

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity

weekly **worker**



Owen Jones quits Labour: but we surely deserve better than another version of Momentum

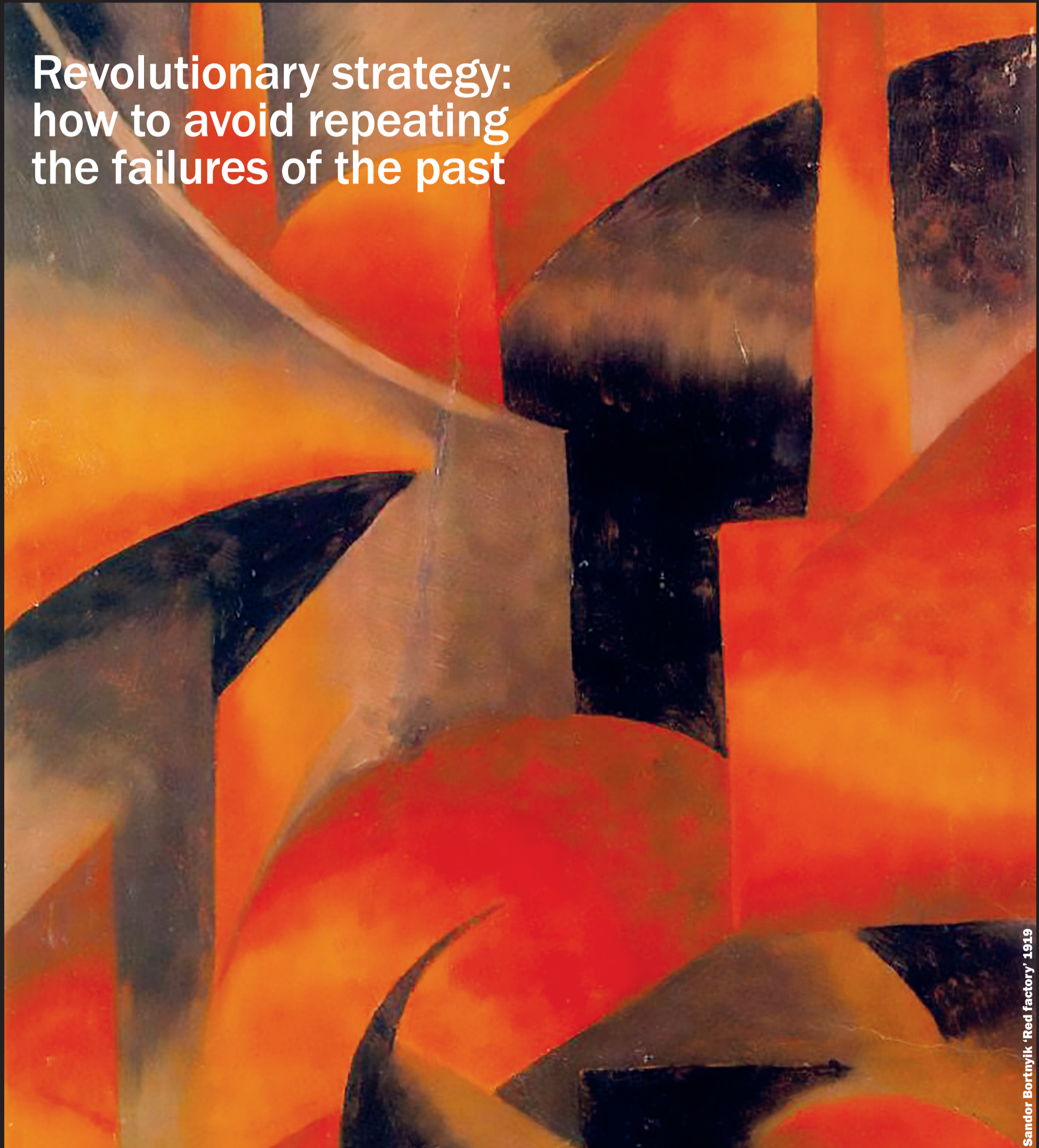
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Towards a mass Communist Party

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Revolutionary strategy:
how to avoid repeating
the failures of the past



Sandor Bortnyik 'Red factory' 1919

LETTERS



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

Short and bitter

The CPGB has inspired the programmes of the international democratic republican left. Specifically, here in the Netherlands it has been copied by Communistisch Platform and, by extension, de Socialisten (The Socialists). As a supporter of the LinkerFlank (Left Flank) faction in de Socialisten, I believe the minimum-maximum programme approach has many advantages. I don't think, however, that the advantages of such a programme are necessarily serviced efficiently by the CPGB's programme and its copycats.

The minimum part of the programme, our immediate demands, serve multiple functions. In my view they are as follows:

1 They are demands we can agitate for under capitalism, demands from which spring our daily work as communists. Ways in which we can explain and wave the banner of democracy in the labour movement.

2 They are, when put into practice completely, a prerequisite for the class dictatorship of the proletariat. And individually they undermine the control of the bourgeoisie over society.

3 They function as strategic points of unity, which a member or faction cannot sabotage in action.

What is the best way to present such a programme? In our view, the programme must be short and bitter, rather than long and sweet. Every demand must be a big and bitter pill for the bourgeoisie. It must be specific enough for us to deduce demands from it for our daily work, broad enough to function as strategic points of unity, and bitter enough to severely break the economic or political power of the bourgeoisie when implemented. An example of such a direct demand taken from the programme of the CPGB would be: "Nationalisation of the land, banks and financial services, along with basic infrastructure, such as

public transport, electricity, gas and water supplies."

Good examples of a minimum-maximum programme would be Erfurt, or the programme of the Parti Ouvrier, where all demands roughly fit the three criteria above. The programme of the CPGB looks very little like those. This is understandable to a certain extent: it was written in and for the 21st century - a time in which our understanding of bourgeois rule has gotten richer and bourgeois rule has gotten more complex. Any minimum programme would be longer nowadays. This however, does not excuse demands like the following being included: "Council and social housing must be high-quality, energy-efficient and with spacious rooms. Where appropriate, outside areas must be provided for children to play."

This demand scores a 1/3 on the necessities of a minimum demand - a failing grade, if you ask me.

It passes one: it is something we can agitate for under capitalism and in the labour movement. I do not disagree that it is desirable.

However, it is absolutely not a prerequisite for proletarian class rule. If the proletariat decided that what is needed for its economic planning is a mass investment into poorly insulated, wooden, tiny houses, it would make me quite sad, but it would in no way destroy proletarian class rule. If we force the bourgeoisie to build bigger and more efficient houses, this does nothing to harm their position of power over the working class.

It also makes no sense as a strategic point of unity, if a local municipal council member wanted to vote for the building of a few tiny houses, this, again, would make me a little sad. But it would in no way be enough to determine that this person is a traitor to our class.

The words, "Where appropriate", can be seen as an admission of guilt. This demand is something which follows as a practical implication of the actual minimum demand, 'Democratically run housing', or some such. The demand cannot be rigorously applied under a

dictatorship of the proletariat: it is simply a frame, advice or paradigm. If one acts against it they can always say, 'Well, it wasn't appropriate!'

Much of the programme is like this, with much of it better left to local election programmes, social campaigns or perspective texts. And the thing drags on for 64 pages. I ask the international democratic republican left to reflect on this. Are our demands really minimum demands? I urge all on the democratic republican left to make their minimum programmes short and bitter.

Sterre Wichelaar
Netherlands

Proud and strong

Stalwart David Douglass, in his piece, 'Spirit lives on still', did fine justice to the 1984-85 miners' Great Strike 40th commemorative event at Hatfield (March 21). I managed to attend myself and can confirm that his piece captured the mood perfectly.

That 'Danny the Red' did so much organising and reporting from his hospital bed is quite remarkable - and it says everything about his enduring commitment to the National Union of Mineworkers and his comrades - and crucially, his class. Under the circumstances, you were amazing, Davy. Get well soon, and I hope that you (and the *Weekly Worker*) will not mind if I add one or two observations.

Back in the distressing 1980s, in the immediate aftermath of the miners' return to work without an agreement, I recall attending a Socialist Workers Party public meeting which was addressed by the late, great Duncan Hallas. Although I forget the absolute specifics of his talk, likely its central theme would have been along the lines of 'Where next for the working class?' underpinned by recruitment to the party.

Like so many other strike supporters from the left I was still reeling and devastated from the enormous defeat, even though I was not a coal miner. When questions and contributions were invited, I asked whether Duncan thought we had just witnessed an epoch-defining moment, a historic turning point for the working class movement, and not in a good way (which was certainly how it felt on the NUM's return to work march at Park Mill Colliery). His response was, of course, a pragmatic 'It is too early to say without a crystal ball - but there is everything to fight for'. Today we all know an answer, and are victims of the deindustrialising history and the consequent decline of trade union membership and strike-days statistics. And, despite the recent welcome stirrings, few could argue that our side has fully bounced back.

Yet, back in Hatfield, on the 40th anniversary day, two things struck me as outstanding. First, it really is quite extraordinary that after those four punishing decades so many men and women from the brutally smashed UK coalfields could remain so absolutely alive with the same dauntless resistance that had characterised their year-long struggle against every vicious and clandestine tactic that Thatcher's juggernaut capitalism could mobilise. Banners unfurled, colliery and pipe bands, solidarity of every complexion - all made for a tremendous day. No sign of a beaten workers' movement: quite the contrary, with many signs of

a dignified and proud community which had held firm, regardless of the 'enemy within' shit that had been heaped upon them.

The other aspect worth noting, without any exaggeration, was the intense human warmth of so many local people. Thatcher's shameful destructive assault may have succeeded in empowering the shiny-arsed, paper-shuffling, money-gathering parasites that occupy 'top' level power politics in the 21st century, but, if my experience of Hatfield is anything to go by, it failed completely to extinguish the collective decency of colliers and their friends and families.

Of course, the war against the miners has now passed into the realm of historical debate, with millions of words being generated by every manner of armchair 'expert'. Unsurprisingly much of it is highly contentious. It was therefore excellent to hear Scargill's accounts of some of the significances from the strike, although afterwards I am left wondering whether more detail about the intricacies will eventually emerge about this colossal working class struggle? For example, the curious role of the pit deputies union, NACODS, surely needs properly explaining after 40 years.

Despite how it may have felt back in 1984-85, the fact that Arthur's and Danny the Red's reiterations that the NUM were only inches from the winning line remains compelling. Perhaps that now distant vision of a UK with an industrial base and vibrant trade unions ensuring at least a level of prosperity will remain a memory. But, as an idea, it is certainly worth holding on to. The evidence suggests that the good people of Hatfield and all the others areas of resistance will ensure that society will never forget how they stood proud and strong.

Dave Collins
Moray Firth

Extremism

Keir Starmer has heroically now started calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. He didn't think it an appropriate course of action some months ago - he believed, like many others, that Israel needed time to defeat Hamas and a ceasefire would have prevented this.

There are a few caveats though to these supposed wise thoughts and words. Israel has been attacking everyone in Gaza. They aren't targeting just Hamas militants, so you could call it an indiscriminate attack. I always think it appropriate to turn the tables and presume the response if Israel had attacked Gaza on October 7 (which Israel had done many times previously). If a military retaliation from Gaza had taken place, would world leaders have been delaying calling for a ceasefire, so that Hamas *et al* had

enough time to defeat the IDF? I don't think so. Israel has the right to defend itself. Palestinians haven't got the right to defend themselves.

The delay in a ceasefire has allowed tens of thousands of innocent Palestinians to be murdered, that's all. It allowed collective punishment to be implemented - something Starmer seemed quite happy with, when he spoke to Nick Ferrari on LBC radio last October. The delay also facilitated genocide. The concept of defeating Hamas is like the 'war on terrorism'. They're just slogans to placate public opinion and justify the slaughter and terrorism perpetrated by powerful nations.

This is the extreme limit to western exceptionalism. The slaughter in Gaza is the extremism that western governments ignore. It's the many forms of protest against this state terrorism that they hope now to define as 'extremism', so that their terrorist activities can continue unmolested by opposition on the streets. Selling arms to countries who use them to murder innocent people is not considered extremism. Allowing arms manufacturing to take place on British soil is not considered extremism. Giving diplomatic support to mass murder is not considered extremism.

What will be considered extremism? Carel Buxton, Dave Buxton and Trish O'Hara were this month arrested in the early hours of the morning for supposedly hissing during a council meeting in Newham - this coming the day after Sunak's speech about extremism outside No10. Samuel Melia was imprisoned recently for manufacturing and selling stickers and being involved in "stickering" incidents.

Apparently we should feel much safer, now that this sticker maker is incarcerated - while at the same time the genocide in Gaza continues unabated.

Louis Shawcross
Co Down

Far-rightist

Ted Talbot complains that I have merely asserted that Tommy Robinson is a fascist and not proved it (Letters, March 21). If joining a fascist party, then founding your own and engaging in street thuggery against the left and organised labour is not fascism then what is?

Of course, Robinson has denied being a fascist (Hitler, Mussolini and Franco gave the creed a very bad name), so we would be entitled to say he is a Schrödinger fascist, using the buzz word of the day. It's like Israel denying genocide in Gaza, whilst slaughtering more than 30,200 defenceless civilians, two thirds of whom are women and children. They can deny it, whilst benefitting from ethnic cleansing from Gaza and then the West Bank (and then Israel itself,

Fighting fund

Three in a row?

I'm pleased to report that, with four days still remaining for the *Weekly Worker* fighting fund for March, we are edging very close to that monthly £2,250 target.

In fact the running total now stands at £2,095: in other words, we are just £155 short. That compares to the £261 received by the fund over the last seven days, which means we are clearly up with the going rate, and so I really hope we can break through that barrier once again.

The most generous donation of the past week was from comrade JC, who came up with his usual excellent £70, followed by comrade DB, who made his regular monthly £50 PayPal contribution. Then there were standing orders/bank transfers from GT (£35), JT (£25), SB and DG (£20 each), IS (£10) and TT (£6). Finally comrades PB (£20) and Hussein (£5) each handed a banknote to one of the *Weekly Worker* team.

So now let's see if we can keep up the good work achieved in the first two months of 2024 - we were £141 over the target in January and £275 over in February. And I can't stress enough how much we need that extra cash right now - not only did we fall short quite a few times in 2023, but now our costs are shooting up too.

But I'm really confident that we're going to cross that line once again in March - I know how much we're appreciated by so many of our readers. So please play your part by making a bank transfer or PayPal donation - go to the web address below, and help us make it three in a row!

Robbie Rix

Our bank account details are name: Weekly Worker sort code: 30-99-64 account number: 00744310

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inevitably, if not stopped).

But Talbot has a long history of Schrödinger politics. Paul Demarty did the job on him, when in his *Weekly Worker* article he pointed to Talbot's defence of far-rightists Maurice Barrès, Douglas Murray, Eric Zemmour and Tucker Carlson in perpetrating the modern version of Renaud Camus's Great Replacement theory ('Original takester', September 29 2022). There is a secret group conspiring to replace the white majority US, British, French and European people with black and brown people, mainly Muslims - Camus called this "genocide by substitution". In the days of the Nazis, it was Jews and non-Aryans who were seeking to replace ethnic Germans.

So today Talbot discovers that the only true intellectuals are not those like Demarty, still less that appalling Gerry Downing (Dowding?) but, wait for it, not only the aforementioned, but also the former leader of the Revolutionary Communist Tendency, now a Tory 'advisor', Frank Furedi, who is, "one of Britain's foremost public intellectuals... emeritus professor of sociology at the University of Kent". And others on the far right also admire far-rightists like themselves, amazingly. Far-right philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy writes of far-rightist Douglas Murray: "Whether one agrees with him or not, he is one of the most important public intellectuals today."

The far-rightist, Talbot, has objected that those who oppose him from the left descend into "mere abuse". I think abuse and ridicule are the proper ways to attack gammon Schrödinger racists and fascists, as long as the organised left does not have the means and the imperative to deal

with them properly when they become a mortal danger. And their defenders, who would obviously join them (Talbot can take that any way he likes).

Gerry Downing
Socialist Fight

Terror attack

Given the potential consequences of the March 22 terror attack in Moscow in terms of future security and military actions by the Russian Federation to protect its citizens and its sovereignty, it is important to be as clear and rational as may be possible in our analysis.

President Putin has *not* explicitly accused the Ukrainian regime of being behind the terror attack. He has merely said the attackers and their accomplices were heading in the direction of the Ukrainian border. It is not clear where they were actually apprehended, but they were very quickly indeed, and this could simply mean they were heading in a general south-westerly or southerly direction. Given the speed of their detention, this may probably have no significance.

The Ukrainian secret service has indeed been responsible for terrorist murders inside the Russian Federation - most notably of Darya Dugina in a car bombing in August 2022. At the time and since, the Ukrainian regime claims "it does not engage in terrorism", yet the US state department has confirmed that the Ukrainian state *was* responsible for Darya's murder. Nonetheless, it would be incredibly dangerous for the regime if it were to be behind, in any way, the attack on Moscow. Western public opinion would be horrified and appalled, and material support for the regime would probably cease very quickly - meaning it would potentially

collapse within months, if not weeks.

It is probably worth taking at face value the claim by 'Islamic State' that it was responsible for the attack. In many ways it was a carbon copy of the Bataclan attack in Paris in 2015 (some might say too much of a carbon copy). It is odd that the four shooters were taken alive, plus seven other alleged accomplices. I thought one of the whole points of these actions was they were suicide missions in search of heavenly glory.

Even the most ignorant peasant in one of the Arab states or ex-Soviet Muslim republics can hardly have been unaware what capture by the Russian state authorities would mean for them. At the very least, 'robust' interrogation by the security forces to obtain maximum information very quickly, in order to neutralise any ongoing threats, and a very long, *de facto* life sentence in some of Russia's hardest prisons or penal colonies.

There is some talk about capital punishment for those found guilty (they have already pleaded guilty), which is still on the books in Russia, which would mean either a firing squad or a bullet in the back of the neck. Soviet and Russian executions are unusual, in that there is no formal ceremony or warning given when about to be carried out. The use of capital punishment is, of course, a matter for the Russian state and the judicial authorities, but personally I would like to see them rot to oblivion over a long period of time in a Siberian penal colony. Execution would, I feel, be a mercy for them.

Assuming it was 'Islamic State', it is worth examining just what IS is, where it came from, which states financed and armed it, and which states continue to provide it with its infrastructure, resources, arms and personnel. There are a whole load of *Weekly Worker* articles over the past number of years which provide vital analyses and insights here.

The CIA has a long established practice when carrying out external 'operations' of, in effect, 'sub-contracting' them to third parties - criminal organisations or terrorist groups - in order to establish 'plausible deniability'. Those bodies may themselves hire outside individuals to carry out the actions, to protect their own personnel and themselves establish 'plausible deniability'.

Plus, as we have seen over the decades, there are 'patsies' - damaged individuals with highly suspect personal, criminal and intelligence records, who at the time of the terrorist actions, just find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time and sometimes literally with a smoking gun in their hands. The arrested individuals shown on Russian TV hardly look like trained professionals - more like lumpen hirelings, taken off some far-distant streets, promised a sackful of cash and oblivion in heaven, if they just do this simple yet barbaric task.

Yes, let's punish these 11 to the full extent of the law and any others picked up by the Russian security service dragnet. But let's also track back properly to what 'Islamic State' really is, which states finance and support it, and ensure both IS and the states whose creature it is also receive the full consequences of their actions. Yes, let's ensure they and the rich and powerful individuals who make up their 'élites' start to feel afraid - very afraid indeed.

Andrew Northall
Kettering

ACTION

Ceasefire now - stop the genocide in Gaza

Saturday March 30, 12 noon: National demonstration. Assemble Russell Square, London WC1 for march to Trafalgar Square. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: palestinecampaign.org/events.

Stop bombing Gaza - stop bombing Yemen

Wednesday April 3, 5.45pm: Fringe meeting at NEU conference, Bayview Suite, International Centre, Exeter Road, Bournemouth BH2. Speakers include Daniel Kebede (NEU) and Lindsey German. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk/events.

Communist culture club

Thursday April 4, 7pm: Fortnightly online culture meeting. Simon Hannah asks if *In time* is the most Marxist film ever; Matthew Jones on what to learn from Trotsky on fascism; and Anne McShane on Palestinian poet and writer Mourid Barghouti. Organised by Labour Left Alliance and Why Marx?: www.whymarx.com/sessions.

No to Nato - yes to peace

Thursday April 4, 7pm: Public meeting, Deptford Town Hall, New Cross Road, London SE14. To mark the 75th anniversary of Nato - a gruesome record of a war, violence and colonialism. Speakers include Kate Hudson (CND) and Andrew Murray (Stop the War). Organised by Lewisham and Greenwich CND: cnduk.org/events/no-to-nato-yes-to-peace-deptford-event.

Merchants of death walking tour

Saturday April 6, 2pm: Assemble outside 25 Victoria Street, London SW1. Discover the arms companies in our midst that have facilitated the obscene punishment on Gaza's civilian population. Registration free. Organised by Campaign Against Arms Trade: caat.org.uk/events/london-caat-merchants-of-death-tour.

The work and legacy of Raphael Samuel

Wednesday April 10, 6.30pm: Book event, Working Class Movement Library, 51 The Crescent, Salford M5. Editor John Merrick discusses the new collection of Raphael Samuel's work on 19th century Britain, *Workshop of the world: essays in people's history*. Tickets free. Organised by Working Class Movement Library: www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=801671655334712.

Towards a theory of revolution

Thursday April 11, 7pm: Online session in the fortnightly 'ABC of Marxism' course, presented by Ian Spencer. Organised by Labour Left Alliance and Why Marx?: www.whymarx.com/sessions.

The rentier city

Thursday April 11, 7pm: Online book event. Isaac Rose introduces his book *The rentier city: Manchester and the making of the neoliberal metropolis* and what can be learnt from property development, landlordism and housing struggle. Registration free. Organised by Manchester rs21: www.rs21.org.uk/event/the-rentier-city.

Five demands to build a real alternative

Saturday April 13, 10am: Conference, Hamilton House, Mableton Place, London WC1. To discuss the challenges - and solutions - to the crises we face and how we build a real alternative. Speakers include Jeremy Corbyn and Fran Heathcote (PCS general secretary). Registration £11.50 (free). Organised by Peace and Justice Project: thecorbynproject.com/events.

Bargain books

Saturday April 13, 11am: Book sale, Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Get your hands on Marxist classics, socialist histories and rare pamphlets. Organised by Marx Memorial Library: www.marx-memorial-library.org.uk/event/450.

Climate justice, climate jobs

Saturday April 13, 11am: Conference for trade unionists, Crowndale Centre, 220 Eversholt Street, London NW1. How to ensure the strength of the working class and trade union movement is at the heart of tackling the climate emergency. Registration £12 (£5). Organised by Campaign against Climate Change Trade Union Group: cacctu.org.uk/conference_2024.

What it means to be human

Tuesday April 16, 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: 'Did matriarchy ever exist?' Speaker: Chris Knight. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: radicalanthropologygroup.org/blog/did-matriarchy-ever-exist.

A celebration of Pat Arrowsmith (1930-2023)

Thursday April 18, 6pm: Public meeting, LSE Library, 10 Portugal Street, London WC2. A peace campaigner, an organiser of the first Aldermaston March in 1958 and an activist for Irish freedom. Speakers include Francie Molloy (Sinn Féin MP) and Lindsey German (Stop the War Coalition). Registration free. Organised by CND: cnduk.org/events.

Palestine and the crisis of democracy

Sunday April 21, 12 noon to 5.30pm: Conference, SOAS University of London, 10 Thornhaugh Street, London WC1. Huge numbers are resisting Israel's genocide in Gaza - on the streets and at the ballot box. Registration £15 (£5). Organised by Counterfire: www.facebook.com/events/1593061668160981.

CPGB wills

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Online Communist Forum



Sunday March 31 5pm BST

Falling out: a week in politics - political report from CPGB's Provisional Central Committee and discussion

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

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

LEFT

We deserve better

Owen Jones has a dodgy record and still shows no understanding of what the anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism big lie is all about, says Carla Roberts

Should we care that Owen Jones has just resigned from the Labour Party, after 24 years of membership?

He has not exactly been an ally of the left during the Corbyn years and it is no coincidence that he is one of the very few self-declared socialists who have not been witch-hunted. As can be expected of the rather harmless go-to-lefty for the establishment, he is a keen supporter of plucky Ukraine, which is fighting a “just, defensive war of liberation against a murderous invasion launched by a kleptocratic, chauvinist, far-right autocracy”.¹ But with over 495,000 subscribers on YouTube and a staggering 1.1 million followers on X, the answer is: yes. His resignation video alone has been watched 243,000 times, as we go to press.²

We are not sure how many people actually take a political lead from what he is saying (hopefully not many). But he certainly has reach. And perhaps he wants to use that reach to do something more than just blow his own trumpet in the pages of *The Guardian* - there are rumours floating about that he is looking for a way to get himself into a position of influence in the ‘Corbyn party’. More on that below.

Launch

His whole video is about how he seems to feel personally insulted by the fact that Sir Keir Starmer ended up going back on his ‘pledges’ and the promise to continue some of Corbyn’s policies. Jones complains:

A pledge is a solemn promise of undertaking. He also promised unity and an end to factionalism. No leadership campaign in Britain’s democratic history has been that dishonest or even close. You can’t trust his words on anything.

It is rather questionable if Owen - who, after all, once served as staffer for John McDonnell MP - really believes that Starmer was about to deliver Corbyn’s policies, or indeed bring ‘unity’ into the Labour Party, for the first time ever. Lenin called it a “bourgeois workers’ party” precisely for the reason that there has always been a left and a right in the party, with the militant rank and file on one side and the majority of Labour MPs, trade union bureaucrats and apparatus jobsworths on the other (with various flotsam and jetsam in between). The Labour Party is an arena of the class struggle and there was absolutely no doubt on which side Starmer positioned himself when he stood against Corbyn’s proposed successor, the lacklustre Rebecca Long-Bailey, in the leadership elections of 2020.

Still, Owen says he bought Starmer’s weasel words. And he admits in his video that after his victory he wrote in his *Guardian* column that “Starmer can succeed and he deserves our support”.³ But, although the toolmaker’s son clearly took on the role of leader in order to transform the Labour Party once again into a safe pair of hands for capitalism, it took Jones a staggering four years of non-stop anti-left purges, policy dilution and sucking up to big business before finally making his grand final stand.

He moans: “I’ve voted Labour under every single leader for 21 years of my life.” But apparently none of them were as bad as Keir. Least of all Tony Blair - you know, the guy who led Britain into a war which killed



Picket of Labour HQ: Mr Jones was nowhere to be seen

over a million civilians and tens of thousands of soldiers, based on the made-up claim of the existence of ‘weapons of mass destruction’. But our Tony did not lie, you see! As proof, Owen shows a 2020 clip of the fragrant Margaret Hodge: “Starmer is triangulating like mad. Somebody said to me, ‘I don’t care what he does as long as he beats Rebecca Long-Bailey.’ And I thought, you know, Tony never did that.”

So even Margaret Hodge could work out that Starmer was spinning a yarn to do a particular job - ridding the party of Corbynism by first getting the Corbynites to vote for him as party leader. But then, the ‘leftwing’ Owen Jones was never much of a fan of Corbyn, famously stabbing him in the back, just before the 2017 general election: he used his *Guardian* column to publicly urge Jeremy Corbyn to resign.⁴ The Labour Party went on to win 40%, of course - its biggest share of the vote for many years. Not always with the finger on the pulse, is Mr Jones.

He was arguing then - and is still arguing today - that “it wasn’t the policies that led to Labour’s defeat in 2019”: ie, it was Corbyn, who was just the wrong man for the job. Jones fully bought into the campaign to smear Corbyn and his supporters as anti-Semites. He also acted as a rather prolific witch-hunter, publicly cheering the expulsions of Jackie Walker, Tony Greenstein, Ken Livingstone and Chris Williamson.

He supported Jon Lansman in his undemocratic takeover coup of Momentum, railing openly against the “Trotskyist sectarians” and “saboteurs” that needed to be rooted out.⁵ He went on to interview Lansman about the made-up “anti-Semitism crisis” in a cringey video for *The Guardian*, nodding along seriously when Lansman claimed that the phrase, ‘I hate Israel’, “is clearly anti-Semitic”.⁶ (The same Lansman who has recently joined the openly pro-Zionist Jewish Labour Movement, we should add.) Jones often argued and campaigned for John McDonnell to replace Corbyn. After all, McDonnell was much ‘tougher’ on the false charges of anti-Semitism: ie, he fully folded to

the right, suicidally promising “zero tolerance”.

And, rather incredibly, Owen is still at it. He laments in his video that “Starmer promised an all-out war on anti-Semitism”. But, sadly, he did not deliver on that pledge either. Because “when it’s politicians loyal to him, it’s a different story”. Another hint that Jones does indeed know that there is a constant civil war raging in the party - which the right has clearly won, at least for the time being.

Jones lists as one of the main reasons for his departure the leadership’s support for Israel’s genocidal politics. He still fails to understand that the main objective of the campaign to conflate anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism - a campaign he still vigorously supports - was exactly the current situation in Gaza. While it was undoubtedly used to get rid of Corbyn, this campaign was designed to delegitimise any criticism of Israel.

Alternative?

Let us have a closer look then at what Jones dubs “the alternative”: He wants us to vote for

... the Green Party or an independent candidate who stands for asking the well-off to pay more tax, our services and utilities being run by the public, candidates who want radical action in everything from the housing crisis to poverty, to the climate emergency, and, you know what, candidates who aren’t complicit in war crimes. That might mean some of the surviving decent Labour candidates if they’re not booted out by then.

Hardly indistinguishable from the Socialist Party’s front organisation, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition; or from the For the Many Network, Left Unity, Transform, etc, etc. But, rather than supporting one of the many, many left-of-Labour grouplets that have sprung up in the last few years and that campaign on exactly the kind of motherhood-and-apple-pie demands mentioned by Owen in his video, he has rather curiously been plugging the campaign We Deserve Better. In fact, he is not just plugging it: in his video he rather

grandly presents it as “the alternative” to the Labour Party.

I must admit I had never heard of it. We Deserve Better is not exactly a beacon of transparency. It is run by a “committee”⁷ of two: Fatima-Zahra Ibrahim of Green New Deal Rising (GNDR) and former Manchester Labour Party councillor Anna Abdullatif, who resigned from Labour in October 2023.

Until a few days ago, it also included one “Hamza Ali Shah, British Palestinian journalist, writer and political researcher”. Busy Twitter detectives quickly worked out, however, that a few years back, Hamza not only agreed with George Galloway that “abortion is murder”, but had also posted a number of racist posts, including “Sikhs? Clean hearted?”, followed by a dozen laughing emojis. Perhaps most problematic for the openly gay Jones is that he also posted clearly homophobic messages like “Looool, imagine getting banged by a fag”.

Incidentally, this debacle was gleefully exposed on Twitter by the execrable Paul Mason⁸ - formerly a long-standing member of the Trotskyist confessional sect, Workers Power, who has speedily overtaken Jones on the right. While he totally agrees with Jones on the anti-Semitism smear campaign and how “heroic” Ukraine is, he has also been openly cooperating with rightwing, security-linked forces to smear socialists and their media outlets and has become an out-and-out cheerleader for imperialism.⁹

He campaigns with the Tories to increase defence spending to “at least” 3% of GDP to fill the “deterrence gap”¹⁰ and says on the subject of the alleged attack of Chinese cyberhackers on the Electoral Commission: “It is done by a state that despises our democratic values.” *Our* democratic values! He obviously does not mean the working class, but, you know, the justice and democracy so generously granted and promoted by Britain’s ruling class.

The man is an embarrassment. No wonder he is now touted as a prospective Labour candidate in the general election - he is said to be “Labour’s best chance to defeat Jeremy Corbyn in Islington North”¹¹ - “best chance” meaning that he *might* get his deposit back (he would get absolutely trounced). We really hope he does stand.

In any case, Hamza quickly resigned from We Deserve Better without any explanation, leaving the committee looking more than bare. Supporters cannot see how much has been donated in total and they will have to trust those two remaining committee members on how they spend the money.

Politically, the campaign is most closely linked to GNDR, which is a self-declared “youth movement” that campaigns for the implementation of the Green New Deal.¹² There is no information on how it was set up or who is indeed running it - but it is looking for employees, if anybody is interested. It is centred on the illusion that the Green New Deal would tweak the system efficiently enough to stop the climate catastrophe. No need to talk about boring things like capitalism’s profit system, the need for socialism, the role of the working class or indeed the problem that any such deal would have to be implemented internationally to make any discernible difference.

GNDR’s “plan” consists of five points, starting with the aim to “Elect a Green New Deal champion as mayor of the North East” - ie, Jamie Driscoll, current mayor of North of Tyne, who is apparently “a strong advocate for the Green New Deal in power” and who only resigned from Labour when he was not chosen to run for the North East mayoral position.

This is followed by: “2. Campaign for Green New Deal champions in the general election.” The “champions” are named as the four Labour MPs, Zarah Sultana; AWL fellow traveller Nadia Whittome; Clive Lewis (fan of Trident and Nato¹³), and centrist Olivia Blake, plus Green Party politicians Carla Denyer (standing in Bristol Central) and Sian Berry (Brighton Pavilion, to replace long-time Green MP Caroline Lucas).

If that is indeed Owen’s “alternative”, consider us underwhelmed. But perhaps his support for this rather odd campaign is just one of his pit stops on the way to pastures new.

Personal

Jamie Driscoll, for example, was one of the speakers on the platform at the March 2 No Ceasefire, No Vote conference in London, which turned into the (unofficial) launch of Andrew Feinstein’s campaign Collective¹⁴ - with plans to become a “political party” - after the general election (to allow Jeremy Corbyn to campaign as a truly ‘independent’ candidate). It includes Counterfire (ie, former Socialist Workers Party leaders John Rees and Lindsey German), Ken Loach and his For the Many Network and, crucially, Corbyn’s Peace and Justice Campaign (Collective so far limits itself to the campaign’s five policy points, plus the demand for a ceasefire in Gaza).

Perhaps Owen wants to wheedle his way back into the political sights of people like Andrew Murray, former advisor of Corbyn and member of the *Morning Star*’s Communist Party of Britain, who seems to be centrally involved in Collective. Either way we doubt very much that the final outcome will be a properly democratic organisation. Maybe it will be something along the lines of Momentum with its referendums, atomised membership and insipid politics ... but with the addition of standing in public elections.

Frankly, we deserve better ●

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HEALTH

Thoughtful end rulers

As we head towards a general election, the Murdoch press is busy promoting big pharma's 'vision' of future healthcare, writes Ian Spencer. But it is not ours

In February, *The Times* regaled us with its 'Health Commission' - a pseudo-objective investigation into what it would like to see in healthcare. *Raconteur* - a supplement distributed with the newspaper at the weekend to provide "stories that connect modern business" - last week focused on health.¹

Raconteur is funded through advertising and sponsorship, including by drug companies, but maintains that it is editorially independent, and the articles' sponsors are clearly stated. *Raconteur* is classed as a 'B Corporation' - the 'B' apparently stands for 'beneficial', although it does not specify to whom. The certification is provided by 'B Lab' - an international, 'non-profit' organisation, which awards 'B Corporation certification' to for-profit organisations that have 'social impact'. In 2019, B Lab had an income of nearly \$17.5 million and assets of over \$9.5 million. Among its founders are Andrew Kasso - a "champion of free-market capitalism", who established B Lab to help capitalism "do social good".

B Lab is funded by what are described as "left-of-centre" funders with a commitment to "embrace environmentalism, diversity, equity and inclusion". They include e-bay founder Pierre Omidyar, Jeffrey Skoll, who financed Al Gore's film, *An inconvenient truth*, and the Ford Foundation.²

What we seem to be dealing with is the more thoughtful end of the bourgeoisie, possibly not hell-bent on the destruction of the National Health Service, but, as we might expect, it is critical. Put differently, most of the articles contain familiar themes, such as the need to reduce obesity, prevent anti-microbial resistance to antibiotics, make better use of information technology to promote efficiency, and change the focus of healthcare towards community services. Let us take a closer look at some of these themes.

IT software

Those of us with experience of wading through volumes of medical notes, composed of indecipherable handwriting, will have a natural sympathy for being able to have ready access to the whole range of clinical data. Yet, each of the 229 NHS trusts and 1,250 primary care networks is responsible for its own software - not to mention the thousands of private care homes and private clinics.

The sharing of data frequently comes up against the problem of the compatibility of different programmes. Clinicians during a day may have to log into several different systems, which may or may not be able to link up to one another. A solution suggested by Charles Orton-Jones, a business journalist, is open-source software, making use of a single unique citizen signifier, as is employed in Estonia. Its use prevents 'vendor lock-in' and at £26 million annually, stands in favourable comparison with the NHS Connecting for Health programme, which costs an estimated £20 billion and was described in a public enquiry as one of the UK's "worst and most expensive contracting fiascos". But what the *Raconteur* article does not discuss are the reasons why the NHS system was such a failure - reasons which have some resonance



Aneurin Bevan, minister of health, on the first day of the National Health Service, July 5 1948

with other IT disasters, such as the Horizon scandal at the Post Office. It was a 'top-down' system, hastily imposed with poor accountability and oversight.³

The NHS has a bureaucracy problem. Whether that is a feature of capitalism in decline is a moot point, but it certainly results from an attempt to force a pseudo-market onto a health system which had developed for 40 years outside of market forces. The hotchpotch of Poor Law, charity and county asylum provision that the NHS was based on was not exactly a 'free market' either. Bourgeois sociologist Max Weber wrote about bureaucracy in positive terms as a rational, goal-orientated alternative to feudal particularism. However, he understood that it was antagonistic to democracy and, of course, that is just the point.

When Marxists have written on bureaucracy, they have frequently focused on the USSR and its satellites. As we know, the Soviet product was almost universally defective, owing to the difficulty faced by the system of enforcing 'planning' and discipline on the workforce, without a market in which choice could exert its own influence on both discipline and quality. Although not some island of socialism, there was no sign of the NHS in the 1970s of being particularly defective for having been taken out of market relations, if judged against health outcomes of other societies of the time. It was, however, 'efficient' in the important sense of spending only a small amount of total expenditure on administration, especially when compared with US healthcare.

The justification for the abolition of area health authorities in 1982 was supposedly to remove an 'unnecessary layer of bureaucracy', as their responsibilities were taken over by smaller district health authorities - until they too were abolished in favour of single-tier health authorities in 1996 and then replaced by primary care trusts in 2002. However, some NHS trusts are now at least as large as the defunct area or district health authorities were. The bureaucracy, far from going away, has responded to the needs of the pseudo-market. The proportion of health expenditure that goes on administration has steadily grown, as an army of accountants manage the separation between

providers and commissioners.

Perhaps more importantly, the dynamic behind the implementation of IT in the NHS is concerned only partly with making clinical records more efficient. In the 1960s, most nursing, for example, was undertaken by qualified nurses or trainees. Now an officer corps of registered nurses supervises an army of healthcare assistants with varying levels of training. The proportion of qualified staff is changing in other occupations too and is likely to undergo further changes in medicine, as physician associates take over from fully qualified doctors. The NHS is consistently failing to recruit as many qualified staff as it loses each year to the private sector or to overseas employment. Similarly, the NHS is wholly dependent on highly qualified nurses, doctors and many others from overseas to simply maintain current levels of staffing - the vacancy rate is currently about 9%.

One response is regulation. IT in the NHS is as much to do with replacing living labour as anything discussed by Marx in his famous chapter on machinery in volume one of *Capital*. If you have not recorded the patient's blood pressure at the appointed time, your handheld device will let you know. On the face of it, it is no bad thing "to make such machines of [wo]men as cannot err". The fear is, though, that the algorithm will replace clinical judgement, as it certainly will not get as tired as a clinician towards the end of a 12-hour shift!

Technology in the health sector is as concerned with surveillance of staff as it is with replacing living labour with dead labour embodied in machines.

AMR danger

An article in *Raconteur* sponsored by the Japanese pharmaceutical company, Shionogi, leads the charge against the danger to antibiotics of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). It does so, supported by freelance journalist Heidi Vella, who quotes the World Health Organisation's suggestion that AMR was responsible for 1.27 million global deaths in 2019. She goes on to point out the disparity between the £5.45 billion for oncology research and development, compared with £125 million for antibiotics.

Put simply, big pharmaceutical companies cannot make nearly enough profit from developing new antimicrobials. It is also difficult to make research into rare diseases profitable too. It is important to understand that pharmaceutical industries do indeed incur high costs in bringing new compounds to the market, especially since the catastrophe of thalidomide in the 1950s and early 1960s. The costs for research and development of a new antibiotic can be more than a \$1 billion. Shionogi's response to the awkward profit problem is to argue that "The market needs to incentivise that investment in research without companies needing to rely purely on large volumes of sales to recoup their outlay."

However, the pharmaceutical industry makes super-profits from its guaranteed 20-year monopoly on the production of new medication. Ernest Mandel has argued that this constitutes a "technology rent", rather than conforming to the normal actions of the law of value.⁴ The holy grail for pharmaceutical companies is something like therapy for cystic fibrosis, one of the most common life-threatening genetic disorders, whereby companies can charge high prices for medication, which the patient will have to rely on for life. In a system based on the meeting of human need, but without the abolition of commodity production, the NHS faces a potentially limitless demand for the products of human ingenuity. Again, the response is regulation.

It is also worth pointing out that the NHS constitutes a guaranteed market for the pharmaceutical industry - an industry which is not shy about being 'tax-efficient', when it comes to supporting the NHS that buys its overpriced wares. Alliance Boots, for example, has avoided over £1 billion in tax.⁵

We are invited to believe that AMR is the result of overzealous prescription to patients who expect antibiotics or do not take them properly - for example, by not finishing the course. While that may play a part, the fact is that AMR is evolution in action. As we saw with the Covid pandemic, microbes evolve quickly. What is a far bigger killer worldwide is the poverty in the provision of even basic requirements for a healthy population, such as clean water, good sanitation and adequate

nutrition. One million children a year die from malaria, most of which could be prevented by the simplest of public health measures.

Even if we accept the industry's argument about the cost of research and development, it is worth celebrating the power of human ingenuity. In 30 years, HIV/AIDS has gone from being almost invariably fatal to now having only a limited impact on life expectancy. Similarly, the development of the Covid vaccine would have been hampered without a large state input, both as a funder of research and guaranteed purchaser. Imagine what could be done if it was taken out of commodity production altogether. And how about nationalising some of those large pharmaceutical industries?

Obesity

The clichés about the 'obesity epidemic' are readily regurgitated in *Raconteur*, in an article sponsored by the pharmaceutical company, Lilly. It manufactures injectable medication for the treatment for type two diabetes, as an alternative to the oral medication, Metformin, which has been out of patent for a long time. However, the company has a point in observing that:

NHS data shows that 26% of adults are living with obesity across the country. However, this is not evenly spread across society - the least deprived areas have an obesity prevalence of 20%, whereas in the most deprived areas the rate is 34%.

Fat, and type two diabetes, are class issues - *Raconteur* is saying nothing new. Not only are poorer people fatter on average, but their obesity is more dangerous, with fat deposition around internal organs and inside arteries.

It is inherently stressful being poor. Stress hormones - particularly cortisol and the catecholamines, such as adrenaline - ensure the release of blood glucose and contribute to insulin resistance. This has been known for decades, as has the fact that type two diabetes is potentially reversible without pharmacological interventions.

What is really needed is a radical transformation of society at large. If you really want to bring down the blood sugar level of the nation, reduce the working week and give people democratic control over their workplaces. If you really want to ensure that big pharma concentrates research into AMR, rare diseases, and new antimicrobials, the solution is not to ensure that the poor guarantee the super-profits of Lilly, Shionogi and others, but to take them into planned public ownership.

Raconteur may represent part of the thinking bourgeoisie, but, despite any good intentions, the fundamental contradiction of capitalist society will never be addressed - or even properly understood - by the bourgeoisie itself ●

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POLEMIC



Repeating past failures

Socialist Appeal's proposed 'Revolutionary Communist Party' claims to offer a 'clean break with the sects'. In fact, the proposal is a mere repetition of the method of the confessional sects, argues **Mike Macnair**

Last week I introduced 'British perspectives 2024: theses on the coming British revolution', published in Socialist Appeal's *The Communist* No4. I argued that the document was characterised by "official optimism": that is, it predicts revolutionary crisis in the short term by selecting *only* evidence which points in that direction. And it predicts that RCP members can, by voluntarily putting massive effort into recruiting to the group, get from 1,400 in May 2024, to 2,000 in 2025, and to 5,000 shortly after - and so to 10,000, which would allow it to open the way to the masses under conditions of revolutionary crisis.

I argued that the prediction of open revolutionary crisis is premature, based on a one-sided view of the evidence which overreads the speed of the social dynamic and omits the real dynamic towards nationalist authoritarianism. This week I will look further at the document's claims about the existing left, about Socialist Appeal/RCP's growth, and about the central argument that a small group can under conditions of revolutionary crisis leap to acquire mass character.

As I argued in my first article, the case for a Stakhanovite, voluntaristic effort to recruit to the RCP from "fresh forces" among the youth rests partly on the supposed imminence of open revolutionary crisis. It also rests on the supposed existence of a "political vacuum" on the left; and, finally, on the idea that Socialist Appeal's politics are radically different (and less opportunist) than those of "the sects".

The supposed "political vacuum" consists, as I said last week, on the failure of the Labour left; of the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of

Britain (misidentified with the party liquidated in 1991); and of "the far left sects".

Also, as I said last week, there is a (non-dialectical) contradiction in the 'theses' between the claim that "The reformist politicians are increasingly exposed for what they are. Figures like Jeremy Corbyn will not be a point of reference for this generation" and the claim, not much later, that "We do not write off the reformist mass organisations, which can be transformed by events." Why does this contradiction exist? The *immediate* reason is that the claim that "the reformist politicians are increasingly exposed for what they are" and similar forms of expression have been made repeatedly since the 1960s, only, on each occasion, to be falsified by a revival of 'official lefts' in a new form. But what lies behind this?

The category, 'reformist', refers to a superficial ideological form and, at that, one which was only dominant in the cold war period, so that the (contradictory) judgments are framed by 1960s boomer-think.

Going behind the ideology, the Labour Party and similar parties (purport to) represent the working class as a class in mainstream politics *through* careerist full-time officials and elected representatives whose authority over the ranks is protected by law and by party rules, and within the framework of *institutional* commitments to the nation-state and to the existing constitutional order.

The creation of such parties is driven by the same dynamic that drives the creation of trade unions, and so on. That is, that the competitive dynamics of the capitalist class, and the dependency of each capitalist on the exploitation of workers, force

Clause four Fabianism dropped for r-r-revolutionary posturing. But despite the name change this confessional sect remains a confessional sect

Trotsky in a 1922 cubist portrait by Yury Annenkov – whatever his virtues, he never really understood the crucial importance of a mass party



capitalists endlessly to attack the working class, and that the only means of *self-defence* available to the working class is collective action. It is this fundamentally defensive role of trade unions that leads to their being repeatedly created, recreated and revived, including under severe repression.

States

The same dynamic applies at the level of the state, for two reasons. The first is that states function to a considerable extent as competing firms within the world market: hence the endless talk of 'British competitiveness' and so on.¹ The second is that if there is within the constitution no source of political input *external* to capital - that is, all political parties, media and the legal system are thoroughly corrupt - the competitive imperative forcing every individual capital to raise the rate of exploitation by wage-cuts, speed-up and so on will be faithfully reflected in individual capitals' command of political representation. This is strikingly visible, for example, in the proliferation of anti-union legislation for *individual industries* through the English 'long 18th century'.²

It follows that, just as the working class will logically tend to create trade unions, and so on, so the class will also logically tend to seek some form of political representation as a defensive measure. I express this point cautiously, because trade union links with one of the major middle class political parties³ was an alternative to the idea of an independent workers' party from an early date. And this option continued in Lib-Lab-ism (workers' representation within the Liberal Party) down to the early 20th century, and continues to this day

in trade union relations with the US Democrats and with the Argentinian Peronists.

The idea of an independent workers' party begins with Chartism in Britain and passes through Flora Tristan's, Marx's and Engels', and Ferdinand Lassalle's, versions of left Chartism, to the success of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) and thence to Europe more widely, and back to ideological influence of the SPD on the small British left groups of the 1880s-90s (Social Democratic Federation, Socialist League, Independent Labour Party). The progress of the small groups in local government elections, and their agitation in the trade unions for an independent workers' party, then produces the Labour Party as a means for the trade union tops and the Lib-Lab MPs to 'head off' this threat. Britain was not the only country where the non-socialist Labour Party form was adopted; but in other countries, it was necessary to *convert* existing socialist parties for this purpose.

This 'trade unionist' dynamic of the production of workers' parties with *defensive* purposes requires that the state should be willing to make sufficient concessions to the working class to allow a defensive-purposes workers' party to attract mass support. At one level, the point is elementary: Engels already argued in *Origins of the family, private property and the state*, on the basis of Greek and Roman history, that the state has the role of enforcing against individual members of the ruling class concessions to the lower orders, made to avoid permanent civil war.⁴

The more significant point is that these concessions need not be elements of movement towards

socialism, or indeed make matters better: they can merely serve to prevent or slow down the blind self-interest of the ruling class making matters worse. The possibility of amelioration of the tendency of capital to make matters worse is enough to produce mass support for pretty ineffective trade unions; and it is enough to produce recurring mass support for loyalist workers' parties after each experience of government by open capitalist parties.

The ideological forms of workers' movement loyalism vary sharply. Reformism is one of them; explicit liberalism, including 'liberal imperialism' is also possible, as is 'Christian socialism' or 'Islamic socialism', simple nationalism, and 'economism' - the idea that the workers' movement should focus on economic demands and ignore issues of constitutional order and of foreign affairs.

Reformism

'Reformism', as I have just said, is merely one of the possible ideological forms of loyalism. The background is that socialism is posed to the working class by its need for collective action to defend its interests. But it is also posed to the society as a whole by the fact that liberal conceptions of a pure-market economy (Mandeville's *Fable of the bees*, Adam Smith's 'hidden hand', Walras's equilibrium, Arrow-Debreu's 'dynamic stochastic general equilibrium', and so on) are merely false in the same way as flat-earthism is false. Collective action with all its problems is necessary.

Hence the critiques, in the *Communist manifesto*, of 'reactionary socialism', whether 'feudal' or 'petty-bourgeois', or 'German or true socialism', all being forms of reactionary anti-capitalism; and of 'conservative or bourgeois socialism'.

The 1920s-30s saw a reaction away from liberalism in favour of various such forms - fascism being the most notorious, but not the only, variety. The recent and current global political dynamic is towards a similar reaction away from liberal economics towards collective and state action, coupled (as before) with political authoritarianism.

The origin of the particular ideology, 'reformism', is in Fabianism. The Fabians took their name from Q Fabius Maximus Verrucosus 'Cunctator' ('delayer'), the Roman general who adopted against the Carthaginian Hannibal what would later be called a strategy of attrition or *Ermattungsstrategie*, avoiding open battle and attacking Carthaginian logistics. The Fabians were advocates of 'bourgeois socialism' within the Liberal Party; and were 'Fabians' in their defence of Lib-Labism and rejection of the revolutionary (anti-constitutional) politics of the SDF and Socialist League. What makes their politics 'reformism' is the belief in gradual movement towards socialism through reforms.

This sort of politics was a more theorised alternative to ordinary Lib-Labism; to the 'Possibilism' (capital P) of Paul Brousse and others in France in the same period; or to the advocacy of coalition between the working class and small farmers, and with liberals, by Georg von Vollmar and others in the 1890s. The difference is that Fabianism offered the idea of progress towards socialism through reforms. Fabianism fed back into the German SPD by way of Eduard Bernstein and his evolution from 1896, starting with his support of what would now be called 'humanitarian intervention', but more elaborated in his book, *The preconditions of socialism* (1899).

But neither Fabianism in Britain nor Bernstein's version in Germany

were the dominant forms of workers' movement loyalism. Bernstein was criticised by other rightists within the party for over-theorising practice, in which coalition tactics, not gradualism, was central; the Lib-Lab MPs, and hence pre-1914 Labour MPs, were mostly liberal imperialists, not Fabians. The ideology of gradualism was hardly plausible in a world where liberals actively promoted revolution against *anciens régimes*, as in Russia (1905), Iran (1905), Turkey (1908) and China (1911). It was still less so in the world of radical instability between 1917 and 1947.

What changed was that in 1947-48 the USA adopted the general strategy of 'containment of communism'. This strategy entailed (among other elements) major concessions to the working class in western Europe, to enable the European capitalist regimes to appear as attractive, relative to the 'eastern bloc'. As a part of this strategy, there was vigorous, active state promotion of Fabianism and Bernsteinism as ideologies of the loyalist workers' parties (or loyalist wings in the workers' parties).

As part of this activity, writers who had been associated with intelligence services and special ops at the end of World War II and in the immediate post-war period published books which presented Fabian or Bernsteinian gradualism as more dominant than it had, in fact, been. They presented an image of Bernstein as 'repulsive but right', with the only other real option being the ideas of Rosa Luxemburg, or of the pre-1917 Leon Trotsky, as 'romantic but wrong' (to invert Sellar and Yeatman on Cavaliers and Roundheads). The Bebel-Kautsky centre tendency, on this analysis, was a futile failure to decide between the two 'real' options; and, moreover, in the form of Bolshevism, by being 'scientific', led naturally to Stalinism. Thus, for example, Carl Schorske's history of the SPD down to 1917; thus Peter Nettl's biography of Rosa Luxemburg; thus Leonard Schapiro and Leo Valiani.

Large parts of the far left, regrettably, swallowed whole this state ideological operation, and began to pose itself as 'revolutionary' in the 'Luxemburgist' sense, as opposed to the state-loyalists' 'reformism'. By doing so it condemned itself to the ineffectiveness of splintered bureaucratic-centralist sects, like Luxemburg's and Leo Jogiches's Social-Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania. This form is - as we have seen since the 1960s - just as safe for capitalist rule as the loyalist workers' movement is.

In this limited sense it is true that 'reformism' is, at least for now, over. It should be clear that the Corbyn movement was never 'reformist' in this sense, except insofar as the *Morning Star*-CPB's *Britain's road to socialism* was all along a Fabian-Bernsteinian project, and Andrew Murray, Seumas Milne and so on were reformists. The actual Corbynite mainstream did not propose a gradualist road to socialism, as the original Fabians did, but merely 'Possibilist' improvements to British national economics.

Reformism is marginalised: and in the UK it has been marginalised, in reality, since Rupert Murdoch's 1994 promotion of Tony Blair as leader of the Labour Party made old-time Fabian Roy Hattersley into a left critic of the party leadership. It will only revive if new conditions produce a new 'Soviet bloc' and with it a new 'cold war'.

But this does not mean that national- and constitutional-loyalist workers' organisations are over and 'exposed'. What I have been discussing at considerable length above is why *capitalism as such* and

the *capitalist state* will tend over and over again to reproduce loyalist workers' organisations: in underlying dynamics, for the same reason as the creation and maintenance of trade unions. We can also see why *left wings* will naturally tend to reappear in these loyalist workers' organisations, only to be defeated, and then reappear in a different form: Stafford Cripps's Socialist League in the 1930s, the Bevanites in the 1950s, the Bennites in the 1970s-80s, Corbynism ...

Even at this level it is not clear that the current 'official lefts' are politically dead dogs. The reason is that the far left, by virtue of its 'united front' policy, actively promotes 'official lefts' until they are not merely defeated, but actually dead. Tony Benn, for example, spoke at the People's Assembly conference in June 2013, 10 months before his death. Jeremy Corbyn continues to be promoted by left campaigns. For small groups, like those of the far left, to apply the united front policy, there *need to be* 'official lefts', with the result that they are promoted even where they are (as was true of the Labour left in 1994-2015) generals without armies.

Even revolutionary crisis, in which the obedience of the soldiers is called into question, does not prevent the revival of state-loyalist workers' organisations and of left versions of them or trends within them. Witness the German revolution of 1918-19. Witness also the Portuguese revolutionary crisis of 1974-77: at the outbreak of the revolution the clandestine Portuguese Communist Party was the dominant workers' party, but US backing and support from the Catholic church allowed the negligible Socialist Party to grow rapidly to mass proportions. The far-left groups, splintered, remained marginal.

Far left

The RCP 'theses' claim that the *Morning Star*'s CPB has not grown, and the other far-left groups ("the sects") have "completely failed". I made the point last week that these claims are made without evidence and without any serious attempt to analyse the groups in question - and, in fact, against the evidence which is available about their state.

In that article, and also in November,⁵ I made the point that the line of the 'theses' on this question is a repeat of the claims made by the Healyites in launching the Workers Revolutionary Party in 1973, by the Cliffites in launching the Socialist Workers Party in 1977, and by the Taaffites in launching the Socialist Party in England and Wales in 1997. The WRP destroyed itself by way of Gerry Healy's abuse of power and his successors' inability to rethink either perspectives or organisational conceptions. But the other groups are still with us; not collapsed; and in terms of formal positions, their papers' 'What we fight for' columns are not that different from the new *Communist*'s equivalent. The British SWP has been continuously recruiting on an 'open' basis, with the hope of getting to 10,000, since the early 1970s ... but is still in the low thousands in terms of *dues-paying* membership.

It is far from clear that Socialist Appeal/RCP's growth is more 'real' than the SWP's 6,000 'registered members': *The Communist* remains a fortnightly, and the fund drive target for the launch is £20,000, which is the same as the target of the much smaller CPGB's 2023 Summer Offensive.

The purposes of the fund drive also reflect the methods of the SWP: "we need to double the size of our organisation by the end of 2024, which means we need 20 new full-

time staff to support this growth". In the SWP, and in the US International Socialist Organisation, the full-timers, appointed from the centre, were a source of patronage for the central leadership and of excessive control of local initiative by the centre. Contrast Marcel Liebman's *Leninism under Lenin*: "In Petrograd even, the central committee [in February 1918] possessed only two politically responsible secretaries and an office staff of four. This apparatus grew very slowly: in 1919 it still numbered only about 15 people."⁶

So we have a repeated pattern, in which a group of some hundreds reaches four figures with a moment of rapid recruitment among youth, and imagines it has hit the big time and that revolutionary crisis is on the immediate agenda; it renames itself as a 'party' and embarks on more 'open recruitment' and an attitude that 'the rest of the left is dead or dying and to be ignored' ... but the outcome is not the expected breakthrough, but merely a group of a few thousand with inflated ambitions.

This is not only a British phenomenon: across the channel, Lutte Ouvrière, the Lambertistes and the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (more recently Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste) have all experienced such abortive attempts to cash in on momentary popularity. Nor just a Trotskyist phenomenon, as can be seen from a series of examples in the US Maoist 'new communist movement' in the 1970s.⁷ Why this persistently reappearing mistake?

Part of the error is, in fact, a Trotsky problem: visible in his comment on the Spanish POUM, quoted in the 'theses':

Ten thousand, with a firm and perceptive leadership, can find the road to the masses, break them away from the influence of the Stalinists and social democrats, the charlatans and loudmouths, and assure them not just the episodic and uncertain victory of the republican troops over the fascist troops, but a total victory of the toilers over the exploiters.⁸

What lies behind this claim is that Trotsky before 1917 tended to deceive himself about the relative weight of Bolshevism, by underestimating it in the interests of hope in his own rival and much weaker projects (the 1912 'August bloc', the wartime exile *Nashe Slovo*, the 'Inter-District group of non-factional Social Democrats' (Mezhrayontsi). In the 1930s, that error allowed him to imagine that if the Bolsheviks could leap to leadership of the masses from very small numbers, so could the 1930s Trotskyists.

Yes, the Bolsheviks only had around 20,000 members in February 1917. But this was under conditions of total illegality, where there was a routine practice of conscripting activists to send them to the trenches. And in 1912 the Bolsheviks had won the workers' *curia* (class-defined electoral seats) in the tsarist duma. Behind this self-deception, in turn, was Trotsky's lack of understanding of the party question. He made this point repeatedly against himself in the 1930s, but it is not clear that he ever really grasped it: that Bolshevism and Menshevism could acquire a mass character because they offered a *political voice* rather than a purely economic and strike-based conception of workers' power, which Trotsky tended to fall back on.

This, of course, does not explain the problem affecting Maoism. But here - and among the Trotskyists, too - there is another element. It is in the first place the idea that talking to the

existing left is a waste of time; and in the second, the idea that capturing the youth will allow the creation of a radically new left, uncontaminated by the errors of the 'old left'. This idea takes us back to 'boomer-thought': it is the legacy of the post-1956 'new left' in the US and Germany, and its global political influence. The idea of generational replacement as the solution to the problems of the left is at the end of the day a bourgeois sociologists' and advertising agents'/publicists' conception, which began with the boomers and is today almost reduced *ad absurdum* with the idea of 'Generation Z'.

What happens to the youth after they have been hooked in by the promise of the revolution round the corner and have spent a few years selling the *Workers' Press* at the factory gate, turning out to the latest demo to hand out SWP placards and party cards, recruiting new members to the Revolutionary Communist Party, or whatever the particular nostrum may be? Many will drop out of politics and/or become violent anti-leftists. Others will find a road to actual engagement with the workers' movement. The result will be that they will either retain their far-left affiliation, but act independently of their leaders, or simply become trade union militants, 'independent leftists' and so on.

In actual revolutionary crisis, it turns out that small groups, however good their politics, are *not* able to find the road to the masses by bypassing the larger trends. We have seen this over and over again: the rising tide does not exactly lift all boats, but the *existing* large parties gain as much, or more than, the small groups. And the result in this situation of clinging to the project of the small group addressing the masses directly is to *fail* to win over forces from the existing broad workers' vanguard. To use the analogy of Russia in 1917, to *fail* to promote Left Socialist-Revolutionaries and Menshevik-Internationalists, and thereby leave political leadership in the hands of the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Menshevik defencists. The result in Russia would have been the victory of Kornilov or one of the other generals and the massacre of the left - a result that has happened repeatedly in subsequent revolutionary crises.

The launch of the RCP is thus not a clean break from the 'sects'. It merely repeats their errors ●

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Notes

- The point was already made by Marx in the *Critique of the Gotha programme*: "the 'framework of the present-day national state', for instance, the German empire, is itself, in its turn, economically 'within the framework' of the world market, politically 'within the framework' of the system of states" (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/ch01.htm). For why, as a matter of the logic of capital, this should be necessarily true, see my series, 'Imperialism and the state' (*Weekly Worker* supplements, March 17, 24, April 7, 14, 2022).
- See JV Orth *Combination and conspiracy: a legal history of trade unionism 1721-1906* Oxford 1991, chapters 1-4.
- 'Middle class' because 'bourgeois' (in the sense of 'capitalist') parties are those that are selected by capitalists for large-scale bribetaking; the ranks and cadre of such parties are usually drawn from the petty-proprietor class, and in particular the intelligentsia (journalists, lawyers, etc).
- MECW* Vol 26, pp268-71.
- 'A communist appeal to Socialist Appeal' *Weekly Worker* November 9 2023: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1466-a-communist-appeal-to-socialist-appeal.
- M Liebman *Leninism under Lenin* London 1985, pp278-79. These figures, of course, do not include the journalists, etc working on the press.
- M Elbaum *Revolution in the air* London 2002.
- 'Is victory possible in Spain?' April 23 1937, in *The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)* New York 1973, p263.

HAITI

Drug war denialism

Marx called for the toleration of the opium trade. Certainly only the legalisation of drugs can end the sort of ongoing tragedy we are seeing in Haiti, argues **Daniel Lazare**

The drug violence that is capsizing one Latin American state after another is leading to a new form of denialism. Unable to look reality square in the face, self-proclaimed socialists are blaming greedy local elites or international bodies like the World Bank or International Monetary Fund - anyone and everyone, that is, except the drug war itself.

The result is a blank space, where a diagnosis ought to be. In *Left Voice*, Haitian followers of the late Argentine Trotskyist, Nahuel Moreno, recently issued a statement denouncing the “social chaos that has been marked for years by armed gangs fighting for control of the country,” but without mentioning the international drug trade that fuels Haitian gang violence in the first place.¹

In *Defense of Marxism*, a site maintained by followers of the late Ted Grant, recently posted an article accusing Haiti’s ultra-violent gangs of ravaging not only Port-au-Prince, but “spreading their reign of terror throughout the rest of the country” as well. Yet the Grantites refuse to mention what is driving the gangs or what business they are in.

“There is no solution to the problem of the gangs under capitalism,” the article went on. “The general sickness of capitalism in Haiti has allowed the gangs to grow and metastasize like a cancer.” Quite true. But it is like telling a heart-attack victim that he or she suffers from general sickness and leaving it at that. In *Defense of Marxism* also called for an “insurrectionary mass movement ... [to] develop an economic, political and social program that can eradicate the poverty and misery that leads many to join the gangs”. But it made no mention of an international drug war, which, unless confronted head on, is sure to destroy any such movement before it gets off the ground.²

Over at the Revolutionary Communist Party USA, a March 18 article urged Haitians “to come together and take up the new communism brought forward by [RCP chair] Bob Avakian.” Yet ‘RevCom’ also steered clear of the D-word.³ So did the *World Socialist Web Site*, run by David North and his ‘International Committee for the Fourth International’. On March 13, it declared:

Haiti’s misery can only be ended through the adoption by the working class throughout the region of the program of permanent revolution in alliance with their class brothers and sisters in the imperialist centers.⁴

But what does that programme have to do with the drug war and its ravages? The article did not say.

Finally, there are the social democrats at *Jacobin* magazine - the people counting on Joe Biden to prevent a Trump takeover and thus ‘save the world’. Last week, *Jacobin* ran an article lauding Colombia’s left-of-centre president, Gustavo Petro, and his plan to demilitarise the drug war by persuading Andean farmers to switch from coca to legal crops instead.

But there is a problem: such crops are far less profitable, which is why growers switch back to coca the moment government inspectors go home. This is why Colombia coca cultivation has increased fivefold over the last decade, why global markets are booming, and why black-market violence is surging as well - because crop-substitution schemes do not work.⁵

A *Jacobin* interview a few days earlier with Jake Johnston - a Haiti expert at the vaguely-leftish Center for Economic and Policy Research in Washington - was even worse. It covered everything from the US military occupation in 1915 to the 2010 earthquake, yet managed not to mention the drug war even once.⁶

Why are self-proclaimed Marxists determined to bury their heads in the sand? If Haiti were suffering from plague or invasion, outlets like *Left Voice* would have no trouble telling it like it is. Yet they turn evasive whenever the subject turns to drugs. Why?

Celestial Empire

The reasons are many - staleness, timidity, conservatism, etc. Avakian and co are Stalinists who celebrate Mao for executing drug traffickers *en masse*.⁷ Gerry Healy, the ideological forerunner of the WSWs, banned even marijuana, while Ted Grant’s Militant Tendency has been described as “austere and self-consciously proletarian: short hair, ties, hard work and early bedtimes, football and table tennis for relaxation rather than sex and drugs”.⁸ Such forces were not likely to participate in a drug legalisation movement that might provide workers with an “idealist escape”, to use the Healyite term, in the form of pot or other substances. They have maintained a policy of discreet silence ever since.

Yet, if self-proclaimed Marxists get it wrong, Marx himself did not. Writing during the Second Opium War of 1856-60, he advised the Chinese imperial government not to fight the opium imports that the East India Company was forcing on the country, but to legalise them instead.

He wrote in Horace Greeley’s *New York Daily Tribune*:

In 1837, the Chinese government had at last arrived at a point where decisive action could no longer be delayed. The continuous drain of silver, caused by the opium importations, had begun to derange the exchequer, as well as the moneyed circulation of the Celestial Empire. Heu Nailzi, one of the most distinguished Chinese statesmen, proposed to legalise the opium trade and make money out of it ... As early as 1830, a duty of 25% would have yielded a revenue of \$3,850,000. In 1837, it would have yielded double that sum ...

Yet the emperor refused. Marx went on:

The Indian finances of the British government have, in fact, been made to depend not

only on the opium trade with China, but on the contraband character of that trade. Were the Chinese government to legalise the opium trade simultaneously with tolerating the cultivation of the poppy in China, the Anglo-Indian exchequer would experience a serious catastrophe.⁹

By choosing prohibition over legalisation, the empire saved the Anglo-Indians’ neck, while cutting its own throat. What goes for the mid-19th century, meanwhile, goes double or triple for the early 21st. The problem is not that drug warriors are not trying hard enough: on the contrary, they are trying too hard to enforce a programme that costs trillions, yet is all but designed to make matters worse.

Instead of reducing production, it is loaded with perverse incentives that cause it to grow by leaps and bounds. Instead of discouraging violence, it causes it to skyrocket by creating a vast underground economy, in which there is no way to settle a business dispute other than at the point of a gun. Rather than encouraging more benign substances, it all but forces *narcotraficantes* to shift to high-potency drugs like cocaine, heroin or fentanyl - which are super-dense, ultra-profitable, and all but impossible to interdict.

The upshot is more gangs, more chaos and more social collapse - problems that will not go away merely because outlets like *Left Voice* and *In Defense of Marxism* prefer to change the subject. The more they cover up, the more they make matters worse.

Indeed, 2024 is shaping up as the year the drug crisis went from the merely horrendous to the absolutely inconceivable. The process began in Ecuador where traffickers have been battling for years for control of Guayaquil, a city of 2.6 million people located just 500 miles from leading coca

production centres in southwest Colombia. With police able to inspect only 20% of the 300,000 or so shipping containers exiting the port each month, it is an invaluable resource for traffickers seeking an outlet to the Pacific and beyond.¹⁰

The result was a near civil war that caused homicides to double in 2022 and then double again in 2023. But violence reached a new level in early January when one of the country’s top gang leaders broke out of prison and president Daniel Noboa declared a 60-day state of emergency. Gangs responded by staging more prison revolts and then taking over a Guayaquil TV station to broadcast additional threats live. The aim was “to generate chaos, violence, fear and terror”, according to Italian journalist Roberto Saviano, who has made his name chronicling organised crime. He said that “the approach is simple: shoot anyone, litter the streets with bombs, make the prisons riot, make ordinary life impossible”.¹¹ Formerly a low-crime haven, Ecuador suddenly became one of the Latin America’s three most violent states, alongside Venezuela and Honduras.¹²

Yet Ecuador was merely a prelude for violence in Haiti that would prove even worse. Three years earlier, the drug-war assassination of president Jovenel Moïse had triggered a vertiginous downward spiral, as rival gangs battled for supremacy. But the process accelerated when Jimmy ‘Barbecue’ Chérizier, an ex-cop turned gang lord, declared war on the government itself last September. When prime minister Ariel Henry fled to Africa on February 29 to approve a plan to use 1,100 Kenyan police officers to quell violence back home, Chérizier’s forces seized the opportunity by storming two of the country’s largest prisons and attacking Haiti’s heavily fortified international airport. Blocked from returning, Henry resigned on March 12.

With food and water increasingly scarce and medical care all but collapsed, government in Haiti had ceased to exist. Since then, American, Canadian and French diplomats have been meeting with Caribbean leaders in Georgetown, Guyana, some 1,200 miles to the south-east, in an attempt to figure out what to do. But, considering how disastrous their interventions have been in the past, it is difficult to imagine them coming up with anything that will not make matters worse. Calling off the war on drugs would help. So would curtailing the flow of guns from the United States, which add to the instability and give traffickers even freer rein than before. But such reforms are the last thing on the Americans’ minds. So the disaster will continue.

Kicks and blows

Haiti has been on the receiving end of history’s kicks and blows since its slave population rose in revolt in 1791. Thomas Jefferson imposed a trade embargo in 1805, which remained

in place until Abraham Lincoln restored diplomatic relations in 1862.

France forced it to pay 150 million francs in gold as reparations for the human property it dared liberate. After ending its military occupation in 1934, the US backed the good anti-communist, François Duvalier, when he became president in 1957. The result was a nightmare that turned ‘Papa Doc’, as Duvalier was known, into a synonym for terror and repression.

Weak state

Since 1963, the UN has counted more than 40 major disasters - floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, disease, etc - affecting 10,000 or more people at a time. Finally, in 2010, came a cholera epidemic started by UN ‘peacekeepers’ from Nepal that killed 10,000 more. A year earlier, ex-president Bill Clinton, by then a UN special envoy, had come up with the bright idea of using Haiti’s super-low wages to lure garment manufacturers into setting up shop in special tax-free export zones. But, other than winning Clinton good press back home, the plan went nowhere. As Canadian anthropologist Greg Beckett observed,

It was the same plan that had brought hundreds of thousands of people to the slums of Port-au-Prince ... And it was the same plan that had kept wages so low in the factories that workers could barely afford to live on them. The same plan that had required violence and terror to enforce it, that had gone hand-in-hand with the suppression of democracy ... It was the same plan that had made the disaster in the first place.¹³

This is why Haiti emerged as a major drug transshipment centre in the 1980s and 90s: because it is a weak state, in which officials are easily bribed, underpaid police officers are easily intimidated, and thousands of desperate slum dwellers are easily recruited to work as enforcers and labourers.

But don’t tell the Grantites, Northites, or other self-proclaimed Marxists. Rather than facing up to reality, they prefer to take refuge in timeworn formulas and clichés ●

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Jimmy ‘Barbecue’ Chérizier:
from cop to drug boss



ECONOMICS

Not dealing with causes

IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva is suddenly worrying about inequality, says Michael Roberts. A significant ideological shift away from the neoliberal consensus

Current International Monetary Fund managing director Kristalina Georgieva is seeking a second five-year term after being nominated by a string of European countries to continue leading the institution. In doing so, she recently delivered a number of speeches outlining what she sees the IMF will be trying to achieve over the rest of this decade.

She said the major economies are experiencing low and slowing growth in real gross domestic product and, according to her, the reason for this is soaring inequality of wealth and income. She said:

We have an obligation to correct what has been most seriously wrong over the last 100 years - the persistence of high economic inequality. IMF research shows that lower income inequality can be associated with higher and more durable growth.¹

This is a new argument. Until recently, the IMF reckoned that faster growth depended on higher productivity, free flows of capital, globalisation of international trade and 'liberalisation' of markets, including labour markets (meaning weakening labour rights and unions). Inequality did not come into it - that was the neoliberal formula for economic growth. But the experience of the 2008-09 great recession and the pandemic slump of 2020 seems to have delivered a sobering lesson to the IMF's economic hierarchy: now the world economy is suffering from "anaemic growth".

And globalisation is fragmenting along geopolitical lines - around 3,000 trade-restricting measures were imposed in 2023 (nearly three times the number in 2019) and Georgieva is worried:

Geoeconomic fragmentation is deepening, as countries shift trade and capital flows. Climate risks are increasing and already affecting economic performance, from agricultural productivity to the reliability of transportation and the availability and cost of insurance. These risks may hold back regions with the most demographic potential, such as sub-Saharan Africa.

Meanwhile, higher interest rates and debt-servicing costs are straining government budgets - leaving less room for countries to provide essential services and invest in people and infrastructure.

So Georgieva wants a new approach for her next five-year term: "With recent improvement to the global near-term outlook, G20 policymakers have an opportunity to rebuild policy momentum, setting their sights on a more equitable, prosperous, sustainable and cooperative future." The previous neoliberal model for growth and prosperity must be replaced with 'inclusive growth' that aims to reduce inequalities and not just boost real GDP. The key issues now should be "inclusion, sustainability and global governance, with a welcome emphasis on eradicating poverty and hunger".

The talk about 'inclusive growth' is not new in itself² (but it is from the IMF). How is this to be done? Here Georgieva refers to the supposed solutions apparently provided by John Maynard Keynes during the



Masters of world finance: IMF board of governors

great depression of the 1930s - in particular Keynes' seminal essay, 'Economic possibilities for our grandchildren'.³

Keynes at King's

Let me remind readers that this essay was originally based on a speech he made to students at King's College, Cambridge, in the depth of the 1930s depression.⁴ Keynes was very worried that his students were being attracted towards Marxist alternatives to the capitalist crisis. He saw the need to stop that by showing that capitalism would get out of its current mess and eventually deliver prosperity for all.

Georgieva argued that Keynes had been right to predict that technology gains would deliver an eightfold increase in living standards in 100 years time from 1931. She said the target for the IMF (over the next 100 years!) was to do the same: ie, achieve such an increase in living standards for eight billion plus people on the planet. But, says Georgieva, it cannot be done "unless we foster a fairer global economy".

On the Keynes prediction for growth since the 1930s, Georgieva was not entirely accurate. Global *per capita* real GDP was \$1,958 in 1940 and reached \$7,614 in 2008. Given recent slow growth, average global *per capita* GDP could reach \$11,770 in 2030. But that is a rise of only six times from 1940.

In her speech Georgieva admitted that Keynes "was also too optimistic about how the benefits of growth would be shared. Economic inequality remains too high, within and across countries." You don't say!

It was not that Keynes was too optimistic: he ignored completely the issue of inequality that Georgieva now wants to take up. He assumed that the major capitalist economies were equivalent to the world economy. And he made no distinction between the imperialist core and the poor periphery - or between rich and poor inside a country. He did not refer

to inequality at all - for him (mean) average growth was enough.

And what has happened to the inequality of global incomes since Keynes's address? Just look at the latest analysis by global inequality expert, Branco Milanovic, in a new paper.⁵

The global inequality index (Gini) rose from around 50 in the early 19th century to about 66 in the 1930s, before hitting near 70 by the end of the 20th century. It has only fallen back since because of the rise of China, where over 900 million Chinese have been taken out of World Bank-defined poverty levels. However, the World Inequality Report (WIR) 2022 shows that after three decades of trade and financial globalisation, global inequalities remain extremely pronounced - "about as great today as they were at the peak of western imperialism in the early 20th century"⁶ (ie, when Keynes did his address). And while Georgieva is arguing that prosperity and better living standards are only possible now by reducing inequality, it appears that Keynes does not offer her any guidance on this at all.

So what do the IMF economists and Georgieva say needs to be done to reduce inequality? They do not propose a wealth tax on billionaires; they do not propose any effective measures to end tax havens for the super-rich and big corporations. Their only measure, it seems to me, is to back the recent vague agreement made to have a minimum corporate profits tax globally (with many attending loopholes). And they suggest higher tax rates at the top of the income distribution, the introduction of a universal basic income, and increased public spending on education and health.⁷

As I have previously mentioned,⁸ leading 'inequality economist' Gabriel Zucman was invited to address the G20 finance ministers meeting in Brazil and asked to come up with detailed measures to tax the super-rich. Zucman admitted that "it

may take years to get there for the super-rich". What is the likelihood that the G20 governments will agree to any measures against billionaires or tax havens?

And anyway, as I argued in that post, all these tax measures are redistributive: ie, they do not deal with the causes of inequality in the first place - they just aim at some redistribution afterwards. It is like taking medicine that may take away some of your headache, but does nothing to stop the causes of the flu that keeps infecting you.

Distinction

The IMF's economists have recognised the distinction between pre-distributive measures to reduce inequality (of income only) and redistributive ones. But their suggested pre-distributive policies refer only to incomes and fail to address the economic structure of wealth inequality that I have argued is key.⁹ Moreover, can they really expect education, health and infrastructure spending to be ramped up across a world economy, as it currently operates?

Indeed, the leading 'inequality economists', Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez and Zucman, recently concluded that, "Given the massive changes in the pre-tax distribution of national income since 1980, there are clear limits to what redistributive policies can achieve." That is why these days, Piketty advocates going 'beyond capitalism' to break the back of inequality of income and wealth which, in my opinion¹⁰ is endemic to a social system where a small group of people own all the means of production and, through banks and companies, squeeze every last cent they can out of the rest of us.

Georgieva concludes:

In the years ahead, global cooperation will be essential to manage geoeconomic fragmentation and reinvigorate trade, maximise the potential of

AI without widening inequality, prevent bottlenecks on debt, and respond to climate change.

Global cooperation? We are in a world where rivalry between the major economic powers is intensifying, with the US imposing trade tariffs, technology bans and military measures against China, while Europe conducts a proxy war with Russia.

Highlighting in her speech Keynes's maxim that "in the long run, we are all dead", Georgieva said:

He meant the following: instead of waiting for market forces to fix things over the long run, policymakers should try to resolve problems in the short run ... And it's a call to which I for one am determined to respond - to do my part for my grandchildren's better future. Because, as Keynes put it in 1942, "In the long run almost anything is possible".

Well, yes, in the long run, "almost anything is possible" - but not necessarily for the betterment of humanity or the planet! ●

Michael Roberts blogs at thenextrecession.wordpress.com

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ARTS

Promote a second front

Boycotting Israel and its military suppliers can make a real difference when it comes to the court of public opinion. But, complains **Tam Dean Burn**, some do not take cultural politics seriously

There has been a range of cultural aspects to the Palestine solidarity struggle recently. For example, the South By Southwest (SXSW) music festival in Austin, Texas saw over 100 bands withdraw because the US army was the festival's "super sponsor", while arms manufacturing companies, which are supplying Israel right now, also have ties.

It seems that the festival has moved more towards a big-tech event, with the organisers ludicrously justifying the military's involvement by saying:

The defence industry has historically been a proving ground for many of the systems we rely on today. These institutions are often leaders in emerging technologies, and we believe it's better to understand how their approach will impact our lives. The army's sponsorship is part of our commitment to bring forward ideas that shape our world.¹

All Irish bands pulled their gigs and made a strong statement at another live performance - read out by the Gurriers' drummer, Pierce Callaghan, from the stage. The statement made some forceful political points:

Sponsorship of the festival from defence contractors and those sending arms to destroy innocent lives is an act we find disgusting and reprehensible. We as Irish people have a lot of solidarity with the people of Palestine, as we share a history of occupation and oppression by colonialist countries.²

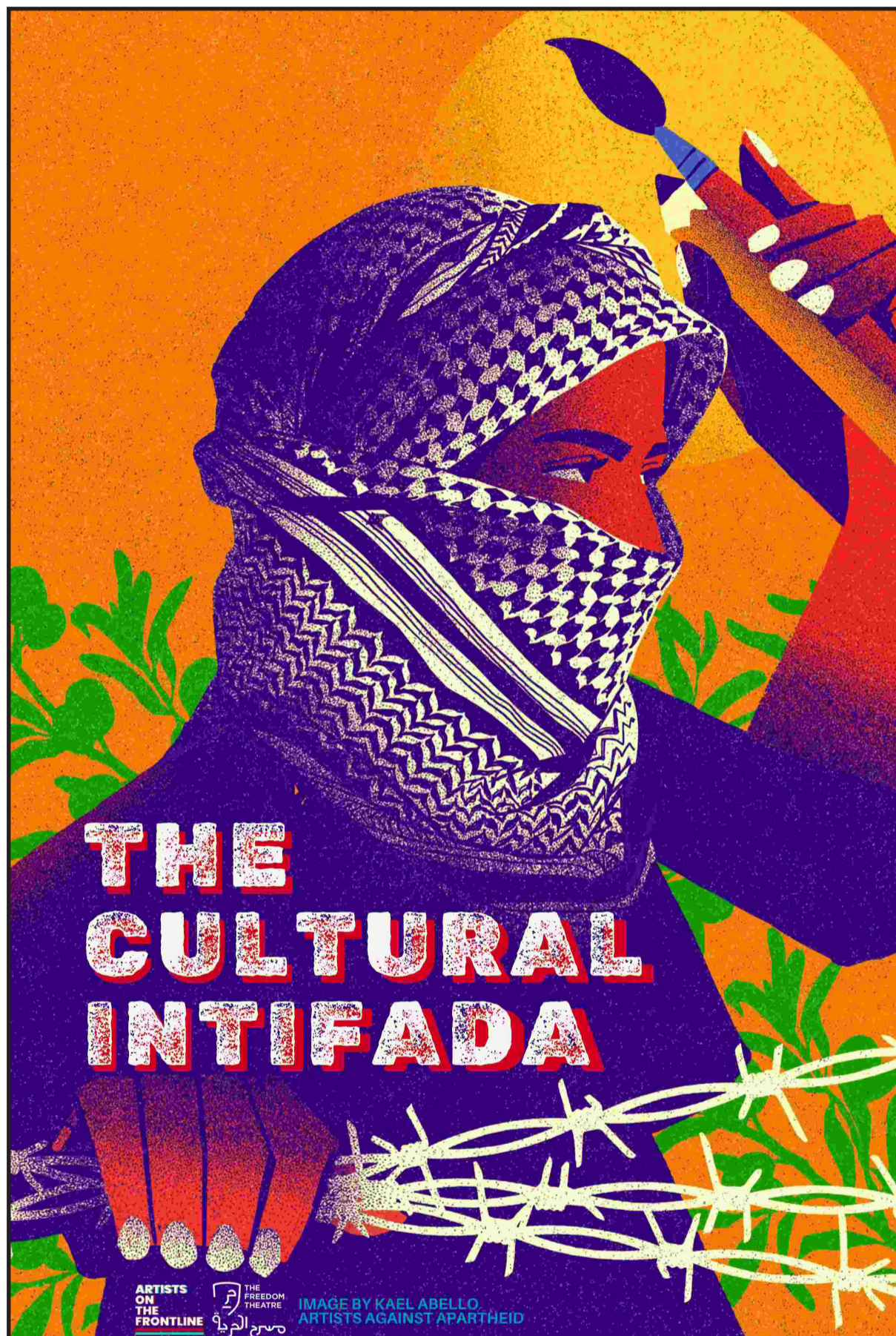
It went on to give the example of the Dunnes Stores strike against apartheid back in the 80s: "This one act triggered a blanket boycott in Ireland, which was mirrored worldwide. If we could all band together then and make a real change, we definitely can now."

In sharp contrast, the Scottish bands listed to take part chose to ignore the boycott - apart from two: Neon Waltz and VLURE. Most surprising amongst them was the Glasgow band, Mogwai, whose members have long been looked on as a radical force - Mogwai is listed to appear at a Palestine fundraiser at the Union Chapel, London, on April 18. I can only presume that its appearance at SXSW, without any statement on the boycott, encouraged other Scottish bands to do likewise. It should be noted that of the 100-plus bands pulling out around 60 were from the UK.

I think it is fair to say that all this sent shockwaves through the radical community in Scotland and provoked *Bella Caledonia*, the left nationalist online magazine, to organise a cultural boycott statement that was then signed by many, including writers Irvine Welsh and James Kelman, the band Young Fathers and myself.³

As well as expressing solidarity with the Palestinian BDS campaign, the statement goes further, calling on all cultural workers not to "participate in events supported by the military and arms companies enabling war in Palestine".

Some of the arms dealers represented at SXSW - Raytheon and BAE Systems - have plants in Scotland that have been targeted recently by activists. In fact the British army has been making inroads into culture with its 'Army at the Fringe' yearly programme at the Edinburgh Festival. It has even managed to



Taking the struggle into the arts

develop partnerships with the Scottish Society of Playwrights (affiliated to the Scottish Trades Union Congress) and the Scottish Poetry Library, which last year organised a 'Bard at the Barracks' programme. Last time I was at the library was for a celebration of the late radical poet, Tom Leonard, and I know for certain that he would have been apoplectic at such a disgraceful turn of events.

Freedom Theatre

Very recently I gave a talk at the second Communist Culture Club livestream under the title, 'The Third Intifada will be Cultural'.

This was an idea proposed by the late Juliano Mer Khamis, founder of the Freedom Theatre in the Jenin refugee camp in occupied Palestine. Juliano was the son of Communist Party of Israel members, so I looked at its website to see if it had anything

I could use in my talk. The party site had several current news items on the Gaza onslaught, but on the 'Party life' page there was nothing more current than 2014!

Juliano did seem to follow his mother Arna's more anarchistic turn than his father's following of the party line and indeed his documentary, *Arna's children*, about her work in Jenin is a brilliant piece, available on YouTube.⁴

I met Juliano when he came to Scotland in 2007 - he has long been an inspiration as an actor who heroically turned his back on a successful Israeli film career to devote himself to the Palestinian cause through youth theatre. He was assassinated outside Freedom Theatre in 2011, whilst sitting in his car with his two-year-old son on his lap - a crime that still remains unsolved.

Also inspiring was his radical struggle against the conservatism of the camp, particularly with regard to the participation of girls and young women in the theatre's activities, and criticisms of the Palestine Authority in a production of George Orwell's *Animal farm*, where PA figures became the pigs! Whether he was killed by forces within the camp will probably never be known, as the Israeli authorities took away his car, laptop and other possessions.

Freedom Theatre has continued to operate since then, but has suffered severe attacks by the Israeli Defence Forces - indeed producer Mustafa Sheba still remains in an Israeli jail after three months' "administrative detention". Many other members of FT staff have also faced detention - and even torture - for running a youth theatre, for fuck's sake!

But none of this has dampened the determination by FT to make Juliano's words come true and indeed in the very week when I was giving my talk an incredible website resource called *Cultural Intifada* was launched by Freedom Theatre and Artists On the Frontline.⁵

I spoke of this valuable resource in my talk, but that was undermined by last-minute procedural changes at the event, when a new item was added to the agenda - a pre-recording of Tony Greenstein discussing the *Al Jazeera* TV documentary, *October 7*, that was tagged onto the front of my 15-minute talk. The discussion after I finished concentrated entirely on the documentary, and even contained a lengthy polemic against Tony by Daniel Lazare. This was particularly pointless, since, as I have said, Tony's was a pre-recorded contribution, because he was at another meeting. The chair, Tina Werkmann, then went straight on to the next item without asking me to respond. When I pointed this out, I was then offered the chance to come back at the very end of the broadcast.

Frustrations

So, all in all, it was a frustrating event. I would have thought that the issue of a cultural intifada is a lot more important for Marxists right now than Daniel Lazare's thoughts on George Orwell, or a review of the film *Dune 2*. The *Al Jazeera* documentary is very important, but hardly culture.

At the time of writing the segments still have not been made available as stand-alone videos, so I cannot promote the issue of a cultural intifada elsewhere, as I had hoped. I have taken part in both Communist Culture club nights and all contributions have been from old white men (like myself), even when celebrating International Women's Day!

This is in stark contrast to what I have been finding in Palestinian and climate activism, where young women are so clearly leading the way. It might have been understandable in Marx's day to be so dominated by male voices, but surely not today.

There is such a wealth of cultural activity going on across the world right now in support of Palestine and resolutely against Israeli apartheid that could be described as a resistance movement - or an intifada. There have also been shameful efforts to counter it - examples I have seen range from an exhibition organised by young artist Georgina Porteous, which was cancelled less than a week before it was due to open at the Moray School of Art in the University of the Highlands, to a short play written and performed by a British-Palestinian writer-performer, Gemilla Shamruk, which was pulled after two nights from the Chickenshed Theatre in London. Porteous did find an alternative venue and continues to demand an explanation from the gallery.

Such determination bodes well for the rising resistance movement - and so does the militancy of the cultural intifada itself ●

Notes

1. accessaa.co.uk/sxsw-issues-statement-after-artists-pull-out-of-event.
2. www.nme.com/news/music/irish-bands-sxsw-boycott-statement-palestine-radar-3601576.
3. bellacaledonia.org.uk/2024/03/22/scottish-cultural-workers-boycott-of-israel/#comment-638523.
4. youtu.be/DvtzDPdHeeU.
5. See www.theculturalintifada.com.

REVIEW

Messiahs and money men

Denis Villeneuve (director) *Dune: part two* 2024, general release

There is a moment quite far into *Dune: part two* where the antagonists - an imperialist army composed of horrifyingly identical, hairless, pale homunculi - bombard the home settlement of our plucky heroes.

A spaceship, a wall of darkest-grey metal, pounds ordnance into a desert rock formation. We viewers know it as 'Sietch Tabr', under which a colony of the oppressed people, the Fremen, have made their home. We have observed their funerary rituals, of removing the moisture from the corpses of their dead and pouring it into an underground pool, and now watch huge boulders burying the dead for good. It was all filmed, and post-produced, long before Israel commenced its present slaughter in the Gaza Strip. Yet it comes out - now, and audiences will no doubt find the resonances uncomfortable.

The Fremen are quite obviously based on the nomadic Arab tribes made famous by TE Lawrence, whose memoir of the Arab revolt so inspired Frank Herbert's original novel. Their language is clearly inspired by Arabic; their messianic figure is called, among other things, the *mahdi* - a term with a long history in Islam, perhaps best known in the predictions by some Shia that the 12th imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, will return from his mysterious occlusion to lead the faithful in their final victory.

The rules of the Hollywood epic complicate this analogy. After all, things have only come to this pass because the Fremen have become such an irrepressible nuisance to the occupiers. Their daring raids on the resource-extraction operations of the colonisers have taken up much of the screen time so far - and director Denis Villeneuve has made an altogether poetic job of it. There is nobody in the world who can do such a great job of presenting incomprehensibly vast objects moving very slowly - a skill that transfers with great facility to the related task of showing incomprehensibly vast objects exploding.

Villeneuve's drift towards the Hollywood mainstream has led some critics to become sniffy about him - notably AS Hamrah, a fine writer of legendary curmudgeonliness. I confess, on the contrary, to being a great admirer of his films and, much of the pleasure of both *Dune* films thus far comes, for me, from the joy in seeing his particular directorial eye cast on a filmic project large enough in scale to truly stretch it. I first fell in love with his work with *Arrival* (2017) - a more philosophical science-fiction vehicle, whose plot turns on *recherché* theories of language; already by that point his art was fully formed. There were the patient, odd shots of tall, cigar-shaped UFOs floating over the landscape; the weepy melodrama of the characters; the post-classical soundtrack, in that film by the late genius, Jóhann Jóhannsson, full of strange vocal cues; and the bassy stings that are now officially known by the onomatopoeic term of art, 'braam'.

Messiah

For those unfamiliar with the *Dune* universe, some exposition is necessary. It takes place many thousands of years into the future: humanity has colonised thousands of planets in the known universe, governed as an 'imperium' with a kind of feudal structure. Transit between star systems depends on the guidance of a specialised cast of navigators, who can only do the



Doing brisk business

job by consuming a hallucinogenic fungus called melange or spice, which grows only on a single planet - the perilous desert world of Arrakis. As the saga opens, this planet is reassigned from the suzerainty of the fascist Harkonnen house (the aforementioned pale and hairless ones) to that of the do-gooder, Atreides, and our hero (sort of) is Paul Atreides, heir of the reigning duke, Leto.

Apart from the imperial forces, the only inhabitants of Arrakis, the Fremen, who live deep in the desert, are exposed permanently and healthily to the spice, and coexist respectfully with the terrifying sandworms - huge monsters attracted by rhythmic sound... like the sound of spice extraction machines, for instance. They are not exactly noble savages - they are masters of technologies relevant to their survival and communal life. But they are not romantic about their lives, and look forward to an eschatological event that will bring abundant water to Arrakis and make the desert bloom.

To this end, the Fremen await the coming of a messiah - the 'Lisan al-Gaib'. But we filmgoers know (and a few Fremen suspect) that this expectation is cultivated among them by an imperial religious order of women, the 'Bene Gesserit', whose true mission is a kind of eugenic singularity in the imperial metropole. They see the Fremen as future shock troops for the messiah figure they themselves are trying to breed in due course. Needless to say, the best laid plans of mice and nuns go awry. Leto Atreides's plan to cultivate an alliance with the Fremen is cut short by his death, thanks to the treachery of the emperor; Paul survives, 'goes native' with his doubtfully sane mother, and struggles with the decision to proclaim himself the 'lisan al-Ghaib'.

Herbert was a true liberal of his own day - disgusted with imperialism, but disquieted by the fanaticism of those who fought against it. Villeneuve, a liberal of ours, heightens things in both directions. The female characters get more of a look-in in his version, but not in a way likely to cheer Hillary Clinton-type corporate feminists. The relentless competence of Paul's mother, Jessica, may have had that effect in the first movie; but she spends much of this one communing with her unborn daughter and conspiring at a galactic holy war. She

is Paul's great temptation: against her is arrayed his Fremen girlfriend, Chani, whose progressive alienation from him marks the distance between his own aims and the apparent wellbeing of her people.

In Villeneuve's version, Paul is pushed over the edge of his initial idealism to become that worst of things for modern Hollywood liberals - some kind of *populist*, who offers his people blood, sweat and tears, but never enough to sate them. He does so in the face of grotesque and genocidal oppression, and it is to the film's credit that we both root for him all the way along and grow nauseous at what it all means.

Mass production

All of which makes this a somewhat peculiar blockbuster. There is no real doubt about its credentials on that score: it was made for a little under \$200 million, and has made a little over \$500 million, as I write, with a good stretch to go in cinemas yet (big money in; big money out). As with all such projects nowadays, it is based on pre-existing, bankable intellectual property. The cast - Timothée Chalamet, Josh Brolin, Rebecca Ferguson, and so forth - are recognisable enough, but not likely to overshadow the material, as one of the few remaining old-fashioned stars like Tom Cruise might. On paper, it looks a very modern blockbuster indeed, after the fashion of the Marvel movies and whatever else.

The end product, however, is quite different. Probably not since Christopher Nolan's *Batman* trilogy has a big-name IP movie series had such a clear directorial stamp on it (I suppose we can throw Zack Snyder in there too, since his soporific self-seriousness is readily recognisable, whatever else may be said about it). It slips occasionally - the near-monochrome sequence on the Harkonnen home world is, alas, a little Snyder-esque. Yet the virtues of the *Dune* movies - their patience, their intelligent and judicious use of source material, their distinct visual style, their emotional directness, their queasy moral ambiguity - are the virtues above all of their director. Auteur theory is back!

Or is it? One swallow (or two, I suppose) does not make a summer. It is quite conceivable that this is a mere clerical error: the money-men - in this case the notoriously bloodless philistine, David Zaslav of Warner Bros - handed an internet

protocol long known to be cursed for Hollywood purposes (rather like *Don Quixote*) to Villeneuve, and the first movie benefited from the distorting effects of the Covid pandemic on the film industry; therefore they couldn't *not* make the second one.

It could still be a straw in the wind, however. The dominant franchises of the last decade are clearly in crisis; the once-imperturbable Marvel brand now produces turkey after turkey, most obviously, and it is not clear what blood is left to get out of the *Star Wars* stone. Meanwhile, the second *Dune* is doing brisk business; and the two tentpole movies of last year, *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer*, clearly fit into certain well-storied commercial film stereotypes (feature-length toy advert, and Oscar-bait biopic, respectively), but were both equally director-led projects from the artistically respectable Greta Gerwig and Nolan.

Could the return of the auteur be the solution to Hollywood's general aesthetic exhaustion? Perhaps. The picture is not uniformly promising. Notably Marvel's one serious attempt to do an auteur movie, *Eternals*, was a disastrous flop, with sequels now officially abandoned - the studio apparently repents of taking too many risks (sic!). That is the problem with leaning into the cult of the heroic artist: it is an inherently unpredictable way to make a buck, which is precisely how we ended up with the perfectly oiled Marvel machine, with its house anti-style and its literal five-year plans in the first place.

The wider economic picture is not great for movie-going either - perhaps the whole thing will finally be swallowed whole by Netflix and friends (as per the title of Hamrah's recent review collection, *The earth dies streaming*). It is the streaming giants who have the most efficient machine for turning data-science on audience tastes into industrially extruded content. Whether or not the recent commercial success of certain auteurs represents a turn in Hollywood's paradigm of production, it at least indicates that mass audiences deserve to be treated with more dignity than they recently have been. But the tyranny of money men like Zaslav and Bob Iger of Disney remains an obstacle to a true revival in quality mass-market cinema ●

Harley Filben

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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Limiting competition is key

Whatever the government does over Rwanda, irregular migrants will keep coming. Eddie Ford defends the right of people to live in whatever country they choose, but we clearly need more than individual rights

Recently we had the ping-ponging between both houses of parliament over the government's flagship, the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill. This is a classic example of parliament calling what is black white and white black - that is, designating Rwanda as a 'safe country' when it obviously is not. That was certainly the view of the supreme court in November, which ruled the plan illegal, as migrants might be deported from Rwanda to face persecution - forcing the government to sign a new treaty with the African country that supposedly contains further 'safeguards' over relocation. In the last round of ping-pong, the bill came back to the Lords after MPs voted down all 10 amendments proposed by peers.

Now parliament is in Easter recess, with the Commons due to return on April 15. Barring an extraordinary set of events, the government will eventually get its way, with the bill becoming an act in the run-up to the general election. Therefore expect it to feature heavily in the campaign - especially as small boat arrivals have increased by over 20% so far this year.

Of course, this was one of Rishi Sunak's famous (or stupid) pledges. OK, he did talk about getting inflation down, but nobody seriously thought it would continue to go up - the only way was down. It need hardly be said that this had nothing to do with the government (as if!), but due to changing global conditions. On the other hand, when Sunak said from behind his No10 podium that he would "stop the small boats", not just reduce them, it was impossible not to laugh out loud. Particularly as it was so reminiscent of David Cameron's pledge in 2010 to limit net migration to the "tens of thousands" a year - even more so when he doubled down on the pledge the next year, saying it would be achieved by the 2015 election, "no ifs, no buts"! Anyway, the Rwanda Bill is part and parcel of that pledge. The idea is that you frighten people to such an extent that they will not get into those inflatables, deciding instead to either go by legal means, stay in France, or go back home, because they are so afraid of being sent to Rwanda.

All extremely unlikely scenarios. Just as people from Latin American countries hit by social meltdown and civil wars will naturally head north to the US (no matter what walls have been built, and despite all the snarling dogs), those seeking asylum in Britain will find a way. For example, previously there was a crackdown on people coming over in lorries - introducing sniffer dogs, heat-sensor technology, draconian fines on lorry drivers, and so on, not to mention a similar clampdown on Channel Tunnel crossings. Lo and behold, people started coming over in small boats instead. And now we have the mad Rwandan plan.



Boats will not stop crossing the English Channel

However, an easy prediction to make is that people will keep coming for the same reasons. All you need to do is look at where these people come from - states undergoing catastrophic economic meltdown because of IMF restructuring packages, foreign military intervention or whatever. Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran ... They will keep coming, whatever the government says or does. You cannot snuff out hope by decree, which means that the politics of fear is doomed to failure.

Black market

The Institute for Public Research has produced a report estimating that for the 300 lucky people who apparently are going to be sent over to that 'safe country', Rwanda, it will cost £230,000 per person - around five times as much as it currently costs to house an asylum-seeker in the UK, whether in ex-RAF barracks or a hotel. Of course, this cost will rise sharply, as obviously it is not a one-off payment: it is about *keeping* people there for an extended period.

As part of the Rwanda deal previously mentioned, the UK has to pay £370 million up front to Kigali - regardless of what actually happens - followed by a further £120 million, once people are finally sent there. Then the British government also has to pay £20,000 for each person deported, plus up to £150,000 per asylum-seeker to cover processing and integration - nor forgetting various other costs. Furthermore, for each person who leaves Rwanda, the UK is expected to pay an extra £10,000 to facilitate their departure - meaning that in the end, our fiscally prudent government could be forking out £1.8 million for each of the first

300 people the government deports to east Africa.¹ Overall, the IPR estimates that the Rwanda policy will cost the government between £1.1 and £3.9 billion to deport those 300 asylum-seekers who have entered the UK via "irregular routes". Therefore, in order to break even, compared with housing asylum-seekers in Britain, the IPR calculates this Rwanda policy will have to put off *two-thirds* of the irregular migrants.

Now, last year there were 36,704 irregulars, meaning you would have had to put off more than 24,000 of them in order for the government to say that the Rwanda policy would work in terms of finance. But it is not going to deter anything approaching one third, let alone two thirds, of those who are serious about getting into the UK. Yes, there is a real risk that you could drown in the English Channel. But, on balance, it is a very small possibility. Much better to take the risk of coming over in a small boat than staying in your home country - maybe in severe danger. OK, you might be denied the legal right of applying for asylum, but what you do is disappear into the UK's black economy.

A couple of weeks ago the *i* newspaper published an investigation it had conducted into delivery drivers, which is just one aspect of the grey or black economy.² It uncovered a growing market in the past three years, where people can rent, buy or sell profiles on apps including Deliveroo, Uber Eats and Just Eat, with more than 100,000 subscribing to them on Facebook and other social media sites. Thus your food may have been dropped off by a 'substitute' rider, who has likely avoided the strict vetting

process official riders are supposed to undergo - perfect for those who know they would fail a criminal background check or are in the country illegally. And it is not just delivery drivers, of course: whatever it is exactly, the chances are that they will be a lot better off in Britain than if they had stayed back at home in god knows what circumstances.

At this point, it is important to stress that all this is not about money, but politics - Rishi Sunak saying that his pledges are going in the right direction, the economy is on the up, the plan is 'working'. Come the autumn, when the English Channel starts to get rough, he will claim that it is the Rwandan policy that is putting people off, not the deteriorating weather.

Meanwhile, those at the bottom end of the labour market are understandably complaining about unfair competition. After all, if you are an illegal worker - always acutely aware that you can be reported as such - the chances are that you are going to try to undercut workers who are legally based in Britain. Of course, as widely reported, - paradoxically since Brexit, which the likes of Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage constantly said was about 'controlling' our borders - the number of *legal migrants* has actually increased to unprecedented levels by the government's own admission.³ The 12 months to June 2022 saw the fastest population growth since the 1960s. Current projections from the Office for National Statistics put the UK on course for a population of 74 million people by 2036 - six million more than there are today. Most of that increase is down to *legal* migration.

What that means politically is that the actual issue itself is not going to go away, even if the government magically got rid of illegal migration altogether - which it cannot, of course.

Organisation

How should the workers' movement respond? We could say no to migration and unfair competition along the lines of George Galloway and his Workers Party, but that is delusional. People will still keep coming. If you make them illegal, then what you are going to have is even *more* competition when it comes to the labour market, with employers ignoring the law and threats of prosecution - because they can hire the best lawyers or produce new companies off the peg at a moment's notice. Either way, that is not the answer.

Nor is it the answer, though we appreciate the sentiments, to say 'asylum-seekers are welcome here' (noting the implicit assumption that asylum-seekers are good migrants). They might be welcome by most readers of the *Weekly Worker* or *Socialist Worker*, but certainly not when it comes to those suffering at the sharp end from unrestricted competition in the labour market. Competition, in terms of lower wages, worse conditions and all the rest of it, will increase, not decrease, with increased migration.

Our communist perspective is based on the principle that people have the right to live in whatever country they choose. But, crucially, what we demand as a direct concomitant is *organisation and legal measures* that will limit competition between workers, engender solidarity and help overcome national chauvinism. Left to themselves and individual bargaining, workers are at the mercy of the iron rule of supply and demand, which, if unchecked, reduces wages to below subsistence levels and endlessly extends working hours.

How to stop capital - driven as it is by the continuous struggle for profit - from reducing wages to the barest minimum and extending working hours to the maximum possible? Only by negating competition between workers through strong trade union organisation, only by infringing upon the 'sacred' laws of supply and demand by enforcing a legal maximum 35-hour working week, only by building a mass Marxist party, a party committed to extreme democracy and replacing the ecologically ruinous anarchy of the market with planned, sustainable production based on need ●

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