



**Mr Griffiths goes to Beijing:
all-expenses jaunt in return
for parroting the Chinese line**

- Letters and debate
- David Miller polemic
- Finnish Winter War
- Chile: 50 years

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Towards a mass Communist Party

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ZELENSKY'S OFFENSIVE ENDS AS IT BEGAN: WITH A WHIMPER



LETTERS



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

Anti-Semitism?

I wish to take issue with Mike Macnair's article, which suggests David Miller is blaming the Jews for the crimes of US imperialism ('Anti-Semitism of useful idiots', August 31). This is about UK and US support for Israel, of course.

It rather feels that Macnair is unwilling to consider that Jews and Zionism are related: he considers the evils of Israel are entirely down to the Yanks, with Jews as unwitting pawns in their battle for world domination. As far as he can tell, Jewish power has nothing to do with the success of Israel. Note it's been said that it's safer to criticise Israel in Israel than it is in the UK. Now why is that? Is it the evil Tories and the Labour right that we must blame for the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism?

In fact, who is behind the hate mail I receive? Who was it that got me expelled from the GMB union for criticising Israel? GMB insiders tell me it was down to Rhea Wolfson, leading light of the Jewish Labour Movement, ex-Labour NEC and currently the GMB's international officer. According to Mr Macnair, she can only be in the pay of the US government... And her claim to be a Jew laid low by my hurtful comments on Israel is entirely unrelated to the charge of anti-Semitism she had Gary Smith lay before me? Indeed, I have Jewish friends who say they must support Israel, because where else can they go, should the Brits turn against them? So one might surmise that it is Jews that want Israel - not necessarily the Americans; the Americans gave their support to the Zionist project rather late in the day - Israel was pretty much fully formed before the Americans chose to support it.

But, according to Mike Macnair, this is all meaningless - for it is US imperialism that oppresses the Palestinians - it is nothing to do with Jews at all. Why - even to mention this, will mark me as a "useful idiot" in Macnair's book.

Whilst he criticises veteran Jewish campaigner Tony Greenstein for supporting David Miller, let us note what Tony himself says on this matter: "Jews are not an oppressed minority - they are overwhelmingly middle class."

Let us recall what David Miller tweeted:

"(1) Jews are not discriminated against. (2) They are over-represented in Europe, North America and Latin America in positions of cultural, economic and political power. (3) They are therefore, in a position to discriminate against actually marginalised groups."

As we all know, Jewish Voice for Labour did not like this. They declared on August 9 that Miller had "crossed the line". They viewed his words as "overstatements at best, flattening and homogenising Jews, ignoring any historical, international or social context and creating an impression of Jews exercising power as a cohesive force. Many were distressed by some of Miller's statements in the past, which seemed to exaggerate Israeli power, but we believed they fell within the terrain of academic freedom. This recent tweet, focusing on Jews, is of a different order and has crossed a line."

Macnair thinks Israel exists because the UK and US created it and support it. If only it were so simple! Key players in declaring that anti-Semitism exists (when it does not) are the Campaign Against Antisemitism, the Community Security Trust, the

Jewish Labour Movement, Hope Not Hate (a misnomer!), Labour Against Antisemitism, the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Jewish Leadership Council, the three Jewish newspapers (*Jewish Chronicle*, *Jewish News*, *Jewish Telegraph*), UK Lawyers for Israel, Friends of Israel, Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre - and, of course, the Israeli government.

What do all these groups have in common? It is estimated that 70% of the UK's 300,000 Jews support Israel (but are they all really 'Jews' for most of them have rejected their *Torah* and *Talmud*...?). However, they abuse their claim to Jewishness in their determination to protect their racist colony.

It is interesting that I was expelled from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign for saying pretty much the same thing as David Miller. Like JVL, PSC is run by folk calling themselves Jews (even though they have a Palestinian employee). They took great issue with me for saying:

"There is anti-Semitism in the UK because, I think, the Jews have so much leverage here. And they clearly do, as the most outspoken ones - those in support of Israel, the Zionists - have shown. They have exerted considerable leverage on the UK's political parties, the police, the schools and universities, the local authorities to adopt the IHRA - and has it made the Jews safer?"

"Not at all. But it does indicate the Jews in the UK (that with 370,000 or 0.5% of the population) generally wield significant influence."

PSC declared I had made an anti-Semitic statement and they continue to decry me. In April, they wrote to all PSC regional groups instructing them to boycott the 'Muslim and Jew: beyond Israel' tour I had organised to 15 cities. By so doing, they were assisting the Zionists, who were also trying to do the same thing. I have come to the view that the PSC care more about cossetting Jews and maintaining "benevolent Zionism" than saving Palestine and dismantling Israel. They support Palestine, it's true, but they seem to believe Jews have a right to Israel too.

Readers may wonder why David Miller and I feel the need to say anything about Jews. Well, the fact of the matter is that we have both been persecuted by people identifying as Jews for criticising Israel. And we know that the power of the Israel lobby in the UK is great. And we know that it is driven by people who think themselves Jewish. But it's clear that neither David nor I are anti-Semitic - neither of us are displaying "hostility to or prejudice against Jewish people" (the *OED* definition). We are simply *making an observation*. We feel a need to challenge the prevailing narrative.

Folk make less than glowing observations about the Scots ('mean with their money'); Irish ('potato-loving drunkards'); English ('stiff-upper-lip xenophobes'); Catholics (poor-loving Mary-worshippers); Protestants (Catholic-haters), etc, but if an observation is made about Jews that contradicts their claim to be perpetual victims, excluded from power and endlessly discriminated against, all hell breaks loose and we see anti-Zionist and Zionist Jews suddenly holding hands, campaigning jointly to exclude us from the struggle for Palestine.

Can I reiterate, this letter is not about attacking Jews. It is about supporting a fellow campaigner for Palestine, who is under attack for commenting that Jews in the UK are not disenfranchised and those that support Israel (ie, 70% of them) are enthusiastic about abusing their influence in furtherance of Zionism,

by deplatforming and smearing all who oppose them as Jew-haters.

One of our Palestinian members has told me this letter is worthwhile, because she has been victimised (like Miller) here in the UK by Zionists - who were claiming to be Jewish. She is but one of the 3,000 Palestinians in the UK who think themselves on a shaky peg. Should the UK Lawyers for Israel (UKLFI) call for their citizenship rights to be removed, their call will be supported by others in the establishment claiming to be Jews. And the UKLFI are run by... who? Well, it's certainly not US imperialists.

If Mike Macnair still believes Israel was created by US imperialism, he should consult Alan Hart's brilliant book *Zionism - the real enemy of the Jews*. He'll read how the USA originally refused to support the Zionist takeover of Palestine and actually sided with the Arabs. All that changed in 1947, when Zionist Jews in the USA started flexing their media and financial muscles. Harry S Truman was in favour of issuing 400,000 visas to the Jews in Hitler's concentration camps, so that they could come to the USA. The Zionists were furious, because they wanted to send them to Palestine.

Truman was told that if he continued he would never be elected president again (see chapter 11: 'President Truman surrenders to Zionism'). He dropped the visa plan. So the camp survivors were pushed by Zionists who chartered boats, often without visas, to Palestine - and there went on to form the backbone of the Haganah, showing no mercy in the Nakba.

Then, when they wanted to declare Israel, Zionist pressure again forced the US to support the UN Partition Plan. Then Truman won in 1948, thanks to Zionist Jews supporting him. Since then, no US president has risked alienating the Zionists.

Pete Gregson
One Democratic Palestine

Horrible hacks

David Miller has been targeted for the sack for political reasons by the mainstream of the ruling class, who concur with the Zionists that he should be eliminated from academia, because of his sharp and meaningful criticisms and exposure of a form of racism that has overwhelming ruling class support. His recent denunciation by Jewish Voice for Labour is another terrible example of how solidarity in the face of attacks by the class enemy is undone by political softness on Zionism on the left.

In raising the issue of the disproportionate representation of bourgeois Jews in the ruling class, he is following in the footsteps of a number of leftwing, anti-Zionist activists, including myself and later Norman Finkelstein, who have put this in statistical form and attempted to discuss its implications in a rational, socialist manner.

Finkelstein in his 2018 essay *Corbyn mania*, in the context of the huge role of the Zionist lobby in destroying the Corbyn movement, offered the best breakdown of this:

"The three richest Brits are Jewish. Jews comprise only 0.5% of the population but fully 20% of the 100 richest Brits. Relative both to the general population and to other ethno-religious groups, British Jews are in the aggregate disproportionately wealthy, educated and professionally successful... Jews are incomparably organised, as they have created a plethora of interlocking, overlapping and mutually reinforcing communal and defence organisations that operate in both the domestic and international arenas. In many countries, not least the US and the UK, Jews occupy

strategic positions in the entertainment industry, the arts, publishing, journals of opinion, the academy, the legal profession, and government... The wonder would be if these raw data didn't translate into outsized Jewish political power."

He concludes his statistical survey by remarking: "It is certainly legitimate to query the amplitude of this political power and whether it has been exaggerated, but it cannot be right to deny (or suppress) critical socioeconomic facts."

Denying and suppressing these crucial socioeconomic facts is exactly the attitude of many on the left that capitulate to Zionism.

Alex Callinicos's Socialist Workers Party issued its own awful statement which began by stating that "Anti-Zionism is not anti-Semitism. Saying Jews are 'over-represented' in positions of power is." This wretched, opportunist organisation has form for joining in Zionist witch-hunts. Callinicos denounced Norman Finkelstein in 1999 for coming "dangerously close to giving comfort to those who dream of new holocausts" with his famous work *The holocaust industry*. Today it includes Zionists in its Stand Up to Racism initiative - particularly in Scotland, with a standing invitation to Glasgow Friends of Israel to its events, to the outrage of Palestine activists.

Now the centrist, Islamophobic and soft pro-Zionist CPGB has jumped on the bandwagon, in a hypocritical, ignorant and two-faced article by Mike Macnair, which agrees with the SWP that Miller uses "really anti-Semitic arguments" and that David's words "lump together all Jews without any recognition of class or other differences. Miller targets Jews, not the actual ruling class, and plays on the idea of Jews as ultra-rich and manipulative."

A pack of lies! Miller does not 'target' Jews. He cites facts about their disproportionate representation in positions of power, which actually puts them in a similar position to white Anglo-Saxons, in Britain, the US and other Anglo-dominated imperialist countries. He says *nothing* about Jews being "manipulative". These are lies pulled out of the author's bottom. Miller quite correctly refuses to accept the widely propagated myth that Jews are *today* oppressed as a people in a world dominated by imperialism, and cites the material facts that prove it.

Macnair writes, in a polemic against Tony Greenstein (whose recent leftward movement is precisely shown in his defence of David Miller, contrary to his denunciations of myself and Gerry Downing in the past): "But rather than defend Miller's right to free speech, even if what he says is crap, comrade Greenstein goes on to argue with the highest degree of artificiality that Miller's tweet's focus on Jews being 'over-represented' in Europe, North America and Latin America in positions of cultural, economic and political power' is not anti-Semitic because it is statistically true. Well, yes. But would you make the same complaint about Jews being 'over-represented' in post-revolutionary Soviet government or the Red Army? The 'over-represented' claim is classically anti-Semitic."

This just shows what anti-Marxist cretins the CPGB leadership - centred around the political coward and charlatan, Jack Conrad - actually are. Macnair *admits* that David Miller has got his facts right. "Well, yes," he coyly concedes. But he follows that up with an amalgam that could have been concocted by the 'Campaign Against Anti-Semitism' or the forgers that put together the lies about 'Trotsky-fascism' at the Moscow Trials.

David Miller was talking about the

situation *today*, not pre-revolutionary Russia, when Jews flocked to the revolutionary movement because of their oppression under the virulently anti-Semitic tsarist regime. Macnair is *deliberately* lying and smearing Miller here by dragging in circumstances and happenings that are economically and politically *light years* away from the current context. He is *consciously* smearing David Miller like those who tried to smear Lenin as a German agent in 1917, or Trotsky as pro-fascist in the 1930s.

The same hackery was used against myself in 2014 when I wrote my 'Draft theses on the Jews and modern imperialism', which cited the same facts. I was purged from the CPGB-allied Communist Platform in Left Unity by these third-campist Islamophobes. *Weekly Worker* editor/hack Peter Manson indulged in similar smearing.

Manson noted that I had quoted statistics from the pro-Zionist source *Jewish World Review* that boasted that "between 40% and 48% [in the US] of billionaires are Jews". And he then ranted: "In my opinion, such 'statistics' say far more about the person quoting them than the people they claim to study. Even if we accept that those figures are accurate (a big 'if'), then why would anyone consider them to be pertinent?" ('No place for anti-Semitism', September 18 2014).

He made his similar Stalinist innuendo explicit: "Interestingly, Donovan notes that communist organisations, not least the Bolsheviks, have often featured a high proportion of Jews amongst their leaders, yet he draws no parallel anti-Semitic conclusions about the significance of this (the Nazis were more consistent in this regard, it has to be said)."

So why would *Norman Finkelstein* consider these facts to be 'pertinent'? He certainly made considerable use of them. He noted that "it cannot be right to deny (or suppress) critical socioeconomic facts". The attitude of the CPGB's hacks is precisely to seek to suppress discussion of these facts, and to smear anyone who does seek a proper discussion of them as effectively Nazi.

But they didn't dare to smear Norman Finkelstein as a Nazi: for the simple reason that he is possibly the best known Jewish anti-Zionist scholar in the world, and the son of survivors of the Nazi holocaust. He would have skinned them alive if they had, as he did to the liars and witch-hunters in the Labour Party, Hodge and co.

This is why Macnair's denunciation of JVL for saying that Miller's remarks "crossed a line" and are indulging in 'cancel culture' is so grotesquely hypocritical. What does he expect JVL to do, once the CPGB concur with them that David Miller is 'anti-Semitic'? Invite him to tea and a slap-up meal? The CPGB say that free speech for fascists is something to be defended as a matter of principle. And they make a pseudo-show of criticising others on the left for demurring from this, having Nazi-baited David Miller in classic Stalinist fashion.

They drag in sensitive and complex questions involving transsexuals and the fears of 'gender-critical' types of predators exploiting trans rights, etc. Which are only distantly related to the question of 'free speech' for fascists and have their own autonomous level of complexity. But any issue will do to muddy the waters and excuse their Islamophobia, which refuses to defend the resistance of Muslim people in Iraq, Iran and Palestine against imperialist and Zionist invasions and terror. During the Iraq war, they made a polemical point of honour of refusing to defend Iraqi resistance against the US/UK invasion.

Likewise, they refuse to defend Iran against imperialism. They refused to defend the elected Hamas government in the Palestinian territories against the coup that Abbas and Israel organised to overrule the elected expression of the Palestinian people in 2007. They refuse to defend the self-determination of Muslim peoples attacked by imperialism. Their neutral position on Ukraine - and refusal to defend the Donbass people targeted by imperialism and their Nazi Ukrainian puppets - is another manifestation of the same approach.

The CPGB's methodology on questions involving Zionism and Jews is driven by racist *philo-Semitism*. Norman Finkelstein escapes censure for citing the same set of "critical socioeconomic facts" that others, such as David Miller, Gerry Downing and myself, were smeared as "anti-Semites" and akin to Nazis for citing. The reason for the difference in such treatment is evidently racialised. Non-Jews are not allowed to cite these socio-economic facts: Jews are so tolerated. This is racism similar to that of the Zionists, and reflects the CPGB's soft-Zionist politics, that meant that in the early 2000s they were pursuing fusion discussions with the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, on the basis of a common defence of 'two states' and the Zionist 'right to self-determination'.

Their leaders are *conscious* charlatans and liars - particularly the cult leader at the top of the pile, Jack Conrad, who instigated my purge from the Communist Platform in 2014. In informal discussion in a London pub prior to my purge, in the presence of another CPGB member, Daniel Harvey, Conrad made it clear that he did not believe that my position was 'anti-Semitic' at all. But he feared that if the CPGB allowed me to fight for these views within their framework, they would be branded as 'anti-Semitic'. Therefore, I had to go. "Call me a coward if you like," he said, in private. Well, I will call him far worse - a cowardly, pseudo-Marxist charlatan, who doesn't give a damn about the oppression of the Palestinians. The only time the CPGB ever turn up at Palestine demonstrations is when they can make money by flogging badges for their annual fundraising 'Summer Offensive'. Barring that, they are notable by their absence.

Ian Donovan
Consistent Democrats

Tail and dog

We agree with the statement of Jewish Voice for Labour and also with the SWP's objection that Miller: "lump(s) together all Jews without any recognition of class or other differences. Miller targets Jews, not the actual ruling class, and plays on the idea of Jews as ultra-rich and manipulative."

In his article Mike Macnair sets the correct context for the debate - the machinations of US imperialism internationally - in the first half of the article. But Mike then goes on to defend Miller on the basis of his right to free speech and condemn 'cancel culture', which we think seriously undermines the identification of the main enemy in the first half. No platforming for fascists is standard leftist practice and just because we are not yet threatened with it does not mean we should take a libertarian view of what it is. Similarly, Tony Greenstein has lost his focus by identifying Zionism as the main enemy.

I have seen Pete Gregson's letter to the *Weekly Worker*, with which I disagreed on the same basis: I wrote: "The USA is the global, hegemonic imperialist power and Israel is its aircraft carrier in the Middle East. It certainly is not the other way around - the tail does not wag the dog." Peter responded, basically asserting that the

tail does indeed wag the dog and 'the Jews' do indeed dominate US politics.

We should mention that the motivation for the demonisation of Corbyn by the Zionists and the British mass media and establishment in general was not primarily to assist the Zionist state of Israel in attacking the Palestinians, but to protect British capitalism and the Labour Party as a fall-back against a discredited Tory Party, when Corbyn's election as leader caused a huge surge in support for the perceived sharp turn to the left in British working class politics. With half a million members, it was the biggest political party in Europe. However Corbyn was unable to promote this surge, seeking to placate his worst enemies and throwing his strongest supporters under the bus.

It is not true that the holocaust and fascism is simply history and Jews have no cause to worry about a repeat. A survey by the Anti-Defamation League in May of this year found that over a third of people in Hungary, Poland and Ukraine have "extensive" anti-Semitic beliefs. Remember the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting of October 27 2018, in which 11 Jews were killed and six wounded - the deadliest attack on the Jewish community in the United States. The Proud Boys are explicitly anti-Semitic and Donald Trump, despite his Jewish son-in-law and Jewish-raised grandchildren, has made explicit anti-Semitic statements.

Jews have legitimate fears of another Trump presidency. In September 2020 Trump said: "Proud Boys, stand back and stand by, but I'll tell you what, somebody's gotta do something about Antifa and the left because this is not a rightwing problem: this is a leftwing problem."

Gerry Downing
Socialist Fight

Not be said

For the people who fought in 1948, when they considered war, what was their context of how wars are fought? What was the Arab vision for action, should they be successful?

What is the unsaid difference between Arab refugees of 1947-49 and the Jewish refugees from Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, etc, etc, in the context of their times? What must not be said is that the Arabs of southern Syria/Mandatory Palestine were expelled/fled/dispossessed from a place of war. What must not be said is that the Jews were expelled/fled/dispossessed not from places of war after the war, far far away, was over.

What must not be said about the fate of the Arabs of 1947-49? That the Arab powers that were (and still are) did not offer them an integration route, in contrast with the early and very poor Israel. What must not be said about the 'borders' of pre-67 Israel? That in every case, at Arab insistence, not a single ceasefire line was to be considered as a 'border' in the Rhodes agreements. They are defined, at Arab insistence, as to be without any sense of permanent state borders. (Really! Go look them up.) What should not be said is that there is no such thing as a '67 border'. What should not be heard is the reasoning behind the demand to return to it.

There is currently a rise in inter-Arab violence in Israel. Loud and condemnatory. But there is no public voice hinting that, to solve murders, some collaboration with the police is necessary. Such things are not to be said.

It is comforting to see that the traditional obsession with 'anti-Semitism' is still here, like poking with your tongue at an abscessed tooth. Shalom, Marxists. We pinkish, liberal, elitist, nearly secular citizens of Israel have been demonstrating for near two thirds of a year against the policies and personnel of our

government. The summer heat and humidity have been seriously brutal. Yet people walked in that clime from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem - four days! - in our thousands and thousands. Every road crossing and thoroughfare has seen demonstrations every week.

And yet not a comment, nary a reference, not even a scathing denunciation from the left. Even the most pathetic turnout of crummy fascists usually gets some kind of dismissive sneer from Marxist circles. Nothing. Nada. Zilch.

John Davidson
Givat Ada, Israel

Ditch Leninism

Andrew Northall in reply to Paul B Smith is ardent on the need to build the Communist Party, by which I presume he means the CPB (Letters, August 31). But the comrade, and communists in general, needs to address serious ideological questions in the light of the collapse of the Soviet Union 32 years ago. The left in general has failed to do this - both those who defend Trotsky and Stalin uncritically.

The first thing that communists need to do is to ask some fundamental questions following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. These questions relate to both Marxism and Leninism. Some of these questions are:

How was it possible for someone like Lenin, who started out as an advocate of democratic socialism, to end up becoming the father of the world's first modern totalitarian regime - which provided a model for Mussolini, and through him, Hitler, as even Trotsky later acknowledged?

Why did Trotsky, who played an important role in the establishment of Leninist totalitarianism, following the suppression of factions in the Communist Party at the 10th Congress in 1921, later develop a mythology, widely accepted by Trotskyists, that there was some golden age of Leninism, and that it was Stalin who came along and spoiled everything?

Why was Marx so easily misled by Blanqui on the question of a dictatorship, viewing it as necessary for the defence of socialism, although no mention is made of dictatorship in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, regardless of which, Lenin turned it into the very essence of Marxism?

Why did Marx and Marxism fail to grasp the significance of the energy revolution, based on fossil fuels, in the creation of modern industrial society, and the consequences for society when these sources of energy begin to deplete, and how this will contribute to shaping the process of socialist change?

Where does the communist movement stand now in matters of philosophy regarding the Marxist claim that 'being' determines consciousness? - a question especially relevant today in view of the swift loss of power by the communists in the Soviet Union, with no mass opposition to counterrevolution.

Finally, should we not be discussing the need to return to democratic socialism, while leaving behind the mistakes of Marxism-Leninism

Some communists will no doubt shy away from addressing these questions, preferring to keep their political blindfolds on, but these questions need to be addressed if communism wants to remain relevant to society.

The meaning of the collapse of the Soviet Union is clear: the choice we face is Marxism-Leninism or democratic socialism. Returning to Leninist totalitarianism is not the way forward, but it appears that most people in the communist movement don't seem to have grasped this.

Tony Clark
For Democratic Socialism

ACTION

Wigan Diggers Festival

Saturday September 9, 11.15am 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.

Stop Starmer campaign launch

Saturday September 9, 12 noon: Public meeting, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. The danger of a Starmer government and why he must be stopped. Tickets £6.13. Organised by Stop Starmer: stopstarmer.co.uk/events.

Abolition Now! DSEI, policing and prisons

Sunday September 10: All-day event outside DSEI arms fair, Western entrance, ExCeL London Exhibition Centre, 1 Western Gateway, Royal Victoria Dock, London E16. Exploring the violence of policing and prisons, and their relationships to the arms fair. Includes speakers and training. Organised by Stop the Arms Fair: stopthearmsfair.org.uk/events/abolition-now-dsei-policing-and-prisons.

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.

Why peace is a trade union issue

Monday September 11, 6.30pm: TUC fringe meeting, Holiday Inn Express, Albert Dock, Liverpool L3. Wages, not war. Speakers include Lindsey German (Stop the War) and Alex Gordon (RMT). Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk/events.

No welcome for the Saudi crown prince!

Wednesday September 13, 6pm: Protest opposite Downing Street, Whitehall, London SW1. No welcome for the leader of the regime which dismembered Jamal Khashoggi, executes political opponents and conducts the siege, occupation and war against Yemen.

Organised by Stop the War Coalition: stopwar.org.uk/events/protest-no-welcome-for-the-saudi-crown-prince.

From Sylhet to Spitalfields

Friday September 15, 6.30pm: Book event, Bookmarks, 1 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1. Author Shabna Begum explores the hidden history of the Bengali East London squatters' movement in the 1970s, which took over entire streets and estates. Free registration. Organised by Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop: www.facebook.com/events/943871050046594.

March in the global fight to end fossil fuels

Saturday September 16, 12 noon: Demonstration. Assemble Grosvenor Gardens, Victoria, London SW1. As world leaders gather at the UN in New York, join millions around the world taking to the streets to demand a rapid, just and equitable end to fossil fuels.

Organised by Extinction Rebellion UK: www.facebook.com/events/2003909896628949.

What it means to be human

Tuesday September 19, 6.30pm: Talks on social and biological anthropology. Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taviton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1 and online. This meeting: 'Can indigenous and western perspectives see eye-to-eye? The value of two-eyed seeing'. Speaker: Chris Knight.

Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: www.facebook.com/events/1910619279319847.

Barclays: don't bank on apartheid

Saturday September 23: Day of action outside Barclays Bank branches nationwide. Demand the bank stops investing in companies that supply Israel with weapons and military technology used to assault Palestinians. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.facebook.com/events/9714385958636351.

Stop US nukes coming to Britain

Saturday September 23: Day of action across Britain to condemn the return of US nuclear weapons to RAF Lakenheath in Suffolk. These warheads will make Britain a target in any nuclear war.

Organised by Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament: cnduk.org/events/stop-us-nukes-coming-to-britain-day-of-action.

Workers' summit

Saturday September 23, 2pm: Conference, Bishopsgate Institute, 230 Bishopsgate London EC2. Discuss key issues facing unions, including how to reject bad deals that fall short of demands. Devise plans for joint working and growing grassroots networks. Registration £11.55 (£6.13). Organised by Strike Map: www.facebook.com/events/1948514978839160.

The Cramlington train wreckers

Friday September 29, 7.30pm: Illustrated talk, Harton and Westoe Miners' Welfare, Low Lane, South Shields NE34. During the 1926 general strike, miners who derailed a passenger train were jailed for eight years. Narrated by Ed Waugh, with songs by Jamie Brown. Tickets £2. Organised by Harton and Westoe Miners' Banner Group: eventbrite.com/e/the-cramlington-train-wreckers-tickets-686461864917.

Protest at Tory Party conference

Saturday October 1, 12 noon: National demonstration. Assemble near Manchester Museum, Oxford Road, Manchester M13. Oppose this vile, vicious and corrupt government. Resist the Tory austerity, privatisation, profiteering, deregulation and attacks on democratic rights. Then prepare to hold the next government to account.

Organised by the People's Assembly Against Austerity: www.facebook.com/events/772136577575237.

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.

THE LEFT

Mr Griffiths goes to Beijing

Showered with all manner of treats, the CPB's gensec is a credulous fanboy of China's 'socialist modernisation', writes Paul Demarty

Readers of the *Morning Star* have been regaled, of late, with a series of articles by Robert Griffiths on his tour of China.

When it comes to the *Star's* China coverage, we are long past expecting much in the way of critical distance. Even by those low standards, however, comrade Griffiths - the general secretary of the Communist Party of Britain, which effectively publishes the paper - has delivered a performance of exceptional guilelessness, which must inevitably raise questions about the exact nature of the CPB's relationship to the Chinese state.

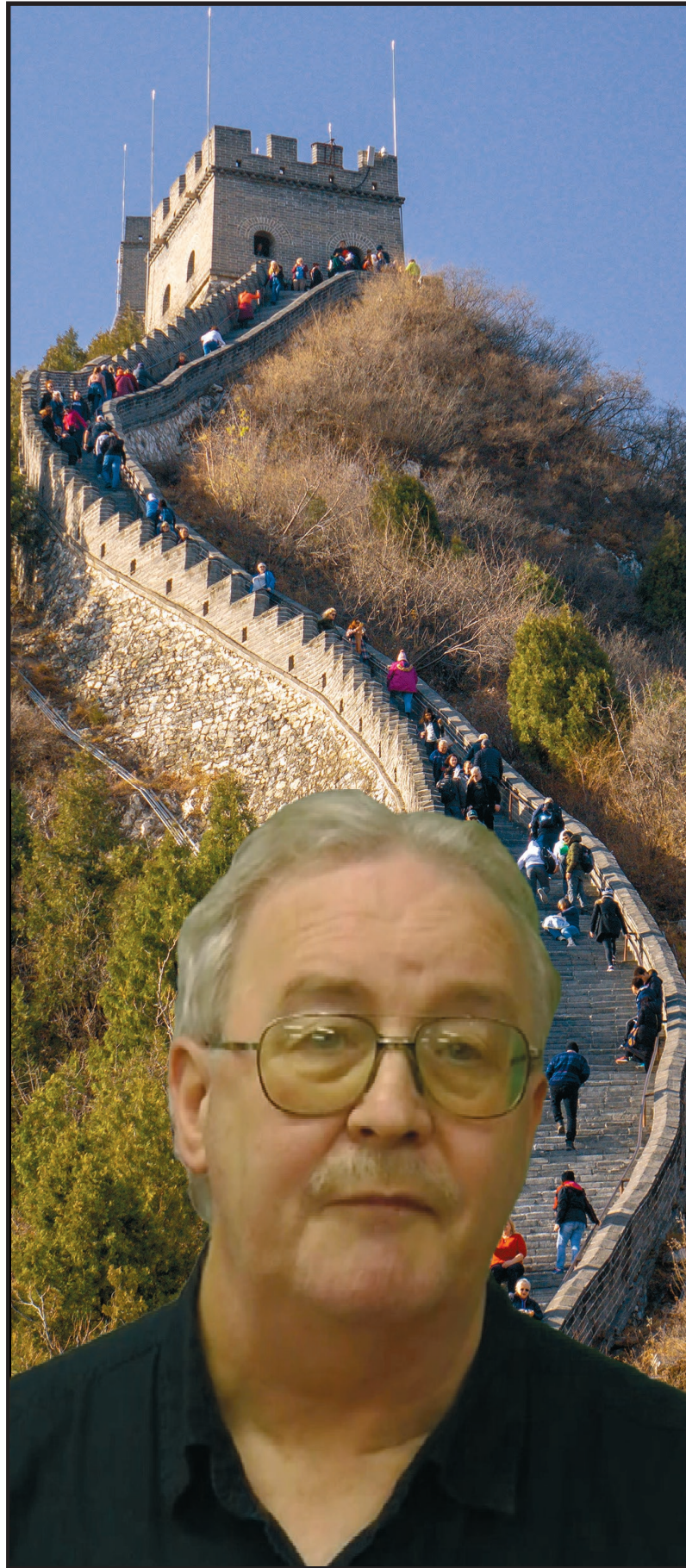
After all, this was no mere holiday, but a 10-day tour of Chinese 'modernisation', hosted by the ruling Communist Party's international department. Griffiths had the "honour of leading" a delegation from "11 communist parties and a friendship society from Britain, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway, the US, Canada and Australia".¹ The star-struck visitors were shuttled around the country, visiting factories in Guangzhou, community organisers in Guizhou, and party bigwigs in Beijing.

"Our hosts' intention was to explain China's path of 'socialist modernisation'," he writes, "and demonstrate the achievements of their country's system of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'." The hosts seemed extremely intent on this - after all, they flew dozens of people from all over the world to China and then all over China, showered them with all manner of treats (Griffiths mentions "An evening visit to the Guiyang Grand Theatre" for "a lavish feast of Guizhou culture";² among other cheerful outings). Perhaps it worked: after all, the "honoured" leader of the delegation proceeded not only to regurgitate exactly what is expected of him (much of his first article simply consists of bullet points that might have been in a CPC press release), but to plumb depths of servility usually reserved for royal funeral coverage in the *Daily Mail*.

Infectious

It would be cruel to inflict too many quotations of this garbage on readers, but a few nuggets will get the picture over. Griffiths is dazzled by the dynamism of the Chinese economy, the progress made in electric car manufacture (quite real, of course). Visiting an EV factory in Guangzhou, he eagerly notes that "its operations in China illustrate how industry is pursuing the course of socialist modernisation set by president Xi Jinping and the CPC, based on consumer-driven, high-quality and eco-friendly development". Sounds great! He visits a residential community in Guizhou, and falls head over heels for its "community director", Yuan Qin, who "spends her days and evenings solving residents' problems ... and organising classes for everything from computers to dancing. Recently a delegate to the CPC's 20th congress, her enthusiasm was infectious" (evidently!).

Later, his delegation is invited to meet several officials from the CPC's international department to discuss politics in the west. "They were keen to learn more about how people in developed western countries live," he notes. "How are our communist parties doing, what are their prospects and those for the advance to socialism?" Unfortunately, "none could deny the reality of growing anti-China feeling in the west and



Up the garden path again: Robert Griffiths is clearly unable to learn from the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union

the onset of a cold war". For his part, Griffiths congratulated the CPC for its "readiness to admit and address China's problems, weaknesses and mistakes"³ - at least it saves comrade Griffiths the effort of making any criticisms of his own.

This sort of thing is hardly new to Griffiths, of course, and still less to the CPB. Before China, there was, of course, the Soviet Union, and the people who would eventually found the CPB - pro-Soviet opportunists like former *Morning Star* editor Tony Chater - cheerfully followed every zig and zag of Soviet policy. This proceeded right to the bitter end, even as Mikhail Gorbachev began taking the whole edifice apart. As the endgame approached, this reached the point of absurdity, with the *Star* hailing the fall of the Berlin Wall. As Evan Smith wrote a few years ago,

... the paper reported that the "winds of perestroika have reached the GDR", but this "[did] not mean a crisis of socialism, ... because the majority of the GDR population is not going to abandon human socialism".⁴

There was always *some* reason for cheer and optimism; *some* reason that criticism of perestroika, whether on Brezhnevite, anti-revisionist or Trotskyist grounds, was unforgivable impertinence. Until, alas, there was no longer a Soviet Union.

In stages, the CPB transferred its allegiance to China. This must have been difficult to swallow for the real old-timers, who remembered the Sino-Soviet split and subsequent Sino-American rapprochement. Yet it seems people committed to

this type of politics find the habit incredibly hard to break. After all, you can't have tankies without tanks. A great-power sponsor allows us to picture ourselves as involved in grand strategy and global politics, even if we are in fact merely a group of a few thousand leftwingers in a country drifting to the right.

There is a story of the *Weekly Worker's* own predecessor, *The Leninist*: a member of that faction of the old CPGB was talking to a member of the Socialist Workers Party, who complained that we still called the SWP a sect when they had 10,000 members (or whatever). "How nice for you," our comrade replied: "we have 300 million." *The Leninist* was not shy of criticising the leaders of the 'socialist countries', least of all Gorbachev. Yet even in its case, as for all members of the 'official' international communist movement, the idea that detachments of the movement had *really* seized power was a paramount motivating force.

The attraction of the Chinese People's Republic is thus, despite the fraught history of the 1960s-80s, quite clear. It is the appeal of a party of hundreds of millions, running a state that is an economic and military powerhouse (one way or another, clearly in better nick than the USSR under Brezhnev or Gorbachev). It *claims* to be a socialist society - albeit, as Griffiths obediently reminds us, "with Chinese characteristics". Yet in some ways it is a harder sell. Those "Chinese characteristics", after all, are a huge and vastly profitable private sector, which has largely been built in service to western capital.

Principles

The new cold war brewing between China and the US - perhaps, indeed, not as cold as one would like - has pushed both powers towards economic decoupling, which will lessen the cognitive dissonance for faraway fanboys like Griffiths.

But he still has some work to do, and the result is a disregard for elementary Marxist principles so blithe that one rather suspects he is quite unaware of it. He quotes, without comment, an official on the role of the trade unions: "The role of the trade unions is to protect workers' rights. The interests of the working class cannot come before the interests of all; our common aim is to build a socialist society through governance."

Marx and Engels denounced this kind of thinking in the utopians, gradualists and 1848-nationalists of their own day; Lenin denounced it in the economists and 'legal Marxists'; and so on. But it all seems perfectly sensible to Griffiths, who elsewhere trumpets the importance of "Marxist-Leninist education" for the young (possibly a sideswipe at the more rebarbatively Stalinist members of the CPB's Young Communist League). Indeed, but for the word "socialist" in the sentence above, one could well imagine it coming from the mouth of Sir Keir Starmer, and we can readily suggest what the *Star* would make of any suggestion on *his* part that workers ought to have their claims limited in the name of the "interests of all" and good "governance"!

Likewise, Griffiths reports (again without comment) the notion that China's Belt and Road initiative is a matter of "assist[ing] poorer countries". Marxists disagree as

to whether it and other, similar initiatives amount to export of capital sufficient to characterise China as imperialist *stricto sensu*, but it is one thing to debate the question and another to simply assume it does not exist. Griffiths makes a point of noting that one of the officials of the Communist Youth League was a "member of China's growing Uighur community", without lingering for a single moment on why that fact might be notable. One does not have to buy into hysterical charges of genocide to note that the situation in Xinjiang hardly reflects well on "socialism with Chinese characteristics".

The question must arise as to whether Griffiths and the CPB are *literally* corrupted by their relations with the CPC. This arises, in fact, even if we assume - as we must - that *no* further material support is forthcoming - nothing like the old days of "Moscow gold" subsidising the 'official' CPGB through bulk paper sales and so on. If a CPB member had been flown around Israel and Palestine on the dime of the Israeli government, and had come back effusive with praise for the settler state, one would readily smell a rat (and the Israeli government certainly conducts such activities). Why should it be different for China?

Alternatively, we might assume that Griffiths can make the same kind of defence as Francis Bacon, who - among his other achievements - was lord chancellor until 1621. He was stripped of his post for taking bribes, but insisted that the bribes had made no impact on his judgments (because he made a point of taking money from both sides!). Variants of this defence have a long and dishonourable history, popping up most recently among supporters of American Supreme Court justice Clarence Thomas, whose lavish treatment by eccentric billionaire Harlan Crow has badly damaged his reputation; but nobody seriously believes that his legal opinions would be any the less comically tilted towards capital, had Crow been less generous.

Thus, Robert Griffiths - sure, he was whisked from power lunch to theatre performance to solemn ceremony by the Chinese state; and sure, he returned to Britain excitedly regurgitating the self-presentation of that state to his readers. But in the counterfactual case where he was rudely snubbed, can we imagine any greater political distance? The answer is, sadly, no. The highly imperfect internationalism that pro-Sovietism represented in the cold war era has further degenerated; now the CPB holds desperately onto the coattails of an at least semi-capitalist great power.

This is, in the end, a *political* error rather than a matter of direct corruption. Either way, the whole thing stinks ●

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Notes

1. 'On the path of China's modernisation' *Morning Star* August 5.
2. 'How technology-led governance works in modern China' *Morning Star* August 9.
3. 'China: meeting trade unionists and party members, young and old' *Morning Star* August 11.
4. hatfulofhistory.wordpress.com/2016/12/14/the-communist-party-of-britain-the-morning-star-and-the-legacy-of-the-soviet-union - Smith's article contains many other poorly-aged prognostications from the *Star* in this period.

POLEMIC

Placing anti-Semitism in context

Supposedly demanding free speech for everyone is mere infatuation. Tony Greenstein defends David Miller and upholds no-platforming as a fundamental principle

Mike Macnair's article, 'Anti-Semitism of useful idiots,' might be more usefully titled 'View from an ivory tower'. It is long on assertion and, in so far as it discusses racism, it utterly fails to place it in any context. For example, the reflective racism of the oppressed is not the same as the racism of the ruling class. Unfortunately the connections between race and class entirely elude Macnair.

The assertion that "Jews 'became white folks'" in the US because the Kennedy administration chose to make Israel a specially favoured vassal, in order to promote US geostrategic control of the Middle East, is without foundation. US economic aid to Israel began under Truman and ended in 1959 under Eisenhower. From then until 1985 such aid was in the form of loans, which were repaid, and commodities. Israel did not receive military aid until after the 1973 war. Before 1971 Israel received a total of \$277 million in military aid, all in the form of loans. But since 1973 Israel has received more than \$120 billion in assistance compared to the \$3 billion before.² Jews "became white" in the United States for the simple reason that they moved upwards socio-economically. As they used to say in Santo Domingo, 'money whitens'.

Nor is it true that it is only recently that the USA has been open about its geo-strategic interests in the region, hence the 'holocaust industry'. The two have always gone hand in hand, but, of course, all imperialists like their interests to rest on moral arguments. What is true is that it took time for US imperialism to become convinced that supporting Israel against the Arab states was in their interests.

I do not see any evidence that there has been a rise in a "variant of the classical anti-Semitism" (whatever that means), as a consequence of Jews being seen as a privileged class. If anything, there have been two concurrent forms of anti-Semitism in the USA. Macnair really does not



David Ben-Gurion: declaring the foundation of the colonial-settler state

understand the evolution of anti-Semitism and the difference between feudal and racial anti-Semitism. One came from below, the other from the top of society. Those arguing that Jews are privileged are at the bottom of society.

Fascist racism in the US rests on the belief that Jews are race-mixing, white liberals, as epitomised in the 'Jews will not replace us' slogan of the Charlottesville marchers and Robert Bower's murder of 11 Jews in a Pittsburgh synagogue. But there is also an anti-Semitism from below, as black people saw Jews as exploiters in the ghettos. Macnair mixes all this up.

I see little evidence that anti-Semitism has been the product of seeing Jews as responsible for US support for Israel. The conclusion that those who see Jews as privileged "serve as useful idiots for the benefit of US Middle East policy" is simply not true. The impact of groups like Alison Weir's If Americans Knew are marginal and of little political importance.³ To transfer the US experience to Britain via David Miller is spurious and, as is often the case with academics, more a question of building theoretical sandcastles on non-existent foundations.

Macnair said that it is not possible to get the context of what Miller said or what he was responding to, because it has been taken down. But the tweet has not been taken down.⁴ And Miller was responding to a Zionist troll, Henry Mazzig, who argued that only Jews are competent to comment on what anti-Semitism is and is not.⁵

The commentary above Miller's interview on Press TV that "the British public is overwhelmingly sympathetic towards the Palestinians, but, due to the government's policies, it is impossible to tell the truth about Palestine and not suffer some kind of ill effect" is correct.

Where Miller goes wrong is in ascribing these policies to the social and economic status of Jews. However, he and others - for example, the late Gerald Kaufmann MP - can be forgiven for their mistake, since these lobbies themselves make the connection between their wealth and power, their Jewishness and government policies. One only has to look at Zionist lobby groups, such as Conservative Friends of Israel, or the efforts of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (Aipac) to unseat Rashida Tlaib, the only Palestinian member of Congress, and Ilhan Omar.⁶

The attacks on Kaufmann in the autumn of 2015 were the start of the fake anti-Semitism campaign against Corbyn. Was he anti-Semitic? Of course not. As I wrote at the time,

The term, 'Jewish money', is a shorthand. Of course, it would be better to say 'Zionist money' or 'Zionist donors', but to say, in the context of donations to the CFI that it is 'Jewish money' is not anti-Semitic. Zionist propaganda organisations and Israeli government *hasbara* spend all their waking time claiming that to be Jewish is to be a Zionist.⁷

When I searched the *Jewish Chronicle* archive, I came up with nearly 600 examples of the phrase, 'Jewish money'. It is a fact that many Jews openly boast of their power and influence.

An example of this was when the Royal Court was pressurised not to show the play *Perdition*. Stephen Roth of the Zionist Federation told the Royal Court's artistic director, Max Stafford-Clarke, that he could imperil the Royal Court's funding by contacting friends in New York and London. One London producer was told: "I own nine theatres, my friend owns six. Put the play on and you're finished."⁸

Miller's dismissal by Bristol University was not due to 'cancel culture' - an ideologically loaded term for those opposed to racists and bigots being given a platform to spew their foul ideas. It was the Zionist movement, aided by the political establishment, which targeted anti-Zionist academics using the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance 'definition' of anti-Semitism. Miller was a victim of this.

I do not accept Mike's and the CPGB's infatuation with 'free speech' for racists. We already know that the establishment only supports free speech for those they agree with. The idea that "defending freedom of speech ... has to mean freedom of speech for all" is a libertarian argument that negates class politics. Nor do I accept that Miller used "really anti-Semitic arguments". This is hyperbole.

Macnair is wrong to say that the Socialist Workers Party was correct

in calling Miller anti-Semitic because he lumped together all Jews without any recognition of class difference. It is a fact that Jews in this country are statistically and sociologically a privileged community. Is it racist to say that black and Afro-Caribbean communities are deprived and disempowered? Of course, not all Jews are rich and powerful, but on average Jews are part of the upper middle class.

It was William Rubinstein, a past-president of the Jewish Historical Society who argued:

Post-1945, British Jewry has migrated into the upper-middle class. The rise of western Jewry to unparalleled affluence and high status has led to the near disappearance of a Jewish proletariat of any size; indeed, the Jews may become the first ethnic group in history without a working class of any size.⁹

It was Geoffrey Alderman, the historian of British Jewry, who wrote that London Jewry is "arguably more bourgeois now than at any time since the mid-19th century".¹⁰

Anti-Semitism is about hate, hostility and scapegoatism. It is not about telling the truth, even if you do sometimes misspeak.

Macnair says that to argue that Jews are "over-represented" is classically anti-Semitic. Yes, it could be. It entirely depends on the context. If you are arguing that Bolshevism was a product of a Jewish conspiracy, then clearly it is. What Hitler and others were doing was producing a single enemy responsible for all capitalism's ills.

But it is a fair point to say that Jews are prominent in the media out of all proportion to their numbers in the population. That cannot help but have an effect on coverage of Israel/Palestine, given that the majority of Jews are Zionists. It isn't the cause of the British media's bias, but it clearly can reinforce it, as is the case in Hollywood.

Finally, Macnair goes from the ridiculous to the absurd when he criticises me for advocating the "virtuous" nationalism of the oppressed, as opposed to the "vicious" nationalism of the oppressor. This has nothing to do with the liberal argument for absolute free speech. Like Lenin I make a distinction between the nationalism of the oppressed and the oppressor. I do not equate Irish republicanism and unionism, nor do I equate Palestinian nationalism with Zionism. One is fighting oppression; the other is perpetrating it.

If Macnair cannot see this, that is because his vision has been obscured by that ivory tower ●

Notes

1. *Weekly Worker* August 31: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1456/anti-semitism-of-useful-idiots.
2. www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/history-and-overview-of-u-s-foreign-aid-to-israel.
3. ifamericansknew.org.
4. twitter.com/Tracking_Power/status/1688310790908956672.
5. twitter.com/HenMazzig/status/1688203923494981633.
6. See, for example, *Jewish Chronicle* October 28 2015: 'Kaufman claims "Jewish money" has influenced Tories'.
7. azvsas.blogspot.com/2015/11/the-witchhunt-of-gerald-kaufman.html.
8. See Jim Allen's letter to *The Guardian* March 18 1987.
9. W Rubinstein *The left, the right and the Jews* p51.
10. 'Two cheers for the GLC' *Jewish Chronicle* March 28 1986.

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

UKRAINE



Russian Ukrainian forces on parade: their war has been going on since 2014

Notes on the war

Despite Zelensky's much vaunted offensive making 'noticeable progress', Jack Conrad argues that, especially with the mud season fast approaching, we should not expect any big changes on the battlefield

Ukraine's propaganda machine and its western media outlets have been full of triumphant news of a breakthrough, with the capture of Robotyne - a small village in the southern Zaporizhzhia oblast. The claim is - and this is probably true - that after three months Ukrainian forces have finally breached the *first* line of Russian defences. In and of itself no mean achievement militarily.

After all, as a UK defence intelligence report recently concluded, "Russia has constructed some of the most extensive systems of military defensive works seen anywhere in the world for many decades."¹ And, because of its perceived vulnerability to a determined Ukrainian southern push, which could conceivably split Russian-held territory into two separate theatres, the area that has been most extensively fortified is the Zaporizhzhia oblast.²

Russia's system of fortifications are some 2,000 kilometres long, stretching in a great arc from the border with Belarus in the north to the Dnipro Delta in the south. Along the front line itself, Russia's defensive systems are organised autonomously, roughly corresponding to one of the four oblasts annexed in September 2022.

The first line of defence, as mapped from satellite images, can easily be

several kilometres deep and usually consists of a series of layers: anti-tank ditches, followed by earth berms, three rows of dragon's teeth and razor wire. Besides the network of trenches and bunkers sheltering Russian troops, there are tightly packed anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines. Attackers also face deadly fire raining in from well-protected artillery and howitzer positions placed in the rear. Russians defending Robotyne doubtless attempted to funnel Ukrainian forces down routes which are "pretargeted".³ In other words, killing zones.

Note, however, defences are not just near the current front lines, but have also been "dug deep inside areas Russia currently controls".⁴ There are normally *three* lines of defence, each forming a subsystem in its own right. Behind the first line there is a matching second line, the third line being a disconnected constellation of fortifications, protecting towns, logistical hubs and other such important sites.

In the case of the Zaporizhzhia oblast, the second defence line spans some 130km from the town of Orlyanske to just north of Bilmak and, according to the US-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, "could serve Russia well, were it to establish a new front line following a successful Ukrainian offensive".⁵

So in the Zaporizhzhia oblast we now have a "successful Ukrainian offensive" breaking through the first line after three months of hard-slog demining sapper operations. Ukrainian troops face not only the second line of defences and near-constant artillery bombardments. There is the danger of counterattack from multiple directions. Russian commanders will seek to isolate Ukraine's combat units from the logistical support they require if their Robotyne salient is to be held, let alone extended.

Russian military doctrine emphasises both positional and mobile defences.⁶ If the second line is breached, Russia will doubtless seek to engage Ukrainian fighting vehicles using a combination of missiles, UAVs, conventional aircraft and their own tanks. Meantime, the loss of Robotyne has triggered the deployment of Russian elite units, while, presumably, the first subsystem undergoes preparations for a pincer movement.

The chances are that Ukraine's offensive will end as it began: with a whimper. After all, later this month the rainy season is due to begin. Rains mean mud. The *rasputitsa* makes land warfare more or less impossible. Ground, including unpaved roads and tracks, dissolves. Infantry slips, slides and quickly becomes exhausted. Wheels

uselessly spin and lorries sink to their axles in the sticky mire. Nor can tanks easily move. It almost goes without saying: *rasputitsa* seasons are well known to confer a great defensive advantage in wartime. Common nicknames are General Mud or Marshal Mud. Only with the winter freeze does offensive fighting become feasible again.

Frustration

As reported in *The New York Times*, US officials are "growing frustrated" with how Ukraine is conducting the war.⁷ Instead of dividing their forces equally between the eastern and the southern fronts, they should, we are told, be concentrating more on the drive to push through the Zaporizhzhia oblast all the way down to the Azov Sea. However, not least in my opinion, to expect a significant Ukrainian breakthrough is as misplaced as expecting a significant Russian breakthrough.

Last November, Mark Milley, chair of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, infuriated Kyiv - as well as some more bellicose elements in the Biden administration - by comparing Ukraine to World War I and suggesting that a stalemate had been reached. In fact this sober-minded assessment was already found in the Pentagon papers leaked back in April, which likewise spoke of "stalemate".⁸

Maybe the promise of a game-changing spring offensive helped persuade the US and its allies into stumping up extra high end arms deliveries: Leopard 2 battle tanks, long range Storm Shadow missiles and F-16s. Without a 'big push' there existed a real risk of public opinion in the west becoming disenchanted. Why do we suffer from falling real wages, increased taxes, deteriorating public services and job losses for what appears to be an unwinnable proxy war against Russia? Indeed there are already signs that wide swathes of the population are arriving at such conclusions - and not only in Germany, the country which has taken the biggest economic hit, with Russian oil and gas being sanctioned.

According to a recent CNN poll, 55% of Americans do not favour additional funding of Ukraine, as against the 45% who do. Some 51% say that the US has already done enough.⁹ A similar poll conducted in the early days of the Russian invasion in late February 2022 found 62% felt the US should be doing more. So the shift in public opinion is palpable ... and this will matter in 2024, with a Donald Trump versus Joe Biden presidential contest seemingly on the cards.

So there is a growing war scepticism - not least in America, where hard-right Republicans, not

the DSA's squad, oppose Biden's pledge to "stand with Ukraine as long as it needs, as long as it requires". Trumpists care little about "a quarrel in a far away country between people of whom we know nothing" (Iran and China are, strangely, another matter).

There is too the risk of a loss of morale amongst Ukraine's armed forces and the wider Ukrainian population. The 'big push' has happened, but advances are slow, insubstantial and obviously reversible. A village here, a village there ... and what *The Economist* calls the loss of an "uncomfortable number of men and equipment".¹⁰ In point of fact, some Ukrainian units have suffered casualty rates of 90%. Initial high hopes put in Leopards and Bradleys turned to bitter disappointment at the point of first contact with the enemy. They were quickly put out of action by UAVs, mines and artillery. According to what seem like reliable reports, most of the fighting to take Robotyne was done on foot and at night.¹¹ Suggestions that F-16s would have made all the difference are risible. Nowadays such hugely expensive kit is more than vulnerable to cheap, shoulder-launched missiles carried by the average infantry grunt.

The initial war enthusiasm, the in many ways justified Ukrainian yearning for revenge on the Russian invaders, could conceivably give way to a popular rejection of the war and a desire for some sort of negotiated settlement. Supplies of the *willing* - those who joined the Ukrainian armed forces out of nationalist fervour - have long been used up. Huge numbers either lie dead or are horribly maimed. Hence the turn to the *unwilling*. There are widespread reports of draft-dodging, police dragnets and fat bribes being paid out. Many have stolen out the country, crossing over rivers and mountain passes - often at considerable personal risk.¹²

Art of the deal

No wonder Volodymyr Zelensky has sacked his defence chief, Oleksii Reznikov. He needed a scapegoat. Besides facing accusations of corruption, Reznikov has been under immense pressure to produce results via the spring/summer offensive, which he previously admitted, in a candid interview with *The Washington Post*, might not live up to "western expectations".¹³ How right he was ... and tens of thousands have paid the ultimate price for what were always *unrealistic* "western expectations". Either way, the Kyiv regime felt obliged to do *something* - if it was going to please its US paymasters.

Ukraine's offensive was never likely to succeed. Leave aside Russia's awesome defence systems, Ukraine lacked the element of surprise, the necessary hardware and the overwhelming 3:1 manpower advantage, recommended by military theorists, when it comes to a war of the offensive, as opposed to a war of the defensive.¹⁴ The actual ratio on the frontline is more like 1:1.

Not that wars are decided by abstract 3:1 formulas. Personnel numbers, food, fuel and ammunition supplies and the quantity and quality of equipment count, but so too do intangibles, such as imagination, chance and morale. A point emphasised again and again by the Prussian military philosopher, Carl von Clausewitz, in his classic 1832 study, *Vom Kriege*: "... in combat the loss of moral force is the chief cause of the decision."¹⁵

Boosting morale, despite the risks of retaliation, surely explains why Zelensky has given the nod to militarily irrelevant drone strikes on

Moscow and other Russian cities, assassination attempts on Putin's far-right allies and attacks on Belgorod oblast launched by the Freedom of Russia Legion and the Russian Volunteer Corps. Ben Wallace, former UK defence minister, seemed keen on such provocations - incumbent US defence secretary Lloyd Austin less so.

Either way - and this is the crucial point - everything shows that the war in Ukraine remains in an impasse. That is what Ukraine's predictable determination to resist Russia's invasion, plus all the west's kit and equipment has achieved - that despite widespread initial expectations of a swift Russian victory, mostly because of the sheer size of its armed forces. As repeatedly argued here, a war of attrition looks to be on the cards - three, four, many more years. That surely explains why there has been a renewed outbreak of calls for negotiations.

Donald Trump boasts that he can finish the war in 24 hours and relegate Ukraine to a mere territorial dispute on the outer fringes of Europe. Former French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, argues that the interests of the EU and US are "not aligned" and that a compromise with Russia should be sought.¹⁶ Emmanuel Macron was saying as much back in May, when he pledged to do "everything possible to make a negotiated peace happen".¹⁷ Nato general secretary's chief of staff Stian Jenssen has likewise suggested that a solution could be for "Ukraine to give up territory and get Nato membership in return".¹⁸ True, he was forced to retract. However, this was the sort of interim settlement "tentatively agreed" by Russian and Ukrainian negotiators in 2022 - without Nato membership, but with security guarantees.¹⁹ Apparently Boris Johnson, then UK prime minister, ensured that any such deal was scuppered. Massive arms deliveries were promised (and maybe threats of an Azov battalion rebellion made).

Of course, the US-UK axis does not want a generalised nuclear exchange and Mutually Assured Destruction. Doubtless that is why everything is carefully calibrated. Ukraine is supplied with enough military hardware to resist Russia, not enough to actually win. A proxy war that lasts for years to come suits the strategic purposes of Washington and London perfectly.

Ukraine can do the fighting and the dying to keep Russia bogged down in a quagmire, an unwinnable war, which will create the conditions for regime change in Moscow. A rollback strategy proclaimed by Jimmy Carter in January 1980 that worked like a dream in Afghanistan (the Soviet Union scuttled in February 1989 and collapsed in December 1991).

Not only has Nato and the EU been steadily extended eastwards all the way to the borders of the Russian Federation itself, but Vladimir Putin and his generals were lured into a bear trap: launching an ill-advised, ill-prepared, full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The 'special military operation' proved, predictably, to be a disaster. No wonder there has been excited talk of ending Putin's *siloviki* regime and Balkanising the Russian Federation.

Break-up

The Russian state includes over 190 distinct ethnic groups and has 21 republics. So December 1991 and the break-up of the Soviet Union can be repeated, argue 'Russia must go' advocates on both sides of the Atlantic.

Such plans were considered at a Brussels meeting convened by the European Conservatives and

Reform grouping in the European parliament, on January 31 2023. In this bloc of the right and far-right former fascists, the consensus seems to have been carving-up the Russian Federation into 34 separate states. Meeting on February 14 2023 in Washington DC, the Hudson Institute and Jamestown Foundation discussed Luke Coffey's paper, 'Preparing for the dissolution of the Russian Federation'.²⁰ Before that the Free Peoples of Russia Forum convened in Sweden in December 2022 - the aim being the "decolonisation, de-occupation, decentralisation and dePutinisation of Russia".²¹ Such plans, naturally, find a ready chorus of approval in Ukraine.

The A-Z case for breaking up Russia is made by Janusz Bugajski in his book *Failed state: a guide to Russia's rupture* (2022). In brief: the Russian Federation is not a nation-state and attempts to export liberal democracy have proved futile and will continue to prove futile. Russia is by nature both autocratic and inherently imperialistic. It should therefore be caged in a St Petersburg-Moscow-Nizhny Novgorod triangle and the rest of the country set up as independent cantons.

Last year the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe hosted a conference in Washington DC titled 'Decolonising Russia: a moral and strategic imperative'. The final resolution calls for:

... all citizens of indigenous peoples and colonial regions to immediately begin active actions for the peaceful decolonisation, liberation, declaration/restoration of sovereignty and independence of their countries [and on] the peoples and governments of the UN member-states to support and assist us ... in our efforts to streamline the uncontrolled process of disintegration of a nuclear state.

That assistance must include official recognition of the independence and sovereignty of the following states of indigenous peoples and colonial areas: Tatarstan, Ingria (a historical region in the north-west of Russia, including the current St Petersburg region), Bashkortostan, Karelia, Buryatia, Kalmykia, the Baltic Republic (Königsberg, East Prussia), Komi, Cherkessia, Siberia, the Urals, the Republics of Don, Tyva, Kuban, Dagestan, the Pacific Federation (Primorsky Territory and the Amur Region), the Moscow Republic, Erzya Mastor ([in] the territory of Mordovia), Sakha, Pomorie, Chuvashia, Chernozyom region, Mordovia, Volga region, Khakassia, Udmurtia, Tyumen Yugra, Mari El, Altai, Ingushetia, etc.

The resolution likewise encourages the formation of "national transitional governments/administrations" and for regional parliaments to "declare state sovereignty and start inter-parliamentary consultations on a mechanism for seceding from the Russian Federation; and constitutions to be prepared". Chillingly, an accompanying 'Northern Eurasia 2023' map depicts a would-be "post-Russia" utopia, with 41 new states carved out of the Russian Federation.²²

True, there are influential voices - eg, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the former Yukos oil tycoon, who warn that the ghastly consequences of the break-up of the Russian Federation would be "dangerous for the west".²³ One can easily imagine nuclear-armed warlords, ethnic cleansing on a vast scale, crashing living

standards, millions of refugees and descent into utter barbarism.

Responsible professors too issue warnings against what is after all an unlikely outcome. Eg, Peter Rutland points out that only in six of the Russian Federation's 21 constituent republics does the ethnically designated nationality make up a majority. Breaking up Russia would solve little or nothing, that is for sure, but would, he argues, create one hell of a holy mess.²⁴

Understandably then, Washington and London are doing their best to unite and direct the disparate Russian opposition around a broadly common programme. While they do not want to name a single charismatic individual as leader, the agenda is surely clear: getting their man into the Kremlin - say, the already presidential Alexei Navalny. Their model is Boris Yeltsin - a dupe of US imperialism and a hero for disorientated western leftists, such as Tariq Ali.²⁵

With a pliant satrap safely in place in the Kremlin, a Versailles-type peace treaty would be imposed, with Russia being expected to pay huge reparations, forgo nuclear weapons, give up its high-end arms industry and accept its position as a US-dominated, oil and gas-producing US neocolony. If, instead of a pliant satrap in the Kremlin, the west has to settle for a son-of-Putin seurocrat, there is still, though, the "once in a lifetime" opportunity to put Russia "back inside its geopolitical box for a generation".²⁶

Xi Jinping will not view kindly any US takeover of Russia. Quite the reverse. Xi is already looking for every opportunity to further incorporate Russia into the Chinese economic space. More than that, Xi is acutely aware that Washington's main strategic target is China itself. The US has already set up Taiwan, Tibet, Hong Kong and Xinjian in pursuit of instituting its "new world order".²⁷

US grand strategy is, firstly, to comprehensively degrade Russia and then, secondly, encircle and strangle the People's Republic of China. Having done that, the US will be able to "manage" at last the Eurasian world island for the benefit of its plutocrats, corporations and

great-power interests - as envisaged by America's foreign policy prophet and sage, Zbigniew Brzezinski.²⁸ ●

Notes

1. UK Ministry of Defence (@DefenceHQ), 'Latest Defence Intelligence Update on the Situation in Ukraine - 01 May 2023': (twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1652911854501388290/photo/1).
2. www.csis.org/analysis/ukraines-offensive-operations-shifting-offense-defense-balance.
3. www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-65615184.
4. UK Ministry of Defence (@DefenceHQ), 'Latest Defence Intelligence Update on the Situation in Ukraine - 01 May 2023; Twitter post, May 1 2023 (twitter.com/DefenceHQ/status/1652911854501388290/photo/1).
5. www.csis.org/analysis/ukraines-offensive-operations-shifting-offense-defense-balance.
6. W Lester and CK Bartles *The Russian way of war: force structure, tactics and modernization of the Russian ground forces* (Fort Leavenworth KS 2016, p62).
7. *The New York Times* August 22 2023.
8. edition.cnn.com/2023/04/11/politics/pentagon-documents-ukraine-war-assessment/index.html.
9. edition.cnn.com/2023/08/04/politics/cnn-poll-ukraine/index.html.
10. www.economist.com/europe/2023/08/20/ukraines-sluggish-counter-offensive-is-souring-the-public-mood.
11. *The Times* September 5 2023.
12. www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0fstmlm.
13. *The Washington Post* May 6 2023.
14. Once again, the name Frederick Lanchester (1868-1946) ought to be mentioned in this context: he produced a whole series of neat mathematical formulas. See PK Davies *Aggregation, disaggregation and the 3:1 rule in ground warfare*: www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph-reports/2007/MR638.pdf.
15. C von Clausewitz *On war* Harmondsworth 1976, p310.
16. *Le Figaro* August 16 2023.
17. *AP* September 1 2022.
18. *The Guardian* August 16 2023.
19. *Foreign Affairs* August 25 2022.
20. L Coffey, 'Preparing for the final collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Russian Federation', Hudson Institute, December 2022.
21. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_Nations_of_Post-Russia_Forum.
22. *The EurAsian Times* June 1 2023.
23. *Politico* June 5 2023.
24. P Rutland, 'Why pushing for the break-up of Russia is absolute folly' *Responsible Statecraft* March 24 2023.
25. See T Ali *Revolution from above: where is the Soviet Union going?* London 1988. The book was dedicated to "comrade Boris Yeltsin".
26. L Coffey, 'Preparing for the final collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Russian Federation', Hudson Institute, December 2022.
27. www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/03/21/remarks-by-president-biden-before-business-roundtables-ceo-quarterly-meeting.
28. Z Brzezinski *The grand chessboard* New York 1997, p30.

Fighting fund

Build on success

As I reported last week, we had already reached our monthly £2,250 target for August's fighting fund. But I'm pleased to say that the total was boosted further on the last day of the month, thanks to a brilliant £100 donation via PayPal from comrade JP, plus two standing orders from MD and VP (£10 each).

That means we ended the month with £2,424 in the kitty - an excess of £174, which definitely eats into the deficit of the three previous months. Thanks very much to all comrades who contributed, but now we need to keep up the good work in September by following August's example!

And I'm also pleased to say that after, as I write, just six days, we've already received £395 for this month. That's not bad, but in fact it's just a little below the going rate - especially as week two is usually the least remunerative of the month.

Anyway, our thanks go to AC (£60), EW (£55), ST and CG (£30 each), MS and BK (£20),

not to mention DC, JS, CP, BG, AN, MM, GB, TM, MT, YM, DI, RG and BH - all of whom added to the pot by either bank transfer or standing order. On top of that, NW came up with his usual two monthly PayPal payments, when he adds to his £5 subscription with an extra £25, while MH's donation via the same method was a tenner.

All good stuff. But now we're about to enter week two, which is usually the worst of every month, mainly due to the low number of standing orders that come our way then. So if you want to help us out - and play your part in ensuring that the *Weekly Worker's* key role in fighting for the principled, democratic-centralist Marxist party is maintained - now would be a very good time to do so!

To find out how, go to weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/donate ●

Robbie Rix

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

WINTER WAR

Cold war adumbration

Paul Flowers draws links with the current Ukraine conflict and the 1939-40 war between the Soviet Union and Finland. An anti-communist consensus formed then, while now we have the demonisation of Russia as the new evil empire



Predictably Finnish troops put up stiff resistance

The fact that Russia's current war with Ukraine is unjustified and reprehensible does not excuse the daily deluge of propaganda on the subject posing as reporting and commentary in the British media. At a time when factual reportage and sober analysis on all aspects of the war are a vital necessity for any concerned reader, official Ukrainian statements are presented as irrefutable truth, official Russian statements are dismissed as worthless lies, while wishful thinking about impending Ukrainian breakthroughs and Russian retreats takes the place of careful assessment.

This is not the first time that an unjustifiable attack by Moscow on a neighbouring country has led to a veritable flood of propaganda in the British media. This phenomenon occurred in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Finland in late 1939, which, as historian Angus Calder put it, created an atmosphere of "hysteria", with the press finding "no praise too high for the gallant Finns",¹ and BBC news broadcasts commencing with the opening bars of Sibelius's 'Finlandia'.² Things

went way beyond mere words: at a time when both Britain and France were involved in a war with Nazi Germany, their governments were happy to supply considerable quantities of *matériel*, including fighter and bomber planes, artillery, machine guns and ammunition, to the Finnish government.³ A bureau was set up in London with official approval for the recruitment of volunteers to fight in Finland.

But that was not all. More important for political thinkers and activists is the fact that the Finnish Winter War served as the trigger for a major shift in social democratic politics in respect of the Soviet Union and Stalinism in general - one that laid the basis for the anti-communist consensus in Britain, which underlay mainstream politics throughout the period of the cold war.

Up until the Soviet forces launched their assault upon Finland on November 30 1939, most rightwing social democrats in Britain had, along with many liberals, adhered to a critical, but generally non-antagonistic, stance towards the Soviet Union, despite their rejection

of the official ideology of the Soviet regime and their hostility towards the activities of the Communist Party of Great Britain. On the one hand, they applauded the Soviet regime for its five-year plans and social reform programmes, whilst, on the other, they condemned the purges, the idea of a one-party state and the suppression of political dissent.

Although the August 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the subsequent annexation of eastern Poland had seriously damaged Moscow's image in Britain amongst 'progressive opinion', the attack upon Finland did more than any other act to drive rightwing social democrats and liberals into a strongly hostile stance towards Moscow, and rapidly led to their joining with conservatives in what could genuinely be considered an anti-Soviet popular front.⁴

There was much disquiet around Moscow's diplomatic bullying of Finland in the autumn of 1939, as the former called on the Finnish government to move the border in the Karelian Isthmus 50 miles north-westwards away from Leningrad, to cede to it five islands in the Gulf

of Finland and some territory near Petsamo in the north, and to permit Soviet forces to be based on Hangö, in exchange for a sizeable chunk of Soviet Karelia. The Finnish government stood firm, and the ensuing Soviet military invasion and air raids provoked a veritable storm of protest - not merely from traditional critics of the Soviet regime, but from many who had seen Moscow as at least a potentially positive force in international affairs.

The previously fellow-travelling *Tribune*, which until then had loyally supported the twists and turns of Soviet foreign policy, issued a thundering declaration against Stalin's attack,⁵ and not merely the Labour Party leadership but even the normally pro-Soviet Harold Laski equated Stalin's actions with the foreign adventures of Mussolini and Hitler.⁶ The social democratic leaders of the British labour movement were particularly incensed and, moving with uncharacteristic speed and vigour, hawked the 'Help Finland's Fight for Freedom' campaign around trade union and Labour Party branches, whilst TUC general

secretary Sir Walter Citrine and Labour MP Philip Noel-Baker made a fact-finding tour around Finland, whilst the war was in progress.⁷ Citrine went along with the calls for Britain to give military assistance to Finland,⁸ although, unlike some commentators,⁹ the Labour leaders strongly denied that they wanted Britain to become involved in a war with the Soviet Union.¹⁰

Nonetheless, it should not be thought that labour movement commentators as a whole went along with the newly-emerged anti-Soviet consensus. Within the context of condemning Stalin's actions, some of them warned against Britain becoming too embroiled in Finland, as this might finally cement the Soviet-German relationship into a full-blown alliance,¹¹ or, in the case of Aneurin Bevan, asked if *matériel* was being sent to Finland because the British government preferred to fight the Soviet Union rather than Germany.¹² Others considered that Moscow's concerns over its defensive requirements, particularly the need to protect the approaches to Leningrad, could not be gainsaid.¹³

The Labour Party leadership, however, declared that on Moscow's logic, Britain would have to cede the Isle of Wight, Southampton and parts of east Kent to Germany, and allow Berlin to control the Orkney, Shetland and Channel Islands.¹⁴

Stalin's attorney

The pro-Soviet lobby attempted to justify Moscow's case, but it showed signs of bending under the pressure of the broad chorus of disapproval - even Hewlett Johnson, the normally reliable 'Red Dean' of Canterbury, found the invasion of Finland "indefensible" from a "moral standpoint".¹⁵ As if implicitly acknowledging that the justification of Soviet foreign policy now required the employment of a legal mind skilled in arguing in favour of dodgy defendants, Britain's would-be Vyshinsky, Denis Pritt, came to the fore to explain Moscow's actions. Pritt's exegesis spent much of its bulk explaining that the British ruling class had been aiming to overthrow the Soviet regime ever since 1917, that it and its counterparts in other countries had "developed and brought near to fruition a plan for forming a common front of capitalist nations against the USSR", and that they now aimed at "switching" the war with Germany into a conflict between the capitalist world and the Soviet Union.¹⁶

The Stalinists claimed that Finland had never shaken off the legacy of the Civil War of 1918, in which the victory of the rightwing forces had resulted in the deaths of several thousand leftwingers and the imprisonment of many thousands more. Pritt claimed that since then Finland had veered between, on the one hand, an ineffectual parliamentary regime that was a mere façade, covering the machinations of reactionary state officials and the fascistic Lappo movement and White Guards, and, on the other, an outright fascist regime that openly suppressed working class organisations.¹⁷ When the glowing pictures presented by social democrats and liberals of Finland's democratic political life and national solidarity¹⁸ were compared with the fascistic and class-ridden hell-hole portrayed by the Stalinists, the unsuspecting reader could have felt that two entirely different countries were being described.¹⁹

Pritt considered that the Finnish ruling class was irredeemably anti-Soviet, but he was sufficiently astute to reckon that few would buy the idea that the rulers of this little state would declare war on its huge eastern neighbour purely on their own volition, so he proffered the notion that the Finns were encouraged to do so by the major anti-Soviet powers as part of their general drive against the Soviet Union. Pritt was often reduced to special pleading. His lengthy digressions on the lack of ethical standards in international relations, the predilection of the big capitalist powers to dominate and interfere in the affairs of smaller ones, and the deathbed revival of the League of Nations to censure and expel the Soviet Union, echoed the complaints in one of his earlier books that the western critics of Moscow's actions were guilty of the very crimes which they accused it of committing. The implication was clear: if the imperialists could play dirty, then why not Moscow?²⁰ The cynical attitude of the domestic Stalinists towards the Finnish War could only serve to deepen the growing hostility to Moscow.

The Finns mounted a determined defence, but after a few weeks, in which they suffered heavy losses, the Soviet forces gained the upper hand, and the Finnish government surrendered on March 12 1940,

acceding to the Soviet demands without receiving any compensation. Although the war led to only limited Soviet gains, it was a crucial episode in Britain, in that it greatly popularised the image of the Soviet Union as both an expansionist force and a threat to western civilisation, to the degree that it was taken up by people who would have rejected it but a few months previously. Diehard anti-communists had customarily seen the Soviet Union as wishing to expand and dominate as many countries as it could, on the basis that it was a world revolutionary force, or represented a revival of tsarist imperialism (or was a combination of both) and thus posed a dire threat to the west. The assault upon Finland was seen in these circles in this light, and Soviet designs were sometimes portrayed in the most lurid terms.²¹

Nonetheless, the fact that Finland, unlike most of eastern Europe, was a parliamentary democracy encouraged others to adopt this way of thinking. The main statement issued by Britain's Labour leaders called upon "the free nations of the world to give every practicable aid to the Finnish nation in its struggle to preserve its own institutions of civilisation and democracy",²² and the Labour Party national executive committee added that the "extinction of the free Finnish democracy" would be "an intolerable disaster for civilisation".²³ *The New Statesman* now saw the Soviet Union as an expansionist force, with Stalin not merely aiming at "reinstating the tsarist empire", but hoping to drive a corridor through to Narvik on the Norwegian coast.²⁴ The adoption by social democrats of the vocabulary of traditional anti-communism represented a significant change of feeling on their part towards the Soviet Union and 'official communism'.

The image of Stalinism as a threat to western civilisation became a regular part of the vocabulary of mainstream social democracy during the period of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, as did the equation of Stalinism with fascism. Hence in early 1941, Francis Williams, a prominent Labour Party journalist, warned of the "implacable and dangerous challenge" that the "altogether alien philosophies" of "Russian communism, fascism and National Socialism" posed to "the conscience of the civilised world", which was represented by "the people of the British Commonwealth and America". The "standards of conduct" of 'official communism', he added, were "set apart from those of humanity".²⁵ *The New Statesman*, whose sympathy for Moscow had been waning somewhat prior to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (Stalin's benevolence was a bit hard to accept after *three* Moscow Trials!), now concluded that there was little to choose between Stalinism and Nazism:

By the inexorable laws of its dialectic, Bolshevism brought into being its antithesis, National Socialism. Today the question being asked is whether the ugly thing that now reigns from Vladivostok to Cologne is turning into the inevitable synthesis: National Bolshevism.²⁶

A week later, the magazine returned to the topic:

They [Germany and the Soviet Union] stand for a new totalitarian idea, which is to be fulfilled at the expense of the western empires and of countries whose security has depended on these empires ... The struggle at the moment is most accurately seen as a joint challenge to the old civilised and conservative empires by totalitarian powers, which care

nothing for the old order or the moral system that supported it; they may differ in the systems they wish to substitute, but agree in the joyous prospect of destroying established power with fire and bayonet, and trampling into the dust the tradition of liberty, law and morality, which has been handed down in the west from Greece, Rome and Judea.²⁷

Whatever their criticisms of both Bolshevism and the developments in the Soviet Union under Stalin, most social democrats, including those of the rightwing variety, had eschewed this kind of language, which had customarily been the property of the right.

A clue to understanding its adoption can be found in a major work of this period by Evan Durbin, a leading rightwing British social democratic theoretician. Durbin went to some length to demonstrate two propositions: firstly, that Marxists and fascists shared a fanatical disposition towards violence in the quest for their political goal; and, secondly, that those whose political outlook rejected bourgeois democracy placed themselves outwith the bounds of civilised society.²⁸ Durbin's fanatical insistence upon the centrality of liberal democracy showed that he saw this institutional framework as the foundation of a civilised society, and - particularly in the aftermath of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact - the seemingly convergent courses of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, not least in their suppression of parliamentary institutions, encouraged social democrats who shared Durbin's passionate regard for parliamentary democracy to place Stalinism alongside fascism as a dire threat to western civilisation.

Warning

One of the most significant developments in the political arena in Britain and other countries after August 1939, and particularly after the Soviet attack upon Finland, was the adumbration of the anti-communist consensus that became the *leitmotiv* of mainstream western politics during the cold war. Many of the ideas that were commonplace and which often went unchallenged in the West during the post-war period were first widely articulated during this time.

Of course, they did not spring from a void in the latter months of 1939, and many of them had been in circulation since the October Revolution itself. But they had largely been the property of the anti-communist right, or had been subscribed to only partially or implicitly. The months following the pact saw for the first time the popular acceptance of an all-embracing totalitarian theory, one which viewed the Soviet Union as a society that was immanently totalitarian and expansionist and - in the construct soon to become almost axiomatic - expansionist, because it was totalitarian.

For the first time, a wide political consensus, drawing in social democrats, liberals and conservatives, coalesced around the idea that the Soviet Union constituted a deadly threat to people of all classes in Britain, and indeed to western civilisation as a whole, and that the 'official communist' movement and the fellow-travellers were Moscow's fifth column - an enemy within the besieged fortress. At the time of the Finnish surrender in March 1940, the British and French governments were but days away from despatching an expeditionary force to Finland, which would almost certainly have led to (amongst other things, bringing German forces even earlier into Scandinavia) a clash with the

Soviet Union. Although the labour movement leaders said that they did not want a war with Moscow, it is pertinent to ask whether they would have actually opposed such a conflict, had it broken out.

The vivid flash of anger in response to the Soviet attack upon Finland was soon submerged within the drama of the fall of France and the Blitz, and the Soviet Union's entry into the war in June 1941 not merely rehabilitated Moscow's reputation, but produced a great wave of pro-Soviet sympathy. Nevertheless, the seeds of a broad anti-communist consensus, centred upon the notion of the Soviet Union as a threatening, totalitarian force in global affairs, had indubitably taken root.

The sheer intensity of the anger expressed, particularly by rightwing social democrats, over Moscow's assault upon Finland - a response that was deeper and more heartfelt than that towards, say, the German invasion of Poland - and the suddenness with which it flared up, shows that something profound was occurring within the confines of British political discourse.

Once Germany had been dealt with, and once tensions between the Soviet Union and the western countries started to rise, as the 1940s drew by, the anti-communist consensus that had suddenly emerged after August 1939 was to revive into a full-blown fury in Britain and the western world in general during the cold war. The Soviet Union became almost universally accepted as a deadly military and political threat to the west, and anyone holding favourable attitudes towards it was considered at best a fool, and at worst a traitor.

The brief furore over Finland showed that, whatever their previous statements in favour of certain aspects of Soviet policies, when it came to any confrontation between liberal democracy (capitalism, in other words) and Stalinism, rightwing social democrats, liberals and conservatives would now stand four-square together in defence of the former, sharing the vernacular - and the intention - of defending the 'free world' against 'totalitarian communism'.

Although the Finnish Winter War was a relatively minor episode in World War II, it was to be of great significance to the general political discourse in Britain and the capitalist world as a whole. The cold war division between east and west had been laid down for the first time within the labour movement. The problem facing genuine socialists of how to defend the interests of the working class without making any concessions to the equally anti-working class and anti-communist, yet mutually opposed, forces of Stalinism and social democracy, was soon to present itself in a new and more direct form ●

Notes

1. A Calder *The people's war: Britain 1939-1945* London 1992, p75.
2. E. Troly *Imperialist war: further recollections of a communist organiser* Brighton 1977, p 68.
3. On March 19 1940, prime minister Neville Chamberlain informed the House of Commons of the British supplies to Finland: Aeroplanes promised - 152; actually sent - 101. Guns of all kinds promised - 223; sent - 114. Shells promised - 297,000; actually sent - 185,000. Vickers guns promised - 100; all sent. Marine mines promised - 500; sent - 400. Hand grenades promised - 50,000; all sent. Aircraft bombs promised - 20,700; sent - 15,700. Signalling equipment promised - 1,300 sets; sent - 800. Anti-tank rifles promised - 200; all sent. Respirators promised - 60,000; all sent. Greatcoats promised - 100,000; all sent. Battledress suits promised - 100,000; all sent. Anti-tank mines promised - 20,000; sent - 10,000. Ambulances promised - 48; all sent. The list also includes many minor items, such as medical stores, tents, equipment, sandbags, steel helmets, sand, etc, and also large quantities of small arms ammunition, and

I may add, in fact, that arrangements were made here for the manufacture of very large supplies of ammunition. This is all cited in WP and ZK Coates *A history of Anglo-Soviet relations* (London 1945), pp 633-34.

4. See P Flewers *The new civilisation? Understanding Stalin's Soviet Union, 1929-1941* London 2008, chapters 3 and 4.
5. A statement by the paper's editorial board and the foreign affairs writer, Konni Zilliacus, was uncompromising: "It is useless to conceal from ourselves that this action of the Soviet Union has profoundly shocked socialist opinion throughout the world. The diplomatic preparation for the invasion smelt more of *Mein Kampf* than of *The communist manifesto* ... Socialism, if it is to be won at all, must be won by the workers themselves in struggle with their own ruling class, and cannot be conferred upon them from outside. Certainly it cannot be expected to take root if its seeds are sown by means of bombing raids ... 'Socialism means war' is hardly a slogan which will endear socialism to the workers" - editorial board and Vigilans [Konni Zilliacus], 'Russia - and Finland' *Tribune* December 8 1939.
6. Labour Party *Finland: the criminal conspiracy of Stalin and Hitler* London, 1940, p 15; H Laski *Where do we go from here?* Harmondsworth 1940, p121. See also 'The man of steel' *New Statesman* December 9 1939, p811.
7. See W Citrine *My Finnish diary* Harmondsworth 1940. As if to highlight the wantonness of the Soviet bombing, Citrine emphasised the damage caused to non-military targets (pp55-56, 78, 139-40, 171-73).
8. *Ibid* p191. See also 'Help Finland now' *Spectator* February 9 1940; 'Help for Finland' *Economist* February 24 1940.
9. *The Economist* averred that, if it was right to fight Germany, it could not be wrong to fight the Soviet Union: 'Two wars' *The Economist* February 24 1940. Others were even more belligerent. The liberal commentator, Frederick Voigt, called for the Allies to blockade Soviet ports and bomb Batum and Baku: The editor, 'The situation' *Nineteenth century and after* March 1940, p267. A rightwing Conservative journal grumbled: "Had we declared war on Russia in September, we should be in a better position than we are at present" ('Episodes of the month' *National Review* January 1940).
10. A Greenwood *Why we fight: Labour's case* London 1940, pp84-85.
11. Vigilans, 'The war in Finland' *Tribune* December 22 1939.
12. A Bevan, 'Stop sending British arms to Finland' *Tribune* December 22 1939.
13. 'Russia's patience' *New Statesman* December 2 1939. Geoffrey Cox, a radical journalist who visited Finland during the war, considered that the Soviet territorial demands were legitimate, although he condemned the regime's means of attaining them: G Cox *The Red Army moves* London 1941, pp275-76.
14. Labour Party *Finland* p12. The recently disillusioned US fellow-traveller, Louis Fischer, rejected the Soviet rationale that territorial adjustments were justified because Leningrad was in range of Finnish artillery, on the grounds that it made "a case against the existence of every weak and small country", as every power could claim that its cities were in range of a neighbour's airforce: L Fischer *Stalin and Hitler: the reasons for the results of the Nazi-Bolshevik pact* Harmondsworth 1940, pp46-47.
15. H Johnson, 'The invasion of Finland' *New Statesman* December 16 1939.
16. DN Pritt *Must the war spread?* Harmondsworth 1940, pp9, 167ff. See also Russia Today Society *Finland: The facts* London 1939.
17. DN Pritt *Must the war spread?* pp96ff.
18. See, for instance, W Citrine, *My Finnish diary* passim; P Noel-Baker, 'Just back from Finland' *The Listener* February 22 1940; J Langdon-Davis *Finland: the first total war* London 1940, pp79ff, 162ff.
19. The Stalinists' lurid descriptions of fascist repression in Finland were called into question by the siding of members of the Finnish Communist Party with the Finnish government: see G Cox *The Red Army moves* London 1941, p256.
20. DN Pritt *Light on Moscow: Soviet policy analysed* Harmondsworth 1939, p132; DN Pritt *Must the war spread?* Harmondsworth 1940, pp10, 63ff, 221ff.
21. See, for example, T Borenus, 'Finland and Europe' *Free Europe* December 15 1939, p42.
22. National Council of Labour, 'Russian invasion of Finland', December 7 1939, in *Report of the 39th annual conference of the Labour Party* London 1940, p13.
23. Labour Party *Labour, the war and the peace* London 1940, p7.
24. 'The man of steel' *New Statesman* December 9 1939.
25. F Williams *Democracy's last battle* London 1941, pp13-14, 36.
26. 'The man of steel' *New Statesman* December 9 1939. The idea that the Soviet Union under Stalin and Nazi Germany were essentially the same sort of society was popular across the political spectrum during this period. See P Flewers *The new civilisation? Understanding Stalin's Soviet Union, 1929-1941* London 2008, pp184-200.
27. 'Progress and anarchy' *New Statesman* December 16 1939, p884.
28. EFM Durbin *The politics of democratic socialism: an essay in social policy* London 1940, pp190, 273-79.

CHILE

National road to disaster

Some 60,000 died, huge numbers were tortured and driven into exile, the parties of the left were banned and driven underground. Mike Macnair asks if any strategic lessons were learnt

September 11 marks the 50th anniversary of the 1973 military coup in Chile, which overthrew the government of Salvador Allende and ushered in a regime of terror against the left and trade unions. Chile was also the site of an early experiment with the 'Chicago Boys' and their shock therapy of privatisation, deregulation and so on.

The history is well-known, and whoever wrote the Wikipedia page on the coup has done a good job with thorough use of relevant materials (some only declassified this year).¹ The USA was, from the moment that the election of Allende as president looked possible in 1970 (when he won the largest minority), determined that it should not happen, and if it happened there should be a coup. And, once CIA efforts to persuade the Chilean Congress - where Allende's Unidad Popular coalition government did not have a majority - to go for a stop-gap president who would hand over to the right failed, the CIA embarked on a destabilisation programme, including external financial and economic pressure, and mobilisation of the middle classes. Allende and his UP coalition attempted to placate the military after the failed coup attempt of June 1973, but this policy did not succeed. August 1973 saw calls for action against the government by both the Supreme Court and the Chamber of Deputies - and September 11 saw the coup led by general Augusto Pinochet.

The Chilean coup was a severe defeat for the competing strategies of the left. This was not only true of the strategies of the advocates of people's fronts, like Unidad Popular, and 'national roads to socialism' (Chile was until 1973 believed to be a stable parliamentary-liberal regime). It was also true of the strategies of the advocates of extra-parliamentary action. The Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) had about 10,000 members in 1973, which, since Chile's population at the time was around 10 million, would be comparable to a party in Britain of around 67,000. By way of comparison, the Communist Party of Chile had, according to US estimates, 27,500 members in 1968. I have not been able despite fairly extensive web searching to find membership figures for the Socialist Party of Chile, but from the various literature about it, it seems likely before 1970 to have been significantly smaller than the CPC, though in the same range of electoral support, so probably in the same size range.

The MIR gave critical support to the Allende government, and (though active in attempting to construct a party military wing and in intervening in the army ranks) was effectively politically helpless in the crisis of 1972-73. MIR attempts to conduct guerrilla resistance to the post-coup regime failed - yet another nail in the coffin of the strategy of 'prolonged people's war', as applied to Latin America.

Meanwhile, the Chinese People's Republic displayed the real meaning of Nixon's 1972 visit to Beijing, when it was one of the few governments in the world *not* to (temporarily) break diplomatic relations with Chile after the coup. China thus aligned itself with US policy in Latin America (and globally); so that Maoism began to fall into crisis - though this was a gradual process through the mid-late 1970s.



Augusto Pinochet meets and greets US secretary of State Henry Kissinger

At the time of writing, only two September 2023 versions of left comment on this strategic defeat are out, and both of those are reprints of older texts (Tony Saunois from 1998 in *Socialism Today*, and Daniel Bensaïd from 2008 on the Anti-Capitalist Resistance website).² However, so little has changed in the stories the left tells itself in the last 50 years that it is probably fair enough to assume that there will be nothing radically new this week. Thus in the *Morning Star* a book review by Carlos Martinez in 2013, and in 2018 Kenny Coyle's introduction to a reprinted 1978 collection of articles by Chilean CP leaders, tell us much the same story as each other.³ The Socialist Workers Party has told its version of the story, beginning in 1973, and repeated in simplified versions in 2003, 2013 and 2020 (the last being for the 50th anniversary of Allende's election).⁴ *Socialist Appeal* in 2013 reprinted a long 1979 article by Alan Woods.⁵

Largely these are actually stories of *failure* to learn lessons from the experience of the Allende government. On the one hand, UP was the sort of 'broad democratic alliance' which the *Morning Star* continues to promote as a strategy for British politics (as its sister parties promote such alliances elsewhere). Allende's overthrow is not just a story of military action, but of a *political* battle fought by US financial and economic warfare against Chile and of US (and British and Australian) disinformation operations. The British left has recently (in 2017-19) lost a similar battle, thanks to US and British security apparatus disinformation operations. Just as the Chilean Christian Democracy deserted its partial alliance with UP in 1972, so the Labour right preferred to see Labour lose in 2019. And so on...

On the other hand, the far-left versions reassert the strategy of building soviets. They play up the *cordones industriales*, which were in effect shop-steward combines on an industrial-estate-wide basis aimed to defeat the capitalists' (and USA's) economic sabotage operations, none

having the level of *city-wide* control of production of the 1905 Petrograd soviet (let alone the effective halfway sovereignty of the 1917 soviets). Conversely, the significance of the MIR is underestimated. Birchall and Harman, writing in 1973, took the MIR fairly seriously, as did Bensaïd; subsequent SWP authors ignored it, as did Woods (and as do the *Morning Star* writers); Saunois provided only glancing mentions. Not taking the MIR seriously is a route to not considering the possibility that a 'strategy of extra-parliamentary action' might be worthwhile in an acute crisis, even when applied by quite a large organisation.

Some 'official communists' in the period after the coup blamed 'ultra-leftism', meaning the MIR and other far-left groups which supported strike action, demands for expropriation of 'sabotaging' firms, etc, for the defection of the Christian Democrats from their initial passive support for Allende, the middle classes taking fright, and so on.⁶ But US documents have trickled out, making clear that the US administration was determined from the outset that there should not be an Allende presidency (and, if there was, it should be made to fail). No amount of increased caution on the part of UP and the workers' movement would have stopped the US destabilisation campaign or prevented some kind of coup - even if it might have been different from the one which actually happened.

Framework

The problem of failing to address the role of US economic and disinformation/political mobilisation warfare is common to both sides of the debate. It arises because both the 'official communist' views about the Chilean defeat and the far left operate within the framework of 'national roads to socialism'. This is unsurprising from the 'official communists', but more than a little surprising from groups of Trotskyist origin, like the Mandeliste Fourth International, the SWP, SPEW and Socialist Appeal.

For Carlos Martinez, "... what

developed amongst the working class had an electrifying effect on the masses in Latin America and Europe. It coincided with a rising struggle against the Franco dictatorship in Spain.

The spreading of the revolution to any of the Latin American countries, linked with a direct appeal to the working class in the USA, would have decisively checked the ability of US imperialism to intervene.

Less elaborately, Alan Woods after a long history of Chile and a long and wildly unrealistic assessment of Chilean politics in 1979, wrote:

The socialist revolution in Chile would be an example for the working class and all the oppressed peoples of Latin America. With a workers' government in Chile, how long would the military dictatorships in Argentina, Uruguay, etc last?

The problem with these arguments is that they fail altogether to address the USA's economic warfare operations and their effects on the Chilean economy and, in consequence, the ability of a revolutionary Chile to feed its people: after World War II, Chile became increasingly dependent on food imports,⁷ which made it dependent on the copper, and so on, exports which the US by financial sanctions from 1970 interrupted.

The result is that the 'isolated socialist state',⁸ far from being a beacon for the peoples of the world or even of the region, and leading to a spreading revolution, becomes an awful example to them, leading to reaction not only in the country targeted by economic warfare, but also in its neighbours. Both the Nicaraguan revolution, created by an actual insurrectionary overthrow of a military dictatorship in 1978-79, and the Venezuelan Chavista regime, created by an electoral victory in 1999 of a movement led by an army officer and with significant army support, provide more recent examples.

The Russian Revolution is a standard counter-example. But this counter-example is wildly unrealistic. The revolution took place under conditions where open war between the major imperialist powers had already radically disrupted the economy; and, this apart, the revolution took place across the former tsarist empire, which was peasant-majority and before 1914 a food exporter. (The Bolsheviks promised self-determination to Russia's dependencies, but were actually forced, in order to survive, to reconquer all of them during the civil war - except for the Baltics and Finland, which were held by German troops.)

All subsequent cases of countries added to the 'socialist camp' by 'national roads' depended on the *prior existence* of the USSR. Breaking with the US-controlled world capitalist order to join the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) would be a feasible strategic option, *if the USSR leadership was willing to take the country on board*. Most cases (North Vietnam included) were immediately post-World War II; but the USSR was willing to back Cuba because the contemporary Sino-Soviet split and the recent struggle with the 'Anti-Party group' made a left posture advantageous to Nikita

the fall of Allende does show is that revolutions do not exist in isolation and that sometimes the prevailing regional and global conditions simply do not allow them to survive." But neither he nor Kenny Coyle, nor the Chilean communists in *1000 days of revolution*, can offer a *strategic line for the defeat of the USA's war on the revolution* or, hence, any ground for supposing that future attempts along the same lines will not result in a similar disaster. Some 60,000 were killed, large numbers fled into exile and the parties of the left were banned.

Birchall in 2003 had the merit of addressing the question - but only to argue that the weakness of the US's situation in the period meant that it *could not* have intervened if a strong line had been taken by the Chilean left:

But the point should not be overstated. The US could only intervene on the basis of the balance of forces inside Chile. They were disentangling themselves from defeat in Vietnam, and direct intervention was out of the question.

But the US's economic and disinformation/political mobilisation warfare, starting in 1970, *created* the "balance of forces inside Chile". And all through the 1950s-60s, US-sponsored coups had been far more common in Latin America than actual cases of "send the marines".

Tony Saunois argued that:

A revolutionary party with a precise programme and correct tactics was needed to direct this energy towards the completion of the revolution and the overthrow of capitalism and its state machine. But no such party existed in Chile.

Had it existed, the revolution could have emerged victorious and would have opened up the prospect of a socialist revolution throughout Latin America and beyond. Even the election of the UP government with its 'Marxist' president and the revolutionary process that

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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Khrushchev; and to back South Yemen because the cost was low and the Aden naval base advantageous to the Soviet navy. This was not a generally available option, because the Soviet leadership was not willing to trigger a general confrontation with the US: even Cuba threatened general crisis, though the deal made was not a simple Soviet backdown, as it was presented in the western media.⁹

Birchall is right that the general position of US imperialism in 1970-73 was relatively weak, after the Tet Offensive in Vietnam, the British scuttle out of Aden, and so on.¹⁰ But that did not mean that it was not massively stronger than any single country in Latin America. If the global left had consistently through the 1950s and 60s characterised US financial and commercial 'sanctions' as acts of war, and promoted the idea that they should be met by seizure of US assets and repudiation of debts to US institutions, not only by the country affected, but by other countries, it is possible that the US response to the election of Allende could have triggered a general crisis of a sort which would force the US to back down.

Equally, if the US left had been unambiguously disloyalist and had - again, from 1945 on - recognised sanctions, etc as acts of war in violation of US constitution, article I, section 8, clause 11 (which requires a declaration of war by Congress, in the absence of a direct attack on the US), it might have been possible to build a movement in the US itself, alongside the subsisting anti-Vietnam war movement, against US economic warfare on Chile.

But promoting either idea would be inconsistent with the basic idea of 'national roads to socialism'. Thus the party programme of the Communist Party USA, 'Road to socialism USA', is decidedly 'soft' on the US constitution. 'National roads' here produces accommodation to the very common US constitutional patriotism.¹¹

Perhaps more immediately relevant to the coup of 1973, 'national roads' up till 1973 produced the illusion that Chile's long 'democratic' (ie, liberal-constitutional) tradition would mean that a military coup was unlikely, in spite of the frequency of US-sponsored military coups across Latin America in the preceding period. Thus Birchall and Harman quote Chilean CP general secretary Luis Corvalan in 1971:

... the army is not invulnerable to the new winds blowing in Latin America and penetrating everywhere. It is not a body alien to the nation, in the service of anti-national interests. It must be won to the cause of progress in Chile and not pushed to the other side of the barricades.

The same Luis Corvalan commented in 1978 that:

Since 1963 the party had been giving its members military training and making efforts to acquire enough arms to defend the government that we were confident the people would set up, but this was not enough, because our activity in this direction was not accompanied by the main thing: namely persistent and sustained propaganda to give the popular movement a correct attitude to the military.¹²

What the "correct attitude" would be remains utterly unclear in Corvalan's account.

This is just a part of the question of the illusions which UP had promoted in the workers' movement when Allende came to office (we

should not say 'to power', since this would be misleading). Thus Allende said in 1972:

My government maintains that there is another path for the revolutionary process that is not the violent destruction of the current institutional and constitutional regime.

The entities of the state administration act today not at the service of the ruling class, but at the service of the workers and the continuity of the revolutionary process; therefore, one cannot try to destroy what is now an instrument to act, change, and create for the benefit of Chile and its labour masses.

The power of the big bourgeoisie is not based on the institutional regime, but on its economic resources and on the complex web of social relations linked to the capitalist property system.

We do not see the path of the Chilean revolution in the violent bankruptcy of the state apparatus. What our people have built over several generations of struggle allows them to take advantage of the conditions created by our history to replace the capitalist foundation of the current institutional regime with another that is adapted to the new social reality.

The popular political parties and movements have always affirmed - and this is contained in the government programme - that ending the capitalist system requires transforming the class content of the state and of the fundamental charter itself. But we have also solemnly affirmed our will to carry it out in accordance with the mechanisms that the political constitution has expressly established to be modified.¹³

The claim that the "power of the big bourgeoisie is not based on the institutional regime, but on its economic resources and on the complex web of social relations linked to the capitalist property system" is widely believed to be orthodox Marxism (in the sense that similar comments can be found from Engels and Kautsky), but it is straightforwardly wrong.

Regime

The *institutional regime* of the rule of law and separation of powers, together with the tradeable-debt-funding of state activities, the free market in legal services, the advertising-based media and so on, delivers the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie: that is, that *capital in the money form* (at the two ends of the circuit M-C-P-C'-M') is above the law and dictates what the law is. In countries outside the US, but having broadly liberal constitutions, because the dollar is the global reserve currency, that institutional form delivers the dictatorship of *US capital* over the laws of the UK, France ... and Chile.

These institutional forms have created the basis of the loyalty of the armed forces (including the police) the civil service, the judiciary, and so on, and constitute them as a state rather than a mere temporary kleptocracy or protection racket. In consequence, Corvalan's idea as of 1971 of winning the army as a whole to the side of the people was delusional. But it was equally illusory to imagine that the judiciary would not - as they did in August 1973 - call for a coup. Illusions in judges are more widespread than illusions in generals ...

In this context, the workers' movement needs, *before* it takes office, to pose the question of radical

constitutional change. Usually, the 'push-back' inherent in the state officials' loyalty to the constitutional order will knock down radical aspirations long before reaching the point of a 1970-73-style crisis (as was visible in the UK in the 1924 Zinoviev letter and its current equivalent, the 'anti-Semitism' smear campaign).

Expose

Posing the question of radical constitutional change requires not just consistent work to expose the corrupt character of the existing regime. It is also necessary to pose, *concretely*, a positive alternative. That implies, for example, proposing the abolition of the standing army and its replacement with a people's militia, and the necessary corollary of that: the right to keep and bear arms. It implies also the defence and extension of trial by jury; the belief among non-Anglo leftists that this is an odd-ball Anglo phenomenon is a matter of these leftists being duped by what Engels called (of France) "the empire of 1799 without the emperor": ie, the capitalist class's adoption of the judicial methods of late feudal absolutism as a bulwark against the working class. It implies institutional forms to reduce excessive trust in judges.¹⁴ It implies the rejection of directly elected presidencies and other monarchical forms, of second chambers in parliaments and congresses. And so on.

As delusional as Allende's loyalty towards the Chilean liberal constitution is the belief of the SWP authors and Saunois that it is possible to counter the problem of state loyalty by two steps. The first is in propaganda to argue that the state *must be* as a matter of Marxist theory a class instrument - in a completely abstract or dogmatic way, without addressing concrete issues of state form. This argument, because it is abstract, can have no serious political purchase. The second step is to argue that in revolutionary crises the workers will necessarily throw up institutions of self-organisation (like the Chilean *cordones industriales*) and that these can form the basis of a counter-power. This is a fantasy version of the Russian Revolution, which leaves out the role of mass parties in creating and leading the soviets.

It also leaves out Leon Trotsky's judgment in 1923 and again in 1931 of the fetishism of soviets.¹⁵ That is, there *were* workers' councils (*Räte*) in Germany and Austria in 1918. But the leadership of these councils remained with the majority Social Democrats in Germany, with the Socialdemocratic Party in Austria. As a result, the *Räte* could not serve as a counter-power. The same is true all the more of the Chilean *cordones industriales*, which never approached being a counter-power.

When push came to shove, the problem in September 1973 was that the armed forces were not *split*: hence the fact that there were no rival aircraft, or anti-aircraft missiles, to defend the presidential palace against the coup-makers. For the armed forces to be split needed enough of the junior ranks to be convinced that their seniors' intervention in politics amounted to treason. That, in turn, required that the left should have been exposing the constitutional order and proposing an alternative for years, not just months, so that the electoral victory of the UP would then reflect an actual belief among broad masses that it was time to be done with that order. Such a belief would *then* stretch into the ranks of the armed forces.

Trotskyist authors place great emphasis on the fact that UP was (as its name tells us) a popular front. But the question posed is: would a

united front government, of the SP and CP alone, have been any better? The answer is quite plainly not. I have quoted above the delusions in the Chilean constitutional order promoted both by Allende and Luis Corvalan.

The essence of the problem is that UP formed a *minority* government, on the basis of wildly unrealistic expectations about the willingness of the other side - the USA and its local political clients - to play by the constitutional rulebook. The price they, and the whole of the Chilean workers' movement, paid for this choice was tragic.

But the idea was already long established that workers' parties should not participate in government unless there is a majority for the implementation of their minimum programme - a minimum which consisted chiefly of constitutional proposals. It was already Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels' critique of Louis Blanc for participating in government in 1848. It was a critique which Engels repeated to correspondents in Italy and elsewhere in the 1890s. It was repeated as a principle by the Second International in response to then-socialist Alexandre Millerand's participation in a 'government of republican defence' in France in 1899.

Since 1900 we have had *many, many* examples of left parties wrecking themselves by minority participation in governments (recently, Rifondazione Comunista in Italy springs to mind) or forming minority governments (eg, Syriza in Greece). Chile 1973 was a tragedy. But it was a tragedy arising from strategic mistakes which the left still clings to, and which are still disastrous - even when the results are banal demoralisation rather than tragedy ●

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Notes

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- socialist.net/the-lessons-of-chile-1973.
- There are several examples in the essays in *1000 days of revolution* Glasgow 2018.
- A Valdés, 'Trade policy and its effect on the external agricultural trade of Chile 1945-1965' *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* Vol 55, 1973 (pro 'free-trade' polemic, but the data is clear enough).
- The phrase was originally from G von Vollmar, "Der isolierte sozialistische Staat: Eine sozialökonomische Studie" (1878-79) in W Albrecht (ed) *Reden und Schriften zur Reformpolitik* Bonn 1977.
- See, for example, www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/jupiter-missiles-and-endgame-cuban-missile-crisis-sealing-deal-italy-and-turkey.
- 'May 68' strengthened the US position in Europe by replacing de Gaulle with a more consistent Atlanticist, and the 'Prague spring' weakened the position of the USSR.
- www.cpusa.org/party_info/party-program.
- 1000 days of revolution* pp115-16.
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidency_of_Salvador_Allende, citing *Textos de Salvador Allende 1972*, 2016, p459.
- I have suggested some possibilities in 'On reducing undue trust in judges: or, against the modern doctrine of precedent' *King's Law Journal* Vol 31, pp41-58 (2020); these do *not* represent the CPGB position.
- www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1924/lessons/ch8.htm; www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1931/spain/spain09.htm.

weekly worker

Nationalism
divides the
so-called
comrades

Old enemies, new friends

Joe Biden's 'comprehensive strategic partnership' with Vietnam is about blocking the rise of China, writes Eddie Ford. It will mean more visits from the Pacific fleet, more trade and new weapons

As this paper has consistently argued, the dominant geopolitical reality is US imperialism's struggle with China. Meaning, ultimately, that the main goal of the US is not really defending plucky little Taiwan, getting rid of Putin from the Kremlin, or even a Ukrainian military victory - though that would obviously be viewed as a bonus. Rather, it is about defeating the strategic challenge that China represents to US global hegemony. That comes above everything.

That is behind the tilt to the Indo-Pacific, the courtship of India and the signing of Aukus - the strategic partnership between the US, UK and Australia, initially to build a new class of nuclear-powered submarines. Now we have the Joe Biden visit to Vietnam on September 10, the fourth US president to come to the country after relations were normalised in 1995. The White House said the president - after going to India for the G20 summit - will meet with Nguyen Phu Trong, general secretary of Communist Party, and other top Vietnamese leaders in Hanoi before travelling to Alaska to commemorate the anniversary of September 11. This follows on from earlier visits this year by Antony Blinken, the secretary of state - weeks after the 50th anniversary of America's humiliating defeat - and treasury secretary Janet Yellen. A serious charm offensive, albeit from charmless people.

What Biden will agree in Vietnam is a 'comprehensive strategic partnership' - an upgrade that would represent a significant diplomatic-political milestone in the relationship between Hanoi and Washington. Thus far Hanoi has only agreed such a partnership with four other powers - China, South Korea, India and Russia. What that will mean in terms of the US is not only more frequent trips from the US fleet, including aircraft carriers based in the Pacific, but also more economic deals. In the words of the official Vietnamese statement, the new partnership "will develop bilateral relationship in a sustainable, substantive and long-term manner, contributing to peace, stability and cooperation in the region and in the world".

The US is one of Vietnam's biggest trading partners. Last year, Hanoi exported \$109 billion worth of goods to America. In a widely commented upon phenomenon, a lot of companies that supply US markets are shifting from China to Vietnam - the most obvious example being the iPhone. That is being done partially for economic reasons, as wages paid in Vietnam are considerably less than in China, but also with a clear government steer from Washington - we want companies to be less dependent on China and to look around for other supply lines ('diversification').

But, on top of that, Joe Biden will agree some sort of opening for the US to sell arms to Vietnam. The country's main supplier of arms for



State founder Ho Chi Minh: combining 'official communism' with national liberation

some considerable time has been Russia (before that it was the Soviet Union, of course). But from now on it will be a more mixed array of weapons. We are not talking on the level of Kalashnikovs or artillery shells - more like fighter aircraft, warships and presumably electronic warfare, etc.

Rivals

Why is the US doing all this? As mentioned earlier, it is about blocking China's rise as a potential rival hegemon. Now, if you take it from a Vietnamese point of view, Joe Biden might represent the old enemy that they defeated way back in the mid-1970s. But you should also consider that, while Vietnam and China have a "comrade and friendship bond" - to use the official description - there has also been armed warfare between the two countries.

Naturally, the background to the conflict was long and complex. Very briefly, following worsening relations between the Soviet Union and China as a result of the Sino-Soviet split of 1956-66, as many as 1.5 million Chinese troops were stationed along the Sino-Soviet border in preparation for a full-scale war against the Soviets. Vietnam then antagonised China when it increased its alignment with the USSR by joining the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in 1978 and - perhaps even worse - signed the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union, under which Moscow pledged to aid Vietnam if attacked. In January 1979, the new

paramount leader, Deng Xiaoping, visited the US for the first time and told Jimmy Carter: "The child is getting naughty - it is time he got spanked". It seems, though the exact details are still a bit murky, that Deng sought an endorsement from the US in order to deter the Soviet Union from intervening when and if China launched an attack against Vietnam. He informed the US president that China could not accept Vietnam's "wild ambitions" and was prepared to "teach it a lesson". According to US national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter reserved judgment - an action which Chinese diplomats interpreted as tacit approval.

When Vietnam intervened in Kampuchea/Cambodia in 1978 to overthrow the murderous Pol Pot regime, China as punishment attacked the north of the country a few months later - citing support for its Khmer Rouge ally, in addition to the mistreatment of Vietnam's ethnic Chinese minority and the Vietnamese occupation of the Spratly Islands, which were claimed by China. In order to prevent Soviet intervention on Vietnam's behalf, Deng warned Moscow the next day that China was prepared for a full-scale war against the Soviet Union - putting all of its troops along the Sino-Soviet border on an emergency war alert, setting up a new military command in Xinjiang, and even evacuating an estimated 300,000 civilians.

During the conflict, China and Vietnam each lost thousands of troops and it cost Beijing 3.45 billion yuan - screwing up its 1979-80

economic plan. We will probably never know the exact number of casualties - a figure which is disputed. Assessments of the strategic consequences of the war are disputed too. Was China's attack on Vietnam a political-strategic failure that left it with a bloody nose, as many think? Either way, China strengthened its relations with the ASEAN countries - particularly Thailand and Singapore - due to their perceived fear of "Vietnamese aggression" (read domestic insurgency). Singapore's prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, said that the Chinese action "changed the history of east Asia" - in the right way, as far as he was concerned. The odious Henry Kissinger reached similar conclusions. He later wrote that China "succeeded in exposing the limits of ... [Soviet] strategic reach" and speculated that the desire to "compensate for their ineffectuality" contributed to the USSR decision to intervene in Afghanistan a year later.¹ Maybe yes, maybe no.

Nonetheless the message was clear, and needs to be stressed - that China acted in conjunction with the US in attacking Vietnam. America today, of course, does not want to be associated in any way with Pol Pot's crazy reign of terror, but the fact of the matter is that the US backed the Khmer Rouge - who were responsible for the deaths of around 1.5 to 2 million of their fellow countrymen - as they continued to fight back from their remote jungle bases in Cambodia. It was China and the US that supported them logistically and diplomatically, as did the UK - something that investigative journalist John Pilger exposed in some detail.²

Ongoing

In Vietnam, the war with China is a recent memory. But we also have the ongoing clashes in the South China Sea between the Chinese navy and Vietnamese fishing boats, hardly a comradesly fight - with the Vietnamese often having their fishing tackle confiscated. There is also the harassment and blocking of Vietnamese exploration, when it comes to underwater oil and gas reserves.

Indeed, the US-Vietnam agreement - assuming it happens - coincides with distinctly escalating tension between Hanoi and Beijing over long-standing territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

Vietnam - along with neighbours like the Philippines and Malaysia - has long opposed Beijing's claim of authority over huge swathes of the South China Sea that extend 1,200 miles from China's coastline.

Showing the sensitivities involved, Hanoi last month banned the blockbuster *Barbie* movie due to a scene featuring Margot Robbie that appeared to reference the line Beijing says marks its territorial waters - claiming it has "exercised jurisdiction" over this area "for thousands of years".³ In response Warner Bros said "the map in *Barbie* Land is a whimsical, child-like crayon drawing ... the doodles depict Barbie's make-believe journey from Barbie Land to the real world", and was "not intended to make any type of statement". We believe you. Meanwhile, recent satellite imagery appears to indicate that China is building an airfield on a little island that Hanoi says is Vietnamese territory.

Despite China and Vietnam having very similar regimes and increasingly similar economies, while there is still the rhetoric of 'comradeship', the two countries seem set on a course for conflict. Of course, Vietnam is not about to join the Americans in Aukus or anything like that. But there is no doubt that, in the event of a clash between China and the US, the chances are that Vietnam would not intervene on China's side - it would be quite content to take a neutral position between the forces of imperialism and the forces of 'socialism'. What that shows about the nature of the regime in Hanoi is another question.

Now, where that would lead organisations like the *Morning Star* and its Communist Party of Britain is intriguing. The CPB has clearly prostituted itself to Beijing politically, but at the same time talks about its fraternal relationships with the Communist Party of Vietnam. How you square that circle is impossible to guess, but that is where nationalist politics take you ●

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Notes

1. H Kissinger *On China* New York 2012, pp304-05.
2. johnpilger.com/videos/cambodia-the-betrayal.
3. nbcnews.com/news/world/warner-bros-defends-barbie-banned-vietnam-south-china-sea-map-rcna93013.

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