

weekly **worker**



Arrest of Ekrem İmamoğlu and the sound, fury and caution of a divided opposition in Turkey

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Towards a mass Communist Party

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ZIONISM OPENS THE GATES OF HELL



LETTERS



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

Red-flag Zionism

In his article, 'Trump greenlights ethnic cleansing' (March 13), Jack Conrad argues against the Socialist Workers Party's position for a one-state solution, aiming for a secular, democratic state. He argues, that the SWP holds this position to posture itself as the most radical to the Muslim contingents of the Palestine movement (a pleasantry they don't need to expect from Conrad himself). I don't know what Conrad is trying to infer here, but he argues that its political conclusion is "tailing Hamas", whatever that is supposed to mean.

The core argument of the article is that a one-state solution is (1) impossible and (2) oppressive to the oppressor. Jack argues, that a one-state solution could only be achieved by a military victory by the Axis of Resistance, built from regional powers like Hezbollah, Iran, Ansar Allah, Hamas and possibly other Islamic forces. Conrad compares this possible victory to the victory of Saladin against the crusaders. They would build an Islamic state in Palestine and the Israeli population would turn to resistance, which would lead to a denial of political rights to the 'Hebrew population' and harsh measures to oppress this group. Because of the fear of oppression against the colonisers, the only hope for liberation is not through indigenous struggle and regional allies, but through the Israeli working class. This fear is based on the speculation that the Palestinians are not aiming for self-determination and expropriation of what has been stolen, but for total domination over the Israelis.

Jack Conrad acknowledges that the Israeli working class has no sympathy for Palestinians and doesn't see any positivity in ending the oppression of the Palestinians. They are not willing to give up the privileges they received for aiding colonial domination and they are cheering on genocide. He is right about that. He argues that the "Hebrew nation" - a euphemism he's coined for Israel - is legitimate because they have a common language and a large part of the Israelis are born in Israel. He argues further that, even though this was achieved by terrible oppression and theft, this is no reason to call for a return of the land, since this also has not happened in the USA, Canada and Australia. They have been living on the land for a while and thus it became theirs.

In European society, this logic isn't followed, as the Conference of Jewish Material Claims Against Germany seized expropriated homes that were stolen during the Nazi rule of Germany as recently as this year. As there are no living heirs identified, the property goes to the foundation itself. I don't want to deny that there is a debate to be had about how long you can expropriate and return stolen land, homes and other resources, but the dismissal of any restoration on the part of Conrad is telling.

Conrad's demands would be the abolition of Zionist Israel, legal equality for all, secularism, halting expansionism and withdrawal from the occupied territories. This leaves a lot open for interpretation, but that could come in handy for the solution that Conrad sees for the conflict.

His solution is one of a mutual recognition of the colonised and the coloniser of each other's national

rights. Conrad argues that this reconciliation can be made possible through a communist pan-Arab movement, a Communist Party of Arabia. Once they establish working class rule in a socialist republic of Arabia, they could entice the Israeli working class to join them with federal status. Then, the colonisers would be willing to give up their ethnostate and would make socialist revolution in Israel. What happens to the Palestinians in this scenario is not mentioned. Conrad deems their struggle and resistance hopeless. The demands stated in the previous paragraph does not mention any atonement whatsoever. Israel is to remain as a red colony.

There is a lot left unsaid in this article by Conrad. There are a lot of questions left. Would a communist movement be able to develop and win without Zionist interference? Nasser was defeated by the Zionists when he tried, and the Israeli working class didn't seem to be bothered at all. Is Arabist unity possible when Israel is wedged in between the Arab states? Do the Arab communists even want to ally themselves with the Israeli working class, which has done nothing to gain the grace of the Arab working class?

The obvious answer is no. The Israeli working class will not heed the call to end their ethnostate. They won't consent to giving it up. In the hypothetical scenario of a Communist Party of Arabia, the Israelis would use the struggle to further the destabilisation and weakening of the regional powers, just as they are doing in Syria as we speak. This would obviously have the support of the Zionist working class.

The solution does not lie in seeking out alliances with 'red Zionists', but in struggling against Zionism altogether. Conrad paints a picture of an undefeatable Israel, but this is not the truth. Israel might have military prowess at this moment, but it is dependent on diplomatic, economic and military support from the western world. It is dependent on the public assuming that defeat is impossible and support is endless. Conrad assesses correctly that Israel is highly militarised. He frames it as a sign of strength, but in reality it is a sign of vulnerability.

Communists should seek to exploit these weaknesses. They should seek to disrupt the western support for the colony. They should seek to build political support for the Palestinians, as well as other forms of support. They should put the injustices and illegitimacy of the Zionist entity at the forefront.

The only way for an end to the oppression of the Palestinians is to weaken Israel. Once the Israelis realise their ethnostate won't last forever, that their future is dependent on the good graces of the peoples surrounding them (even the Muslims), then a solution becomes a real possibility. No solution is possible if the Zionist state is in a position of strength.

Conrad seeks to legitimise the occupation, to ignore the crimes and theft against the Palestinians. He wants a Communist Party of Arabia that wants to normalise relations with Israel - Zionism with a red flag. **Jonathan Scheerder** email

Fascism undefined

Your article, 'Notes on America', makes a lot of fascism and neo-fascism and gives some definitions (March 20). But why do you think it is so important to define whether or not something is fascism anyway?

In working class history,

communist parties have called regimes fascist and then gone on to have a popular front with capitalist parties. This is a cross-class alliance, which is against the interests of the working class - it holds back revolution and undermines the fight for communism. Communism is the only answer for the working class and the world.

Jack Conrad did not give any reasons for harping on about whether fascism existed in a country or not. Surely communists have to fight against capitalism, whatever kind of regime it is. So how come it is important what the label of a nasty capitalist system is?

I suppose I'm asking what is different about how communist parties fight when it's not fascism, but workers are viciously attacked and civil liberties are non-existent - and fascism? You have to fight against the boss class and its regime to the best of your ability, whatever label you give it, don't you? Calling it fascism or not makes no difference, so why go on arguing about it? We have to fight whatever.

Rod Smith

London

Fascism looming

A wealth tax is a transitional demand. Together with windfall taxes on the superprofits of transnational corporations, increasing corporation taxes and seriously targeting moving vast sums abroad to tax havens to avoid tax at home, this implies the beginnings of a rejection of the neoliberal agenda of Regan and Thatcher, begun at the 'other' 9/11 - the Chile coup of September 11 1973.

Back in 2016 John McDonnell said that the City of London is seen as a "tax haven" at the centre of a worldwide system designed to help the super-rich avoid paying tax, as he called for an independent inquiry into the Panama Papers. But, when he was the shadow chancellor following the big success of Labour in the 2017 election, he became very anxious to placate the City of London, and he stopped all that foolish leftism - he also apologised for the sympathetic remarks he made about the IRA.

After all, this was what the 1945 Labour government did, despite its appalling record of class collaboration with Winston Churchill in alliance with the CPGB Stalinists (then in a full popular-front alliance with capitalism, as spelled out in the Yalta conference - guaranteeing capitalism's survival in Europe by crushing revolutionary upsurges in France and in seven other countries and accepting dominance for Stalin where the so-called Red Army was in control). This meant that revolutionary uprisings in Warsaw, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Vietnam and most shamefully northern Italy were betrayed. Tito attempted to support the Greek working class, much to Stalin's displeasure, but in northern Italy the working class, led by communists, liberated many cities, only to be bombed by the Allies.

Stalin's hack in Italy, Palmiro Togliatti, even entered a government led by the fascist, Pietro Badoglio. He was deputy prime minister from April to December 1944. To enforce the alliance of the Communist Party, socialists, liberals and Christian Democrats he then proceeded to expel and assassinate the naive communists in the communist movement of Italy, who were under the impression that Stalin was still a revolutionary socialist like the 1917 Bolsheviks, because, under illegality, they had not experienced the popular front degeneration turn of 1934-35

and thought they could repeat the Russian Revolution.

Of course, as in Greece, they were falsely accused of 'Trotskyism' and allying with the fascists. In the *Morning Star* letters page Trotskyist renegade Ollie Coxhead has defended these appalling acts of class treachery. The Trotskyists were the leading forces seeking revolution and the Stalinists even collaborated with the Nazis to murder them. David Broder, in his excellent 2021 book, *The rebirth of Italian communism 1943-44: dissidents in German-occupied Rome*, tells this story in great detail.

We now arrive at the CPGB's reluctance to advocate a wealth tax, which would unleash the downtrodden working class, who would then be open to the demand for the expropriation of the capitalists and a workers' government. A workers' uprising in the US, UK and EU is inevitable, despite the attempts of the Democrats, the Labour Party, social democrats and trade union bureaucracy to stop it, just as they betrayed the 2023 strike wave.

In Trump's US what we are seeing is the construction of a fascist state with the strong possibility of a civil war and the abolition of the constitution. In 1991, George Bush nominated Clarence Thomas, now the most senior Supreme Court judge and a believer in the original purpose of all Supreme Courts judgements and constitutional amendments. One recent commentator cited him as the central character who would defend that constitution. But black man Thomas cited the shocking Dred Scott 1857 judgement - black people were not citizens and could never escape slavery, which sparked the Civil War - in justification of the 2022 abolition of the right to abortion contained in the Roe vs Wade 1973 judgement.

We are seeing the construction of a fascist state in the US, to be followed by Germany and elsewhere if it is not defeated. And, contrary to Jack, we do have substantial blackshirts and brownshirts in the US now - the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys, etc - particularly after Trump's pardoning those who attempted the coup of January 6 2021, which did have the support of key parts of the National Guard and US Army and came close to success. His replacement of leading army, CIA/FBI figures and judges with his own supporters shows he has advanced plans to abolish elections in the US.

Neither Mussolini nor Hitler came to power solely with the support of these street thugs. After the October 1922 March on Rome, Mussolini was allowed to abolish the constitution by the king. Similarly, Hitler came to power constitutionally and on June 30 1934 completed the construction of the fascist state by executing the leaders of the Strasserite movement (which sought a second, socialist, revolution after getting rid of the Jews, who allegedly represented finance capital). Ernst Röhm, leader of the brownshirts, was executed despite Hitler's opposition, because the state-terrorist Gestapo now replaced them.

Gerry Downing

Socialist Fight

Die Linke votes

I was amazed to read a short and enraged article by Yanis Varoufakis, in which he laments that "Die Linke has joined the warmongering radical centrists in their rearmament folly." The former finance minister of Greece thinks it's "goodbye" and "goodnight for Die Linke", because apparently the party "could have blocked" the constitutional

amendment that now allows for unlimited military spending. Elsewhere, I've read that Die Linke refused to stop the vote going through because it would have meant they had to vote with the rightwing Alternative für Deutschland.

Did they do so? Well no, is the short answer. It's a bit complicated - but not so complicated that somebody who used to help run a European country, went to Cambridge University and now works as an academic should get it quite so wrong. Most interesting in any case is what Varoufakis leaves out.

Here is the slightly longer answer: Die Linke does demand, quite rightly, a radical reform of the so-called debt brake (*Schuldenbremse*), which was inserted into the German constitution in 2009 after the global financial crash and prohibited the German government from increasing its annual debts by more than 0.35% of gross domestic product. The 16 federal states were not allowed to increase their new debts at all.

Previous chancellor Angela Merkel wanted to appear 'super sensible', but created in reality a broken country, which has become particularly apparent after billions were spent on Covid and the Ukraine war: there is no money to repair bridges and roads, hospitals and schools. Things in Germany are falling apart - and very visibly so.

Die Linke argued and campaigned strongly against this particular reform of the debt brake pushed through by the mainstream pro-war parties, which will allow the government of the day to borrow and spend an unlimited amount of money on anything to do with 'defence' (ie, war).

Die Linke, just like the rightwing AfD and the BSW (the new party of ex-Die Linke MP Sahra Wagenknecht), even tried various legal appeals to the German federal court to try and stop the vote. They argued - rather pointlessly - that the *old* Bundestag should be considered *dissolved*. Why? Because of the success of the AfD (20.8%) and Die Linke (8.8%) at the February 23 elections, the mainstream pro-war parties in the *new* Bundestag will no longer have the two-thirds majority required to change the constitution (and thereby the debt brake). This legal manoeuvring was never going to work - mainly because it was absolute nonsense: a new parliament has to be formed "within 30 days" of the last election and March 25 was long scheduled as the change-over date.

The AfD (and the MPs who defected from Die Linke to the BSW) also tried to convince MPs to force a parliamentary vote on declaring the *new* Bundestag in session. Die Linke is now being heavily criticised for refusing to join in this attempt. If they had refused *only* because it would have meant voting together with the AfD, then the critics would have been correct. The attitude of 'do not touch the AfD' has only helped this outfit to grow.

But the potential outcome was always clear - it obviously would have been voted down, though it might have caused some friction along the way. I think Die Linke was therefore correct to refuse to get involved in this rather pointless charade - though admittedly, as has now become apparent, critics ranging from the AfD via the BSW, the Stalinists in the German Communist Party and various anarchist outfits are using it as a nice stick to beat Die Linke with - rather unfairly, in my view.

Die Linke is currently a minority coalition partner in two federal states: the west German city-state of Bremen and the east German state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. In both, Die Linke members of the government did, however, not insist on an abstention, but allowed the representatives in the Bundesrat to vote *in favour* of the reform. That is indeed outrageous and the reasons by they did so are as obvious as they are wrong.

Contrary to what Varoufakis writes, the reform of the debt brake also included the setting up of a *Sondervermögen* (special budget) of €500 billion, €100 billion of which is reserved for (unnamed) climate measures, while €400 billion is to be spent on 'modernising infrastructure' (roads, bridges, etc), but also run-down schools and hospitals - and €100 billion of those are to be divided up and spent by the 16 federal states. That was clearly designed to get most of the *Länder* on board as well as the Greens (not that it was needed - they are the most gung-ho when it comes to the war on Ukraine anyway).

Die Linke ministers in Bremen and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern therefore argued (not wrongly) that the money does not *just* go on defence - ie, they stepped right into the 'government responsibility trap'. But, even if they had insisted on an abstention, it wouldn't have changed the outcome and there still would have been a two-thirds majority in favour of the reform - again, contrary to what Varoufakis writes. From our perspective, that makes it even worse, of course, because these ministers were simply signalling to their SPD coalition partners that they too can manage capitalism.

The decision has been strongly criticised both by Die Linke members, including those in those two states, and the national leadership, which is apparently fuming (though there is no official statement - yet). But clearly the party as a whole fought hard against the reform. Those who allowed a 'yes' vote should be expelled from the party - they acted clearly against the position agreed by the party as a whole (and also featured in the election manifesto).

I don't expect that the Linke leadership will do this - or indeed accept that this behaviour really is the logical outcome of taking government responsibility in a non-revolutionary situation and as a clear minority. One of the reasons the party did well in the national February 23 elections was the fact that it stood on a clear platform of opposition ('Everybody wants to govern. We want to change things'). But that has not translated into an understanding that participation in regional governments should obviously be opposed too. Perhaps this mini-scandal will push the party - thanks to its many new leftwing members - in that direction. Fingers crossed.

Not that Varoufakis goes there - taking over 'government responsibility' is, after all, exactly what he and the rest of Syriza did in Greece - with the inevitable outcome that these socialists ended up attacking the working class, all in the name of responsibly 'balancing the books'. In fact, Varoufakis seems to imply that the debt brake is very good indeed and should not be reformed at all: "The German parliament amended the constitutional debt brake so as to enable unlimited military spending, *irrespective of how deeply into the red it will push the federal government's budget.*" He still preaches fiscal 'responsibility' and adhering to the dictate of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, etc.

His explanation as to *why* the vote went through is no better: "The underlying reason for introducing this stunning change to Germany's constitution is simple: German automakers are now too uncompetitive. They can't profitably sell their cars to civilians in Germany or abroad. So they demand that the German state buys tanks that Rheinmetall will be making on Volkswagen's disused production lines. To get the state to pay for this, the constitutional brake of government deficits had to be bypassed."

Simple. It's all about the economy and has nothing to do with the massive German political and financial support for the Ukraine war, the changing geopolitical situation after Trump's victory or the efforts to remake Europe into a serious player.

The man has learned absolutely nothing from the fiasco of the Syriza government and clearly does not seem to understand global politics either. It is amazing how some still celebrate him as some kind of socialist hero.

Tina Becker
email

Who killed JFK?

George Joannides was a CIA officer who in 1963 was the chief of the agency's 'psychological warfare' branch in Miami. He directed and financed the Student Revolutionary Directorate - a group of Cuban exiles whose officers had contact with Lee Harvey Oswald in the months before the assassination of President John F Kennedy on November 22 1963.

In 1978 Joannides was the agency's liaison to the United States 'House Select Committee on Assassinations'. He was said to be the author of the CIA concept of "plausible deniability". Given his role as head of PsyOps, it is not beyond the realm of reason that Joannides authored at least some of the disinformation conspiracy theories that have plagued the JFK assassination case ever since.

Alleged suspects in the assassination have included George HW Bush, Richard Nixon, Lyndon Johnson, the Watergate burglars, Mafia hitmen, deep-state hypnotists, Cuban emigres ... Joannides must have been quietly amused by just how readily the kook and screwball community took the bait. Not only did they gulp down the little tidbits initially fed to them, but they converted them into a thousand and one conspiracy theories, and thereby manufactured a vast industry of disinformation - all helping to detract from who and what may have been responsible.

Of course, if the assassination of JFK was 'officially' sanctioned in some deniable way, agencies or services given the 'job' would frequently 'contract it out' to other agencies, organisations and networks, who themselves might sub-contract out a number of times, to remove all traces of direct responsibility. One would hardly expect that any of this, or any economic transactions to support it, would have been documented in any way - and, if there had been any documentation, it would surely have been destroyed decades ago.

Given the massive interpenetration and intermeshing of official US state and intelligence agencies with the likes of the Mafia and the Cuban émigré terrorist networks (to both counter each other's activities and to use them to their own ends), it is hardly surprising the picture of actual involvements becomes very complex and hard to disentangle, making it difficult to assess who

was really using who.

Some years ago now, respected BBC journalist and investigative reporter Gavin Esler effectively demolished two key planks of the 'multiple shooters' conspiracy theories that have surrounded the JFK case. First, Esler confirmed from primary records and interviews that Oswald was in fact a crack marksman and was perfectly capable of accurately firing the three shots from the 6.5 mm Carcano rifle found at the scene, loading and reloading each time.

Second, the 'multiple shooters' theories came from the notion that the two bullets which were fired by Oswald (or at least from that direction) and hit the occupants of the presidential car could not have caused all the entry and exit wounds to Kennedy and governor John Connally, who was sitting in front of him. There must therefore have been, according to the conspiracy theorists, more shots and more shooters: ie, a conspiracy.

It still, however, remains unclear whether Oswald was acting off his own volition or on behalf of others. Lyndon B Johnson, Kennedy's vice-president who succeeded him to the presidency, was strongly convinced that either the Soviets or the Cubans were implicated in the assassination, and was fearful if that came out in the open, the public clamour for retaliation against either could lead to nuclear war, with 40 million Americans killed in the first hour.

Oswald had previously defected and then returned from the USSR in the late 1950s. His public activism in favour of Cuba in New Orleans, his alleged contacts with the Soviet and Cuban embassies in July 1963 (the CIA suspected he was looking for an escape route after the assassination), his earlier defection to the USSR and living there for a period - all indicated communist affiliations.

To avoid any misinterpretation of my words, I personally do *not* believe either the Soviets or Cuban government had any direct involvement in the Kennedy assassination. It was just a year after the Cuban missile crisis and two years after the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion ordered by Kennedy. Cuban intelligence has estimated there were 42 distinct assassination attempts on Castro during JFK's presidency. There had also been numerous dreadful terrorist attacks against Cuban infrastructure and Cuban civilians, carried out from America's southern shore.

Kennedy's erratic and reckless behaviour leading up to and during the Cuban missile crisis (we know he was constantly wracked with pain and frequently addled with a cocktail of painkiller and other drugs), nearly led to nuclear world war.

Khrushchev was deeply concerned by the immaturity of JFK, his apparent instability and mood swings (he didn't know of his addiction to drugs, although may have suspected it), and had to act with the most flexibility and responsiveness during the Cuban missile crisis, making significant concessions to avoid immediate and then total war - concessions and retreats which may have contributed to his ouster in 1964.

It is intriguing that the most recent files released first under Biden and then Trump appear to relate to Oswald's time spent in Mexico and his contacts with the CIA there. The extent and degree of Joannides' involvement and therefore of his bosses remains to be seen.

Andrew Northall
Kettering

ACTION

Stop Farage and Reform UK

Friday March 28, 6pm: Protest, Utilita Arena, Birmingham B1.
7pm: March to rally in Centenary Square. Farage is bringing toxic politics to Birmingham - stand up, speak out and fight back!
Organised by Stand Up to Racism Birmingham:
www.facebook.com/events/545776201959372.

No thanks, Nigel

Friday March 28, 7pm: Rally, Secret Space, 30-34 River Street, Birmingham B5. Reject Reform's divisive blame game. Speakers include Zarah Sultana MP and Salma Yaqoob. ID required for entry.
Organised by Zarah Sultana: www.facebook.com/ZarahSultanaMP.

Socialism or barbarism

Saturday March 29, 10.30am to 5pm: Day school at two venues near to Farringdon station, London EC1. Over 15 sessions, discussing socialist solutions to global crises. Tickets £11.55 (£6.13).
Organised by Arise - A Festival of Left Ideas:
www.facebook.com/events/3962684384006410.

We demand change

Saturday March 29, 11am to 5.30pm: Rally, The Cause, 60 Dock Road, London E14. Build a network of activists across campaigns and unions to turn the tide on despair. Registration £11.55 (£6.13).
Organised by We Demand Change: wedemandchange.uk.

Welfare, not warfare

Tuesday April 1, 6.30pm: Rally, Brunei Gallery, SOAS, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1. Stop Starmer's militarism - defend the right to protest! Speakers include Jeremy Corbyn and Ben Jamal. Organised by Stop the War Coalition:
www.stopwar.org.uk/events/welfare-not-warfare-public-meeting-2.

Kensington and Chelsea council: divest now!

Tuesday April 1, 6.30pm: Protest outside Kensington Town Hall, Hornton Street, London W8. Demand the council's pension committee divests from companies enabling Israel's war crimes.
Organised by Kensington and Chelsea Palestine Solidarity Campaign:
palestinecampaign.org/events/kensington-chelsea-council-divest-now.

German social democracy - model for Bolsheviks

Thursday April 3, 6.30pm: Online discussion in the series, 'Our history'. Speaker: Lars T Lih.
Organised by Why Marx?: www.whymarx.com/sessions.

Increased military spending won't bring peace

Thursday April 3, 7pm: Public meeting, Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2. Starmer is slashing foreign aid and cutting welfare benefits, as he prepares for war.
Organised by Greater Manchester Stop the War Coalition:
www.facebook.com/events/1188711822644233.

Censorship, democracy and the right to protest

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

Censoring Palestine

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

The cult of personality in The Faerie Queene

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

Welfare, not warfare

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

Liaison Committee - rank and file organisation

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

Bristol's radical history

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

London May Day march and rally

Thursday May 1, 12 noon: Assemble Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. March to Trafalgar Square for rally. Stand in solidarity with all the workers celebrating May Day across the world.
Organised by London May Day Organising Committee:
www.londonmayday.org.

CPGB wills

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

HEALTH

Cancer of capitalism

James Linney looks at the shocking effects of social inequality on health and life expectancy ... and Labour's austerity cuts can only make things worse

On February 21 the Cancer Research UK charity published a report called 'Cancer in the UK 2025: socioeconomic deprivation'.¹ There was an accompanying spattering of stories in the media, but it did not make many waves and you would be forgiven if it passed you by.

It is, however, worthy of further consideration: its findings, as we will see, present clear empirical evidence of the horrific reality of how inequality - an inherent trait of capitalism - is increasing and is devastating the health of the most vulnerable in society.

The report presents data gathered on how deprivation in the UK (comparing the most deprived parts to the least) influences cancer rates, treatment and outcomes. Deprivation is here classified using several different domains, such as income, employment opportunities, health, education, barriers to housing, crime and access to public services. It probably will not come as a huge surprise to readers that the study found that, the greater the deprivation a person is exposed to, the greater the burden of any cancer that they suffer; the results reveal that being born in a relatively deprived area means you are significantly more likely to develop cancer, that you will face more barriers accessing health treatment for it, that you are more likely to be diagnosed at a later stage and that, even after being diagnosed, your cancer treatment is more likely to be delayed. Yet, even to those of us expecting these findings, the size of the inequality gap and amount of suffering it represents is still shocking.

Horror number

So, for example, we read that "for all cancers combined in the UK, mortality rates are almost 60% higher in people living in the most deprived areas, compared to the least (337 per 100,000 vs 217 per 100,000) ... in the UK, around 28,400 cancer deaths each year are associated with deprivation." It is hard to overstate the horror of these numbers, so it bears repeating: nearly 30,000 people die of cancer every year for entirely avoidable reasons.

This data tells us about trends on a population scale: each individual within this population will have their own risk factors and genetic predisposition to cancer, meaning that the exact risks of developing any one particular cancer is multifactorial and complex. But, even when we analyse each of the risk factors, they are largely influenced by deprivation. So, for example, with lung cancer, which is still the most common cause of cancer death for men and women in the UK, smoking is the major risk factor and smoking rates are at least three times higher in the most deprived areas, compared to the least - this has consistently been the case for many decades.

Of course, we should not think that being born into poverty is entirely deterministic of a person's lifetime cancer risk. Individuals in deprived areas can, for instance, choose not to smoke or successfully quit, as many do, but the point is that, the more deprivation they are exposed to, the more barriers they face.

If each day is a struggle to keep warm, pay the rent or mortgage, feed your family, find or keep employment or pay basic bills, then taking time for being able to access support or



Ensure a healthy living standard for all

treatment to stop smoking becomes an unaffordable luxury rather than a 'choice'. This is why public health campaigns simply focusing on education are largely of low impact - people are not ignorant of the harms of smoking, but their lived environment makes choosing not to smoke or to give up much more difficult. Having to focus all their energy on the struggles of day-to-day survival deprives them of the privilege of being able to focus on their long-term health. Not surprisingly then, the study also shows us how people in the most deprived areas will be less likely to participate in cancer screening services (57% most deprived vs 76% least), that obesity rates are much higher (36% vs 19%) and that people are more likely to present later with cancer symptoms - meaning a delayed diagnosis and a more advanced, less treatable disease.

Tip of iceberg

Given that deprivation has such a huge impact on cancer risks and burden, why then is so little attention paid to it by modern medicine or public health campaigns? Scientists, doctors and public health policy-makers do not exist in a vacuum: they may like to think they answer only to empirical evidence, but they exist and practise within a society dominated by capitalist hegemony. One result is that public health and medicine tend to focus predominantly on individual behaviour and how that increases cancer risk, whilst largely ignoring the overarching role society plays - in other words, looking at the effect, not the cause.

These policies fail to recognise that not only does capitalism breed inequality, but in feeding its need to

constantly create new markets it pushes the sale of the very commodities that are directly cancer-causing, whether it be cigarettes, alcohol or obesogenic poor-quality food, onto the most vulnerable in society. At the same time, of course, the working class on the whole are forced into wage labour in order to survive - meaning for the majority of their waking lives they are forced to do repetitive, often sedentary work, which is harmful for both body and mind.

So far we have seen how the Cancer Research study demonstrates clearly how deprivation and inequality in the UK are responsible for putting people at enormously increased risk of cancer, resulting in death and suffering hard to articulate. But this is only the tip of the iceberg: this link can be extrapolated and applied to all major chronic health conditions: ie, those responsible for the vast majority of mortality and morbidity - such as heart disease, chronic respiratory disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, etc.

There is plenty of data to support this conclusion - it was, for example, evidenced in a 2020 publication by the Health Foundation and authored by Michael Marmot, professor of epidemiology at UCL.² He conducted a review of how health inequalities in the UK are manifested. The findings are harrowing. Here are some of the conclusions:

Since 2010 life expectancy in England has stalled; this has not happened since at least 1900 ... Life expectancy follows the social gradient - the more deprived the area, the shorter the life expectancy. This gradient has become steeper; inequalities in life expectancy have increased. Among women in the

most deprived 10% of areas, life expectancy fell between 2010-12 and 2016-18.

Not only are people in deprived areas more likely to die younger, but in their shorter lives they will have fewer healthy years: "The gradient in healthy life expectancy is steeper than that of life expectancy. It means that people in more deprived areas spend more of their shorter lives in ill health than those in less deprived areas."

We learn from these findings that health is directly linked to inequalities in the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age.

Michael Marmot and the Institute of Health Inequality published a further study in 2024 called 'Health inequalities: lives cut short',³ which concludes with more appalling figures: "The decade from 2011 saw over a million people dying earlier than they otherwise would have done, had they experienced the death rates seen in the least deprived areas."

In his review Marmot recommends several policy objectives that he believes are needed to reduce health inequalities:

- to give every child the best start;
- to enable people to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives;
- create fair employment and good work for all;
- ensure a healthy standard of living for all; and
- create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities.

These are very supportable demands and could be worthy additions to a leftwing organisation's programme of minimum demands. But they are not achievable without the working class being organised

into a mass Marxist party - to think that a bourgeois state is just going to sign up to these objectives is completely deluded.

Health inequality is defined by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence as "differences in health across the population, and between different groups in society, that are systematic, unfair and avoidable". It continues: "They are caused by the conditions in which we are born, live, work and grow. These conditions influence how we think, feel and act and can affect both our physical and mental health and wellbeing."⁴

Benefit Marxism

Marxism gives us the benefit of viewing health inequality as resulting from economic and class inequality - both are, although not specific to, a defining component of the capitalist mode of production. We cannot overcome inequality by simply changing government policy. The health inequalities illuminated in the studies above are mere examples of daily suffering and death which the working class is made to bear, so that the capitalist class can survive, albeit in a declining form.

Our job is to highlight this link between unfair, unavoidable suffering and inequality and the *system*, not just policy. As communists we recognise that the working class's immediate priority is fighting for better healthcare, better-quality affordable food, housing, working conditions, etc. Politically policies obviously can act as a brake on or accelerate inequality and deprivation. So, for example, this week the announcement of Labour's vicious cuts to disability benefits will inevitably force thousands of the most vulnerable people further into poverty and inevitably worse health.

But we must also be clear: it is not ending austerity (either the Tory version or Keir Starmer's), or better pay, more funding for the NHS, better public health campaigns, etc, that are going to overcome inequality and stop the avoidable suffering - it can only be stopped with the ending of the system itself.

The studies discussed above give clear evidence of the health effects of late-stage capitalism in the UK - tens of thousands of people dying every year just in the UK, with millions more being forced into a state of poor health. Globally the suffering is multiplied many times over: millions of people each year are being sacrificed for the sake of a system that cannot exist without creating 'haves' and 'have-nots', and benefits only a tiny minority.

These studies also undermine one of the great myths of capitalism: that it equates to linear progress. Despite a relentless and continuous march of technology and advances in modern (soon to be AI-enhanced) medicine, there exists an ever-growing health inequality gap - one that will always exist unless the working class is able to cure itself of the cancer of capitalism ●

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Demise of NHS England

The decision to scrap NHS England might look like a bureaucratic reorganisation, writes **Ian Spencer**, but public provision is about to be butchered by yet more privatisation

Wes Streeting has decided to scrap NHS England. This has come as a shock to staff, as it will mean the loss of around 9,000 jobs in the NHS and the Department of Health and Social Care. Apparently, this is to avoid ‘duplication’ with officials at the department. This has been portrayed as the “removal of a layer of bureaucracy” and a “shift back to democratic control.” I doubt that, somehow.

The Labour government is starting to look like a mirror image of the Trump administration in the US. Labour has dramatically cut the overseas aid budget and is about to make swingeing cuts to welfare in favour of increased military expenditure. Trump has removed funding from the World Health Organisation and the US Agency for International Development. Now, in an apparent emulation of Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency, Streeting is set to pursue a populist line with attacks on civil service jobs. I do not think this is accidental.

Labour thinks the UK needs a trade deal with the US, particularly now that we are separated from our biggest trading bloc, the European Union. What better sweetener could there be for taking Trump’s tariff knee off the neck of British steel and aluminium exports than opening access to the NHS for US medical and pharmaceutical companies? (It is not as if they are not already making inroads.)

US pharmaceutical giant Lilly, based in Indianapolis, is investing in the UK as part of a ‘collaborative partnership’ with the UK government, about which Wes Streeting said: “Partnerships like this are key to building a healthier society, healthier economy and making the NHS fit for the future.”¹

And if the biggest pharmaceutical company in the world is not enough, let us not forget how much private medicine has invested in Wes Streeting personally. Around 60% of the registered donations accepted by the health secretary come from people and companies linked to private health. These have included John Armitage, a hedge-fund manager, reported to have interests of more than \$500 million in United Health, the largest healthcare insurer in the US.²

After all, Keir Starmer has already said that Labour will “keep all options on the table”, while not, of course, announcing any retaliation against US tariffs. This is unlike the EU, which has announced retaliatory tariffs on Bourbon whiskey, jeans and the motorcycle company, Harley Davidson, which is already in dire financial difficulties.³ Does this mean an escalating trade war, which will lead to recession? Probably: Trump himself has not ruled it out and the US stock market has suffered significant losses in response.

The value of the UK’s raw steel and aluminium exports to the US in 2024 was around £470 million. However, the tariffs also apply to finished metal products, from gym equipment to machinery. It is estimated by the Global Trade Alert think tank that the UK’s affected exports are worth around £2.2 billion.⁴ The 25% tariff may prove to be one of the last nails in the coffin of UK steel manufacturing, but then it is an industry that has been



Charles Landseer ‘Anatomical study’ (c1818)

on life-support for some time and I suspect its demise will be a matter of indifference to Labour.

NHSE role

NHSE manages how health services in England are run (Scotland and Wales have their own arrangements). It employs civil servants rather than clinicians, and was established under the Tory-Liberal Democrat coalition of David Cameron, when Jeremy Hunt was health secretary. Its creation was portrayed at the time as a rationalisation of the NHS commissioning boards for England. It ‘commissions’ services, such as general practitioners, dentists and specialist services, and allocates close to £200 billion of NHS funding each year.

Put differently, NHSE owed its existence to the imposition of a pseudo-market in healthcare, where there is a separation between ‘purchasers’ and ‘providers’ of health services. This followed from the NHS and Community Care Act 1990, under prime minister Margaret Thatcher.

I say ‘pseudo-market’, because in a real market health services would be creating surplus value. A real market would also allow unprofitable hospitals to go to the wall. It was the drive towards a pseudo-market that allowed the creation of NHS trusts, which were introduced in 1992.

Trust status was intended to emulate a particular business model, with more freedom for management to make decisions, including staff reductions and higher pay for executives. The case of Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust is instructive. Created in 1993, following a £19.9 million annual deficit, by 2012 it was put into administration and dissolved in favour of yet another reorganisation in February 2013 (the other consequence was substandard care, by the way). An estimated 400-1,200 more patients died between 2005 and 2008 than would otherwise be expected.

While it might suit Labour to portray the abolition of NHS England as ‘cutting red tape’, this convinces nobody. Streeting’s aim is to bring the English NHS under more direct control of the department of health (and therefore Streeting himself).

It is not as if we have not been here before. The Blair government came into office with the promise of removing the ‘internal market’ in the NHS, only to go on to strengthen it and expand measures such as the private finance initiative - which was introduced by the John Major government, and has proved to be a costly failure.

At the heart of the constant reorganisation of the health service is the contradiction at the heart of capitalism - between use-value and exchange-value. In the production of use-values, human need is met only incidentally because of the production of exchange-value and therefore profits. In creating the NHS, the provision of healthcare came at the expense of a proportion of the social surplus, realised through taxation. Subsequent attempts at privatisation of health services have been attempts to re-introduce the production of surplus value in healthcare.

After all, it is not as if it was very far away. Although the NHS after 1945 did not produce profits, it served as a guaranteed market for the giant and very profitable pharmaceutical industry. Incidentally, the end of the market in healthcare meant that some professions - in particular medicine, dentistry and to a lesser extent nursing - were guaranteed legal monopolies on who could call themselves a doctor, dentist or nurse. The reintroduction of the market carries with it the necessary corollary: the proletarianisation of healthcare professions.

The introduction of physician associates, nurse associates and a range of other grades in professions allied to medicine has led to a weakening of control by professionalising bodies, such as the British Medical Association and Royal College of Nursing, and the forcing down of wages for junior doctors, among others. This finds its expression in class struggle, as we saw in the most recent strike waves in the NHS. It is instructive, however, that this was not replicated in other sectors of health and social care, such as care homes, where the trade union base is extremely weak.

The trade union response to the demise of NHS England has been predictable. RCN general

secretary and chief executive (sic) Nicola Ranger said: “The chaotic reorganisation that created NHS England cost billions and took money away from clinical care. Nobody can afford a repeat, now that NHS performance is already at a historic low and money is scarce.”⁵

Professor Phil Banfield, chair of the BMA council, said of the abolition: “This is a high-stakes move from the government. Without NHSE acting as a buffer between himself and the delivery of healthcare to patients, the buck will now well and truly stop with the health secretary.”⁶

While the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), which has the most members to lose because of the abolition of NHSE, has been more forthright in its condemnation, its Left Unity general secretary, Fran Heathcote, has said: “Our members will be understandably concerned about this announcement, which has gone ahead without any consultation. Ministers must consult with PCS and our sister unions as a matter of urgency.”⁷

Not much change

The fact is, another reorganisation will not change very much. Marxists generally have not theorised bureaucracy and the field has been left to Weberian sociology, which generally views it in functionalist terms, as the rational organisation of goal-orientated objectives. For Max Weber, this was preferable to either feudal particularism or the real possibility of democracy. (Weber knew whose side he was on, and it was not the proletariat. He also understood that bureaucracy stands in contradiction to democracy, but was writing when there was the real possibility of the proletariat taking power. That, for Weber, was bureaucracy’s great virtue.)

The ruling class faces a problem: it would like to scrap the NHS in favour of a US-style market in healthcare, where most medical services can be returned to producing surplus value, rather than be paid for, at least in part, by the ruling class. However, free healthcare, distributed according to need, remains universally popular. The US system is hopeless, except for those who are so wealthy that they are indifferent

to the cost of medicine or are at least able to pay the high premiums for good healthcare.

The US spends more on health as a proportion of gross domestic product than any other nation on earth, but achieves an outcome worse than many far poorer countries, such as Spain, if measured in terms of average life expectancy and rates of mortality and morbidity across the board.⁸ The US, like the UK, has even seen a slight reduction in life expectancy in recent years.

The US system is very expensive, with a far higher proportion of costs being spent on administration than the NHS or comparable tax-based universal systems. The US spends 16.6% of GDP on health (the UK 11.3% and Spain 10.4%), but at the same time it leaves an estimated 26 million Americans - or eight percent of the population - without health insurance at all. Meanwhile, 23% are ‘underinsured’ and a further 12% had a “gap in coverage in the past year”. Consequently, many delay getting treatment, suffer worse health and end up in debt as a result. Around 48% of adults in the US with medical or dental debt are paying off \$2,000 or more.⁸

What we need is, of course, a democratic society, based on meeting human need and planned by the producers themselves. The alternative is bureaucratic administration and the kind of sham democracy that we see under capitalism. Since the end of the post-war Keynesian ‘social democratic consensus’ the tendency has been to gradually dismantle the concessions won in the aftermath of World War II, when the USSR was perceived as posing an alternative to capitalism (even though many of the same contradictions would ultimately see the end of the Soviet system too).

As in the USSR, the transition to the market is not easy. It entails the end of social guarantees and a return to naked class struggle. The contradiction between use-value and exchange-value will always lead to a distorted form of healthcare delivery systems - the commodity form - which will mean an excellent healthcare system for those who can afford it and (if we are lucky) a miserable safety net for those who cannot.

In the long term, the inevitable outcome is a worse system for society as a whole. While the NHS expressed the rationalisation (and nationalisation) of Poor Law and charity provision, its central tenets of free healthcare and distribution according to need remain not only popular, but must be a key demand of workers everywhere. No-one is taken in by yet another reorganisation and the transition to a US-style system too dire to contemplate. There is no choice but to resist ●

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PALESTINE

Zionism opens gates of hell

The Palestinian masses are threatened by genocide and ethnic cleansing, but Israeli settler-colonialism is riven with profound contradictions and can be beaten. Jack Conrad outlines the communist plan

After two months of a fragile ceasefire, Israel has renewed its genocidal war against Gaza. Already many hundreds have been killed and thousands injured. Israel has yet again demanded the evacuation of whole areas and, with a new Israeli Defence Forces chief-of-staff and a new defence minister, there is talk of taking full military control. Secretary of state Mark Rubio has expressed America's "unequivocal support for Israel and its policies".¹

Benjamin Netanyahu's excuse for breaking the ceasefire is just that - an excuse. He and his coalition government had cut off supplies of food, medicines and electricity (and thereby desalinated water). Then came the demand, prompted by Donald Trump, that the terms of the first phase of the ceasefire be extended to include handing over all 59 remaining war captives (dead and alive).² In fact, it had been agreed that this would happen in the second phase, which would entail the complete withdrawal of all Israeli forces from Gaza ... note the continued IDF control over the Philadelphia Corridor.

So, while Hamas has insisted on keeping to the original terms, Israel has always been eager to continue its war in Gaza and extend it into the West Bank, Lebanon and Syria.

We must therefore ask why Israel agreed to the January 19 ceasefire? It was unmistakably US pressure. First Joe Biden. Next, and decisively, Donald Trump. Both the 46th and 47th presidents wanted to be seen as peacemakers for electoral purposes.

But, no, not according to some comrades. Israel had apparently suffered "a heavy defeat" in Gaza because of the brilliant tactics of Hamas and its al-Qassam fighters. Faced with "unsustainable losses and demoralisation", as well as a "deep economic crisis and social breakdown", Israel was forced to agree terms.³ In the same panglossian spirit we find those who breezily maintain that Israel "cannot win", that Israel is "unequivocally losing" its war, or that Israel has already "lost in Gaza".⁴ All true ... if Israel's war aims were really about destroying Hamas militarily and bringing home all war captives. However, that was never the intention.

"The idea that it is possible to destroy Hamas, to make Hamas vanish - that is throwing sand in the eyes of the public," said the IDF's now former top spokesman, rear admiral Daniel Hagari, in an interview with Israel's Channel 13.⁵ Hamas has deep social roots and not only in Gaza. Of course, Netanyahu is perfectly aware of that, but he needs the fiction of destroying Hamas as cover. It is the same with the war captives. They are little more than a domestic nuisance for Netanyahu. He knows it and so do the tens of thousands of relatives, friends and supporters, who have time and again demonstrated in Tel Aviv's Hostage Square.

If you really want the war captives back from the tunnels, tents and bomb shelters of Gaza, then direct negotiations with Hamas would be an absolute priority. And destroying Hamas and negotiating with Hamas are, to put it mildly, mutually incompatible.

No, the *real* war aim of Netanyahu, his war cabinet and his Likud-led coalition is to uproot the entire Palestinian population in Gaza in what is yet another



Selling economism: SPEW's gen sec, Hannah Sell

carefully calculated step towards realising the Zionist dream of a Greater Israel. When the opportunity arises, that means expelling as many Palestinians as possible - a second nakba - the obvious route, when it comes to Gaza, being a forced exodus into Egypt's Sinai. Hence, the significance of the Philadelphia Corridor ... otherwise ominously known, in Israel, as the Philadelphia Route.

Bezalel Smotrich, finance minister and leader of the far-right National Religious Party, is reported as saying that Israel's security cabinet approved proposals to organise "a voluntary transfer for Gaza residents who express interest in moving to third countries, in accordance with Israeli and international law, and following the vision of US president Donald Trump."⁶ Sudan, Somalia and Somaliland have been mooted ... all entirely *improbable* destinations.

In fact, it is all none too subtle code for the ethnic cleansing of Gaza's entire civilian population, but dressed up as realising Trump's vision. His 'Riviera plan', unveiled at a White House press conference on February 4, alongside a beaming Netanyahu, proposes that the US would "take over" and "own" Gaza. There may have been some confusion about whether or not US troops might be involved. The same goes for US tax dollars. But what was crystal-clear is that the Gazan population would be removed in its entirety before redevelopment work begins ... and they will never return, because, in Trump's words, "they're going to have much better housing ... a permanent place for them".⁷

Famously, Trump shared an AI-generated video on his Truth Social page, showing a ghastly, glitzy, garish 'Trump Gaza', featuring Dubai-style skyscrapers, golden Trump statues, bearded belly dancers, and Trump himself lounging in the sun alongside Netanyahu. All set to upbeat music and these lyrics: "Donald's coming to set you free, bringing the light for all to see. No more tunnels, no more

fear: Trump Gaza's finally here."⁸

There were those who treated the whole thing as a joke, albeit in bad taste. A mistake. Trump's vision has been warmly embraced across the board by Zionist opinion in Israel, especially by the right and far right. Why? Because it has nothing, absolutely nothing, to do with the US stationing troops, nothing to do with a US "takeover". No, what is being welcomed is greenlighting the forcible removal of the 2.1 million Gazan population ... and an *Israeli* "takeover". What applies to Gaza applies to the West Bank too. Israel wants to push, drive, stampede its 3.4 million Palestinian population over the other side of the Jordan river as soon as the opportunity arises.

True, a second nakba risks the collapse of the Egyptian and Jordanian regimes: their peace treaties with Israel would certainly be "thrown into the abyss".⁹ But Israel cares little about that. Perhaps the same goes for the Trump administration ... we shall see.

Seen in this light, while it is true that Israel has not achieved its *real* war aims yet, it perhaps stands on the threshold of achieving them. A joint Israeli-US strike against Iran would provide the perfect means of mass distraction, when it comes to global public opinion. There have already been airstrikes on the Houthis (Ansar Allah) in Yemen. Trump threatens that any retaliation against Red Sea shipping will bring "dire consequences" ... for Iran.¹⁰ His national security advisor, Mike Waltz, warns that things are "coming to a head" and that "all options are on the table".¹¹ Alarmingly, the USS *Carl Vinson* carrier strike group is set to join the *Harry S Truman* carrier strike group in the Red Sea in April.

Fragile

Though Israel is a Middle Eastern superpower, it cannot be described as internally united, stable or calm.

Even with the return of Itamar Ben-Gvir and his Jewish Power back into the coalition government,

it is clear that Netanyahu's position is far from secure. Not only does he face an ongoing trial over charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust: there is the 'Qatargate' investigation into two of his aides by Shin Bet (Israel's equivalent of MI5).

Predictably, Netanyahu has dismissed Qatargate as a "desperate attempt to fabricate evidence of a non-existent crime": no less to the point, his government sacked Ronen Bar, chief of Shin Bet. Netanyahu's opponents claim that ousting Bar involves more than unwelcome corruption investigations. The claim is that Netanyahu is determined to block the truth about events leading up to October 7. Earlier this month Shin Bet released a report which acknowledged it should have prevented the attack, while criticising Netanyahu for helping to create the conditions for October 7.

In turn an "Israeli official" accused Bar on Channel 12 of doing nothing to stop Hamas, even claiming that he knew it was going to happen:

"Ronen Bar preferred not to attend the government meeting [tonight] dealing with his case, simply because he was afraid of giving answers," asserted the official, whom Channel 12 identified as prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu himself, "and especially of answering one question: Why, after you knew about the Hamas attack many hours before it happened, did you do nothing and did not call the prime minister - something that would have prevented the disaster? If Ronen Bar carried out his role like he is now clinging on to his job, we would not have reached October 7."¹²

Netanyahu has sought to shift responsibility for the colossal failure onto the shoulders of the security establishment, arguing that he was not woken up in the hours before the October 7 attack despite impending signs being picked up. Crucially he denies buying into the "conception" that Hamas was more interested in governing Gaza than attacking Israel. Note, for years Netanyahu considered Hamas a strategic 'asset' in keeping the Palestinians institutionally divided, with two rival regimes in Gaza and the West Bank.¹³ Indeed Qatari funds were allowed to flow into Gaza and Israel issued work permits for Gazans and ordered limited responses to armed actions by Hamas and Islamic Jihad. In its investigation - much of which remains classified - Shin Bet blames the IDF for not handling intel properly, for organisational overlap and the fact that Hamas acted, on October 7, "like an army".¹⁴

Not surprisingly there has been a proliferation of conspiracy theories to the effect that Netanyahu and his cronies were in some way "deliberately" complicit in allowing the whole thing to happen.¹⁵ It was, after all, a year in preparation and involved all manner of practice runs.

Anat Saragusti is, however, convinced that a whole string of false conceptions provides the best explanation. That is, Hamas could be safely contained through money; that targeted assassinations would prevent serious armed resistance; that the IDF is so strong and so sophisticated that it is unbeatable on any front; that Hamas is so chaotic it could never organise anything that amounted to a coordinated military

action; that Israel's Intelligence Corps and its generously financed Unit 8200 is fully aware of what is happening in Gaza, with "every conversation monitored, every meeting photographed and every move known in real time". Of course, Israel did know "every conversation", etc, etc, but failed to interpret the information correctly because of its colonial contempt for the Palestinians as a subject people.¹⁶

Storm

The sacking of Bar has raised a storm of protest within the country and saw attorney general Gali Baharav-Miara telling the government that it could not remove Bar from office until its factual and legal foundation had been "fully clarified". Now the government has passed a vote of no confidence on Baharav-Miara herself. Mass protests have been joined with the threat of a general strike from Yar Lapid (Yesh Atid) and Yair Golan (Democrats) if the government defies the courts.

The constitutional crisis, temporarily suppressed by October 7 2023 and Operation al-Aqsa Flood has thereby resurfaced with a vengeance. Liberal and soft-left opinion - inside Israel and out - unhesitatingly sides with the judiciary against the government. They picture Zionist opposition parties, such as Yesh Atid and the Democrats, fighting a brave rearguard action against Netanyahu's government and its growing despotism. More than that, the pro-judiciary movement, which began in January 2023, is presented as a beacon of hope for democracy - even socialism - in Israel.¹⁷ A thoroughgoing misreading of Israel's political dynamics.

There can be no doubt that Israel is steadily shifting to the right. A predictable social and electoral phenomenon to be expected in any *active* settler-colony. Let us add that Israel does not have anything like the UK's 'first past the post' election system. Despite a cynical 3.25% entry threshold to the Knesset - designed to bar Arab-based parties - representation is strictly proportional. Hence, with just over a half of the seats in the Knesset, Netanyahu's coalition represents just over half of Israel's electorate. And in the name of that rightwing Zionist majority Netanyahu and his coalition are determined to assert government control over judicial appointments and end the situation whereby judges overrule Knesset votes.

In other words, the 'judiciary versus the government' constitutional struggle does not have the judiciary on the side of democracy. An altogether odd idea for anyone even vaguely on the left. Rather the judiciary, and the parties which back its self-perception of standing in between the executive and individual liberty, are defending a constitution which embodies the function of the courts - crucially the supreme court - to act as a check, a block, a balance against the democracy of the Israeli-Jewish majority (as of today, yes, still bribed and thoroughly duped). Its Arab population are second-class citizens and those in the occupied territories are, almost needless to say, effectively rightless.

Former head of the supreme court Aharon Barak gives the game away when he says, "We have to prevent the tyranny of the majority".¹⁸ A term commonly traced back to Alexis de Tocqueville, who used it in his book *Democracy in America*

(1835 and 1840). It appears in the title of chapter 14: 'Causes which mitigate the tyranny of the majority in the United States': he specifically cites the "temper of the legal profession" and how it serves as a "counterpoise to democracy".¹⁹ From there the idea goes through John Stuart Mill (*On liberty* - 1859), Friedrich Nietzsche (*Human, all too human* - 1879), before arriving at Ayn Rand, who wrote about how individual rights should not be subject to a public vote, and that the political function of rights is precisely to protect minorities from oppression by majorities and "the smallest minority on earth is the individual".²⁰ In Britain similar warnings against an "elective dictatorship" were issued in 1968 and 1969 by former Tory minister Quintin Hogg (later Lord Hailsham).²¹ He feared for the constitutional loss of authority by the judiciary and the House of Lords.

Of course, we are what Marx called *extreme* democrats. We positively advocate the dictatorship, the decisive rule, of the working class through winning a thumping communist majority in the House of Commons. With that in mind, we should exercise *extreme* caution before supporting any pro-judiciary movement anywhere, let alone in Israel.

Civil war

Israeli public opinion is deeply divided both over judicial reform and the war in Gaza. Indeed there is an almost exact match between those who oppose judicial reform and those who oppose breaking the ceasefire. Together they constitute the party of Liberal Zionism.

Unsurprisingly therefore the IDF is experiencing huge problems in calling up urgently needed reservists. Some units claim 25% of reservists not reporting for duty, others as much as 50%. Reservists basically do not want to fight in a war that they consider unprovoked and unjust. They certainly know that the renewed assault on Gaza has nothing to do with rescuing war captives. Nor do they want to risk their lives for a government of the far right.

Showing the government's weakness, caution, lack of confidence, refuseniks are dismissed from the IDF, not charged and sent for trial (incidentally the same goes for the tens of thousands of ultra-Orthodox Haredi who have been called up - only a few hundreds have agreed to be conscripted).

Given that Israeli forces are engaged on four fronts - Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon and Syria - this matters. The 170,000-strong standing army relies on the 450,000 reservists, when it comes to fighting wars. There is, needless to say, universal conscription (discounting, of course, the Arab minority).²² That explains why Israeli military doctrine favours short, sharp wars. Reservists are, however, not only vital for the military. They are vital for the economy too.

Does that mean that Israel faces imminent military and economic collapse? Leftwing wishful thinking. True, the Gaza war has cost Israel dear - the Bank of Israel estimates some \$55.6 billion. Meanwhile economic growth has shrunk ... but there has, note it, been economic growth. Instead of the expected 6.5%, there has been a much more modest 2% increase in GDP. In part this is down to the mobilisation of reservists, in part the barring of Palestinian workers coming in from Gaza and the West Bank.²³ But the situation is sustainable.

The same goes with the military. Some 800 Israeli soldiers have been killed and at least 6,000 injured (with many more suffering post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health problems). And then

there are the refuseniks. But Israel's armed forces are vastly superior, compared with any Arab country or any conceivable combination of them. It is not a matter of total numbers under arms or the undoubted sophistication of home-produced and American weapons systems. Israel's armed forces are better led, better trained and better motivated. That is what makes Israel a modern-day Sparta.

Haim Bresheeth-Zabner calls the IDF "an army like no other".²⁴ The IDF constitutes the spinal cord of Israel's national identity. Not country of origin, not religious sect, not political affiliation. Such is the historic effect of the IDF's *mamlachtiyut* ideology: a Hebrew expression conveying both 'sovereignty' (power) and the 'norm' of state consciousness.²⁵ The IDF has thereby, yes, forged the "new Jew" envisaged by Theodor Herzl from the "base elements" coming from middle Europe, the Soviet Union, the Arab countries, Ethiopia and America.

There have been many recent accusations of planned judicial coups, coups by Shin Bet, coups by Netanyahu, even Israel coming "closer to civil war" (former prime minister Ehud Olmert).²⁶ However, what needs to be understood is that civil wars, like every other war, require armies to fight them and at the moment, and for the foreseeable future, Israel only has one army. Indeed, we are reliably told that till recently the IDF exercised an "almost total control of the political agenda"; that the military therefore poses no "direct threat" to the country's political elite.²⁷ Military tops definitely exercised a veto, when it came to annexations on the West Bank, striking against Iran's nuclear facilities, reoccupying southern Lebanon, etc.

So, even though Israel formally practises what is called an 'instrumentalist model', meaning that its military follows policies set by the government, there is another less formal model: namely 'political-military partnership'. In practice "the military has been a weighty partner in determining government policies even beyond the narrow field of security".²⁸

This has caused much fury and frustration on the far right, with accompanying calls for a thorough-going purge. Indeed that is what appears to have happened, albeit on the quiet. With recent personnel changes at the top, there has been what liberal critics call an "overenthusiastic effort to ingratiate themselves with the right" by the general staff.²⁹ So, if there is going to be a judicially triggered army coup, that would have to rely on a rebellion by middling to junior officers and rank-and-file IDF personnel. Would Liberal Zionism take such a risky course? Maybe, but unlikely.

SPEW economism

Recently Joseph O'Connor Meldau wrote a useful letter to the *Weekly Worker*.³⁰ Useful, because it allows us to repeat and clarify our strategic approach.

I am not going to discuss his utterly unprincipled willingness to "fudge" programmatically between revolution and reform or his naive faith in Tusc and how a putative-alliance with the trade union bureaucracy will deliver socialism. No, I shall concentrate on what he believes are "essentially" the same positions of the CPGB and his Socialist Party in England and Wales, when it comes to Israel-Palestine.

It is certainly true that both the CPGB and SPEW want socialism, consider that the Hebrew working

class should not be written off as irredeemably reactionary and demand that Israeli forces ought to immediately quit the West Bank and Gaza. But what he spectacularly misses it that, while there are various points of intersection, we actually approach the Israel-Palestine question from exactly opposite directions and advocate radically different political methods to arrive at our goals.

Comrade O'Connor Meldau opens by 'correcting' me, when I write that SPEW is committed to a "socialist two-state solution". The comrade seriously claims that this is "misleading", because SPEW is, in fact, committed to "an independent, socialist Palestinian state, alongside a socialist Israel, with guaranteed democratic rights for all minorities, as part of the struggle for a socialist Middle East". But that is exactly what I said: SPEW is committed to a "socialist two-state solution". True, I could have added the stuff about "guaranteed democratic rights for all minorities, as part of the struggle for a socialist Middle East". However, it makes no difference. SPEW's strategic point of departure is the struggle to realise a "socialist two-state solution".

Not quite socialism in one country: rather socialism in two little countries with a combined population of just around 15 million (much less than Greater Cairo's 23 million). Anyway, why on earth two such socialist states would remain separate, especially given the shared geographical proximity, long-established economic ties, widespread bilingualism and a common interest in resisting imperialist-sponsored intervention, is something of a mystery as far as I am concerned. Perhaps comrade O'Connor Meldau would care to enlighten us.

Presumably, once achieved, in the imagination at least, the results would be so marvellous, so attractive, that the masses of the Middle East would be clamouring to emulate the "socialist two-state solution" in Israel-Palestine. Except they probably won't. Not only is a "socialist two state-solution" utterly delusional: if by some fluke it happened, the results would not be peace and plenty, but war and poverty. The tragic fate of the Soviet Republic in Russia.

In Israel-Palestine there is no overwhelming oppressed national majority ready for revolution. There is not even the threat of a Palestinian Samson bringing down the temple. The odds are completely stacked in Israel's favour. That is why Hamas resorts to desperate guerrilla actions and the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Fatah are reduced to impotent verbal gestures, pathetic diplomatic pleading ... and collaboration. Recognising this, Hannah Sell's SPEW and its various breakaways, such as Socialist Appeal/Revolutionary Communist Party and Socialist Alternative, clutch at the "progressive", pro-judiciary "democracy" movement, Hostage Square protests - that and joint economic struggles in Israel, which are supposed to weld together Hebrew and Arab workers into a lever for social change.³¹ It amounts to classic Militant Tendency economism, which combines tailism with routine trade unionism.

In fact, as I have repeatedly explained, Zionism acts to keep workers inside Israel structurally divided. That means legal, political and material privileges for Israeli-Jewish workers - privileges they will hang onto for dear life ... unless there is something much better on offer (Israeli-Jewish workers, especially those at the bottom end of the labour market,

have no wish to compete with Arab-Israeli/Palestinian worst paid labour as equals, that is for sure).

Note, trade union politics - ie, struggles over wages and conditions - always finds itself cut short by the high politics of war, security, national privilege, etc. Therefore no Histadrut strikes demanding equal civil rights for Palestinians, ending the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and calling for the right of return. Nor should any such development be expected within the narrow confines of Israel-Palestine. Trade union politics is by its very nature sectional and confined to the relationship between sellers and buyers of the labour-power commodity. Hence in Israel trade union politics as trade union politics does little more than reproduce the division of the working class: on the one side, nationally privileged labour aristocrats and, on the other, a nationally oppressed underclass.

SPEW, it should further be noted, blurs the national division of the working class in Israel-Palestine. In fact, it insists upon treating Israel as a 'normal' country: the idea of it remaining a "settler state" is dismissed out of hand.³² That despite the ongoing horror in Gaza and the relentless announcements of yet more Jewish settlements on the West Bank and the Golan Heights - there are already 720,000 Israelis inhabiting the occupied territories (including east Jerusalem), the vast majority of them supporting the politics of the Zionist far right.

By contrast, our strategic starting point begins not within the narrow confines of Israel-Palestine. No, we start with the high politics of Arab unification ... and from there we go towards the possibility of a civilised, democratic solution in Israel-Palestine. It cannot be the other way round.

There are nearly 300 million Arabs in a contiguous territory that stretches from the Atlantic Ocean, across north Africa, down the Nile to north Sudan, and all the way to the Persian Gulf and up to the Caspian Sea. Though studded here and there with national minorities - Kurds, Assyrians, Turks, Armenians, Berbers, etc - there is a definite Arab or Arabised community. Despite being separated into 25 different states and divided by religion and religious sects - Sunni, Shi'ite, Alaouite, Ismaili, Druze, Orthodox Christian, Catholic Christian, Maronite, Nestorian, etc - they share a living bond of pan-Arab consciousness, born not only of common language, but a closely related history.

Let me stress that we are not talking about reviving either Nasserism or Ba'athism. Nor are we talking about something akin to the pan-Slavism of Ludovít Štúr. No, communists need to take the lead in the fight for pan-Arab unity - as Marx and Engels and their comrades in the Communist League did in the fight for German unity. Such a fight, is, of course, inseparable from the task of building a mass Communist Party - first in each Arab country and then throughout the Arab world. A Communist Party of Arabia (a regional section of a reformed Communist International).

What of rapprochement between Hebrews and the Palestinians? This can only happen in the context of sweeping away the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan, Lebanon's sectarian warlord plutocracy, Egypt's military bureaucratic regime and the House of Saud - and the establishment of working class rule in a socialist republic of Arabia.

Only from such a wide salient, even if it is in the process of realisation, can the Israeli-Jewish working class be prised away from

the clutches of Zionism. Towards that end we favour a bold declaration that an Arab socialist republic, even if it is initially confined to the Mashriq, would offer the Hebrew nation self-determination, when it comes to joining the project - perhaps, to begin with, with the offer of a voluntary federation. Such an invitation would surely receive a positive response from below.³³

Joining the ruling working class - now that would be something ●

Notes

1. *The Times of Israel* March 23 2025.
2. In a social media post on March 5 2025, Trump told Hamas to "release all of the Hostages now, not later, and immediately return all of the dead bodies of the people you murdered, or it is over for you" (*The Guardian* March 6 2025).
3. Brarite CPGB-ML leaflet distributed on the London March 15 2025 Palestine demonstration.
4. In order: Sophie Squire, 'Six months of slaughter, six months of resistance' *Socialist Worker* April 3 2024; Ofer Cassif of the 'official communist' Hadash party in Israel; and US 'realist' John Mearsheimer *Al Jazeera* January 24 2025.
5. edition.cnn.com/2024/06/20/middleeast/hagari-netanyahu-destroy-hamas-israel-intl/index.html.
6. edition.cnn.com/2025/03/24/middleeast/israel-approves-proposal-to-facilitate-emigration-of-palestinians-from-gaza-intl/index.html.
7. www.ajc.org/news/what-is-trumps-proposal-for-gaza.
8. www.instagram.com/realdonaldtrump/reel/DGHfpGhsOg6.
9. www.chathamhouse.org/2025/02/negotiating-tactic-or-not-trumps-gaza-plan-has-already-done-irreparable-damage.
10. www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/3/22/every-shot-fired-are-yemens-houthis-a-proxy-force-for-iran.
11. cbn.com/news/israel/israeli-forces-heighten-attacks-gaza-lebanon-us-leaders-focus-iran.
12. *The Times of Israel* March 24 2025.
13. *Ibid* October 8 2023.
14. *Ibid* March 4 2025.
15. www.eurasiareview.com/15022024-did-israel-deliberately-ignore-warnings-of-an-attack-by-hamas-to-enable-them-to-destroy-gaza-oped.
16. A Saragusti 'All of Israel's conceptions about managing Palestinian conflict have collapsed' *Haaretz* March 9 2025.
17. In these pages there has been the English democrat, Steve Freeman: he wrote about "a struggle going on over the nature of Israeli society and its democracy before October 2023 and it is now growing again" ('Another Israel is possible' *Weekly Worker* June 20 2024). Leave aside Israeli "democracy": there is SPEW too (see A Cohen, 'Israel: new upsurge of anti-Netanyahu democracy protests' July 12 2023 - www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/113436/12-07-2023/israel-new-upsurge-of-anti-netanyahu-democracy-protests). Nor should we forget the Alliance for Workers' Liberty (for a general overview of their position, see *Two nations, two states* London 2016).
18. *Financial Times* March 21 2025.
19. A de Tocqueville *Democracy in America* Ware 1998, p108.
20. web.archive.org/web/20241012155611/aynrandlexicon.com/ayn-rand-ideas/collectivized-rights.html.
21. ipfs.io/ipfs/QmehSxmTPRCr85Xjzjut6uWQihTfag9VihJ892bmZCp/Elective_d dictatorship.html.
22. Military service - for both sexes - starts in the late-teenage years and goes on, in the reserves, well into adulthood (40 for regular soldiers, 45 for officers).
23. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_impact_of_the_Gaza_war.
24. H Bresheeth-Zabner *An army like no other: how the Israeli Defence Forces made a nation* London 2020, p13.
25. N Kedar 'Ben-Gurion's mamlachtiyut: etymological and theoretical roots' *Israel Studies* Fall 2002, pp117-35.
26. www.palestinechronicle.com/olmert-gantz-sound-alarm-threat-of-civil-war-in-israel-closer-than-ever.
27. H Bresheeth-Zabner *An army like no other: how the Israeli Defence Forces made a nation* London 2020, p374.
28. Y Peri 'The widening military-political gap in Israel: www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2020C02.
29. *Haaretz* March 14 2025.
30. Letters *Weekly Worker* March 20 2025.
31. Eg, the RCP's recent pamphlet and this statement: "Only the establishment of a united front between the people of Palestine and the working class and progressive layers of Israeli society will create the possibility of dividing the Israeli state on class lines, opening the way for a lasting and democratic settlement of the Palestinian question" (*Israel-Palestine - a revolutionary way forward*, p28).
32. J Horton *Socialism Today* February 2 2024.
33. A perspective advanced by Jabra Nicola and Moshé Machover in June 1969. See M Machover *Israelis and Palestinians: conflict and resolution* Chicago IL 2012, pp15-25.

TURKEY

Three presidential ploys

While Erdoğan is ever more unpopular, the opposition is divided and the left is weak and demoralised. **Esen Uslu** reports on the aftermath of Ekrem İmamoğlu's arrest

The tortured twists and political turns of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his regime have reached new extremes with the frontal attack on Istanbul mayor and rival presidential candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu.

When İmamoğlu emerged as a strong candidate for the upcoming presidential elections, and managed to carry a large part of the Kurdish vote in the last local elections through an alliance called 'Urban Reconciliation', alarm bells started to ring in Cumhurbaşkanlığı Sarayı, the presidential palace. According to all the polls, even with the fullest support of his coalition partners, Erdoğan would lose against İmamoğlu. His plans to remain in power 'until death do us part' were in jeopardy. A string of policies were set in motion.

The first ploy was to drive a wedge between İmamoğlu and his party, the Republican People's Party (CHP), and the Kurds. When the international conditions offered an opportunity, they launched a vague peace process initiative by allowing the pro-Kurdish People's Equality and Democracy Party (DEM) to contact Abdullah Öcalan, the imprisoned and isolated leader of the Kurdish freedom movement. Erdoğan again kept a low profile and let his coalition partner Devlet Bahçeli, leader of the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), run the show.

Believing that the historical cleavage between CHP and the Kurdish freedom movement is easy to open up again, and that a grateful DEM would reconsider its support for the anti-Erdoğan candidate when there was something on offer, the regime quickly proceeded with their plan. The 'peace process' with the Kurds would be restarted despite the risk of offending the most conservative elements in the state security bureaucracy. Öcalan duly made his call for the Kurdish Workers Party to lay down arms and dissolve.

Constitution

The second ploy was to stop İmamoğlu's candidacy in its tracks. To do that the pro-Erdoğan establishment made use of the Turkish constitution, which stipulates that any person running for president must have a university degree! Here İmamoğlu was vulnerable. There was a technical flaw in his university record. Although he graduated from Istanbul University, he did not pass the central university exams. In the mid-80s there were few private universities, so, if you were unable to get the necessary points to get into a state-run university, the short cut was to enrol in one of the newly emerging universities in northern Cyprus and then transfer back to Turkey after the first year. That is exactly what İmamoğlu did.

However, a year after he was admitted to Istanbul University in 1990, the Council of Higher Education decided that Girne American University in northern Cyprus, where İmamoğlu had completed his first year, should no longer be recognised. When it became clear that he would be Erdoğan's rival, the politicised judiciary contacted the faculty that awarded İmamoğlu's degree in order to get it cancelled. The request was rejected by the faculty, citing precedents, but the judiciary insisted and went to the university board with



CHP rally addressed by presidential hopeful İmamoğlu

the same request.

Under immense pressure, the university board decided to invalidate the diplomas of about 30 former students - including İmamoğlu's 31 years after his graduation! Among the other victims are the dean of management faculty of Galatasaray University, and many top managers of industrial and financial companies. They will most likely ask the courts to cancel this decision and might eventually be successful. However, any such case would drag on until the deadline for filing candidacies for the presidential election has past.

The third ploy was to appoint an administrator to Istanbul municipality instead of İmamoğlu to gain the control of its resources. The only option available for doing so was to get him charged with terrorism, so that after his arrest the appointment of an administrator would be legally possible. However, that alone did not seem enough, so an investigation into financial mismanagement was added to the mix.

In Esenyurt, one the largest municipalities in Greater Istanbul, the Kurdish mayor elected on a CHP ticket in line with Urban Reconciliation was arrested and one of the deputy governors of Istanbul province was appointed as administrator in his place. This is the same procedure that was widely used in the provinces where the DEM won the mayoral elections.

For example, the mayor of Şişli was arrested on terrorism-related charges, and the district governor was appointed as administrator in his place. Likewise, the mayor of Beşiktaş (one of the traditional heartlands of CHP support) and the mayor of Beykoz (a rapidly developing locality, where the AKP used to reign in land development and failed miserably in the last local elections). As with İmamoğlu, the mayor of Beylikdüzü was also arrested on charges of financial misconduct. So in addition to İmamoğlu, six local mayors are currently in prison.

Failed calculation

When the regime decided to turn the screws, it calculated on the basis of precedent that the CHP would not be able to do anything meaningful apart from hot air. That calculation proved wrong. While the new leadership of the CHP showed a vacillating approach, a huge groundswell of anger forced it to act.

CHP was preparing for a preliminary vote of its membership to choose its presidential candidate. When their candidate was disqualified, they decided to hold

a straw poll, together with the primaries. This became a massive mobilisation. In the end 15 million people voted for İmamoğlu in last Sunday's primary election. Considering that he was elected mayor in March 2024 local elections with just under 4.5 million votes, this result was quite an achievement.

The timing of the arrest and the outpouring of popular protest coincided with the Newroz - the Kurdish new year celebrations, which have become a massive display of national sentiment. While hundreds of thousands gather for five days in front of the municipal building in Sarayhan Square, on March 21 almost two million came together in a close-by meeting place in Yenikapı to celebrate Newroz.

While the two crowds failed to merge into a single manifestation, the speeches of DEM leaders were quite clear: they did not take Erdoğan's bait, but showed their continued support for peace and democracy, while strongly rejecting the criminalisation of Urban Reconciliation.

The massive protest movement was the biggest urban uprising since the Gezi days. A new generation of youth has entered street politics, but CHP's leadership did its utmost to pacify them and promote its pseudo-democratic, nationalist and anti-Kurdish stance. It tried to limit the aims of protest against the arrest of İmamoğlu, while on the streets the demand was for the resignation of Erdoğan. Nationalist slogans, Turkish flags and Atatürk's posters were prominent, while youths shouting Kurdish slogans and demands were manhandled out of the demonstrations.

Leaders of rabid nationalist and anti-Kurdish opposition parties were given the opportunity to address the demonstrations under the pretext of solidarity. They poured their nationalist, fascist and anti-Kurdish poison out to the people gathered in front of the municipality building. Even the possible alternative presidential candidate, the mayor of Ankara, toed the line. His venomous speech probably ended any hopes of standing as a candidate in the vacuum created by İmamoğlu's arrest.

Once again, CHP lost the opportunity to walk side-by-side with the Kurdish freedom movement and, while consolidating its nationalist base, it lost the chance to achieve any meaningful gain. The CHP leadership really seem not to understand that its chosen slogan, "We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal", is a slap in the face of the Kurds. Even under the new leadership, the true nature of the CHP as a brake on the popular

opposition against the Erdoğan regime was revealed once again.

As the days of protest passed, the CHP leadership also attempted to water down street actions with individual actions for a consumer boycott of media companies, who deliberately did not mention a single word about the protests in their broadcasts. Since those media companies were owned by conglomerates that had good relations with the Erdoğan regime and produced goods and services for public consumption, a boycott seemed the appropriate action. However, calling for such watered-down actions only serves to divert the attention of the masses from the holders of political power.

At the same time, the regime is getting prepared to close down or neutralise CHP. Faced with such a possible move against alleged irregularities in the convening of its last congress and electing a new leadership team, the CHP has decided to hold an extraordinary congress on April 6. There was a danger that the party would be closed down or that the elections held in the previous congress would be annulled.

Old saying

However, as the saying goes, the worm that gnaws at the tree is inside. Some former CHP leaders attempted to win a court order to annul the decision to convene an extraordinary congress, on the grounds that the current CHP leadership was under investigation for irregularities and therefore had no right to make such a decision. Thus, the CHP's fractured nature was once again put on display. Keeping it together to win a presidential election seems increasingly difficult. As long as the party's internal relations remain so fractured, it would be almost

impossible to keep together the electoral coalition which is needed to oust the president.

However, Erdoğan, who knows the difficulties and divided nature of the opposition, is struggling to find new ways and means to conduct his battle for political survival. The management committee of the Istanbul Bar Association was brought down by a court order. The IBA had been a thorn in the side of the regime, as it was a leading force of the liberal opposition. Erdoğan first tried to split it, claiming it had become too big to operate efficiently, and then sponsored the formation of a second bar association in 2020. However, this was not very successful, as only 2,600 lawyers opted for it, while 59,000 remained with the old association. Therefore, the beheading of the IBA seemed the only option for Erdoğan at this critical stage.

The politicised judiciary, used as a weapon against all opposition parties, is also employed against the press. There are more than 10 journalists and correspondents who have been convicted on trumped-up charges and imprisoned. While the judiciary was turning a blind eye to police brutality and arbitrary actions, the prosecutors and selected judges were appearing as Erdoğan's spearheads. With the law being used with full force against the opposition, the CHP's decision to wind down street actions seems even more short-sighted.

While the worsening economic conditions are forcing trade unions to carry out more and more strikes, they remain aloof from the general protest movement. The disorganised and dishevelled left is certainly unable to provide an alternative leadership for those following either the Kurdish freedom movement or CHP.

The order of the day for us is once again: organise, organise, organise! ●

Fighting fund

Into the swing of things

There are now just a few days left before we increase both our subscription charges and the *Weekly Worker* fighting fund target. Starting on April 1, the monthly subscription for UK readers will be £8 and for those overseas £14, while the monthly fund target will be £2,750.

In the meantime, we need, first of all, to reach the current target of £2,250 and the good news is we are very close to getting there, with the March running total standing at £2,128. In other words, we now need less than £100 in five days. But, of course, it would be a good idea if we could get somewhere near that £500 increase this month - let's get into the swing of things!

There were no less than four *three-figure* donations received in the last week - thanks very much, comrades SK, PM, LM and JC, while in addition there was another £70 from JC, £50 from AG, £20 from DR, £10 from TT and £8 from MD. All the above contributions came via standing order or bank transfer, but in addition three comrades used PayPal - thank you also, AC (£50), ST (£30) and GD (£6). Finally, that familiar name,

comrade Hassan, handed his usual fiver to one of our team.

All that came to an incredible £963 in one week! It just shows that the new target is not beyond our reach - especially as there are still five days left to go soaring past it and see if we can reach the new target a month early! Please go to the web address below to find out how you can play your part.

As for the new subscription rates, all the details you need are at weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/subscribe. Meanwhile, a reminder to existing subscribers - please make sure you increase your payment to the new rates, beginning on April 1 - from the date your previous one expires, if you currently have an annual or six-monthly sub. If you pay monthly, then the increase takes effect on the date it is due in April, of course.

Please help the *Weekly Worker* play its essential role! ●

Robbie Rix

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

AUSTRALIA

Arms and the Greens

Seeking 'electoral credibility', Australia's Green Party has adopted nationalist militarism, writes **Marcus Strom**. Meanwhile what passes for the left peddles a combination of economism, pacifism and liberalism

In a pre-election lurch to the right, the Australian Green Party has announced a \$4 billion policy to invest in domestically produced missile and drone systems. It is being promoted as the only "credible" way that Australia can drop the \$368 billion Aukus pact for nuclear submarines and militarily 'decouple' from a Trumpite United States.

In announcing the policy, the Greens said the investment will be "strictly for defensive purposes to ensure the defence of Australia without relying on the US and foreign arms companies". Defence against whom or what they do not say, but everyone knows in the current geopolitical climate, this means China.¹ Naive, stupid or both? Either way, the Australian Greens are clearly going down the same road taken by the German Greens. They want to be seen both as a 'respectable party' and the bringers of a 'liberal eco-capitalism'.

Of course, this armament policy was decided behind closed doors. No debate with party members, no conference vote. This echoes how the Australian Labor Party was dragooned into adopting Aukus before the 2022 election. That policy too was adopted by the parliamentary leadership on the eve of an election and then presented to the party as a *fait accompli*.

This is as a point worth making. Green Party members regularly claim its internal political life is far more democratic than that of the ALP, for which the Green Party acts as a reformist left in exile.

Defensive weapons

How this all fits with the Greens' global 'four pillars'² is not explained. Those pillars are 'ecological sustainability', 'grassroots participatory democracy', 'social justice' and 'peace and non-violence'.

After all, its fourth pillar says: "Australia's foreign policy should be based on dialogue, diplomacy and cooperation, not aggression. Trying to prevent or counter violence with violence itself will not work. The Greens are committed to peaceful and non-violent solutions locally, nationally and internationally." Good to know the \$4 billion will go to non-violent drones and missiles, then.

While the Greens do call for an end to Aukus, the closure of US spy and military bases and the removal of US troops from Australia, their approach to the 'Anzus treaty' is not for withdrawal, but for its "renegotiation". Anzus - the formal treaty aligning Australia with the United States - has been the cornerstone of Australian foreign policy since 1951.

This commitment to investing in drones seems to contradict elements of official Green Party policy - namely this clause in the 'Peace, conflict response and veterans' document: "Lethal autonomous weapons are a serious threat to global peace". That is followed by a demand for an "international ban on the development of lethal autonomous weapons systems".³

While drone systems are often manually operated, we have seen in Gaza and Ukraine that the switch from manual to autonomous is simple and frequent. The use of AI for target selection has become commonplace.⁴ And the idea that military capacity can be maintained as 'strictly defensive' and that a military offensive could never be a



On the march: 'former Marxist' Adam Bandt (right)

defensive move exposes a lack of any serious understanding of such matters.

Further, to believe that modern drone and missile technology can be autarkically built using only "genuinely sovereign" manufacturing capabilities would make Kim Jong Un blush. Even the North Koreans know they need to get their military technology from the best available sources. Any 'national only' military industry would quickly be eclipsed and become redundant. The arms industry is truly global.

This shift to the right is nothing less than a desperate move to achieve bourgeois respectability on the eve of an election, which will take place in early May.

Recent election fortunes of the Greens have been mixed, but they have been stuck at around 10% of the vote for about two decades now, with no clear pathway to growth. In the 2022 federal election, they went from one seat in the House of Representatives to four, adding three in Queensland to the seat in Melbourne, held by their leader and former Marxist Adam Bandt. The party received 12.2% of first-preference votes - up by 1.8 percentage points. In addition, the party has 11 senators in the upper house out of 76.

In recent Western Australian state elections, the Greens picked up 4.1 percentage points - up to 11.1% - but failed to pick up any lower-house seats. In the New South Wales local elections last year, they won votes in some outer-Sydney council areas. However, in the party's middle class inner-city base areas, they failed to make headway. In Victoria's local elections, they did less well, dropping from 36 to 28 councillors - in part due to changes in the voting system.

To their credit, the Greens have campaigned against the Israeli genocide in Gaza, but this has come at some cost amid the furious confected anti-Semitism campaign being waged by Zionists. There are concerns among the Greens themselves, added to projections by psephologists, that the party could lose three of its four-seat beachhead

in the lower house, in part because they have been painted as 'extreme' on the Israel-Palestine question and 'unrealistic' on defence questions over Aukus.

In the Queensland state elections last year, which saw Labor lose office, the Greens failed to build on their gains in the 2022 federal election, winning just one seat with 9.9% of the vote - similar to its 9.5% in 2020. According to the *Australian Financial Review*, "Prime minister Anthony Albanese said the state Greens MPs had paid the price for the increasingly militant and opportunistic behaviour of their federal counterparts".⁵ So there is pressure from the right on the Greens - and this adoption of a multibillion missile and drone policy needs to be seen in that context. Pointing to the militarist Green parties in Europe, Euan Graham from the hawkish anti-China think tank, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, told Sky News Australia that the Greens were "behind the curve" of their counterparts in Europe, who had realised the need for a "viable defence policy".

Anti-China

Unsaid by the Greens is the fact that this policy shift comes amid an ongoing anti-China scare campaign (not least with Aukus) to drum up militarism in the region. Of course, China has a strategic interest in expanding its influence in Asia-Pacific, but only the most febrile think that this would include a military attack on Australia. The Chinese navy recently sent a three-ship taskforce to circumnavigate Australia in international waters and conducted live-fire exercises to show that Beijing is not intimidated by US posturing in the region.

The Greens themselves have a staunch anti-China faction not least around Clive Hamilton, who in 2018 published *Silent invasion: China's influence in Australia*. Two years later he came out with a follow-up: *Hidden hand: exposing how the Chinese Communist Party is reshaping the world*. Hamilton was a Green Party candidate in 2009.

Of course, the Green Party is right

on one thing. In order to present yourself as a party seriously worth supporting for political office, you need a credible policy on the military and defence. Naturally, for a petty bourgeois outfit like the Greens, credibility means echoing establishment opinion and proposing a few policy tweaks.

Left deficit

But this shift to the right by the Greens has exposed a real deficit among left groups like Socialist Alternative and its electoral front, the Victorian Socialists. The same goes for the Socialist Alliance and the rump 'official' Communist Party of Australia. These groups share various pacifist and liberal nostrums, however, naturally, they take for granted the standing army, and make no call for it to be disbanded and replaced.

Socialist Alliance election material contains calls to "cut military spending by at least 50%".⁶ The CPA less ambitiously says Australia should "immediately cut military spending by at least 10%",⁷ while the Victorian Socialists, dominated by the post-Cliffite Socialist Alternative, make the call to "cut military funding - no to a new armaments programme. Redirect military funding to healthcare, housing and education." Of note, the Victorian Socialists do call for the disbanding of the SAS special forces, due to their "repeated involvement in war crimes". But this makes it clear that they do not want to disband the rest of the Australian standing army.

Naturally, we want resources shifted from warfare to supporting useful human activity. But, on their own, these policies are mere pacifism - turning swords into ploughshares. Privately, perhaps these comrades think that the standing army should go. But they dare not say so, because 'ordinary people' are not calling for it. This, apparently, is the magic of the 'transitional method'.

For these comrades, the 'transitional method' has become an opportunists' charter, whereby you hide the principled politics of Marxism that you think lack immediate traction. Instead promote

mainly economic and social demands that are already popular. Vital constitutional demands thereby go downplayed or totally ignored: open borders, a popular militia, the election of judges, republicanism. Marxism, it seems, is to be hidden until 'the revolution', when the masses will spontaneously arrive at such politics. It is only then that we should reveal our true programme.

This shows a complete misunderstanding of the 'revolutionary' programme (for such groups useful only for speechifying at Sunday school sermons). There is no joined-up thinking: the Marxist programme is not, it seems, a roadmap to political power, but something shared only among consenting Marxists. Meanwhile, there is the wages, conditions and benefits gruel for the benighted masses.

A consistently democratic and republican defence policy is to disband the standing army and initiate a popular militia. This is not even a specifically Marxist demand, but was the common sense of democrats and republicans throughout the 19th and into the 20th century. It was even in the first election manifesto of the British Labour Party, which called for "abolition of the standing army, and the establishment of a citizen force". Quite right.

A model for a democratic and popular militia in Australia could be the State Emergency Service, a largely volunteer force that exists in just about every community. The origins of the SES lies with the air-raid wardens of World War II and a little later the Civil Defence Service, started in 1955. The SES has a small number of full-time staff to organise logistics, training and organisation, but the overwhelming majority are volunteers that assist with disaster relief and emergency services. The Swiss organise their militia along similar lines.

Meanwhile, the Victorian Socialists lead senate candidate, Jordan van den Lamb, has posted a decent takedown of the Greens' lurch to the right, slamming its crass electoralism. But it seems that he does not see the beam in his own eye. The Greens, after all, have a point - if you want to contend for power, you need a defence policy.

So who should have the arms in society? If the Victorian Socialists secretly believe the population should be armed, but will not say so, they too are guilty of electoralism to be 'respectable' and are peddling pacifist 'swords into ploughshares' nostrums. If they do not support this, and want to maintain a standing army, then how are they socialists or even democrats?

Our minimum programme should be for a republican and democratic constitution that ensures the disbandment of the standing army and a democratically organised popular militia ●

Notes

- greens.org.au/news/media-release/greens-announce-new-policy-decouple-australia-us-military.
- greens.org.au/about/four-pillars.
- greens.org.au/policies/peace-conflict-response-and-veterans.
- See 'AI Scales Up' at www.lawfaremedia.org/article/the-rush-for-ai-enabled-drones-on-ukrainian-battlefields.
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ECONOMICS

From welfare to warfare

We are returning to 'military Keynesianism', but will the 'war dividend' result in the end of stagnation and an economic boom? **Michael Roberts** doubts it

War mongering has reached fever pitch in Europe. It all started with the US under Donald Trump deciding that paying for the military 'protection' of European capital from potential enemies was not worth it. He wants to stop the US paying for the bulk of Nato's financing and providing its military might; and he wants to end the Ukraine-Russia conflict, so he can concentrate US imperialist strategy on the 'western hemisphere' and the Pacific, with the aim of 'containing' and weakening China's economic rise.

Trump's strategy has panicked the European ruling elites. They are suddenly concerned that Ukraine will lose to the Russian forces and before long Putin will be at the borders of Germany or, as Keir Starmer and a former head of MI5 both claim, "in British streets".

Whatever the validity of this supposed 'danger', the opportunity has been created for Europe's military and secret services to 'up the ante' and call for an end to the so-called 'peace dividend' that began after the fall of the dreaded Soviet Union, and now begin the process of rearmament. The EU foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, spelt out the EU's foreign policy as she saw it: "If together we are not able to put enough pressure on Moscow, then how can we claim that we can defeat China?"

Several arguments are offered for rearming European capitalism. Bronwen Maddox, director of Chatham House, the international relations 'think-tank', which mainly presents the views of the British military state, kicked it off with the claim that "spending on 'defence' is "the greatest public benefit of all" because it is necessary for the survival of 'democracy' against authoritarian forces.¹

But there is a price to be paid for defending democracy: "the UK may have to borrow more to pay for the defence spending it so urgently needs. In the next year and beyond, politicians will have to brace themselves to reclaim money through cuts to sickness benefits, pensions and healthcare." She went on: "If it took decades to build up this spending, it may take decades to reverse it," so Britain needs to get on with it: "Starmer will soon have to name a date by which the UK will meet 2.5% of gross domestic product on military spending - and there is already a chorus arguing that this figure needs to be higher. In the end, politicians will have to persuade voters to surrender some of their benefits to pay for defence."

Martin Wolf, the liberal Keynesian economic guru of the *Financial Times*, launched in: "spending on defence will need to rise substantially. Note that it was 5% of UK GDP, or more, in the 1970s and 1980s. It may not need to be at those levels in the long term: modern Russia is not the Soviet Union. Yet it may need to be as high as that during the build-up, especially if the US does withdraw."²

How to pay for this? "If defence spending is to be permanently higher, taxes must rise, unless the government can find sufficient spending cuts, which is doubtful." But don't worry, spending on tanks, troops and missiles is actually beneficial to an economy, says Wolf: "The UK can also realistically expect economic returns on its defence investments. Historically, wars have been the mother of innovation." He



Military spending on the standing army is not supportable

then cites the wonderful examples of the gains that Israel and Ukraine have made from their wars: "Israel's 'start-up economy' began in its army. The Ukrainians now have revolutionised drone warfare." He does not mention the human cost involved in innovation by war.

Wolf moves on: "The crucial point, however, is that the need to spend significantly more on defence should be viewed as more than just a necessity and also more than just a cost, though both are true. If done in the right way, it is also an economic opportunity." So war is the way out of economic stagnation.

Wolf's clothing

He shouts that Britain needs to get on with it:

If the US is no longer a proponent and defender of liberal democracy, the only force potentially strong enough to fill the gap is Europe. If Europeans are to succeed with this heavy task, they must begin by securing their home. Their ability to do so will depend in turn on resources, time, will and cohesion ... Undoubtedly, Europe can substantially increase its spending on defence.

Wolf argued that we must defend the vaunted "European values" of personal freedom and liberal democracy: "To do so will be economically costly and even dangerous, but necessary ... because "Europe has 'fifth columns' almost everywhere." He concluded: "If Europe does not mobilise quickly in its own defence, liberal democracy might founder altogether. Today feels a bit like the 1930s. This time, alas, the US looks to be on the wrong side."

The 'progressive conservative', *FT* columnist Janan Ganesh, spelt it out baldly: "Europe must trim its welfare state to build a warfare state. There is no way of defending the continent without cuts to social spending."³ He made it clear that

the gains working people made after the end of World War II, but were gradually whittled away in the last 40 years, must now be totally dispensed with: "The mission now is to defend Europe's lives. How, if not through a smaller welfare state, is a better-armed continent to be funded?"

The golden age of the post-war welfare state is not possible any more: "Anyone under 80 who has spent their life in Europe can be excused for regarding a giant [sic] welfare state as the natural way of things. In truth, it was the product of strange historical circumstances, which prevailed in the second half of the 20th century and no longer do."

Yes, correct, the gains for working people in the golden age were the exception to the norm in capitalism ("strange historical circumstances"). But now

... pension and healthcare liabilities were going to be hard enough for the working population to meet even before the current defence shock ... Governments will have to be stingier with the old. Or, if that is unthinkable, given their voting weight, the blade will have to fall on more productive areas of spending ... Either way, the welfare state as we have known it must retreat somewhat: not enough that we will no longer call it by that name, but enough to hurt.

Ganesh, the true conservative, sees rearmament as an opportunity for capital to make the necessary reductions in welfare and public services. "Spending cuts are easier to sell on behalf of defence than on behalf of a generalised notion of efficiency ... Still, that isn't the purpose of defence, and politicians must insist on this point. The purpose is survival." So so-called 'liberal capitalism' needs to survive and that means cutting living standards for the poorest and spending money on going to war. From welfare state to warfare state.

Poland's prime minister, Donald Tusk, took the warmongering up another notch. He said that Poland "must reach for the most modern possibilities, also related to nuclear weapons and modern unconventional weapons". We can presume that "unconventional" meant chemical weapons? Tusk: "I say this with full responsibility - it is not enough to purchase conventional weapons, the most traditional ones."

So nearly everywhere in Europe, the call is for increased 'defence' spending and rearmament. European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen has proposed a 'Rearm Europe Plan', which aims to mobilise up to €800 billion to finance a massive ramp-up in defence spending. "We are in an era of rearmament, and Europe is ready to massively boost its defence spending - both to respond to the short-term urgency to act and to support Ukraine, but also to address the long-term need to take on more responsibility for our own European security," she said.

Under an 'emergency escape clause', the EU Commission will call for increased spending on arms, even if it breaks existing fiscal rules. Unused Covid funds (€90 billion) and more borrowing through a "new instrument" will follow, to provide €150 billion in loans to member-states to finance joint defence investments in pan-European capabilities, including air and missile defence, artillery systems, missiles and ammunition, drones and anti-drone systems.

Von der Leyen claimed that, if EU countries increase their defence spending by 1.5% of GDP on average, €650 billion could be freed up over the coming four years. But there would be no extra funding for investment, infrastructure projects or public services, because Europe must devote its resources to preparing for war.

At the same time, as the *FT* put it, the British government "is making a rapid transition from green

to battleship grey by now placing defence at the heart of its approach to technology and manufacturing".⁴ Starmer announced a rise in defence spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2027 and an ambition to reach 3% into the 2030s. Finance minister Rachel Reeves, who has been steadily cutting spending on child credits, winter payments for the aged and disability benefits, announced that the remit of the Labour government's new National Wealth Fund would be changed to let it invest in 'defence'. British arms manufacturers are cock-a-hoop. "Leaving aside the ethics of weapons production, which deters some investors, there is plenty to like about defence as an industrial strategy," said one CEO.⁵

Over in Germany, the chancellor-elect in the new coalition government, Friedrich Merz, pushed through the German parliament a law to end the so-called 'fiscal brake' that made it illegal for German governments to borrow beyond a strict limit or raise debt to pay for public spending. But now military deficit spending has priority above everything else - the only budget with no limit. The defence spending target will dwarf the deficit spending available for climate control and for badly needed infrastructure. Annual government spending due to the new German fiscal package will be larger than the spending boom that came with the post-war Marshall Plan and with German reunification in the early 1990s.

Arms economy

That brings me to the economic arguments for military spending. Can military expenditure kickstart an economy that is stuck in a depression, as much of Europe has been since the end of the great recession in 2009? Some Keynesians think so. German arms manufacturer Rheinmetall says that Volkswagen's idle Osnabrück factory could be a prime candidate for conversion to military production. Keynesian economist, Matthew Klein, co-

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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author with Michael Pettis of *Trade wars are class wars*, greeted this news: "Germany is already building tanks. I am encouraging them to build many more tanks."

The theory of 'military Keynesianism' has a history. One variant of this was the concept of the 'permanent arms economy' that was espoused by some Marxists⁶ to explain why the major economies did not go into a depression after the end of World War II, but instead entered a long boom with only mild recessions, that lasted until the 1974-75 international slump. This 'golden age' could only be explained, they said, by permanent military spending to keep up aggregate demand and sustain full employment.

But the evidence for this theory of the post-war boom is not there. UK government military spending fell from over 12% of GDP in 1952 to around 7% in 1960 and declined through the 1960s to reach about 5% by the end of the decade. And yet the British economy did better than at any time since. In all the advanced capitalist countries, defence spending was a substantially smaller fraction of total output by the end of the 1960s than in the early 1950s: from 10.2% of GDP in 1952-53 at the height of the Korean war to only 6.5% by 1967. Yet economic growth was sustained pretty much through the 1960s and early 1970s.

The post-war boom was not the result of Keynesian-style government spending on arms, but is explained by the post-war high rate of profitability on capital invested by the major economies. If anything, it was the other way round: the major economies were growing relatively fast and profitability was high: governments could afford to sustain military spending as part of their geopolitical 'cold war' objective to weaken and crush the Soviet Union - then the main enemy of imperialism.

Above all, military Keynesianism is against the interests of working people and humanity. Are we in favour of making arms to kill people in order to create jobs? This argument, often promoted by some trade union leaders, puts money before lives. Keynes once said: "The government should pay people to dig holes in the ground and then fill them

up." People would reply. "That's stupid, why not pay people to build roads and schools?" Keynes would respond saying, "Fine, pay them to build schools. The point is it doesn't matter what they do, as long as the government is creating jobs".⁷

Keynes was wrong. It does matter. While Keynesianism advocates digging holes and filling them up to create jobs, military Keynesianism advocates digging graves and filling them with bodies! If it does not matter how jobs are created, then why not dramatically increase tobacco production and promote the addiction to create jobs? Currently, most people would oppose this as being directly harmful to people's health, but making weapons (conventional and unconventional) is also directly harmful. And there are plenty of other socially useful products and services that could deliver jobs and wages for workers (like schools and homes).

Defence minister John Healey recently insisted that boosting the arms budget would "make our defence industry the driver of economic growth in this country". Great news! Unfortunately for Healey, the UK arms industry's trade association, ADS, estimates the UK has around 55,000 arms export jobs and another 115,000 employed in the ministry of defence. Even if you include the latter, that is only 0.5% of the UK workforce (see the Campaign Against Arms Trade 'Arms to renewables' briefing for details⁸). Even in the US, the ratio is much the same.

Stimulus?

There is a theoretical question often at debate in Marxist political economy. It is whether the production of weapons is productive of value in a capitalist economy. The answer is that it is - for arms producers. The arms contractors deliver goods (weapons) which are paid for by the government. The labour producing them, therefore, is productive of value and surplus value. But at the level of the whole economy, arms production is unproductive of future value, in the same way that 'luxury goods' for just capitalist consumption are.

Arms production and luxury goods do not re-enter the next

production process, either as means of production or as means of subsistence for the working class. While being productive of surplus value for the arms capitalists, the production of weapons is not reproductive and thus *threatens* the reproduction of capital. So, if the increase in the overall production of surplus value in an economy slows and the profitability of productive capital begins to fall, then reducing available surplus value for productive investment in order to invest in military spending can damage the 'health' of the capitalist accumulation process.

The outcome depends on the effect on the profitability of capital. The military sector generally has a higher organic composition of capital than the average in an economy, as it incorporates leading-edge technologies. So the arms sector would tend to push down the average rate of profit. On the other hand, if taxes collected by the state (or cuts in civil spending) to pay for arms manufacture are high, then wealth that might otherwise go to labour can be distributed to capital and thus can add to available surplus value. Military expenditure may have a mildly positive effect on profit rates in arms-exporting countries but not for arms-importing ones.⁹ In the latter, spending on the military is a deduction from available profits for productive investment.

In the greater scheme of things, arms spending cannot be decisive for the health of the capitalist economy. On the other hand, all-out war can help capitalism out of depression and slump. It is a key argument of Marxist economics (at least in my version) that capitalist economies can only recover in a sustained way if average profitability for the productive sectors of the economy rises significantly. And that would require sufficient destruction in the value of 'dead capital' (past accumulation) that is no longer profitable to employ.

The great depression of the 1930s in the US economy lasted so long because profitability did not recover throughout that decade. In 1938, the US corporate rate of profit was still less than half the rate of 1929. Profitability only picked up once the war economy was underway, by 1940 onwards.

So it was not 'military Keynesianism' that took the US economy out of the great depression, as some Keynesians like to think. US economic recovery did not start until the world war was underway. Investment took off only from 1941 (Pearl Harbour) onwards to reach, as a share of GDP, more than double the level that investment stood at in 1940. Why was that? Well, it was not the result of a pick-up in private-sector investment. What happened was a massive rise in government investment and spending. In 1940, private-sector investment was still below the level of 1929 and actually fell further during the war. The state sector took over nearly all investment, as resources (value) were diverted to the production of arms and other security measures in a full war economy.

But is not increased government investment and consumption a form of Keynesian stimulus, but just at a higher level? Well, no. The difference is revealed in the continued collapse of consumption. The war economy was paid for by restricting the opportunities for workers to spend their income from their war-time jobs. There was forced saving through the purchase of war bonds, rationing and increased taxation to pay for the war. Government investment meant the direction and planning of production by government decree. The war economy did not stimulate the private sector: it replaced the 'free

market' and capitalist investment for profit. Consumption did not restore economic growth, as Keynesians (and those who see the cause of crisis in under-consumption) would expect; instead it was investment in mainly weapons of mass destruction.

The war decisively ended the depression. American industry was revitalised by the war and many sectors were oriented to defence production (for example, aerospace and electronics) or completely dependent on it (atomic energy). The war's rapid scientific and technological changes continued and intensified trends begun during the great depression. As the war severely damaged every major economy in the world except for the US, American capitalism gained economic and political hegemony after 1945.

Guglielmo Carchedi explained:

Why did the war bring about such a jump in profitability in the 1940-5 period? The denominator of the rate not only did not rise, but dropped, because the physical depreciation of the means of production was greater than new investments. At the same time, unemployment practically disappeared.

Decreasing unemployment made higher wages possible. But higher wages did not dent profitability. In fact, the conversion of civilian into military industries reduced the supply of civilian goods.

Higher wages and the limited production of consumer goods meant that labour's purchasing power had to be greatly compressed in order to avoid inflation. This was achieved by instituting the first general income tax, discouraging consumer spending (consumer credit was prohibited) and stimulating consumer saving, principally through investment in war bonds. Consequently, labour was forced to postpone the expenditure of a sizeable portion of wages. At the same time labour's rate of exploitation increased. In essence, the war effort was a labour-financed massive production of means of destruction.¹⁰

Let Keynes sum it up: "It is, it seems, politically impossible for a capitalistic democracy to organise expenditure on the scale necessary to make the grand experiments which would prove my case - except in war conditions."¹¹ ●

Michael Roberts blogs at thenextrecession.wordpress.com

Notes

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weekly worker

Why
Afghanistan
comes bottom
is no surprise

We happy few

The latest 'world happiness rankings' are out, with the usual suspects at the top and the bottom. Major change is unlikely so long as imperial power survives, suggests **Paul Demarty**

Last October, the England football team flew to Helsinki for a match against Finland. Travelling fans were met with the chant: "Happiest country in the world, you'll never sing that!"

It doesn't scan terribly well, but it makes the point. The Finns are, these days, world-renowned for their collective good humour. The English, meanwhile, seem a truculent and restive bunch - none more so, indeed, than the hardcore followers of the national team, crushed under the combined weight of infinite entitlement and the metaphysical certainty of defeat.

The Finns get to keep the chant for now, at any rate. The latest annual World Happiness Report has been published, and Finland topped it for the seventh year running. The United States and Germany dropped out of the top 20 for the first time, overtaken by several nations in eastern Europe, who have apparently been nipping at the heels of the wealthier nations. The UK is clinging on to 20th.¹

The WHR is a measure of the so-called 'Cantril ladder' - a single question that asks people to imagine a ladder with 10 steps: "The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?" This happiness is then attributed to six related factors, including perceived corruption, GDP per capita, "freedom to make life choices", and life expectancy.

It is not clear how seriously we can take the relative rankings, when they are close together. The researchers helpfully include confidence intervals per country, which vary considerably in size. That said, it is not terrifically surprising to see the US dropping down the rankings, given that life expectancy is trending downwards amid a crisis of trust in institutions (another thing included in the score). As for the Finns, domestically there seems little doubt as to the causes of their indomitability in this little competition. Reporters for the *Agence France-Presse* newswire talked to a local academic:

Jennifer De Paola, a happiness researcher at the University of Helsinki in Finland, told AFP that Finns' close connection to nature and healthy work-life balance were key contributors to their life satisfaction. In addition, Finns may have a "more attainable understanding of what a successful life is", compared to, for example, the United States, where success is often equated with financial gain, she said. Finns' strong welfare society, trust in state authorities, low levels of corruption and free healthcare and



Finland in 19th century: Akseli Gallen-Kallela 'Rural life' (1887)

education were also key. "Finnish society is permeated by a sense of trust, freedom, and high level of autonomy," De Paola said.²

This would seem to be a strong commendation of the famous 'Nordic model', and indeed Denmark, Iceland and Sweden completed the top four both this year and last. Relatively flat inequality (compared to the stupendous gulf between rich and poor to be found in countries like the US and UK) is well known to be correlated with better outcomes on a huge variety of social matters, from mental health to crime rates. A generally less precarious existence is a happier one, all things being equal. The apparent happiness of the Nordics has given the world's social democrats a strong argument on which to hang their hats.

Scepticism

There are, nonetheless, reasons for scepticism about the exercise, at least as to how far we can take its conclusions for granted. The first obvious question, albeit not one (alas) that a short article in the *Weekly Worker* has a hope of answering definitively, is: what is happiness? I think most of us would roughly concur with the *Oxford English Dictionary* in calling it "the state of pleasurable contentment of mind; deep pleasure in or contentment with one's circumstances". As opposed to wealth, or good fortune, or good health - all of which are essentially objective measures of wellbeing, if not simple matters - happiness is subjective: pleasurable contentment of mind.

Yet perhaps this is not what we think of, when we are asked if we have a happy life. A parent may be happy to have their child, even though

there was a successful socialist revolution that took a huge swathe of the world permanently outside the system in which these variables are so explanatory - how, then, would the good researchers of world happiness compare between the two classes? How, for that matter, do they compare across cultures that, for whatever reason, tend to weight these things differently?

Imperialism

All of this hints at the biggest problem. This data is presented, in part, as a guide for policy-makers to improve their standings - and indeed as an intervention against the *extremely* narrow set of indicators preferred by standard-issue neoliberalism (capitalist individual freedom, GDP growth, "corruption", defined as *not* including the pervasive *legal* corruption of the advanced capitalist world). That would in turn imply that it is policy-makers in *individual* countries who are the agents here, who can tweak this or that, launch some social programme or other, to improve national wellbeing.

Yet it is blindingly obvious that these various happiness scores are *not* independent variables. Way, way down at the bottom of the list this year, we find Afghanistan. Is its weighted Cantril-ladder score of around 1.7 supposed to be unrelated to the Americans' 6.7, given that the US has imposed brutal narco-warlordism on Afghanistan for two long periods in the last half century - on both occasions to be replaced by medievalist Islamist reaction? Can it be unrelated to the vengefulness of American sanctions after they were chased out of Kabul four years ago with their tails between their legs? Supposing the senior cadres of the Taliban suddenly got obsessed with improving this happiness metric: how on earth would they even start, given the Afghan state has been effectively non-functional for most of the past 40 years?

Next from the bottom is Lebanon: is the misery of its inhabitants unrelated to the deliberately divisive carving of this delicately cross-confessional territory from Ottoman Syria a century ago by the UK (number 20, as noted) and France (27), the designs of its predatory neighbour, Israel (5), and its existence as a flashpoint in the regional competition between Israel, Saudi Arabia (28), the United Arab Emirates (22) and Iran (100)?

Generally, a glance at the bottom half of the league table is unsurprising reading for anyone who has noticed the existence of imperialism. It is a list of places with long histories under the colonial jackboot, and subsequent histories of constant political meddling by the great powers and enforced economic dependency. As the poor African and

Asian nations in this cohort suffered from the global balance of power, so did the Nordics benefit: permitted to build powerful welfare states and corporatist economies with powerful unions, in order to shore up the eastern reaches of the 'free world', they have weathered the erosion of state capacity in the neoliberal era better than many other countries. With recent western adventurism against Russia having turned hot in the Ukraine war, they remain in a strategically salient position (though perhaps the Trump era problematises this).

The world's happiness, then, seems a matter of good fortune. (Of course, one archaic use of the word 'happiness' is to translate, precisely, good fortune ...) It is determined not by the grab bag of indicators tracked by the WHR - which the researchers admit are correlations rather than causes - but by where you happened to stand during the frenzied era of colonial acquisition. The colonisers have largely had soft landings; the colonised have been pushed from one disaster to the next.

That is the problem with the social democratic read of this data. The social democrat, in Britain or America, asks: 'Why can't we be more like Finland?' (She is perhaps not so foolish as to ask why Liberia can't be more like Finland.) But this is to treat it as a rhetorical question. In reality, it is a question with definite answers: the fraying social safety net in this country is directly produced by our role in the world system, as the murderous chaos in large parts of Africa or the desperate condition of an Afghanistan results from theirs.

To change these roles is, in the end, to change the system as a whole: to go beyond a national frame of analysis and action. It is also to relegate the liberal 'just so' stories implied by the WHR's explanatory framework. It is useless to complain of corruption, low life expectancy or poor GDP growth in the former colonial world, when these countries are *deliberately held* by imperialism in conditions where all three are basically inevitable.

We propose the scientific hypothesis that the overturning of relations of domination - between countries, and between economic classes - will have a far more profound effect on the readings of the Cantril ladder. But, of course, the only way to produce the data to test our hypothesis is the long, hard road of revolution ●

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Notes

1. worldhappiness.report/ed/2024/happiness-of-the-younger-the-older-and-those-in-between/#ranking-of-happiness-2021-2023.
2. www.france24.com/en/europe/20240320-finland-world-happiest-country-7th-year-us-drops-out-of-top-20.