systems. Inevitably many of their cadres have been arrested, but at least it was for something *prima facie* worth the pain - something that points meaningfully towards British complicity in Israel's genocide. By contrast, JSO was merely the remainder left over when XR failed, flailing around hopelessly. If it had deliberately designed its activities to get people sent away for long jail terms unmentioned, it could hardly have done a better job.

That does, of course, raise the question - *were* its activities so designed? At present, we have no way of knowing. But we know that the ecological movements of the 1980s-2000s were intricately infiltrated by police agents, thanks to the 'SpyCops' scandals. We know that the minoritarian character of

these direct action networks makes them exceptionally vulnerable to state infiltration.

We know that, when movements of this sort *are* infiltrated by police agents, such agents are usually to be found urging more r-r-radical action - the action urged upon Verloc by his handler, Mr Vladimir, in Joseph Conrad's *The secret agent*, of a bomb attack on the Greenwich Observatory and therefore an outrage against time itself, is more typical than it might seem. If any reader wants to take it, I'll bet twenty quid against a hundred that at least three JSO activists will be unmasked as state operatives by 2035.

Here, I realise I may be taken as simply denouncing the JSO people as fools. That is not quite the point. Their choice of actions was, it is fair to say, extremely foolish; but there is always a rational kernel to any irrationality. In this case, the rational kernel is so obvious it is almost insulting to mention - we are *already* in the throes of catastrophic climate change; the warnings of generations of activists are proving all the more true every terrifying day; and yet we have lived through decades where some moderate, 'sensible' action to mitigate climate change has been the stuff of official ideology. At the end of all that, what have we to show for it except total, abject failure?

In other words, if I argue that JSO enacts the politics of despair, I do not argue that the despair is unfounded. Who could shield themselves from it entirely - who, that is, except the most idiotically self-deceiving? The alternative to JSO politics must be more 'sensible' in the narrow way that it is more likely to work. It cannot be more 'sensible' in any respect that obscures the gravity of the situation, or gives any credit to the 'business as usual' absurdities of 'official' climate politics (for as long as Donald Trump suffers the latter to exist).

It is this background situation

that makes the 'our work here is done' spin put out by JSO as their justification for winding up so irresponsible. To take on the fight against global warming - whether in the form of Green Party-type politics, far-left organisation, XR/JSO direct action or even David Cameron-style eco-Toryism - is implicitly to take responsibility for that fight. We are answerable for success and failure in this extremely grave matter. It must be conceded that none of us have much to brag about, for the reasons already mentioned; but that responsibility is still on our shoulders.

### Denialism

It is plain that JSO did not achieve its aims. Our roads are still clogged with internal combustion engines. Heathrow is to be expanded. Globally, we blow past one point of no return after another and the political drift is towards denialism. XR and offshoots like JSO base themselves on a dubious social science that claims a highly-motivated 3.5% of a population can drive through major changes; but in any case, nothing like 3.5% of the population was ever involved with either of them. Taking responsibility would mean confronting that failure and drawing lessons.

To claim *victory* under these conditions is a total abdication. It is a piece of shallow self-protection; it saves JSO the bother of facing up to the fact that several brave activists are to rot away in jail for years with none of their ambitious goals reached. Even allowing them the 'win' of getting these oil licenses cancelled (did they *really* frighten Sir Keir Starmer into it?), the net result of this wave of disruptive protest stunts was to give the political class a pretext for sweeping illegalisation of protest across the board. It shows that, for this group, it is easier to leave the door open to repeat mistakes than to account for them.

Ironically, despite Roger Hallam's high-minded contempt for the traditional left, it is a failing all too familiar in our own parish of small-group far-left politics. Hannah Hunt's statement was at least briefer than the interminable self-congratulation of the Socialist Workers Party's central committee, when it writes up its perspective documents for the SWP annual conference every year; but these very different organisations share a lethal addiction to official optimism.

The same might be said of many other groups - there is never any time for critical self-reflection, when so many great opportunities and grave dangers lie before us. Until we learn the habit of self-criticism, however, opportunities will keep going to waste, and dangers will creep ever closer to us ●

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