

# weekly **worker**



**Could it happen again?  
A second Trump term is  
far from impossible**

- Letters and debate
- MBS and Saudi ambitions
- NHS workforce plan
- NHS infected blood scandal

No 1455 August 10 2023

Towards a mass Communist Party

£1/€1.10



**SOVIET UNION  
OTHER THEORIES  
OTHER LABELS**

Pavel Filonov 'Lavoratori shock (maestri dell'arte analitica)' 1934-35 (Wikimedia Commons)



## LETTERS



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

## My solution

Thank you for publishing two excellent articles on the climate catastrophe (Eddie Ford's 'A living nightmare' and Jack Conrad's 'Techno-fix delusions' (both July 27)). Both reflect the urgency required to prevent increased tendencies towards drought, famine, war, inequality and state oppression. Eddie calls for a "working class solution", while Jack, on the other hand, criticises socialists who advocate carbon capture and storage schemes (CCS). He targets them for substituting technological solutions for the need to organise the working class into a political party.

What, therefore, is a solution that both ends the catastrophe and assists the process of workers forming a collective movement to oppose and overthrow capitalism? The following is an attempt to give a tentative answer. Put succinctly, this is for Marxists to support workers to devise a socialist plan to end both climate change and its cause - capitalist accumulation. Such a plan applies globally; is transitional to a socialist world of abundant, clean energy; and operates on a democratic basis - workers electing managers and administrators, subjecting them to instant recall, and paying them an average wage.

The global creation and application of a socialist plan is necessary because fossil fuel and financial companies operate transnationally. Moreover, the effects of the catastrophe apply across borders. Socialists want to avoid being associated with what Jack calls "the ruinous industrial practices" of the former Soviet Union. As he observes, these resulted in a series of environmental and social disasters. If thinkers such as Hillel Ticktin are correct, these disasters were not the outcomes of socialist planning. Targets were set, but there was no planning. Nor could there be in a backward, isolated country that oppressed workers.

Under the Stalinist system, workers had less control over production than within capitalism. This is one important reason why a socialist plan to end the climate catastrophe entails the democratic control of the workforce. Here we can distinguish nationalising the production of clean energy from bringing it under the social control of the producers. The former allows for the continued existence of capital accumulation and the emergence of a corrupt, bureaucratic elite. The latter involves the election of managers, the abolition of the financial sector, and the creation of a democratic decision process. This would erode the existing division of labour.

A socialist plan for ending the climate catastrophe is transitional to a world where people's needs for clean energy, water and air are met. This means liberating energy, water and air from the commodity form. These goods' actual or potential role as capital must be abolished. Calling for free clean energy, water and air is an essential part of the socialist movement and addresses the real needs of workers for a higher standard of living worldwide.

Finally, what role will technology play in a socialist plan? I imagine that workers will debate how to convert presently harmful technology, into useful and environmentally safe machinery. This would be part of the planning process. The proposal that robots and artificial intelligence be

used to bring a world of abundance of time, goods and services into being will be discussed. Will that mean that workers support investment into research into CCS? Choosing CCS as an alternative to driving carbon emissions down to zero is clearly irrational. Supposing proven environmentally safe schemes do exist, CCS could only be used alongside - rather than instead of - other political and economic measures for establishing a world of free, clean energy, water and air,

Paul B Smith  
Ormskirk

## Sustainable

There are several issues with transport policy ('Clean air as a right', August 3) and the inability to provide sustainable transport infrastructure.

Car dependency is the main issue, with cars being the most detrimental mode of transport. No technological or physical barriers really exist to a high modal share of walking, cycling, light rail and heavy rail in urban areas in developed countries. People's journey share on sustainable transport increases everywhere in line with its provision. It is only fossil fuel propaganda, greenwashing (any battery electric vehicles) and half-measures (quite possibly Ulez and LTNs) obstructing real progress.

Tricks they use are the emotive 'motorist-cyclist' division, claiming cars benefit the vulnerable and infirm, and dubious metrics. For example, modal comparisons for the impact of journeys without including the impact of manufacture and disposal of vehicles. Or the environmental impact broken down per passenger over a fixed distance, but not factoring in distance travelled.

It is a shame then that Britain (and America) ripped out its town tramways to make room for cars in the 1950s. Sustainable transport may not be revolutionary, but it is certainly not Tory policy either.

Jon D White  
email

## Zetkin's legacy

Clara Zetkin was an important and effective socialist leader during the period of the Second International. She was a fierce advocate for women's rights and was clear and uncompromising in her working class politics; she understood the dangers of bourgeois feminism. However, I'm not sure that the honour and accolades, the quasi-exaltation bestowed upon her by Ben Lewis is warranted ('Clean breaks and clear principles', August 3). Parenthetically, although she's attributed with being one of the major proponents of International Women's Day ("one of Zetkin's major achievements", says BL), it's less known that the origins of this working class celebration have their roots in New York City, circa 1908.

The greatest revolutionaries have made mistakes, which do not always impact on their revolutionary legacies. In Zetkin's case I think it's worth doing a double take on where she fell short *vis-à-vis* political principle. Lewis questions why Zetkin hasn't been given the acknowledgement he feels she deserves. He asks: how is it that somebody so admired by her contemporaries has largely been ignored by subsequent history?

She's been criticised by both liberals and Marxists, etc. If the left has been ambivalent about Zetkin, it is probably because she made consequential choices which didn't result in a sufficient challenge to Stalin, following the demise of the Bolshevik revolution, and had a complicit role. She might be the representative of Stalinist apologia

as much as the "representative of the hundreds of thousands of social democratic workers internationally who remained faithful to the axioms of revolutionary social democracy", as Lewis asserts.

According to the book edited by Mike Taber and John Riddell, "Zetkin supported Bukharin and Stalin's harsh reprisals against the United Opposition, going so far as to endorse Trotsky's expulsion from the Communist Party in November 1927. She did not protest the mass arrests of oppositionists and their banishment to Siberia" (*Fighting fascism: how to struggle and how to win*).

Leon Trotsky - arguably one of the greatest revolutionaries of the 20th century - should be taken seriously in whatever he wrote or said. About Zetkin he had some choice words. Shall we take a moment to mull over his assessment of Clara Zetkin?

"For a long time Clara Zetkin has been a purely decorative figure on the presidium of the executive committee of the Communist International. This cruel characterisation might not have been necessary if Zetkin did not serve as a pathetic cloak for the methods that not only compromise her, but also bring the greatest injury to the cause of the international proletariat. Zetkin's strength was always her temperament. She never had any independence of thought.

"During 1923, Zetkin showed all the traits of a good old social democrat: she understood neither the sharp change in the situation nor the necessity for a bold change in policy. In the main, Zetkin takes no part in deciding questions" ('Who is leading the Comintern today?', 1929).

Notwithstanding everything, her historic speech to the German Reichstag in 1932 is a magnificent event in working class history.

We, the ordinary philosophers *du jour*, with the help of various professional Marxist historians and philosophers, have the final call in determining the legacy of Clara Zetkin based on her actions - not Leon Trotsky, not a few poetic words by Louis Aragon cited in the article (albeit one of my favourite poets), or the author's attempts at idealisation and romanticisation.

Zetkin's place in history should be seen without tendentious, rose-coloured glasses, so her socialist accomplishments can be realistically measured.

GG  
USA

## Confusion

In reply to comrade Peter Manson (Letters, August 3) I would like to point out that Lenin's definition of dictatorship as rule untrammelled by any law is no different from my referring to this as "lawless rule". "Untrammelled by any law" or "lawless rule" is exactly the same thing, although I may not have made this sufficiently clear, thus leading comrade Manson to misinterpret what I was aiming to convey.

The comrade correctly points out examples of dictators - eg, Napoleon and Hitler - who passed laws to bolster their respective regimes. However, the definition of dictatorship provided by Lenin, which I agree with, is not that dictatorships don't pass laws, but are not bound by any law. That is the essential difference between a dictatorship and a democracy.

When communists misunderstand what dictatorship actually means, it's not personal. It is a mistake shared by every single communist (including myself in the past) who have been misled - and that includes Marx himself, who went on to mislead communists over this issue in the period after the *Communist manifesto*.

The *manifesto* nowhere mentions the term, 'dictatorship', but speaks of winning the battle for democracy, which logically prepares the ground for democratic socialism.

Communists have been misled about the meaning of the term 'dictatorship', which they mistakenly use to describe working class, socialist rule. Comrade Manson correctly tells us that, as long as social classes continue to exist, governments of any class will impose measures to limit the power of the enemy class. This is very true, but has little to do with the discussion about dictatorship. We don't need a dictatorship to protect socialism, apart from in a serious temporary emergency. This is how it was used in the time of the Roman Republic before Caesar.

Dictatorships can and do pass laws, but they are not bound by any law. The Soviet Union is a good example. The 1936 constitution was for democratic socialism, which was in complete contradiction to the totalitarian direction taken by Leninism after the suppression of factions in the Bolshevik Party in 1921 - and later taken to extremes by Stalin and co. The execution of Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin, and the murder of Trotsky, who supported Leninist totalitarianism until he lost power, was illegal under the Soviet constitution, which is why they had to be framed up. Why did these murders occur? One reason is because the regime was a dictatorship, which is not bound by any law.

We need to learn from the collapse of communist rule in the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe rather than imagining that we can bring Leninism to power in the advanced capitalist countries. Democracy can take different forms, but the essence remains the same: the freedom to criticise our leaders and hold them to account, something which is anathema to all dictatorships. The most important political choice facing communists is that between Marx's dictatorship theory and democratic socialism. We need to stop confusing dictatorship with coercion, the latter being the main function of the state, regardless of its class nature.

Tony Clark  
For Democratic Socialism

## Neo-Nazi Ukraine

"Someone wants to kill you, to rob you, and you will be next!"

You are being addressed by Derzhava, a Ukrainian political party banned by the neo-Nazi government of Zelensky. Most of the media lies and hides from you the fact that your government openly supports Zelensky's fascists, openly helps neo-Nazis and actually preaches fascism itself, directing efforts to exterminate as many people as possible.

The political scientist, Lawrence W Britt, outlined 14 signs of fascism: 1 A strong manifestation of nationalism; 2 Contempt for human rights; 3 Search for scapegoats; 4 The supremacy of the military; 5 Rampant sexism; 6 Controlled mass media; 7 Obsession with national security; 8 Religion and the ruling elite tied together; 9 Protection of corporate power; 10 Suppression of workers' associations; 11 Disdain for intellectuals and art; 12 Obsession with crime and punishment; 13 Rampant cronyism and corruption; 14 Fraudulent elections.

From this list, the Ukrainian neo-Nazi government put all 14 positions into its service. Those who do not agree with this face assassination on the street or death in prison dungeons. Prisons in Ukraine are overflowing with political prisoners persecuted for dissent.

The Ukrainian neo-Nazi government operates under the leadership of world imperialism, led by the USA and Nato. US imperialism, in its deepest economic crisis, organised Ukrainian fascism in order to maintain and expand its hegemony by war. Unfortunately, many people live in countries whose governments, acting in the selfish interests of the ruling elites, support Nato. By paying taxes to such a government, people unfortunately are forced to support fascism. You can't keep silent about it. You can't turn a blind eye to it.

The price of silence and support for Nato fascism is high: worsening living conditions and cutback of medical services leading to impoverishment and sickness, and the inevitable shortening of the lifespan of people in the Nato countries.

A small bunch of traitors in the governments of different countries support Nato, with the aim of furthering the unhindered robbery of their own people. Every day they brazenly take away the surplus value and value added from each working hour of a working person (labourer, worker, employee, policeman, doctor, lawyer, teacher, military man), take one part of the stolen money to enrich themselves and give the rest to Nato to continue the plunder and murder.

US imperialism, which supports the puppet Ukrainian neo-Nazis, continues to pump them full of weapons to prolong the bloodshed and the mass resettlement and extermination of the people in Ukraine.

But this is not enough for traitors and US imperialists. They are steadily leading people like a herd to the slaughter, having already launched weapons of mass destruction in the form of cluster munitions and nuclear shells with depleted uranium. They've been helping Ukraine create a dirty bomb. They even want to blow up nuclear power plants and bring the war in Ukraine into a nuclear phase.

IUAFS  
email

## George Shaw

Very sorry to bring you the sad news of the death of our dear comrade, George Shaw, at the age of 87.

Born in November 1936, he grew into a young man interested in engineering. During his years in the car industry, he became a Labour Party member, a militant trade unionist and a Trotskyist. From 1975 or so, he moved to London, settling in Wembley. He joined the Brent Trades Council, supported the Grunwick workers and helped the Kilburn Unemployed Working Group in their many campaigns against inhuman treatment by the Department for Work and Pensions.

George moved to Barnet in more recent years, where he died on July 27 - he represented Unite on the Barnet Trades Council. And, as a Labour Party member, he defended the comrades of Labour Against the Witchhunt: he repudiated the fraudulent conflation between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism.

As a Republican, George helped present the thesis by Bruno Leibold, *Citizen Marx: the relationship between Karl Marx and republicanism*. In the last period, he joined the International Ukraine Anti-Fascist Solidarity front, where he denounced Nato as the warmonger that uses Ukraine as a platform for its war on Russia, China and their allies.

George's communist confidence in humanity lives on through the continuation of our struggle for justice and equality without which there will never be peace.

Marie Lynam  
email



# MIGRANTS

## Fuelling the politics of hate

Once again the Tories are targeting migrants. Bibby Stockholm is meant to serve as a deterrent but, in fact, it's a political weapon designed to prevent electoral meltdown, argues Kevin Bean



Cruel and unusual treatment

Given predictions of a coming recession, the ongoing cost of living crisis and truly dismal poll ratings, the spinmeisters and political consultants working at Conservative Campaign Headquarters (CCHQ) must be taking some small comfort from the recent furore about the government's migration policy. They got the headlines they wanted and the chance for ministers and MPs to tour the media studios and give press interviews in which, once again, they banged away about the government's policy to crack down on 'people smugglers' and 'illegal migration'.

August is traditionally the silly season for the media, with many politicians and journalists away on holiday, and most of the political world taking a summer break. However, it seems that this year the strategists in CCHQ were not relaxing on the beach and instead took the opportunity to fan the xenophobic politics of fear and hatred that the Tories believe won for them in 2019. The none-too-subtle message is that if you vote Labour the borders will be thrown open and Britain will be swamped by scroungers, thieves, rapists and young men up to no good.

The main focus has been on the Bibby Stockholm barge, moored at Portland in Dorset. Due to house some 500 asylum-seekers, who are currently mainly in hotels, the scheme has hit a wall of refusals and appeals. Clearly, though, the whole barge farrago was designed to deflect attention from the news that the backlog in processing asylum seekers has grown to a record 166,261 and costs the exchequer a whopping £2 billion per year. This hardly squares with David Cameron's manifesto promise to bring down migration figures to the tens of thousands or Rishi Sunak's pledge to 'stop the small boats'.

So getting some asylum-seekers, even if only a few dozen, out of hotels and onto the barge is politically essential, showing that the government was at last 'getting to grips with the problem'. There was also the added bonus that the 'basic' nature of the accommodation on board could be contrasted with the perceived luxury of the hotels, further adding to the punitive and deterrent character of the policy. As deputy Tory chair Lee Anderson put it in 'salty language', "If they don't like the barges, they can fuck off back to France."<sup>1</sup> Taken together with hints that the Tories will campaign to leave the European Convention on Human Rights, which features in the Rwanda legal case, this shows that the politics of rabid national chauvinism will continue to be ruthlessly promoted in the run-up to the next general election ... meanwhile licence is given to local mobs, far-right groupies and lone-wolf terrorists to launch their own attacks.

Though Anderson has been denounced by a range of former Tory

cabinet ministers, such as Dominic Grieve - he was even branded as a 'fascist' by one of them - the calculation will be that being beastly to foreigners always goes down well with a certain section of Tory voters. Once it was the Huguenots, later the Irish, then the Jews, after that West Indians and Pakistanis ... now it is Muslims fleeing from Iraq, Iran, Syria and Afghanistan.

The real sticking point for Sunak's government is that the central plank of their policy on migration and asylum - the off-shoring of the application process to a third country, Rwanda - has been subject to legal challenge and a government appeal against a Court of Appeal ruling is currently awaiting a hearing by the Supreme Court. This could be delayed until early 2024 and, if the court rules that the policy is lawful, there will be little time for it to be implemented before the expected date of the general election in 2024.<sup>2</sup> So, the clock is ticking for the government and their options appear to be running out.

However, this legal case and a number of other unrelated legal challenges on different aspects of the policy have opened up another political front for the Tories, giving them the prime targets of lefty lawyers gaming the system, liberal judges thwarting the will of the people and Labour trying to politicise the legal system.

Justice secretary Alex Chalk's comments on politically motivated lawyers obstructing the government's migration policy, together with home secretary Suella Braverman's attempt to muddy the waters by identifying lawyers defending the rights of their clients as potentially crooked, just ramps up the rhetoric still further.<sup>3</sup> In these and other recent attacks by cabinet ministers designed to shift blame for the failures of the government's policy we can see just how important migration and asylum will be in the general election campaign.<sup>4</sup>

Although the Tories think they can pin the 'lefty lawyer' label on Sir Keir and identify Labour with 'open borders' and do-gooding liberalism, the Starmer leadership's triangulation strategy means that they have moved one step further to the right. When Labour spokespeople make a criticism of current migration policy, it is not about the principle, but focuses on the practice and the failure of the Tories to be hard enough and deliver on their promises. So, when Yvette Cooper, the shadow home secretary, calls out Braverman, it is over inefficiency in dealing with the backlog, not the stated aims of the policy to penalise migrants and reduce the numbers of people coming to Britain. Likewise, Labour frontbencher Nick Thomas-Symonds' hand-wringing over the issue of barges to house migrants is combined with the regret that, given the situation an incoming Labour government will inherit, the policy

of using barges and other elements of existing arrangements will have to "temporarily continue".<sup>5</sup>

While Tory and Labour politicians exchanged soundbites at Westminster, another closely related form of the politics of migration was playing out in Portland Harbour. One group of demonstrators gathered to proclaim that "refugees and migrants are welcome here" (Stand up to Racism), while another group (Nimby locals) countered this welcome with opposition to the barge being moored in Portland at all: it would put a strain on local services and disrupt the local community.

As one protestor put it in a radio interview, "Let's look after our own first, not treat migrants like kings!"<sup>6</sup> Ultimately these forms of the politics of migration are rooted in those of scarcity which underpin bourgeois society. Arguments that we cannot afford to house more people, that there are not enough jobs, that migrants put pressure on local services and that Britain is overcrowded reflect the concerns of many people when the issue of migration is raised. If you accept the logic of capitalism and the economic programmes of the parties that uphold the system, then resources are indeed scarce! Furthermore, if you frame your politics around these arguments, as both Tory and Labour leaders do, your policies will inevitably amount to little more than pulling up the drawbridge and trying to limit migration so 'we' can look after 'our own' first.

Despite the tough words, the never-ending stream of legislation and the continual crackdowns on illegal migration, within contemporary capitalism migration has its own dynamics and patterns of 'push and pull' factors, which shape the movement of people globally. The Tories focus on 'stopping the boats' crossing the English Channel, but, as we know from the recent tragedy, with 41 migrants drowning off the island of Lampedusa, and the continued exodus from Latin America into the US, these patterns of migration are essentially international. The 'push' of IMF and World Bank austerity, narco-wars, the petty warlordism of Islamic fanatics, the chronic lack of opportunities, along with the disastrous effects of climate change, combine with the 'pull' factors that encourage millions to leave their homes in search of a better, more secure life in the rich capitalist economies of western Europe and North America.

No matter how vile the chauvinist language or how punitive the 'welcome' migrants are offered by the likes of Rishi Sunak, Ron DeSantis, Giorgia Meloni and Nigel Farage, the flows of human beings across seas and land borders will continue. The push factors are so overwhelming and the pull factors far too attractive to be countered by the types of measures announced over the last few days ●

### Notes

1. www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1800164/lee-anderson-nigel-farage-migrant-berge.
2. www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-66057908.
3. www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12382605/Suella-Braverman-wages-war-crooked-immigration-lawyers-announces-new-taskforce-root-rogue-firms-guilty-fraud-facing-LIFE-jail.html.
4. www.ft.com/content/75a485b9-247f-4edb-ac98-92142531d5c9.
5. labourlist.org/2023/08/labour-asylum-seekers-accommodation-barges-nick-thomas-symonds-stephen-kinnock.
6. Interview broadcast on Radio 4's *The World at One* (August 7).

## ACTION

### Chopped liver and unions

Until August 26 (not Sundays), times vary: The Space on the Mile, 80 High Street, Edinburgh EH1. *Chopped liver and unions* tells the story of Sara Wesker, who organised many strikes by garment workers in the East End of London in the 1920s. Tickets £10 (£8). Performed by Lottie Walker. Part of the Edinburgh fringe festival: tickets.edfringe.com/whats-on/chopped-liver-and-unions.

### Weaponising anti-Semitism

Friday August 11, 6.30pm: Online and onsite book launch, IHRC, 202 Preston Road, Wembley HA9. Author Asa Winstanley discusses his new book - *Weaponising anti-Semitism: how the Israel lobby brought down Jeremy Corbyn*. Free entry, registration required. Organised by Islamic Human Rights Commission: ihrc.org.uk/author-evening-with-asa-winstanley-weaponising-anti-semitism.

### Peterloo guided tour and archive open day

Wednesday August 16, 11am to 3pm: Peterloo anniversary event, People's History Museum, Left Bank, Spinningfields, Manchester M3. Uncover the stories of a defining day for Britain's democracy. Bookings £10 (£6). Organised by People's History Museum: phm.org.uk/whats-on/DAY/16-08-2023.

### Peterloo march for democracy

Saturday August 19, 12 noon: March, rally and entertainment. Assemble St Peter's Square, Manchester M2. Remembering the Peterloo massacre. Followed by debates and seminars on democracy, peace and starting a socialist party from scratch. Speakers include Ken Loach, Ian Hodson, Stella Assange and Audrey White. Organised by *The Word* newspaper and Oldham Trades Council: www.facebook.com/events/953870805921542.

### Comedy, music and politics

Saturday August 19, 7pm: Evening of entertainment, Trehale Farm, Mathry, Haverfordwest SA62. Includes screening of *Oh, Jeremy Corbyn - the big lie*, the feature-length documentary exposing political deceit and outrageous anti-Semitism smears. Organised by Pembrokehire People's Assembly: www.facebook.com/events/807548790834256.

### Marx in London

Friday August 25, 6.30pm: Meeting at St Anne's, 55 Dean Street, London W1, followed by walk around Soho. Exploring how Marx's life, writing and politics were shaped by his time living in the area. Accompanied by historians Morgan Daniels and Katherine Connelly. Tickets £6.13. Organised by Counterfire: www.facebook.com/events/344971404520754.

### Introduction to Living Rent

Wednesday August 30, 6.30pm: Online briefing. Living Rent is Scotland's tenant and community union. Learn about the history, vision, structure, campaigns and activities, which include securing home repairs, stopping evictions and preventing rent increases. Organised by Living Rent: www.livingrent.org/intro\_to\_lr\_aug23.

### DSEI: make the connection

Wednesday August 30, 7pm: Online briefing. In September the Defence and Security Equipment International arms fair returns to ExCel in London. Learn how the DSEI connects to war, militarised borders and policing, the climate crisis and Palestine. Organised by Campaign Against Arms Trade: caat.org.uk/events/dsei-make-the-connection.

### Stand up for choice

Saturday September 2, 1pm: Counter-protest. Assemble at the Millicent Fawcett statue, Parliament Square, London SW1. Oppose anti-abortion groups and stand up for the right to choose. Organised by Abortion Rights: www.facebook.com/Abortionrightsuk.

### Remember Burston strike school

Sunday September 3, 10.30am to 4pm: Rally, Diss Road, Burston, Norfolk IP22. Commemorate the longest strike in history. Free entry. Organised by Unite the Union and the TUC: www.facebook.com/groups/9098942153.

### Stop the DSEI arms fair

Tuesday September 5, 6pm: Vigil, Cundy Park, Prince Regents Lane, London E13. DSEI facilitates the sale of weapons to Israel for use against Palestinians. Join artists and activists in opposing DSEI. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.palestinecampaign.org/events/stop-the-dsei-arms-fair-vigil.

### Wigan Diggers Festival

Saturday September 9, 11.30am to 9.30pm: Open-air free festival, The Wiend, Wigan WN1. Commemorating Gerrard Winstanley and the 17th century Diggers movement with music and political stalls. Organised by Wigan Diggers Festival: www.facebook.com/WiganDiggersFestival.

### Fight Tory anti-union laws - lobby the TUC

Sunday September 10, 1pm: Eve-of-TUC rally, Premier Meetings, Albert Dock, Liverpool L3. If workers take action together, the Tories and their anti-union attack can be beaten. Speakers include Sharon Graham (Unite) and Sarah Woolley (BFAWU). Organised by National Shop Stewards Network: www.facebook.com/ShopStewardsNetwork.

### Workers' summit

Saturday September 23, 2pm: Conference, London Irish Centre, 50-52 Camden Square, London NW1. Link the fights; reject bad deals; fight to win. Speakers from NHS Workers Say NO!, UCU Solidarity Movement, Amazon strikers and St Mungo's strikers. Registration £11.55 (£6.13). Organised by Strike Map: www.facebook.com/events/1948514978839160.

### CPGB wills

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



## USA

# Closer to the brink

Donald Trump faces numerous legal challenges. Despite that he runs neck-and-neck with Joe Biden in the polls and could well win the next presidential election. Daniel Lazare gives his take on the pending constitutional crisis

First US Democrats used the intelligence agencies to bring Donald Trump down. Now they are trying to use the criminal-justice system. But it is looking less and less likely that they will succeed.

The reason, simply, is that one effort undercuts the other. Four years of a round-the-clock destabilisation campaign aimed at proving that Trump was in cahoots with Moscow undoubtedly served to weaken him and help Joe Biden wrack up an impressive seven-million-vote win in November 2020. But, by failing to come up with evidence to back up their lurid charges, Democrats ended up undermining their own credibility. As a consequence, fewer and fewer voters now believe Democratic prosecutors when they say they are charging Trump with everything from fraud to violations of the 1917 Espionage Act merely because they want to uphold the law. Instead, they believe the real reason they are going after him is to prevent him from winning a second term.

Polls tell the story. After Manhattan district attorney Alvin Bragg charged Trump on March 30 with criminally concealing hush-money payments to porn star Stormy Daniels, a stunning 76% of respondents described the charges as politically motivated. In other words, three out of four believed they were essentially fraudulent. When special prosecutor Jack Smith charged Trump three months later with security violations in connection with 31 sensitive defence documents squirreled away in his Mar-a-Lago home, 62% said the charges were political as well. Where only 43% of Republicans backed Trump prior to the first indictment, his support rose to 55% after the second.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, when Smith indicted Trump on August 1 on charges stemming from the January 6 2021 attempted coup d'état, a poll found that he was now even with Joe Biden (43% each) and that his nearest Republican rival, Florida governor Ron DeSantis, was trailing even further in the dust.

"Any time they file an indictment, we go way up in the polls," Trump told a Republican gathering in Alabama a few days later. "We need one more indictment to close out this election."

Chances are he will get it, as Atlanta prosecutor Fani T Willis prepares to charge him with election interference. This is based on a phone call he made to Brad Raffensperger, Georgia's top election official, in January 2021, as congressional certification of the 2020 election was drawing near. "I just want to find 11,780 votes, which is one more than we have, because we won the state," Trump said. Having lost Georgia by 11,799 votes, in other words, he needed Raffensperger to rustle up that many votes plus one to move the state into the plus column and help reverse Biden's win.

If Willis does indict (a move that could come within weeks), the upshot is that Trump could face four criminal trials next year - an unprecedented pile-up that could cause the entire system to crash like an overloaded computer. Matt Taibbi, a freelance journalist with a major internet following, describes it as a recipe for "pure chaos". Last week he wrote:



Could it happen a second time?

If not for the fact that the disintegration of American society might be imminent as a result, I'd be laughing harder. Prosecutors keep applying new charges to him like leeches on a medieval convalescent, and news audiences need a CNN case tracker to follow Trump's charge count (76, with more on the way). The punchline? The man facing death in prison is in the strongest position of the major candidates.<sup>2</sup>

Quite right. A Harvard law professor named Jeannie Suk Gersen neatly summed up the legal snarl arising from the latest 'J6' indictment. She wrote in *The New Yorker*:

All four counts depend on a basic factual allegation: that Trump understood that he had lost the election, and that his actions were undertaken with that knowledge ... Yet a paradoxical effect of reading through the [indictment's] grimly repetitive march of person after person who told Trump that he had lost is that it underscores his stubborn refusal to let go of the belief that he had won.<sup>3</sup>

## Legal offensive

Even though Trump sincerely believed that the election had been stolen, according to all outward appearances, Smith faces the difficult task of persuading a jury that he really believed the opposite and that he tried to overturn the results out of pure cynicism and greed.

Gerson notes that, for legal reasons, Smith did not charge Trump with inciting insurrection - the charge for which he was impeached following the Capitol Hill takeover and the one crime that would formally bar him from the presidency. Even if a jury votes to convict, Trump could therefore enter the White House

regardless. Gerson says:

The sitting president's justice department is prosecuting his leading electoral opponent, for interference with the 2020 presidential election - a prosecution that voters who support Trump may interpret as interference with the 2024 election. The most distressing challenge, then, for Smith and for the country, is that, no matter what the outcome, there seems to be no viable path forward that all Americans will see as a win for democracy.

Translation: even if Smith and other prosecutors win in court, it could be at the cost of losing in the political arena, which is the only one that counts. The judiciary is no place for sorting out problems better left to the voters. By hitting Trump with charge after charge, Democrats are confusing matters rather than clarifying them.

Of course, the legal snarl stems from an even greater snarl caused by a growing constitutional collapse. Conceivably, things could have turned out differently if Congress had impeached Trump following the January 6 insurrection - a legal procedure that is the equivalent of a grand-jury indictment - and if the Senate had convicted him as well. Since a conviction on charges of inciting insurrection would also have barred him from holding office, a problem that had bedevilled Democrats for years would have been fixed. With Trump's political career at an end, attempts to hold him criminally accountable could have proceeded more calmly and rationally in the judiciary.

But the US constitution requires a two-thirds majority for conviction - a barrier that is all but insurmountable - and Trump thus got off scot-free. After mounting an all-out Russiagate

offensive aimed at driving him out of office during his first term, Democrats felt obliged to follow up with an all-out legal offensive aimed at locking him up prior to his second.

The process moved forward as if on autopilot. Beginning in June 2022, a special House committee, consisting of seven Democrats and two anti-Trump Republicans, held a series of televised public hearings, whose clear aim was to manoeuvre the Biden justice department into filing charges. Biden added to the pressure by letting his inner circle know in late 2021 that he thought attorney general Merrick Garland should prosecute Trump as a threat to democracy - sentiments that were sure to reach Garland himself.<sup>4</sup>

Eventually, the AG got the message and instructed Smith to begin assembling a case. Temperatures then rose when Smith sent as many as 40 FBI agents to raid Mar-a-Lago in search of missing documents last August.<sup>5</sup> They rose again when Republicans took back the House in November and vowed to use their victory to launch a retaliatory investigation into influence-peddling by Biden's son, Hunter. Now they are rising even more, as Smith adds a slew of January 6 charges to the mix.

Instead of a one-off affair, the January 2021 uprising was thus the start of a protracted breakdown. The upshot is that 2024 is shaping up as less a democratic election than a bar-room brawl, in which members of Congress, candidates and maybe even the militias all grapple desperately to assert control.

## Trump victory?

Who will win? With crime up more than 50% since the mid-2010s, homelessness reaching epidemic proportions, and a president and vice-president who are both personally unpopular, it is looking more and more like it will not be the Democrats. Indeed, if you toss in inflation and a faltering counter-offensive in Ukraine, Democratic fortunes look even worse.

Conceivably, the party could turn things around by easing Biden out of the way, and bringing in Democrats from outside Washington who are younger and more dynamic - people like California governor Gavin Newsom or Michigan governor Gretchen Whitmer. But Biden is stubborn, even though he is so decrepit at the age of 80 that he is practically a second Konstantin Chernenko. The upshot is a Trump-Biden rematch that Trump might very well win.

It is all too clear what will happen if he does. With Trump vowing to pardon hundreds of J6 insurrectionists now languishing in jail, the effect will be to retroactively vindicate an uprising that was a direct assault on free elections. Even though the outward forms might linger on, just as they did in Italy for three or four years following Mussolini's 1922 March on Rome, the outcome will be the same: American democracy will be *finito*. After issuing his own presidential pardon, Trump will then launch a purge of the 'deep state' - otherwise known as the FBI, the CIA and the rest of the 'intelligence community' - for their role in Russiagate. As he has made clear, he will go after a long list of enemies: not only Hillary Clinton

and the Bidens, but small fry like Adam Schiff - the California neocon whom Republicans despise for leading the 'Russia, Russia, Russia' charge in the House.

Many, it not all, could wind up in the dock, as Trump does unto others what others spent years doing unto him. "If you go after me, I'm coming after you!" Trump wrote (all in capitals) on his personal social-media platform last week. With Republicans cheering him on, there is every reason to take him at his word.

A Trump victory also means that the police will be unleashed, racism will rise, and harsher measures will be brought to bear against everyone from homeless drug-users to women in need of an abortion and desperate migrants trying to make their way across the border. The 'Texasisation' of America will be complete. With Trump now inveighing against 'leftists' at every turn - "they are communists, they're Marxists, and they're people that don't get it," he said of the Biden forces last week - there is little doubt that socialists will also get it in the neck.

Internationally, the results will be no less pronounced. John Bolton - national security advisor until Trump fired him in September 2019 - recently warned that Trump will pull out of Nato if elected, leaving the alliance as little more than a hollow husk.<sup>6</sup> But, even if he does not, rightwing nationalism will still surge, as Poland, Hungary and the Baltic states take a tip from the United States and institute mini-MAGAs ('Make America Great Again') of their own. France, Germany, and the rest of the European Union will have little choice but to follow suit.

As Trump moves to settle the Donbas war on terms favourable to Russia, the upshot will be to reduce Ukraine to an embittered neo-Nazi rump state - further destabilising a region already suffering from overload. Criticism of Israel will cease, Netanyahu will have more of a free hand than ever, while relations with Iran will plunge to a new low. The outlook is less clear for China, since Trump tends to tread cautiously when it comes to the People's Republic, despite his tough-guy rhetoric. But, given that the United States is already on a collision course with the PRC, there is no reason to think that imperialism will reverse course. A clash seems inevitable.

If Biden ekes out a victory, on the other hand, the day of reckoning may be forestalled. But it is only a matter of time until the imperial-constitutional collapse resumes, since the process is essentially unstoppable. When a global hegemon breaks down, no corner of the globe is left untouched ●

## Notes

1. See nypost.com/2023/04/03/poll-76-say-trump-indictment-political-but-60-approve; www.npr.org/2023/08/04/1191279975/raising-money-poll-numbers-donald-trump-teflon-don-indictments-criminal-charges; and poll.qu.edu/poll-release?releaseid=3874.
2. www.racket.news/p/campaign-2024-officially-chaos.
3. www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/08/14/the-challenges-of-trumps-third-momentous-indictment.
4. www.nytimes.com/2022/04/02/us/politics/merrick-garland-biden-trump.html.
5. www.macrotrends.net/countries/USA/united-states/crime-rate-statistics.
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SAUDI ARABIA

# Gambler of Riyadh

From sportswashing to megacities: what is MBS up to? Paul Demarty investigates the grandiose Vision 2030

For the left, Mohammed bin-Salman, the crown prince and de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia, is on one level a fairly straightforward character.

His infamies, after all, seem concordant with Saudi Arabia's pseudo-medievalism, eccentric body politic and reactionary global role. He took the bloody methods of the security services on tour to the consulate in Istanbul, to the great misfortune of Jamal Khashoggi, the dissident journalist assassinated in 2018. He sponsored jihadist lunatics from one end of the Middle East to the other, and to that added a war of his very own - against the Houthis in Yemen, whose death toll makes the Ukraine war look like a teddy bears' picnic.

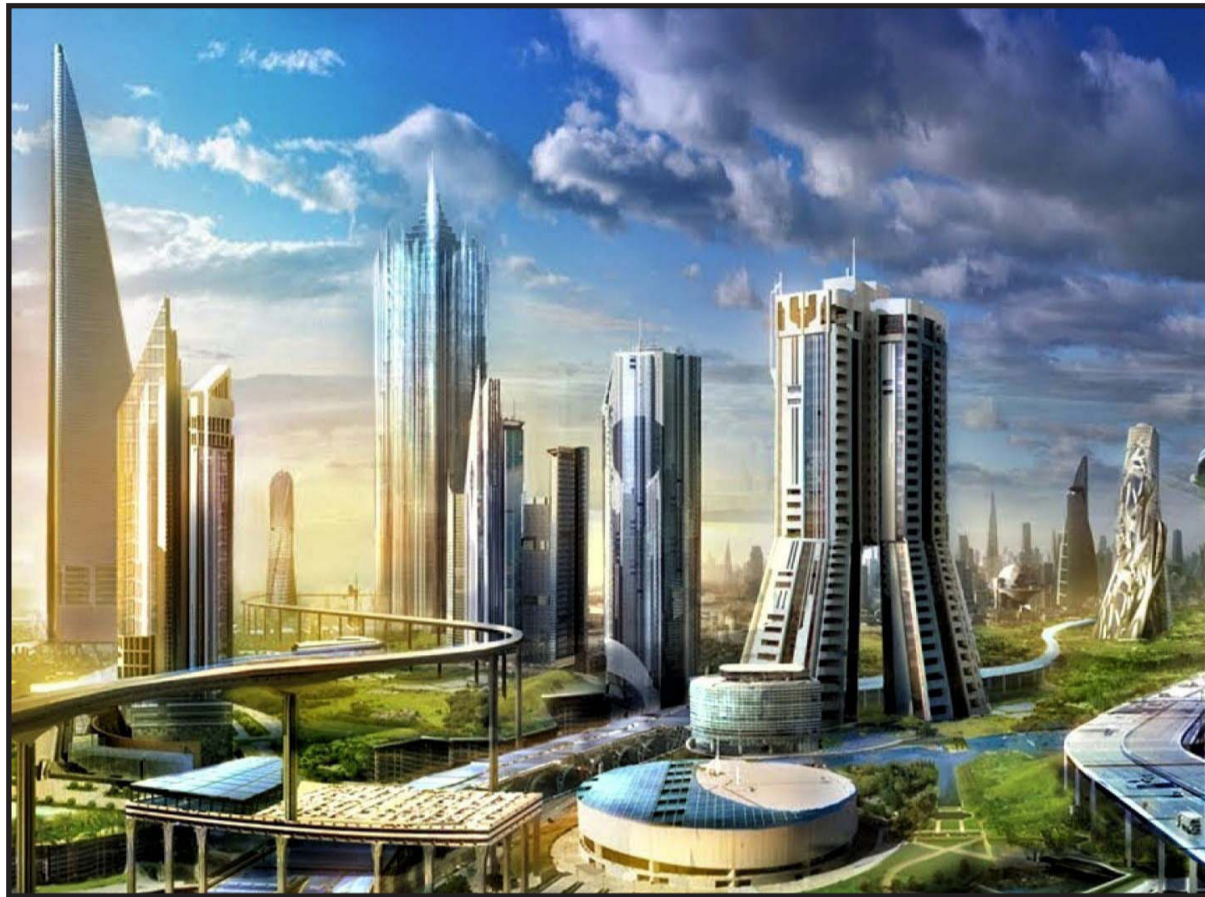
Yet, in important respects, he departs from the pattern of his various predecessors. The signs are everywhere - from the man's own relentless self-promotion, via the profligate sportswashing and similar 'soft power' initiatives, to the bizarre megaprojects. The problem for the house of Saud has long been: what to do with all the money? (Leaving aside other matters like how to avoid being assassinated by angry Islamists, how to prevent terrorist sieges in Mecca, and so on.) They have been squirrelling it away in the famous Public Investment Fund (PIF) for half a century, but one cannot just bury banknotes under the *Ka'bah*. It has to be, precisely, *invested*. MBS has found his plan - developmentalist 'modernisation' by brute force.

The overall scheme goes by the name of Saudi Vision 2030 (a future-dated 'vision' seems to be a must-have accessory for a dictator in the region - Egypt and Kuwait have their own, while UAE Vision 2021 just recently concluded). The main economic objective is an obvious enough one - somehow reduce the Saudi dependence on oil revenues and related industry, increasing the productivity of Saudi workers and reducing dependence on superexploited migrant labour under the notorious *kafala* system.

## Diversification

The problem is exactly *what* to diversify into. There is tourism, of course, and the related matter of pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina. That is not likely to move the needle, however (and presumably there are already as many people making the *hajj* pilgrimage as there will ever be). There remain the two major options of 'services' - competing with Dubai and the like as an offshore financial hub, in effect - and industry. MBS is playing the field here, but the industrial policy is more eye-catching. What better regime could there be, after all, to spearhead the world's green energy transition than the one that so ably fed our appetite for fossil fuels all these years?

The Saudis operate one of the largest solar farms in the world - it is, after all, famously sunny around there. They are investing in 'green hydrogen' (hydrogen is typically extracted from fossil fuels today). They are bending over backwards to attract foreign investment. The huge showpiece is the projected megacity of Neom, to be built from scratch at the top of the Red Sea. There is little about this initiative that seems remotely feasible, but there is a green hue to all its various proposed parts. The Line - a bizarre 'linear city'



Neom: tech utopia or MBS hell?

consisting of two 110-mile-long buildings either side of a central avenue - is planned to be car-free and powered entirely by renewables.

One could call this greenwashing, of course, but that might be to miss the point. What if MBS is serious about all this? What reason do we have to suppose he is not? The crown prince is an immensely wealthy man, with an obviously bloated ego and what from the outside seems like a firm grip on the country. He would not be the first inheritor of a sleepy absolutist regime to try to jolt things to life. Despite endless delays, Neom is, after all, being built, or parts of it at least - the total cost is expected to top \$500 billion. If China can build cities out of nothing, he reasons, why not us? If the west can design electric vehicles and renewable power sources, why not us?

One might even detect grander ambitions behind the sportswashing. The charge of sportswashing, after all, is that a regime is using investments in sports teams and sponsorships to generate good PR. Is this all the Saudis are up to? In recent times, they have purchased a premiership football club, seduced the ageing football legends Cristiano Ronaldo and Karim Benzema to play in the Saudi league, summoned a golf tour out of nothing, and won the privilege of hosting the 2029 Asian Winter Games, of all things. As a PR exercise, this is hardly cost-efficient; so why assume that is the point? Both the International Federation of Association Football (Fifa) and the International Olympic Committee are based in Switzerland - but why *should* they be based there? What is so special about that country? Could they perhaps be ... *induced* to up sticks to somewhere else? Could competitors be set up, just as the Saudi-sponsored LIV Golf has humiliated the Professional Golfers' Association?

Sport, George Orwell famously said, is war without weapons. Indeed, that is the main advantage to Fifa, the IOC and the like of being based in Switzerland: it is a neutral ground for hashing out deals

between bigger players. MBS seems, also, to fancy the Saudis' chances of playing a similar role, at least within the region. As with all the other initiatives, this is a mixed bag, to say the least. Many of the diplomatic 'successes' of recent years amount to walking back failed acts of aggression: Syrian president Bashar al-Assad was invited to visit Riyadh, but only after the Saudis' playthings in Syria failed to topple him after a decade of vicious sectarian warfare. The Chinese brokered a peace deal between the Saudis and Iran, but only after the Saudis failed to defeat the Houthis, who enjoy limited material support from the Islamic Republic.

The latest such initiative is the so-called Ukraine 'peace talks'. They are not to be taken seriously as a plan for peace - after all, one of the belligerents is missing altogether. The proposal to be discussed is that of Volodymyr Zelensky - that is, the return of every inch of Ukrainian territory - which, regardless of the rights and wrongs, is not ever going to be acceptable to Vladimir Putin. Nonetheless, it offers an opportunity to MBS to broker another kind of 'peace' - between the US and the wider, 'non-aligned' world, whose enthusiasm for the Ukrainian cause has never been more than tepid.

Among those countries, though it is a long-standing US ally, you could count Saudi Arabia. Saudi-American relations are at a low ebb. The regime notably snubbed requests to increase production to get oil prices under control after the west imposed sanctions on Russia: not only did this keep oil and gas prices high and cause massive inflation in the US, but it made it economically viable for Russian oil and gas to be laundered in countries like India and resold at a mark-up to the west. The Saudis have close ties with the US state, in spite of the present frostiness - but they can also do business with China, and have direct influence in Europe.

So could Saudi Arabia end up an attractive place to broker deals of this kind - a Switzerland of the sands? We suppose it has as much chance

as any other wealthy regional power in the world. Yet it only works as part of a package. MBS can play at global statecraft only if his domestic affairs are in order, which means that Saudi society is politically stable and insulated economically from any severe shocks. In short, the Vision 2030 stuff has to actually work.

## Scepticism

The reasons for scepticism here are legion. MBS plans to house nine million people in The Line. *Who?* Why would they move there? To work in the industries that do not exist yet, presumably. There is a bootstrapping problem here. Economic development is not a matter of plonking down a power plant and drawing some industrial and residential zones next to it. That is the incumbent advantage of existing industrial cities: there is *stuff already there*: plus skilled workers and infrastructure to support it.

For all these things, the Saudis are incredibly dependent on international supply chains. That is all the more true of their plans for clean tech - the rare earth metals needed for batteries and the like are available only through imports, while the manufacture of silicon chips is enormously concentrated in east Asia and already a flashpoint in the brewing great-power conflict between China and the US. Playing diplomatic footsie with all of them may work for a time - at least while everyone needs Saudi oil. But it could quite as easily backfire.

The geopolitics matter here too. MBS is gambling on US weakness. The idea is spreading that the unipolar era is coming to an end - it is even circulating in the US state core itself. The signs of relative decline are indeed obvious, not the least of which is the inability of the US to corral countries like Saudi Arabia *vis-à-vis* the Ukraine crisis. There is also a decline in foreign reserves held in dollars relative to other currencies. Yet decline should not be confused with an end to hegemony. The Saudis would not be able to carry on warfare for more than a few weeks

without US operational support, and this is true of a great number of US allies. The US military is *not* dependent on Saudi oil, though US strategy demands *control* of Middle Eastern oil in relation to its great-power rivals.

In short, the 'multipolar' hype is overblown. The success of MBS's economic initiatives depends on staying in the good graces of the US - and not only that success. The Americans have underhand ways of getting what they want. In the game of thrones, you win or you die. MBS will want to stay on the right side of the door to the embassy basement.

In fact, there is the real possibility that all of this will fail *quietly*. The diplomatic heft of the regime will remain regional; the football and golf investments will not transcend the level of sportswashing; and the economy will not be diversified. The *kafala* system will continue to grind through people. The whole point, beyond providing some insulation from fuel price fluctuations, is that the world is transitioning away from carbon. But is it *really*? One has almost to admire MBS for actually trying to do his part here, in his strange, grandiose way. Alas, we predict that there will be a thriving market for the Saudi kingdom's most plentiful export for some time yet - until either political revolution or 'climate socialism' finally ends the party. And, until such a time, there will always be the temptation to fall back on the old ways, and leave Neom to turn into ruins in the desert.

There is a final aspect to MBS's 'modernisation' - the loosening of some religious restrictions on daily life, especially the daily lives of women. The sheer modesty of some of these changes (finally allowing women to drive; putting on the first pop concert in decades - for bellicose country singer Toby Keith of all people) has caused a great deal of mockery, especially of those journalists and others who help MBS launder his reputation abroad - most notoriously Thomas Friedman of *The New York Times*.

But the mistake of Friedman and others was not to take MBS at his word: that he was a moderniser or a reformer of some kind. It was to imagine that such modernisation entailed the advance of democratic rights. The death of Khashoggi was a wake-up call for the western media, even if the idea that it would seriously affect US-Saudi relations was always a mirage. But even a more serious attack on clerical power need not entail liberalisation of the *political* regime (just add the clericalists to the list of people to be chopped up in basements ...)

This link between capitalist economic development and wider social progress was always a lie, but perhaps never more obviously than today, when the true source of democratic concessions - the political movement of the working class - is so much in abeyance even in its old heartlands, never mind in such a sociologically bizarre country as Saudi Arabia. Neom is not the city of the future - but perhaps the Saudis are the *state* of the future, as 'liberal democracy' erodes both as an institutional form and as a legitimating ideology, to be replaced with 'strongmen' who 'get things done' ●



## USSR

# Other theories, other labels

If, after the launch of the first five-year plan, the Soviet Union cannot be classified as a workers' state, what was it? **Jack Conrad** looks at some alternatives that have been offered by different schools of thought

On the so-called ladder of historical progress there are those on the left who consider the first five-year plan to be a step away from socialism ... but half a step forward to "bureaucratic state capitalism" (Tony Cliff).<sup>1</sup> Many other such state-capitalist theories, labels and verdicts had already been presented ... and by a very diverse range of thinkers at that.

Lenin thought that Soviet Russia should build state capitalism (under proletarian rule). That would be a "step forward", compared with "petty-proprietor, small capital", and, if achieved, would put "full socialism" within reach.<sup>2</sup> Zinoviev echoed this positive perspective in his writings in the 1920s. On the other hand, there were those who used the term 'state capitalism' in an entirely pejorative manner: Karl Kautsky, Theodore Dan, Emma Goldman, Herman Gorter, Raya Dunayevskaya, etc.

There were differences over October 1917. Either the revolution was considered premature, Russia not being ripe for socialism - that, or the stress was laid on the failure of revolution in Europe. But the general consensus was that the Bolsheviks had been forced to substitute themselves for the capitalist bourgeoisie. However, post-1928-29, necessarily, this entire pejorative school found itself hopelessly mangling the elementary social categories of capitalism: the law of value, wage labour, profit, money, etc, so as to fit the still vaguely understood realities of the rapidly evolving Soviet Union. A Procrustean bed, not a coherent theory.

Looking back to the late 1940s, Cliff recounts how he "didn't come" to the theory of state capitalism "by a long analysis of the law of value in Russia [sic], the economic statistics in Russia". No, nothing of the kind: "I came to it by the simple statement that if the emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class, then you cannot have a workers' state without workers having power to dictate what happens in society." Cliff further explains that he had to "choose between what Trotsky said - the heart of Trotsky is the self-activity of the workers - or the form of property. I decided to push away the form of property as determining the question."<sup>3</sup>

Cliff was right to dismiss the Soviet Union as a workers' state. If workers had no political power and no positive control over the means of production, then that category simply makes no sense. However, Cliff was painfully aware of Trotsky's repeated polemics savaging the idea of the Soviet Union being state-capitalist. The October Revolution, he said, put the working class into power and, despite Stalin, remained in power, if only because of "socialistic property forms".<sup>4</sup> As for state capitalism, it was, maintained Trotsky, impossible. Neither the giant monopolies nor the great tycoons would countenance such an outcome. State capitalism actually amounted to nothing more than a tendency for the role of the state to expand. Trotsky, therefore, dismissed attempts to "identify capitalist state-ism with the Soviet system" as "absurd".<sup>5</sup>

Cliff conceded ground before Trotsky's shade. The state exercised a monopoly over foreign trade and, Cliff asserted, in effect, within the country, the state acted as the sole employer. Hence, Soviet



**USSR: then and now**

workers had to be categorically distinguished from workers in the west. They could not really change their employer because there was only one employer (as we have repeatedly argued elsewhere, a badly mistaken assumption). Contradicting the state-capitalist theories of his contemporaries, Cliff readily admits that "if one examines the relations within the Russian economy, abstracting them from their relations with the world economy, one is bound to conclude that the source of the law of value, as the motor and regulator of production, is not to be found in it".<sup>6</sup>

Despite that, a few decades later, in reply to a rather lame Eurocommunist critique of Cliff's state-capitalist theory,<sup>7</sup> we find his disciples insisting that workers in the Soviet Union were just like ordinary wage-workers in the west. Peter Binns and Duncan Hallas write that "wage-labour" and a "wages system in the strict Marxian definition of the term" existed in the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup> A claim 'corrected' shortly afterwards by Binns himself (this time in collaboration with Mike Haynes). There was no "genuine labour market there". But, the pair insisted, that does not matter in terms of theory. The existence of a "pure wage market" is not required by capitalism - as shown by the examples of slavery in the US south and serfdom in tsarist Russia.<sup>9</sup> Of course, inserting the word "pure" is a ruse. After all, who had been insisting on a "pure labour market"? Capitalism has never been characterised by all-encompassing wage-labour: there is, for example, a not inconsiderable stratum of self-employed. As for the US south and tsarist Russia, both were locked into *subordinate* trade relations with British capitalism: cotton, tobacco, timber, cordage, leather, hemp.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless - and this is the real point - British capitalism did have a "genuine labour market".

The Binns-Haynes position elicited strong objections from Duncan Hallas. He stood by the contention of wage-labour and a labour market: because without

wage-labour and a labour market the theory of "bureaucratic state capitalism" falls. "If labour is not a commodity in the USSR" there could be no proletariat, and without a proletariat "there can be no wage-labour/capital relationship". Ergo, "no capital either ... and no capitalism in any form". It was vital, therefore, according to Hallas, to define work in the Soviet Union as wage-labour. Moreover, workers had to sell their labour-power for "genuine money" and buy "commodities", goods "produced for sale" .... if that is not the case "then the USSR is not capitalist". Instead - *quelle horreur* - "it must be a new method of extracting surplus product from an exploited class that is not a proletariat".<sup>11</sup> Such reasoning surely exposes the true worth of state-capitalist theory. The conclusion lies at the beginning, not the end.

## Logic

We have already seen that Cliff's first line of argument relied on what logicians call the exclusive disjunction. Either the Soviet Union was moving in the direction of genuine socialism or, given the abundant evidence that belied such a claim, it *has to be* going in the direction of "state capitalism" (that or it is "already state capitalism").<sup>12</sup> It is one or the other. A binary choice.

His second line of argument appealed to external contradictions. Military competition with Germany, Japan, Great Britain, France, the United States, etc imposed the logic of capitalism: ie, "the increasing rate of exploitation, and the increasing subordination of the workers to the means of production".<sup>13</sup> Given the fixation on use-values, albeit through the mediation of target-values, this is unconvincing. With the first five-year plan, doubtless the mass of surplus pumped out of workers substantially increased. There was an accompanying drive to build up the forces of production. The success of primary accumulation meant that the Soviet Union had at its disposal a powerful arms industry and a Red Army equipped with

modern weapons (ie, target-values which have use-values). Of course, Marxists have traditionally ascribed the task of primary accumulation to capitalism. But taking up tasks traditionally ascribed to capitalism does not *equal* capitalism. The argument has to be proven.

Furthermore, it has to be said, under capitalism - that is, under *real* capitalism - when it comes to fighting big wars, there is an overriding drive for use-values. A tank is a tank, a fighter plane is a fighter plane - for the state. True, the same cannot be said of Messerschmitt, Krupp, Vickers-Armstrongs, de Havilland, Ford, Mitsubishi, Boeing, etc. Arms manufacturers seek to realise a profit. But - and this is vital - the dominant social logic runs in the direction of use-value, not exchange-value.

World War II can surely serve as a test case. Between 1939 and 1945 Britain subordinated its entire economy to the war effort. That meant *restricting*, even *suspending*, the operation of the law of value: banning strikes and lockouts, direction of skilled labour, military conscription, labour conscription for the coal mines, rationing, government administration of agriculture, forced savings, central allocation of steel and capital, state control over railways, ports and road haulage, government prioritising of aircraft production, etc.<sup>14</sup> A similar pattern can be seen in Germany, the US, Italy and Japan. So total war generates war socialism.

Actually, Cliff's ladder was not that different, compared with 'official' Stalinism and 'official' Trotskyism. Both presented the Soviet Union as being on the highest rung of post-capitalist progress. Cliff's only disagreement appears to be that, having demonstrated that the Soviet Union was not any kind of socialism, there was only one other option: bureaucratic state capitalism - the "highest stage possible" under the system of capitalism before the transition to socialism.<sup>15</sup> Cliff's "bureaucratic state capitalism" therefore includes a positive claim: the Soviet Union was "progressive", because it developed the "material conditions" necessary for a "higher order".<sup>16</sup>

The events of 1989-91 should have prompted a thorough-going reappraisal. Sad to say, because of sect interests, the politics of conviction were replaced by the politics of denial. Eg, Chris Harman, an ever loyal Tony Cliff lieutenant, claimed that the Soviet apparatus simply undertook a "sideways" move from state to private ownership.<sup>17</sup> How that squared with the Soviet Union as the "highest stage possible" under capitalism went revealingly unexplored.

## New mode

If the Soviet Union cannot be classified as a workers' state nor as state-capitalist, should Marxists classify it as wholly original, a new mode of production ruled over by a class of collective exploiters - the contention of Bruno Rizzi, Max Shachtman, James Burnham, Rudolph Hilferding, Joseph Carter, Michael Harrington, Milovan Djilas, Sean Matgamna, etc?<sup>18</sup>

Understandably, many on the left want to morally distance themselves from the USSR, maintain an unsullied vision of socialism and put an end to the trite 'If it isn't this, it must be that' game. Yet, because of changing realities, false suppositions

and constantly shifting moods, there are umpteen versions of the theory.

In broad terms, though, what is commonly called bureaucratic collectivism can be considered:

(a) *universal*: a previously unexpected stage between capitalism and socialism. The ladder of progress therefore goes: original communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, bureaucratic collectivism and only then socialism/communism.

(b) *unique*: due to the Soviet Union's unripeness for socialism - that or the failure of the October Revolution to spread internationally - the Bolsheviks morph into a wholly exceptional dictatorship over workers and peasants.

(c) *partial*: a stage that should be expected in backward, mainly agricultural, societies attempting to modernise, under conditions where the world is dominated by capitalism.

With the publication of *The bureaucratisation of the world* (1939), Bruno Rizzi is widely credited as being the founder of the new mode of production school. Doubtless, so it seems, that distinction should go to others. Lucian Laurat and Simone Weil have been mentioned.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, for our purposes, not least because he has been so widely discussed, Rizzi can serve as an introduction to the *universal* version of the theory.

He saw the Soviet Union as dominated by a "new ruling class" which arose with the "retreat" of the October Revolution. However, this "new-formed" society was leading the entire world.<sup>20</sup> Hitler and Mussolini were somewhat behind, but travelled along the same essential route. With Roosevelt's new deal, so too did the US. According to Rizzi, the Soviet Union constituted a Stalinist antechamber, which, having developed the means of production, creates the material conditions needed for the transition to communism. Claims of a new mode of production did not stop Rizzi running with a bog-standard list of categories taken from capitalist political economy: eg, commodity production, surplus value, profit and wage labour. An elementary, but unfortunately a still all-too-common error.

Rizzi is known nowadays mainly because of the polemic directed against him in Trotsky's *In defence of Marxism* (1942). He built no organisation and left behind no group of co-thinkers. And, though a member of the Fourth International, though he floated in and around the Bordigaist current, it has to be admitted that his views are closer to national socialism than Marxism. For example, he urged Britain, France and the US to grant Germany, Italy and Japan the 'living space' needed for their continued economic expansion. His views on Jews certainly fit with the 'socialism of fools' denounced by August Bebel. He did not advocate pogroms, but, according to Rizzi, while there were lone good Jews, such as Marx and Trotsky, the Jewish people *as a whole* were a "capitalist dungheap".<sup>21</sup>

Thankfully, as far as I know, neither Lucien Laurat nor Simone Weil shared Rizzi's anti-Semitism. Nonetheless, they too saw distinct similarities between the Soviet Union and Mussolini Italy and Hitler Germany: all mass movements - whether socialist, communist or fascist - seemed to be moving in the direction of a bureaucratic collectivism dominated by managers and technocrats.



A pessimistic conclusion, repeated by James Burnham. Having definitively broken with Trotskyism in 1940, he almost instantly authored a best seller, *The managerial revolution* (1941). Burnham's 'managerial society' matched Rizzi so closely that some accused him of plagiarism.<sup>22</sup> Yet, because of his new found *explicit* anti-Marxism, Burnham was quickly drawn to the bosom of the US establishment. He is even regarded as providing key ideas for the paleoconservative right. In 1983 Ronald Reagan awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Laurat, Weil, Rizzi and Burnham produced what nowadays can only be regarded as literary curios. By contrast, Max Shachtman (1904-72), did manage to build an organisation. And his ideas live on in the Democratic Socialists of America, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty in Britain and the many and various Worker-communist fragments of the Iraqi and Iranian diaspora.

Shachtman started off as an honest socialist, but ended his days backing Richard Nixon and the US war in Indo-China. That included the threat to bomb North Vietnam "back into the stone age" (US airforce general Curtis LeMay).<sup>23</sup> Revealingly, a "substantial" number of Shachtman's circle made a pretty seamless transition into the US neocon movement (some, such as Hal Draper, stayed true to socialism - he finally broke with Shachtman in the early 1960s).<sup>24</sup> Latter-day followers too have locked themselves into the same horrible logic: eg, the AWL is proudly pro-Zionist and pro-imperialist.

Nonetheless, it would be stupid to dismiss Shachtman. Even as the Red Army dismembered Poland, along with Nazi Germany, Trotsky demanded that the Fourth International "defend the Soviet Union", and Shachtman found that totally unacceptable. And what had been unacceptable became intolerable, when Stalin ordered the Red Army to invade Finland with a view to gaining still more territory. Nor, looking back, did Shachtman and co have any wish to celebrate the first five-year plan as a triumph for socialism.

Shachtman fielded some cogent arguments. The Soviet Union's (reactionary) property relations are surely more important than its (progressive) property forms. If the state owns the means of production, what is crucial is who controls the state. There had been a *violent* bureaucratic counterrevolution. And, through the horrors of forced collectivisation, the purges, etc, the apparatus had been transformed into something far more than a mere parasitic caste. Not that bureaucratic collectivism was claimed to be anything more than an aberration by Shachtman. Revolution in the advanced capitalist countries would ensure its quick demise.

However, concrete analysis, discovering laws of motion and accurately predicting outcomes was noticeably absent. Rightly, the Soviet Union had to be distinguished from capitalism on the one side and socialism on the other. But on the ladder of progress it seems the Soviet Union could be placed either on a higher or lower rung, compared with capitalism. There is no consistency.

Joseph Carter, one of Shachtman's comrades, seems to have been the man who coined the term, 'bureaucratic collectivism'. In his view the Soviet Union did not represent anything progressive - no, not even nationalised property forms. The new bureaucratic ruling class attempted to expand the social

surplus using methods that were dreadfully inefficient and wasteful. Terrorism and forced labour were deemed to be an "inherent feature" of production relations. Carter considered bureaucratic collectivism to be "a nationally limited" economy in terms of its origins, but, for the sake of its "nationally confined" productive forces, is propelled towards the overthrow of world capitalism. In other words, the "world triumph of bureaucratic collectivism".<sup>25</sup> What begins as unique is therefore driven to become universal.

In the 1970s, Moshé Machover and John Fantham produced a *partial* variant of bureaucratic collectivism - what they called, for the "sake of brevity", state collectivism. Where the "normal path" of capitalist development was blocked - ie, in the "underdeveloped part of the world" - a new ruling class could constitute itself and then pursue a programme of modernisation: a path which ran parallel to capitalism. Examples given were of the Soviet Union, eastern Europe, China, North Vietnam, North Korea, Cuba and various African countries which had successfully carried out national-liberation revolutions.

Priority was given to department A, because this justified the bureaucracy ideologically. Heavy industry came with a potent aura of catching up, rationality and boundless technocratic optimism. However, the more successful was the bureaucracy, the more the contradictions build up. Bureaucratic planning could not cope with the complexities of a sophisticated industrial society. Incidentally, the two authors claimed that their use of 'class' when referring to the bureaucracy was perfectly justified. "Class is not a superhistorical category", as each mode of production is specific. Hence, while the Soviet bureaucracy might not be a class in the capitalist sense, it was "still a class": it had proved to be stable and reproduced itself.<sup>26</sup>

## Not a mode

Whether or not the Soviet Union can be considered a mode of production is highly problematic. Surely, by definition, a mode of production implies *extended* reproduction. Yet the Soviet Union was characterised by an inability to continuously revolutionise the means of production. A mode of production also requires a consolidated ruling class.

Arguably, Stalin carried out his policies using officials whose "trustworthiness" and "competence" he considered "dubious". Of course, from the mid-1930s onwards that so-called "anti-bureaucratic scenario" turned murderous.<sup>27</sup> Members of the apparatus were massacred by the hundreds of thousands. And those who survived lived in constant fear. Even within their families husbands could not trust their wives, parents could not trust their children. So it was not only peasants, workers and intellectuals who were atomised. Even when the killing stopped, voicing an honest opinion, organising against superiors, even contacting foreigners remained extraordinarily risky. Tendencies towards cohering the apparatus into a ruling class were, as a result, constantly cut short. A point made by Trotsky and others too.

Following the 1991 fall, *nomenklatura* oligarchs successfully converted state property into heritable property. But, let us not forget, only a minority of the oligarchs came from the apparatus: eg, Viktor Chernomyrdin, Vladimir Scherbakov, Rem Vyakhirev and Vagit Alekperov. Most originated

in the "seamier stratum of black market operators and money changers".<sup>28</sup> Apocryphally the *entrepreneurial* oligarchs started out with "two empty hands - and two sharp elbows".<sup>29</sup> True, powerful friends were needed. Nevertheless, it is they who long dominated the *Forbes* list of Russia's super rich.

No less to the point, the most important oligarchs were gathered together by Putin in July 2000 at the Kuntsevo Dacha (Stalin's former residence). Putin told them in no uncertain terms to stop meddling in politics: "You can keep what you have ... But, from here on out, you are simply businessmen and *only* businessmen."<sup>30</sup> Those who failed to get "the message" - eg, Russia's wealthiest man, Mikhail Khodorkovsky - were arrested, stripped of the bulk of their assets and/or fled into exile.<sup>31</sup> Hence, it was always problematic to classify the oligarchs as a *ruling* class.

With hindsight, admittedly a great advantage, all three versions of bureaucratic collectivism fail. Obviously, the universal version deserves to sink without trace. The world has neither arrived at bureaucratic collectivism, nor is it heading towards bureaucratic collectivism. The 'mixed economy' of the 1950s and 60s was a symptom of capitalist decay and conceding ground to the political economy of the working class. For sure it was not the birth of a new class society. The Soviet Union is no more. China is 60:40 capitalistic. Vietnam is going the same way. Rizzi, Burnham and Carter were therefore badly mistaken. Nor does Shachtman's unique version of bureaucratic collectivism hold up. The post-1929 Soviet Union was imitated, as a state, in post World War II eastern Europe, China, etc. And, of course, the Soviet Union was not brought down by proletarian revolution in the west. The partial version stands vindicated in comparison, but evidently fails to account for the turn to capitalism as the mainspring of development. Certainly the idea that the Soviet apparatus amounted to a historically constituted class is impossible to take seriously nowadays.

Bureaucratic collectivism, as a theory, has, however, well in the hands of the AWL and their ilk, morphed into a barely disguised social imperialism and the claim that the US global hegemon represents a blunt instrument of historical progress. An abject surrender before the class enemy and a betrayal of the most elementary principles of socialism. Indo-China, Chile, Angola, Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and now Ukraine, shows that the US is no longer the bringer even of *capitalist* civilization. No, instead it brings death, destruction and social retrogression.

Beyond saying that the Soviet Union was neither socialist nor capitalist, bureaucratic collectivism is, in fact, characterised by an inability to dig down and discover the actual workings of the system. The same goes Karl Wittfogel and his *Oriental despotism* (1957) ... but in spades. Instead of concrete analysis of a concrete situation, we are offered moth-eaten historical analogy.

Taking his cue from Max Weber, Wittfogel argued that China and India were "hydraulic-bureaucratic official states". Because irrigation and river management were central to economic life, a strong and domineering centralised state power emerged. Private land ownership was weak and non-bureaucratic forces in society were politically impotent.

Wittfogel proceeded to apply

the idea to Russia. It was, he said, the Mongol invaders who brought oriental despotism to Russia. Till February 1917 autocratic rulers exercised unchecked power over all social classes. Compared with the west, the east was therefore characterised by an all-encompassing tyranny. However, according to Wittfogel, the democratic promise of the Constituent Assembly was let slip by the timid, moderate socialists. The Soviet Union, in effect, went on to oversee the "restoration" of a medieval oriental despotism, but on a higher, industrialised, basis.<sup>32</sup> A theory which influenced the likes of Barrington Moore, George Lichtheim, Maurice Godelier, Rudolf Bahro and Rudi Dutschke.

There exists a little problem, though. The history is a lot more complex. There are good reasons to believe that the tribal Mongols had a relatively limited impact on the much more developed Kyvian Rus.<sup>33</sup> Eg, the religious, landownership and the taxation systems. Furthermore, wherever they went the Mongols rapidly assimilated into the host population.

While the Turco-Mongol invasion broke the back of Kyvian Rus, the Moscow principality emerges as the dominant power, first by acting as a Mongolian appanage, then slowly asserting its independence and taking over territories to the south and east previously dominated by the Golden Horde.

Muscovy was heavily influenced by Byzantine when it came to religion, the military techniques of the Mongols were readily borrowed, its tsars based their notions of kingship on the Mongolian khans and the Byzantine emperors, but the social system they presided over was an Asiatic despotism of their own making. Even Peter the Great's modernising reforms were enserfed to the state and relied on serf labour. Hence "European limbs were transplanted onto an Asiatic torso" (Plekhanov).

Surely, though, the post-1929 Soviet Union needs to be understood with categories that allow us to grasp its specific historic features, laws of motion and the full range of contradictions involved: target-value and use-value, success in quantity and failure in quality, atomisation of the population and lack of control over the product, the leading-edge machine and low productivity, workers' negative control and the limits to relative exploitation, accumulation and the growth of shortages, the apparatus as Gosplan and the apparatus as management, etc. Crucial, in this respect is the overall global background of a capitalism in decline, a capitalism in transition, a capitalism facing the ever growing power of the working class.

Undoubtedly 1917 was a revolution against tsarist autocracy, peasant land poverty and the remnants of serfdom. But 1917 was also a revolution against an overripe capitalism - a revolution that aimed to bring about world socialism. Of course, without Europe, what was established was never viable. The Soviet Union was an ectopic social formation, a social formation which failed to become an *extended mode of reproduction*. In other words a freak society which had a past but no future.

Writers such as Chris Arthur and Aleksandr Zimin, but most importantly Hillel Ticktin, advanced such a thesis well before the final collapse.<sup>34</sup> The system lasts some six decades. But, despite expectations of a proletarian revolution, there is a falling back into a particularly corrupt and brutish form of capitalism ●

## Notes

1. T Cliff *State capitalism in Russia* London 1974, pp162ff.
2. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 27, Moscow 1977, pp293-94.
3. 'Tony Cliff interview' *The Leveller* September 1979 (quoted in M Linden *Western Marxism and the Soviet Union* Chicago IL 2009, p119).
4. See J Conrad, 'Not a workers' state' *Weekly Worker* August 3: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1454/not-a-workers-state.
5. L Trotsky *The revolution betrayed* New York NY 1980, p248.
6. T Cliff *State capitalism in Russia* London 1974, pp208-09.
7. D Purdy *The Soviet Union state capitalist or socialist?* London 1975.
8. P Binns and D Hallas, 'The Soviet Union: state capitalist or socialist?' *International Socialism* January 1976.
9. P Binns and M Haynes, 'New theories of eastern European class societies' *International Socialism* winter 1980.
10. The US south was "a 'virtual semi-colony' of the British to whom it supplied the bulk of their raw cotton" (HJ Fuller *Empire, technology and seapower: Royal Navy crisis in the age of Palmerston* London 2013, p221). Stalin pictured imperial Russia as a "semi-colony" of Anglo-French imperialism (*History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (short course)* Moscow 1939, p162). A widely accepted claim: "In a secret memorandum to Nicholas II in 1899, [tsarist minister] Witte characterised Russia as occupying the position of a semi-colonial country, which supplied western Europe with cheap raw materials and agricultural products, while not possessing the abilities to make use of her abundant natural materials in order to develop manufacturing industries" - discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1559904/1/Final%20Thesis%201606.pdf.
11. D Hallas, 'Eastern European class societies' *International Socialism* summer 1980.
12. T Cliff *State capitalism in Russia* London 1974, p282.
13. *Ibid* p212.
14. See S Boadberry and P Howleth, 'Blood, sweat and tears: British mobilisation for World War II': web.archive.org/web/20201111190216/https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/staff/sboadberry/wp/totwar3.pdf.
15. T Cliff *State capitalism in Russia* London 1974, p162.
16. *Ibid* pp185-86.
17. C Harman, 'The storm breaks' *International Socialism* spring 1990.
18. www.marxists.org/archive/shachtma/1950/09/deutscher-stalin.htm.
19. Eg, Lucian Laurat (*The Soviet economy* 1931) and Simone Weil ('Are we going towards proletarian revolution?', 1933). Laurat, an Austrian left social democrat, argued that the Soviet Union had become a new kind of society. He rejected the contention of Kautsky, Gorter, etc, that Russia was not ripe for socialism - it was, if, the international revolution had happened. Without that, the apparatus developed into a caste, or class, which exploited wage-labourers and extracted surplus value. Weil was a revolutionary syndicalist. She argued that the bureaucracy ruled. A tendency she detected outside the Soviet Union. See M Linden *Western Marxism and the Soviet Union: a survey of critical theories and debates since 1917* Leiden 2007, pp69-75.
20. B Ruzzi *The bureaucratization of the world* London 1985, pp50-51.
21. Quoted in JM Fenwick, 'The mysterious Bruno R' *The New Internationalist* September 1948. See www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/ni/vol14/no07/v14n07-sep-1948-new-int.pdf.
22. Eg, the US SWP leader, Joseph Hansen. See J Hansen, 'Burnham's *Managerial revolution*' *The Fourth International* Vol 2, No5, June 1941. Cited in en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\_Burnham#cite\_note-27.
23. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curtis\_LeMay.
24. www.enterstageright.com/archive/articles/0304/0304neocontrop1.htm.
25. www.marxists.org/history/etol/writers/carter/1941/09/burcoll.htm.
26. M Machover and J Fantham *The century of the unexpected* London 1979. See bigflameuk.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/unexpected-sec1.pdf.
27. See LT Lih, 'Introduction' in LT Lih, OV Naumov and OV Khlevniuk (eds) *Stalin's letters to Molotov, 1925-1936* New Haven CT 1995.
28. M Goldman *Oilopoly: Putin, power and the rise of new Russia* London 2008, p58.
29. See C Ericson *The oligarchs: money and power in capitalist Russia* Stockholm 2012.
30. B Mezrich *Once upon a time in Russia* London 2015, p6. Other accounts put the meeting in St Catherine's Hall in the Kremlin, but what matters is not the location, but the message.
31. M Goldman *Oilopoly: Putin, power and the rise of new Russia* London 2008, pp101-02.
32. See K Wittfogel *Oriental despotism: a comparative study of total power* Chicago IL 1957.
33. See NV Riasanovsky, 'Oriental despotism and Russia' *Slavic Review* Vol 22, No4, December 1963; also B Kagarlitsky *Empire of the periphery: Russia and the world system* London 2008.
34. See H Ticktin, 'Towards a political economy of the USSR' *Critique* No1, spring 1973.



**NHS**

# Empty promises, real threats

James Linney picks apart the NHS workforce plan and warns that Sir Keir's Labour is committed to exactly the same agenda of privatisation and austerity

So here we are again, looking down the barrel of yet another Tory-sponsored plan for 'saving the National Health Service' - this time we are presented with a 15-year plan to solve the current workforce crisis.<sup>1</sup>

We have seen many such schemes since the Conservatives took the reins of government back in 2010. First came Andrew Lansley's infamous Health and Social Care Act 2012, when we were promised the cutting of red tape and the handing over of more control to doctors in running the NHS. In reality the act was a Trojan horse: the restructuring overburdened primary care with bewildering layers of bureaucracy and hidden within its belly was the real reason for the reforms - the opening of the door to private health companies.

The NHS has never been free from the influence of private companies, but the HSCA 2012 introduced the requirement of offering service contracts to "any qualified providers", which further catalysed its marketisation, and since this door has been opened the private sector's influence has grown exponentially.

Since the HSCA 2012 we have also seen further attempts at making the process of privatisation go more smoothly, through the further fragmenting of care provision (the most recent being the creation of integrated care boards) and the starving of GP surgeries and hospitals of funds. Forcing NHS services to compete for contracts with private providers has predictably seen a race to undercut, to cherry-pick the more profitable sectors and consequently the quality of care has fallen drastically. Meanwhile the NHS's increasingly scarce funds have had to deal with more GP consultations than ever, the Covid-19 pandemic, disastrous social care services, longer waiting lists than ever before and A&E departments that are on their knees.

All of this has happened in parallel with the freezing of pay across the NHS, leaving staff completely demoralised; many have been forced to retire early, go off with stress or leave for other jobs in order to be able to pay their bills. The process of dismantling and demoralising has effectively left the NHS on the brink of total failure. Presumably the intention all along.

We should instinctively distrust any new publication claiming to save the NHS, such as the 'Long Term Workforce Plan'. It has been concocted in cahoots with the very same people who manufactured the existential crisis that currently threatens us. Without any irony or mention of how we got into this position, we read in the foreword how the plan is "one of the most seminal moments in [the NHS's] 75-year history" and a "once-in-a-generation opportunity to put staffing on a sustainable footing and improve patient care".

We are informed that the NHS currently has a 150,000 staffing shortfall and that without any intervention this is projected to climb as high as 360,000 by 2037, but we are expected to believe that these shortfalls are solely due to an ageing population and setbacks resulting from Covid-19 - nothing here about the sustained attack on the NHS by the same bunch now claiming to be its saviours.

These projected staff shortages



Paul Cézanne 'The Three Skulls' 1898

are even more scary than they first appear, given that the UK already has significantly fewer doctors per 1,000 population than most nations in the OECD.<sup>2</sup> Imagine for a second if, as is perfectly possible, in 2037 another pandemic hits the UK (or Covid-19 mutates again, becoming as deadly as it was in 2020), what will happen if the current rate of disintegration is allowed to continue - a terrifying thought.

## Headline-grabbing

So, with this possible disaster in mind, let us turn to look at how exactly NHS England and the government aims to save our health service with their Long Term Workforce Plan. The plan is divided into three parts: 'Train', 'Retain' and 'Reform'. The first part, focusing on training more staff, is where we see the main, headline-grabbing ideas and is the only part of the plan that commits to any concrete funding.

We are told that £2.4 billion will boost the training of more nurses and doctors; we are promised a doubling of medical school places, including a 50% increase for general practitioner training and a 92% increase for adult nursing by 2031-32. On the face of it these pledges actually seem quite ambitious and have been welcomed by many leading doctors.

But, of course, it raises the immediate question: if all we had to do was train more clinicians, then why have they waited 13 years, with the NHS on the point of collapse, to come up with it? The obvious answer is that these pledges give the Tories positive headlines and useful slogans for the upcoming general election without them having to commit any funding or action in the near future.

However, even if the extra training targets were met, the new doctors and nurses would not be seen for many more years. We are promised 500 extra medical school places by 2025, but how would this benefit in the short term, for example, primary care, which has recently been hemorrhaging GPs due to stress and burnout? In the meantime, far more GPs would have been forced to leave their jobs due to stress and the reality of the crisis facing the NHS each winter means that even surviving the next 12 months is not certain!

Then there are the other features of the plan: eg, shortening medical school training. Currently this involves a five-year university course, but there is no evidence

suggesting that doctors are being overly educated. Speaking personally, when I started my junior doctor years, I felt the opposite was true: I could have done with an extra year or two of education, so that I was not left to try and learn things on the job - often with not so good consequences for the patients.

True, making mistakes on the job can be a valuable way to learn and healthcare workers will always make mistakes just like in any other job, because they are human. But, in healthcare more than in other jobs, every effort must be made to minimise mistakes, or accept them only in controlled situations, where the impact on patients is likely to be minimal.

The proposal to introduce more apprenticeships for doctors and nurses is an even worse idea - it means that by 2031-32 apprenticeships would make up at least 22% of the entire workforce. Apprenticeships in any profession are usually bad for the workers - they essentially enable employers to pay them less (sometimes pay nothing at all for a while) to do their job. Introducing large numbers of apprenticeships, or less well educated doctors, would thus require a large pool of the current, very experienced doctors and nurses to teach and train these less experienced - sadly the exact opposite situation exists in our hospitals and GP surgeries currently. The experienced clinicians do not even have enough time to care safely for their own patients - hence the horror of 12-hour delays in A&E and the 7.47 million people who have been waiting years for treatment.

The plan goes on to describe other ways that "innovative new ways of working" will be established, with greater reliance on, for example, physician and nursing associates (PAs and NAs); by 2036-37 we are promised there will be 64,000 NAs and 10,000 PAs. These are not actually new roles: PAs have been around for several years now and nursing associates sounds very much like the rebranding of healthcare assistants, who have been part of the workforce for decades. We are back to the same issues here as with apprenticeships. What these roles are essentially about is an attempt to get doctors and nurses to do work they have always done for far less pay.

Medical training for PAs would be squeezed into a two-year course

- at the end of which they would be expected to do the same job as foundation doctors. But again they are going to be very inexperienced, and employed in workplaces that are more unsafe; they will be overwhelmed with patients and will have little or no time to be fully trained for their roles - a recipe for disaster.

## Meaningless

The other two parts of the workforce plan - 'Retain' and 'Reform', which span 151 pages - are very light on any concrete ideas, but very heavy on vague, meaningless soundbites that from a certain perspective sound reasonable, but are at the same time fully detached from the reality of the extent of crisis in the NHS. They are also aims for which it will be impossible to hold anyone to account. Thus in 'Retain' we are told NHS jobs will become more "flexible" and healthworkers will have "access to health and wellbeing support" and "work in a team that is well led". In other words, generic managerial speak that could have been (and probably was) copied and pasted from any organisation's occupational health policy.

Perhaps the token mention of supporting the health and wellbeing of NHS staff implies recognition of the terrible problems we face. For example, a recent survey revealed that almost 80% have considering leaving due to stress, anxiety and burnout in the past year.<sup>3</sup> But access to a "wellbeing service" is not going to have much impact: it will no doubt involve workers in that service (themselves probably woefully undertrained and overworked) telling stressed staff to work on their self-resilience, whilst all the time ignoring the main cause - an unsafe working environment and inadequate pay.

Pay is, of course, the elephant in the room throughout this plan - predictably, given the recent strikes. It is not mentioned. Why after all would paying someone enough to be able to feed their family and pay their bills be relevant to convincing people not to leave their job or sign up to all these new, shiny and very expensive training courses?

Despite what the government and their media collaborators would have us believe, the recent NHS strikes have not been caused by greedy nurses or junior doctors. The typical starting salary for a

band 5 nurse is £28,407 per year, which is about the average wage in the UK currently - and clearly not much more than the bare minimum needed to survive, given the current cost of living. The same situation is true for the vast majority of NHS staff - paramedics, ambulance crew, physiotherapists, etc, etc. Even doctors who have historically been paid more than other staff are now much worse off; as we learnt from junior doctors during their strikes, they are now being paid 26% less in real terms compared to 2008.

So it is all very well wanting to double doctors' training places and increase nursing numbers by 92%, but are people going to be flocking to take university degrees that will make them £100,000-plus in debt for a profession that leaves them barely able to pay their bills and with stress-related illness?

What becomes more clear, the more we analyse the workforce plan, is that it is obviously not a serious attempt to tackle the current funding and staffing issues that are driving the NHS crisis. It is a useful document that allows them to play lip service to the NHS, while continuing to preside over its destruction. If things continue as they are for another decade or so, most likely the NHS will exist in name only.

Some may say that there is a small glimmer of hope in that the chances of the Tories winning the next election are currently looking slim. But, of course, Sir Keir is on a crusade to steer Labour more to the right than even Tony Blair dreamed of. If Starmer and shadow health secretary Wes Streeting have their way, then a Labour win would mean very little in the way of sanctuary for the NHS; hence Streeting's stated intention to continue to use the private health sector to reduce NHS waiting times and Starmer's general disdain towards striking NHS workers - not to mention the fact that the Labour leadership is now giving full support to the workforce plan, which they think is so good, they accused the Tories of stealing it from them! ●

## Notes

1. [www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/accessible-nhs-long-term-workforce-plan](http://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/accessible-nhs-long-term-workforce-plan).
2. [www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/nhs-delivery-and-workforce/workforce/nhs-medical-staffing-data-analysis](http://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/nhs-delivery-and-workforce/workforce/nhs-medical-staffing-data-analysis).
3. [www.newstatesman.com/spotlight/healthcare/2023/07/nhs-staff-quitting-strikes-stress-burnout](http://www.newstatesman.com/spotlight/healthcare/2023/07/nhs-staff-quitting-strikes-stress-burnout).



## INQUIRY

# Blood on their hands

Ian Spencer examines the infected blood scandal. A tale of political incompetence, corporate greed, imperialism and extreme poverty

Rishi Sunak and the Tories are still refusing to announce a compensation scheme for victims and families affected by the infected blood transfusion scandal. That despite people living blighted lives for decades, thousands killed and an inquiry that has been ongoing since 2017.

Even Sir Brian Langstaff, chair of the inquiry has called for immediate compensation payments. But the government refuses to budge, insisting on waiting for the completion of the inquiry report. Meanwhile, more and more die.

Earlier this year, on April 5, Sir Brian published his second interim report. In it he said:

My conclusion is that wrongs were done at an individual, collective and systemic levels. I will set out the detail of what happened and why in my full report, but my judgement is that not only do the infections themselves and their consequences merit compensation, but so too do the wrongs done by authority, whose response served to compound people's suffering.<sup>1</sup>

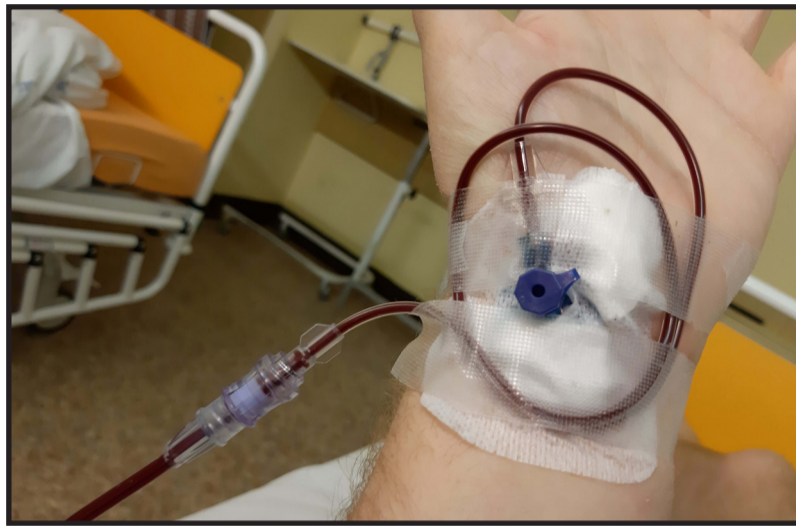
His full report is expected in the autumn.

The background is chilling. It is a story of how hazards associated with the international trade in blood products led to companies knowingly using dangerous techniques to provide 'factor 8' - essential for the formation of blood clots that should allow haemophiliacs to live a near-normal life. In the UK around 1,250 people with bleeding disorders were infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and a further 2,400 with hepatitis C virus (HCV). Of these, by 2022, two-thirds of those with HIV had died and around 700 with HCV, which typically kills by causing chronic active hepatitis, leading to cirrhosis.<sup>2</sup>

It is a story about personal tragedies, deaths and loss, often accompanied by stigma and discrimination. It is also a story of how, even when the damage was done, successive governments, Labour and Conservative, tried to brush the matter under the carpet. Most of all, it is a story of how capitalism in general and imperialism in particular set the scene for the amplification and spread of HCV, hepatitis B (HBV) and HIV.

The inquiry was established in July 2017 by Theresa May as prime minister, following a class action in the courts representing 500 haemophiliacs, most of whom had been infected by HCV and some by HIV. There had been earlier attempts to get to the truth, such as by the privately funded inquiry, under the chairmanship of Sir Peter Archer in 2009, which was established because of government refusal to investigate the matter further. However, it had no statutory powers to subpoena witnesses or documents. What it did discover, though, was the loss of significant numbers of documents relating to the infection of patients with HCV, including the archives of David Owen, from when he was Labour health secretary.

Later, in 2000, it was revealed that the minutes of meetings of the Advisory Committee on the Virological Safety of Blood had also "gone missing". Owen discovered that NHS self-sufficiency in blood products had not been achieved by 1987, despite the fact that, as early as 1975, the World Health Organisation



Transfusion: with horrendous dangers

recognised the dangers of HBV and called for countries to be self-sufficient.<sup>3</sup> One of the reasons for the UK failure to become self-sufficient was the underfunding of the then state-owned Bio Products Ltd, which was visited by the Medicine Inspectorate in 1979, where they noted that the buildings were never designed for the scale of production envisaged.

### Hepatitis

Generally, HCV is difficult to catch, other than parenterally (that is, by injection or transfusion). Most factor 8 was produced by plasmapheresis, which is when donated blood has the plasma extracted before the packed red cells are re-transfused back to the donor. One of the advantages of this is that plasma can be 'donated' much more frequently.

While in the UK the donation of blood is voluntary, elsewhere the selling of blood in general and plasma in particular was carried out often by the poorest in society. In the United States this included intravenous drug users and prisoners. There are examples, such as the Arkansas prison system, profiting by regular blood harvesting.<sup>4</sup> The poorest in the world, as well as the US, were often 'donating' (if it can be called that) several times a month under extreme economic compulsion, and in many developing countries were directly infected, during the process of donating, due to poorly sterilised equipment.<sup>5</sup>

It had long been recognised that there was a 'serum hepatitis', as distinct from hepatitis A (HAV), which typically occurs in epidemics, as a result of infected food or water, often in children and rarely with long-term consequences. For example, in 1942, during mass vaccination of US troops, some 50,000 personnel were infected with 'serum hepatitis'.<sup>6</sup> In 1963 Baruch Blumberg identified the antigen and by 1971 a test had been developed to screen donations to blood banks.<sup>7</sup> Worldwide, around 620,000 die each year from HBV and its sequelae - typically cirrhosis and primary liver cancer.<sup>8</sup> By 1975 HCV was isolated, then identified as 'non A, non B' hepatitis.

In 1974, Judith Graham Pool, who had developed cryoprecipitate as a safer treatment for haemophilia, warned of the dangers of the newer form of treatment, using factor concentrates, where large amounts of plasma is pooled to extract factor 8. The WHO had also expressed its concern. It was the development of factor concentrates that led to a huge, worldwide growth in plasma farming in poor countries around the world and large profits for the companies

engaged in it.

By May 1983 the risks from HIV, HBV and HCV were well known and concerns were expressed by the head of the UK Centre for Disease Control, Dr NS Galbraith, who recommended the withdrawal of US blood products. By then, France had already halted all US imports. Despite this, Tory health secretary Kenneth Clarke, who this time was obliged to give evidence to the inquiry, said in November 1983, "There is no conclusive evidence that Aids is transmitted by blood products", and they continued to be used.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, the Cutter Biological Division of the pharmaceutical giant, Bayer, was still not pasteurising plasma donations up until August 1984 and was busily dumping old untreated stock in Asian and Latin American markets in 1985.<sup>10</sup>

The inquiry published its first interim report on July 29 2022. Among its recommendations, was that there should be interim compensation payments of £100,000 to those infected and still alive, as well as to the bereaved partners of those who had been killed. However, there was no compensation for the parents of children who were killed and those children who were orphaned by infected blood products. It is expected to be among the recommendations of the enquiry that payments will be extended, but it remains to be seen to what extent culpability will be acknowledged by the government and whether responsible individuals will face justice.

### Epidemiology

The dialectical relationship of accident and necessity in history is no better illustrated than in epidemiology. The history of Aids is the history of colonialism, poverty and the subjugation of women. HIV is simian immunodeficiency virus (SIV) from chimpanzees that has crossed over to humans, probably because of the butchering of chimpanzees for meat.

The transition from ape to human is likely to have taken place in the first two decades of the 20th century in Cameroon - a former German colony seized by French and Belgian forces during World War I. HIV2 developed in western Africa and is SIV in sooty mangabeys. However, the crossing of a virus from one species to another is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition to cause a pandemic, which has cost the lives of over 40 million people and has seen a further 39 million living with HIV. In 2022, 630,000 people worldwide died of HIV-related disease.<sup>11</sup>

There is a direct relationship between the imperialist colonisation of Africa and the spread of HIV,

which may have long pre-dated the imperialist epoch, but had only a very limited effect - an epidemiological dead-end, as it were, confined to a village or a small number of people. It was only able to reach first epidemic and then pandemic proportions by the transformation of African society by capitalism, as settled rural communities became urban and rooted in commodity production. Urbanisation was responsible for this, combined with the parenteral (injected) spread of the virus by inadequate colonial medical services disseminating the virus by poorly sterilised needles and syringes - used in well-meaning responses to the treatment of a range of tropical diseases, many of which, such as sleeping sickness, were almost invariably fatal.

Having reached Kinshasa (formally Leopoldville) and neighbouring Brazzaville, HIV was concentrated further by men paying for the use of sex workers, where there were few other opportunities for women to independently earn their living, particularly with the growing poverty in the former Belgian colony in the lead-up to independence.<sup>12</sup> HIV and hepatitis was further spread by poverty and war in Africa and, in the case of South Africa, the denial of its causal role by president Thabo Mbeki. South Africa now has one of the highest rates of HIV prevalence in the world.<sup>13</sup>

When I nursed Aids patients in London in the mid-1980s, the risk factors were cited as the 'four H's': Haemophiliacs, Heroine Users, Homosexuals and Haitians. The last of those seems to be forgotten today, but Haiti saw a huge increase in HIV infection, owing in part to large numbers of Haitians working in Zaire to fill the places formerly occupied by Belgian teachers and administrators who left after the independence of a country where few resources and little effort was put into the education of Africans. At least some of these returned to Haiti with HIV, where another amplification took place.

Haiti, along with many other poor countries in Africa, Asia and beyond, took its place in the worldwide

trade in blood products. It is likely that hundreds, if not thousands, of donors taking part in plasmapheresis were infected. Plasmapheresis donors could donate several times a month and were paid as little as \$2 a time, making it a lucrative trade for corrupt officials of the Duvalier dictatorship. The donors themselves were often infected by HIV, HCV and HBV. Aids in Haiti was further exacerbated by its well-publicised use for sex tourism, particularly by visitors from the US.

Disease is inseparable from the social conditions that give rise to it. As we have seen with Covid, capitalism is a world system - and so are the diseases which emanate from and are exacerbated by it. The solution is an international, planned society where the interests of people and the natural environment are central. I await the final report of the Infected Blood Inquiry with interest, but I am sceptical that even those responsible for the dissemination of HIV, HCV and HBV by negligence, indifference or corruption will face justice - and more sceptical still that the systemic economic base will be spotlighted, of course ●

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## Summer Offensive

### £7,000 still needed

This is the last *Weekly Worker* report before our Summer Offensive concludes at the end of August, which still gives us some three weeks to reach our target of £20,000 - and three weeks for comrades to step up their efforts for the final push.

As well as raising the essential funds and supporting the political work of the CPGB, this year's Summer Offensive has the important aim of raising the cash for our new Communist TV initiative, which we plan to launch this autumn. So, if you support our ideas and want to help us to take them out to an even wider audience, why not make a donation to the SO now?

Last week our total stood at £9,858, leaving us with just over £10,000 still to raise before August 31. As is usual with the Summer Offensive, that sum was made up of big and small donations and this week is no

exception. But whether it be a large or small donation, every pound counts. This week I'd like to thank TD, JC, ML and SM each for their £10, CR who chipped in £90, Ben L, GR and YL who each gave £150 to the SO. Special thanks also go to MM for a £300 donation, along with FK, who raised a nice, round £1,000, and SK, who topped that with £1,356, bringing this week's total to £3,626 and an overall total so far of £13,484.

That means that we have three weeks to raise just under £7,000 to reach our target. Given the amount that has come in on average each week so far during the Summer Offensive, this should be more than possible. In fact at this rate we can even exceed our target.

So get fundraising, comrades, and see if we can get over the line - and beyond it before the 31st! ●

James Harvey



# REVIEW



A weapon beyond the imagination

# Celebrating a mass murderer

Christopher Nolan (screenplay/director) *Oppenheimer* Universal Pictures, general release

This self-serving and slavishly pro-imperialist film from the Anglo-American, Christopher Nolan, follows in the footsteps of those previously produced by such talented directors as Leni Riefenstahl and Kathryn Bigelow - glorifiers of Nazism and US militarism respectively.

The film is a slanted biopic of J Robert Oppenheimer (played by Cillian Murphy) - the US theoretical physicist who developed nuclear weapons as part of the Manhattan Project, and thus was party to the August 1945 mass murders in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. With his self-aggrandisement personified, he prostituted his science and himself to US ascendancy and domination of the rest of the world. It was four years until the Soviet Union was able to test an atomic weapon, during which time the USA was cock of the walk worldwide.

In a USA fed a decades-long diet of the Yellow Peril (fuelling racism against immigrants of Chinese and Japanese origin, especially in California), president Harry S Truman's open sabre-rattling after Franklin D Roosevelt's attempted masking of the nature of US imperialism, and the sneak Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, it was easy to engender a climate dehumanising the Japanese foe.

Arguments about saving GI lives during a hypothetical invasion of the Japanese home islands are hinted at in *Oppenheimer* - although, even if truly discussed widely, this was window-dressing for public consumption and the salving of liberal consciences. Truman (Gary Oldman) did not need convincing that the atom-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki would bring about a rapid Japanese surrender, which his administration needed primarily to best the USA's wartime Soviet ally.

Under heavy political pressure exerted at the covert Los Alamos, New Mexico atomic weapons campus through general Leslie Groves (Matt Damon), Oppenheimer brought forward the first A-bomb test, code-named Trinity. The test was carried out on July 16 1945 in order that it could be announced as a *fait accompli* at the Potsdam Conference held from July

17 - August 2 between the USA, UK and Soviet Union (represented by Truman, Attlee and Churchill, and Stalin). Even then, the bomb was described euphemistically.

As a result of Stalin's 1943 declaration at the USA-UK-USSR Tehran conference that the Soviet Union would enter the war against Japan once Germany was defeated, the Soviets declared war on Japan on August 7 1945. Subsequently, the USSR defeated the Kwantung Army in parts of China (including Manchuria) and in Mongolia.

However, US atomic weapon technology or research was never shared with the USSR, its 'ally'. And, unsurprisingly, neither was the Soviet Union informed beforehand of the atomic bombing of Japan, though the UK authorities gave formal agreement under treaty. Hiroshima and Nagasaki were accordingly targeted on August 6 and 9 respectively.

*Oppenheimer* fails to show any of the effects of those atomic weapons on the ordinary people of those cities. Film of the aftermath in both cities is readily available, as is the testimony of survivors (the *hibakusha*, totalling 400,000), many of whom died of radiation poisoning subsequently. An estimated 210,000-250,000 people perished in the two cities either immediately or shortly after the two bombings. This failure results from a political decision by the film-makers and their financial backers, exposing its propagandist nature. Some mealy-mouthed excuses have been given recently about the too-shocking nature of these images, but they were shown repeatedly on BBC television throughout the 1950s, being then considered salutary for all ages.

Unsurprisingly, the US military and its paid academics have always tried to downplay the number of deaths, incredibly suggesting that only around 100,000 died - still mass murder in anyone's book.

Oppenheimer's communist associations, including his wife and a former lover, who were lapsed members of the Communist Party of the USA, are of little moment, given the CPUSA's Stalinist politics and its degeneration into a rally squad for Roosevelt's bourgeois government.

The film depicts Oppenheimer's crocodile tears and apparent concerns, even after the 1945 Trinity nuclear test more than confirmed the certain, massive devastation as a result of using these atomic devices. Let us never forget that no-one was forced to work on the Manhattan Project, which produced the weapons used on Japan. Certainly, other nuclear physicists continued their research outside the military, including professor Patrick Blackett, who became a vociferous opponent of UK nuclear weaponry in later life.

During World War II the mantle of global hegemony passed inevitably, if reluctantly, from the UK to the USA. The period covered by *Oppenheimer* sees this in Britain's growing 'bag carrier' role for the USA. Pathetic attempts to regain its empire and colonial-based prestige were crushed at Suez in 1956 and during the post-war years when Britain strove for an 'independent nuclear deterrent', but it was all for nothing. Now, Britain's armed forces are much reduced in comparative global terms, and the UK has become merely the US's satrap.

And, so far, the USA is the only country in the world to have used nuclear weapons. Since Vietnam kicked out its forces in 1975, it might have become the destroyer *par excellence* - armed to the teeth as it is, but unable to build, only to obliterate whichever enemy Aunt Sally it wants to cow. It must come as no surprise that US 'defence' spending is larger than that of the six next largest arms-spending countries combined.

*Oppenheimer* fulfils the Whig version of history. Not only is everything done in our interests in the best of all possible worlds, and the many thousands of deaths caused by the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were inevitable and necessary to shorten the war: but incredibly their use was somehow to be seen as *saving* lives! US servicemen's lives, that is. Of course, from the US imperialist view - some of us in the 60s and 70s might have said the 'Amerikan' view - the lives of those beyond its territory (stolen by blood and war from its

indigenous peoples, of course) are dispensable.

We know that US bourgeois ideologues have a fall-back position of defending the 'American way' at the expense of the rest of us on earth. Satraps nothing! - we may become

slaves to a future Amerikan empire, keeping its population in a custom to which it has become habituated.

*Oppenheimer* has more than a whiff of this and we would be well advised to take heed ●

Jim Moody

## Fighting fund

### Two-week break

It's been a pretty good seven days for the *Weekly Worker* fighting fund and the chances of hitting our monthly target of £2,250. That's the amount we need from our readers and supporters to ensure we're able to do our job week after week.

Over those seven days a number of comrades chipped in, donating altogether £525 - which, added to the £187 that came our way in the first two days of August, takes us up to £712. But I'm not taking anything for granted - we need to make sure we do what we did in July and break through that £2,250 barrier, in contrast to the previous three months.

Leading the way this week was comrade JP, who contributed a fantastic £100 via PayPal - brilliant, comrade! Other PayPal donors were AM (£30), NW (also £30, made, as usual, in two separate payments), and MH (£10).

But the largest chunk this week came, as usual, from those standing orders/bank transfers. Thanks go to comrades AC (£60), AM (£45), BO (£35), CG and NH (£30 each), NR, GD and DV (£25), RG (£15), and SM and LG (£10 each).

On top of that we received the usual cash donations from those regular contributors, LM (£40) and comrade Hassan (£5) - all of whom helped us take that much needed step forward this week.

But, as I say, I'm taking nothing for granted and I hope that our keenest supporters take the same attitude. They know

that comrades like them must play their part if the *Weekly Worker* is to continue doing its essential work each and every week. Help us keep up with the early pace by making a bank transfer, clicking on that PayPal button on our website or sending us a cheque. Let's make sure we do it once again this month, comrades.

But let me repeat what I said last week: you won't hear from me now until August 31. The *Weekly Worker* is about to take its two-week summer break to coincide with the CPGB's Communist University, so I hope to see lots of you there! If not, you'll hear from me at the very end of the month.

Remember, while there will be no paper for the next two weeks, we continue to pay our printers by standing order. That is how we got such a good deal from them. Because we are weekly, because we pay month in and month out, we managed to negotiate a considerable reduction in what they normally charge. So, despite a two-week break, there is no break in our need for finance. In other words, keep the money coming in.

To donate via PayPal, go to [weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/donate](http://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/donate); to do so by bank transfer, please pay 'Weekly Worker', using sort code 30-99-64, account number 00744310 ●

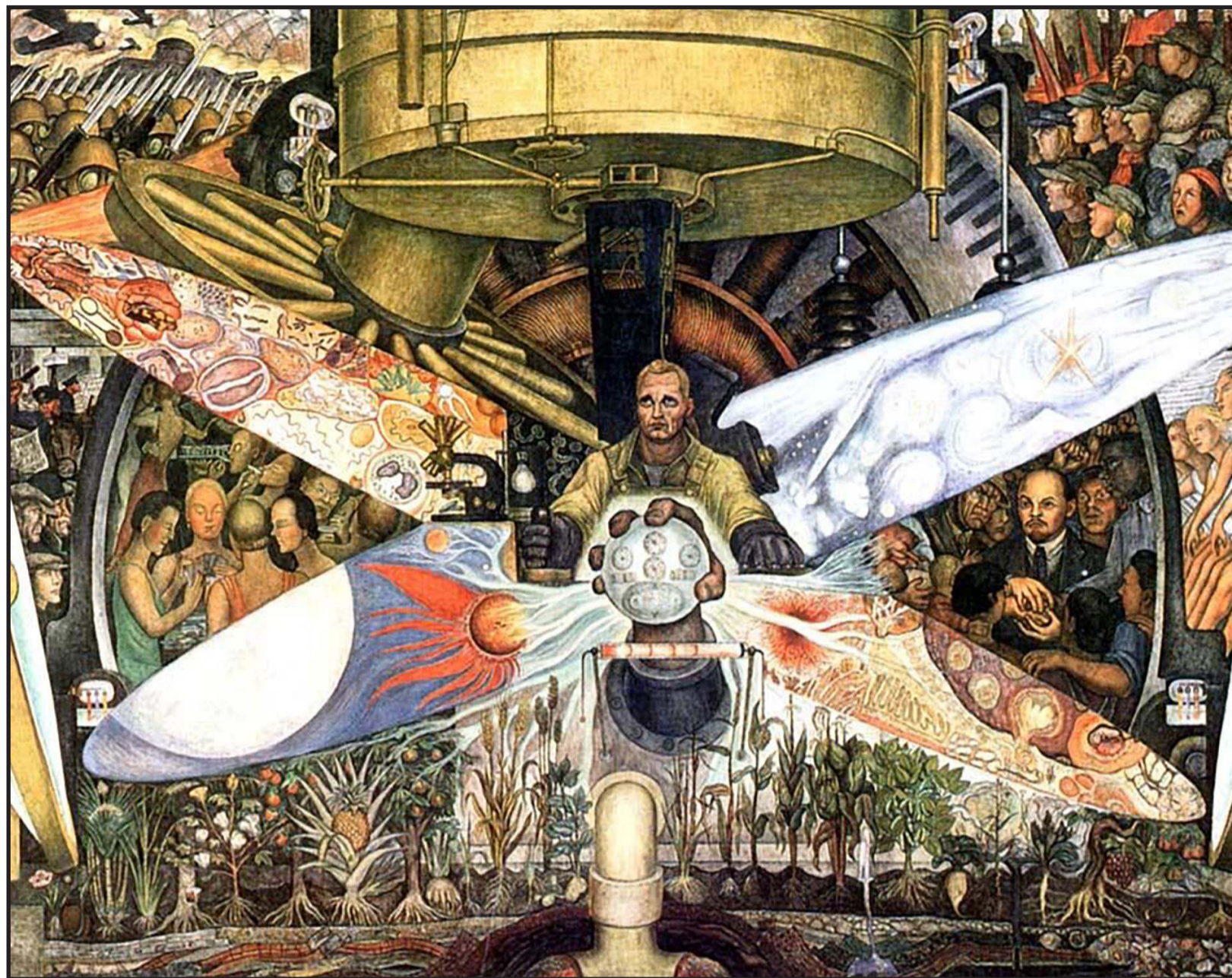
Robbie Rix

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



# COMMUNIST UNIVERSITY

## A week of provocative debates



CU is different from the run-of-the-mill schools put on by other left groups. There is plenty of time is allocated to contributions from the floor. Controversial debate is positively welcomed and, needless to say, there are no one-minute time limits. Moreover, critical thinking is encouraged, as can be seen by our impressive list of speakers each and every year

Dates: Saturday August 12 to Saturday August 19 (inclusive)

Venue: International Student House, 229 Great Portland Street, London W1 (nearest tube: Great Portland Street)

Cost: Full day: £10 (£5) Single session: £5 (£3)

For the latest updates and zoom registration links visit [communistuniversity.uk](http://communistuniversity.uk)

Date	10am to 12.15pm	2pm to 4.15pm	4.45pm to 7pm
<b>Saturday August 12</b>	Registration begins at 1pm	'The Bolshevik adjustment': was the October revolution legitimate? Lars T Lih	Climate crisis - no time like the present: end of the roadshow Tam Dean Burn
<b>Sunday August 13</b>	The revolutionary origins of language: how did we learn to speak? Chris Knight	The rise and rise of the far right David Broder	Labour and price: a simple bypass round an old conundrum Moshé Machover
<b>Monday August 14</b>	Clara Zetkin and the women's and women workers' question of our time Ben Lewis	The pro-war 'left': the necessity of drawing hard lines of demarcation against social-imperialists Colin Turner (Communist Platform, Netherlands)	The CPGB 1920-1941: unity and its travails Lawrence Parker
<b>Tuesday August 15</b>	Capitalism in the 21st century Michael Roberts	'For Stalin and the tsar': red-brown politics in modern Russia Edmund Griffiths	Marx, Faraday and the spectral objectivity of value Ian Wright
<b>Wednesday August 16</b>	Are human beings about to be superseded by AI? Yassamine Mather	Turkey: how not to stop the far right Esen Uslu	Prospects for the DSA Joseph Perez (Marxist Unity Group, USA)
<b>Thursday August 17</b>	Iran protests and the failures of the Iranian left Yassamine Mather	What's left of Corbynism? Why the official Labour left has been so useless Tina Werkmann and Kevin Bean	The challenge of communist unity Mike Macnair
<b>Friday August 18</b>	The struggle for reproductive rights in the early communist movement and its relevance for today Anne McShane	Socialism and bourgeois feminism: from Marx and Engels to the Second International Marc Mulholland	Nato's proxy war in Ukraine and its strategic goal: encircling and strangling China Jack Conrad
<b>Saturday August 19</b>	Leaving deserts behind: ecological destruction in the ancient world Mike Macnair	Starts 1.30pm: Climate crisis and the limits of protest politics Jack Conrad	Immediately following previous session: Brief evaluation

## 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

There are  
paradoxical  
effects

## Land, sea and air records

Yet more grim statistics show that the planet is getting hotter and hotter, writes **Eddie Ford**. Meanwhile the Tories are denouncing eco-zealots, campaigning against Ulez and granting yet more oil and gas concessions

Another week, another set of temperature records broken. This time it is the announcement that we had the hottest July and the hottest day, July 6. That came just after news of the hottest surface sea temperatures. True, the difference might appear at first to be microscopic. But what is important is the direction of travel - which is terrifying. Everywhere you look, things are getting hotter and hotter, and everything we know tells us that will continue to be the case.

Yes, it is more than likely that these temperatures are partly driven by the El Niño phenomenon - the warming of the eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean. However, that effect is relatively marginal. The main explanation, quite obviously, is human-created greenhouse gases. Again, it is worth remembering - going against a British-centred view - that we are dealing with *global* temperatures, meaning that the highest surface temperatures of the sea should be expected in March, not in July or August. This means that records will almost certainly continue to be broken.

Interestingly, sea surface temperature measurements have been made from ships for more than 150 years and are actually some of the longest instrumental records available for understanding the climate. How accurate they have been is a different question, of course, but they do exist and they do not need to be that accurate to give you a good idea about where things are going. As it happens, with the near inevitable march of technology, for the past 40 years there have also been measurements available from satellites and buoys - so no-one can pretend that they do not know what is happening.

### Steeper curve

From all this data, scientists have discovered that over the full period of the records, global mean sea surface temperature has increased by close to 0.9°C, and that the increase over the past four decades is about 0.6°C - the curve is getting steeper. The latest five-year average is about 0.2°C above that between 1991 and 2020 - another alarming sign. Some of the fastest warming areas are parts of the Arctic Ocean, the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea, as well as parts of the Pacific. This is extremely bad news for all of us, because seas and oceans help to regulate the climate, soaking up heat, driving weather patterns, acting as a carbon sink and providing respite, as cool air blowing off the sea can make hot land temperatures more bearable. On the flipside, warmer waters have less ability to absorb carbon dioxide, which means there will be more of this greenhouse gas in the atmosphere.

Warming oceans also contribute to ice melting, which causes a rise in sea level - with potentially catastrophic consequences. In more scary statistics, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts



Robert Hubert 'Fire of Rome' 1785

that by 2100 sea levels could be as much as 1.1 metres higher than they are today, and sadly no amount of emissions reduction can stop the near and mid-term impacts of this phenomenon. About one billion people could possibly be exposed to much greater risks of flooding by the mid-century, whether in Bangkok, Amsterdam, Jakarta, Shenzhen, Manila, Huston, New Orleans or Dubai.

As many readers will know, several marine heatwaves have occurred around the world this year, including around the British Isles earlier this summer. Last week, waters off Florida had unprecedented temperatures of 38°C. Unfortunately, marine heatwaves are becoming more numerous, with the number of heatwave days having tripled in the past couple of years. They rose by more than 50% in the 30 years to 2016, compared with the period 1925-54. These marine heat waves destroy swathes of sea-life, just as wildfires take out huge areas of forest. Indeed, as satellite images have shown, the deep blue sea is actually becoming steadily greener over time, due to changes in plankton populations - with areas in the low

latitudes near the equator especially affected.

You could not ask for a more graphic representation of the dire state of the ecosystem. Plankton of different sizes scatter light differently, and plankton with different pigments absorb it differently. When comparing these changes in colour with those hypothesised from a computer model simulating what the oceans would look like if human-caused global heating had never taken place, these changes seem clear. They have been detected in over 56% of the world's oceans - an area greater than all of the land on earth. In most areas there is an unmistakable greening effect, but there are also places where red or blue colourings are rising or falling - climate change being a complex, chaotic process.

Furthermore, in an ominous warning, Antarctica is experiencing what amounts to heatwaves on the frozen continent. Last summer and this winter, sea ice extent has reached record lows - changes that happened even faster than most climate scientists predicted. There is now 2.5 million square kilometres less sea ice than there should be at this time of year - roughly the size of

Western Australia. There have also been winter heatwaves in the central Chilean Andes, with temperatures surging to 37°C - melting the snow below 3,000 metres, which will have knock-on effects for people living in downstream valleys who depend on meltwater during the spring and summer.

Perhaps most worrying of all though, there is a lot of competition - a new study published in the *Nature Communications* journal suggests that the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation could weaken to the point of collapse by as early as 2025. AMOC was already known to be at its most sluggish in 1,600 years owing to global warming and researchers spotted warning signs of a tipping point in 2021. Using sea surface temperature data stretching back to 1870 as a proxy for the change in strength of AMOC currents over time, evidence from past collapses indicates a temperature *drop* of 10°C in places like the British Isles, Norway and Iceland. Global warming is predicted to have such paradoxical localised effects.

### Madness

In a depressing footnote to this story, we have Rishi Sunak's campaigning against the London Ulez scheme and granting at least a hundred new gas and oil licences in the North Sea as part of a "maxing out" of fossil fuels that can only be described as moral and economic madness. Alongside that we have the comical (or disgusting) sight of Tory ministers trying to justify the unjustifiable by telling us that the new licences are "totally compatible" with the goal to achieve net zero by 2050.

One of the most absurd things that has been said, out of the many, is that these gas and oil concessions would be good for the environment because domestic supplies require less transport - therefore they will cut down on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and must be green! You could hardly make it up. Do they really believe it themselves? As if North Sea oil ends up entirely in Britain: no, it is sold into a global market. Certainly, the idea that opening up 100 new gas and oil concessions is somehow a contribution to the fight against global warming is not only jaw-dropping nonsense: it is downright stupid.

Well-rehearsed Tory MPs have

appeared on the radio and TV to inform us about Britain's marvellous achievements over the past years when it comes to setting the green agenda, etc. What they do not explain, of course, is that these supposed achievements had far more to do with the class war than ecological concerns. Though Margaret Thatcher did give one speech about the environment, she quickly recanted - going on to complain that the climate had become a leftwing vehicle and writing in her 2003 book *Statecraft* about the "alarmist" science of the IPCC: "The new dogma about climate change has swept through the left-of-centre governing classes."

Therefore any idea that Thatcher was some sort of eco-warrior, should be dismissed with the contempt it deserves - even if she did have a scientific background as a food researcher at J Lyons. No, she did not close down the coal mines because she was a far-sighted guardian of nature who recognised the threat of global warming. Rather, she recognised the threat of highly organised and militant British miners to the bourgeois order.

There were two miners strikes under Ted Heath - the final one in 1974 ended up in a general election, with him asking who ruled in Britain: the unions or the elected government? Well, he did not get the answer he wanted: the Tories were voted out of office. The Tories never forgave the miners for such a humiliation. From that moment onwards they were determined to break the NUM - for which they prepared assiduously, just like the bourgeoisie did for the 1926 General Strike (unlike the TUC, it has to be said). The fact that they closed down one coalfield after another was the Tories' *unintended* contribution to reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions: replacing coal with gas generation of power made a difference. But, of course, the burning of any fossil fuel still releases CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouses gases.

Now we are meant to believe that gas and oil extracted in British waters is a wonderful thing. A bit like going to the supermarket nowadays and finding out that half of the products on the shelves are apparently good for the environment. It is spin, gimmickry and downright lies.

Rishi Sunak is a modern-day Nero. He fiddles the figures while the planet burns ●

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