

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity

# weekly worker



**How to respond to Trump? Democrats want to play dead. Marxists want independent socialist organisation**

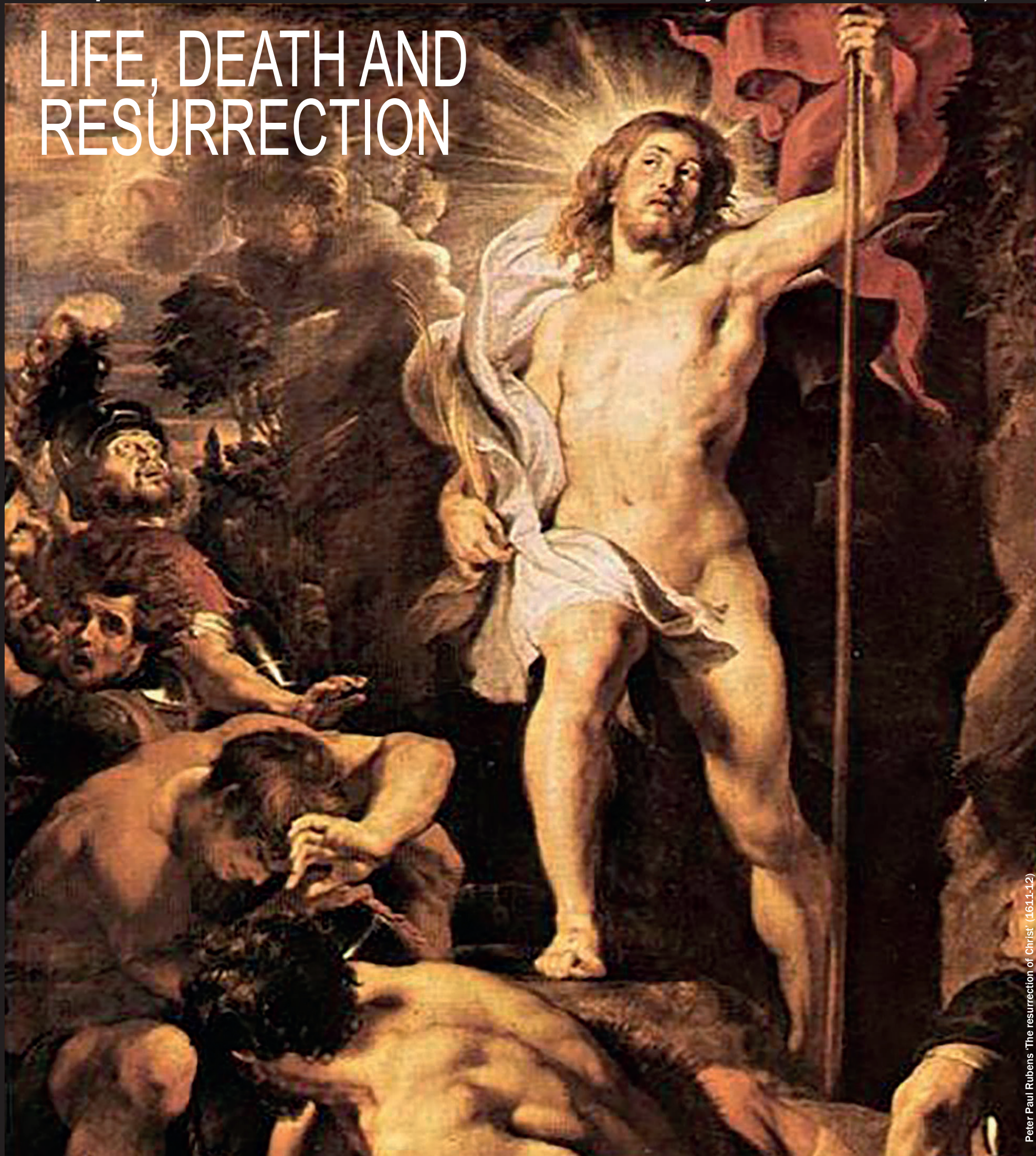
- Letters and debate
- Gaza genocide
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- Owen Jones: Il Duce

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Towards a mass Communist Party

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## LIFE, DEATH AND RESURRECTION



Peter Paul Rubens 'The resurrection of Christ' (1611-12)



# LETTERS

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

## Celebrate

There is unease in French society at the many attacks on magistrates and judges - a trend noticeable also in the United States and, of course, in the UK.

In 2019, prime minister Boris Johnson was found by the UK Supreme Court to have unlawfully closed parliament when he prorogued it for five weeks ahead of an October deadline for Britain leaving the EU. Tory tabloids raged at the judiciary. Recently secretary of state Shabana Mahmood, faced with a row over guidance to improve consistency on sentencing by the courts, chose a populist narrative, openly threatening the powers of the Sentencing Council. On the gov.uk website she described the Sentencing Council as promoting “greater consistency in sentencing, while maintaining the independence of the judiciary”. Obviously too much for the Labour leadership.

Democracy is threatened and old certainties are fracturing. Communists do not defend state institutions under capitalism, but, being democrats, we always push for more and better suffrage, more and better political representation. This goes much further than bourgeois democracy, but does not mean shying away from critical involvement and tactical positioning *vis-à-vis* the various parliamentary parties in any nation-state.

When a party like National Rally is found to have committed fraud, we do not defend that party because their fraudulent practice was committed under capitalism: we look at the overall context. The context is that a rightwing party of ‘law and order’ has been caught out after years of brazen contempt for the very laws it brandished in the faces of everyone else. We rejoice. At the same time, we echo our French comrades, insisting that Marine Le Pen and the National Rally can and will be beaten at the ballot box.

**Paul Russell**  
email

## No transition

Thanks to Jack Conrad for providing a link to the Socialist Party of Great Britain’s explanation of its aim and principles (endnote 6 of his ‘Rediscovering our words’, April 10). This will enable readers to see exactly what the SPGB’s position is on what the working class does on winning control of political power:

“2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.”

“3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.”

“5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.”

“6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously

and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.”

In other words, the working class, on winning control of political power, democratises the machinery of government and uses it to dispossess the capitalist class (which needn’t be a lengthy process, as demonstrated by the recall of parliament last Saturday to legislate in a single day some government control over British Steel). This done, socialism (also sometimes called ‘communism’), as “the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people”, has been established.

Jack Conrad, who seems to want to establish a “mass Bolshevik party”, rejects this traditional definition, insisting that socialism is not a system of society to replace capitalism, but some sort of lengthy process, during which capitalism is gradually abolished or, as he puts it, “socialism being the transition period between capitalism and communism, or of socialism beginning as capitalism, but ruled over by the working class”.

Socialism as “capitalism ruled over by the working class”! What next?

**Adam Buick**  
SPGB

## Truth and justice

In his first Labour conference speech as prime minister last year, Keir Starmer promised to pass a ‘Hillsborough Law’ bill in parliament before the 36th anniversary of the Hillsborough disaster itself. That anniversary was on April 15, but, the day before, Downing Street said that it needed “more time” to create the “best version” of the legislation.

The ‘Hillsborough Law Now’ campaign is demanding a bill that puts into law a “duty of candour” - a legal obligation for public authorities and officials to tell the truth and proactively cooperate with official investigations and inquiries, with officials who knowingly provide false information or obstruct justice to face criminal penalties.

Such a bill would assist ordinary people at the receiving end of wrongdoing, involving the state, to fight for truth and justice - including publicly funded legal representation to create a “parity of arms”. As well as Hillsborough victims, other examples would include the postmasters (victims of the Horizon scandal), victims of the infected blood scandal, as well as Windrush and Grenfell victims and their families.

One can only hope that the government is indeed making the legislation ‘watertight’, although - given their record in regard to previous pledges, such as the ‘New Deal for Working People’, and Starmer’s personal history in regard to pledges - it is more likely it’s being watered-down. One aspect of the bill campaigners fear is being amended is that of the sanctions on individuals, meaning those accused under the new law could seek to hide behind organisations - a loophole likely to be exploited.

As Hillsborough campaigner Margaret Aspinall said, a “watered down” version of the law would be of “no use”. Importantly, it would also be a good indication

of whose interests Starmer and his government truly represent. Again, a short glimpse into the past - in particular to his handling of the Jean Charles de Menezes and Julian Assange cases - offers me little hope that he’ll side with the ‘ordinary working people’ he so often claims to care about.

**Carl Collins**  
email

## Mike’s coalition?

It ought to be a fundamental principle for the labour movement that work should not only pay, but that anyone who works physically and mentally hard for 40 hours a week should earn enough to cover not only all basic living costs, but sufficient to fully participate in society - including through leisure, culture and continued education and learning.

The Loughborough University Centre for Research in Social Policy has devised a minimum income standard (MIS) calculator, which assesses for different family types what they would need to have a decent life. So, for a couple with (say) one primary and one secondary school child, the MIS indicates they need total earnings of £85,699 or net income of £1,321.86 a week. If both adults worked full-time, that would imply an hourly wage rate of over £20.

One might reasonably take a view that in the interests of having adequate time for leisure and to devote to bringing up children, it is unhealthy for both to have to work full-time, so the required hourly rate would need to go up accordingly to compensate. If they were to work (say) 30 hours each, that would equate to £27 an hour. One might question the detailed composition of the calculator, but overall we appear to be talking of minimum rates of pay which are way above the current national minimum wage of £12.21 an hour.

Our immediate counter should surely be that these rates completely fail to achieve the basic production and reproduction of our class, and are self-destructive even from the perspective of capitalist society. Clearly, the state should also take direct responsibility for funding many of the costs of bringing up children: eg, through an enhanced system of child benefits, as clearly not only having children, but ensuring they are well looked after, well and healthily fed, kept warm and dry, as well as being well educated in a balanced way with necessary relaxed, leisure and play times, is essential to the reproduction of society.

How much should be funded via the state as opposed to wages is open to debate, but must surely be set far higher than what applies now and paid for all children. But, if the principle is correct that all workers should earn enough to reproduce and enhance their labour - and society has a basic interest in this as well - then surely this should be one of our basic minimum demands?

We should be demanding and insisting what we actually need, not what capitalism, the media or politicians say is ‘affordable’ or ‘realistic’. If such demands require deep inroads into the wealth and power of the capitalist class, then so be it. If they require a fundamental change in system to one run by and in the interests of working people - socialism - then let’s make that change!

As a long time reader and subscriber to the *Weekly Worker*, I have long understood this basic approach to minimum or immediate

demands is core to its basic approach and that of the rather tiny group which exists behind it. I was pleased to see this basic approach clearly reiterated by Jack Conrad (‘Labourism without Labour’, April 3) - and, I have to say, in vivid contrast to the voluminous confusion and obfuscation of Mike Macnair, who, in far too many self-indulgent wordy confusing and obscure articles, reveals no real communism at all, but more a throwback to 19th century social democracy, and two of its later key outputs - the Socialist Party of Great Britain and the Mensheviks in Russia.

In the past year or so, Macnair has become increasingly open about how he opposes (indeed hates and detests) virtually every decision and action the Bolshevik Party took after assuming power in October 1917 - and, of course, his utter contempt for the entire role, function and purpose of the Communist International. Macnair both officially (ie, without declaring it is a personal view only) and unofficially (allegedly writing as an individual) manages to undermine and contradict many of the *Weekly Worker* group’s positions and yet remains as a senior member. His articles on the role and purpose of the minimum programme are clearly at great variance with the WWG - and indeed the mainstream communist movement, which sees the minimum (or immediate) programme as part of a strategy to help develop the working class in the here and now into a class that is ideologically, politically and organisationally capable of taking state power and establishing socialism.

For Macnair, the minimum programme is a set of conditions for the “working class to take governmental office”! Can there be a more blatant example of utter reformism and constitutionalism? And just who is the working class bargaining with to “take governmental office”? Presumably parties of capitalism. So he’s a capitalist ‘coalitionist’ to boot!

One really does wonder how or why Macnair manages to remain with the WWG. Maybe it is as simple as the fact that it provides him with a weekly print and online journal where he can profusely and confusingly pontificate and add so very little on so many subjects. I wonder how many readers actually do manage or choose to struggle through his social democratic and Menshevik meanderings. I guess it’s just seeing the words in print, rather than who or how many actually reads them which matters to some people.

For real communists, the minimum or immediate programme (which does, despite blatant lies by Macnair, include a comprehensive range of economic, social, political and constitutional demands - his so-

called ‘high politics’ - and his utterly contemptuous and dismissive attitude to what he considers ‘trade union’ or economic struggles) starts from what we as the working class genuinely need in the here and now, but is absolutely not limited by capitalism’s claimed ‘realism’ or ‘affordability’.

As socialists and communists, we can do the basic maths, even with existing capitalist society, about the production and distribution of real wealth. We know it is even today possible, practical and indeed necessary to establish a society and economy run by and in the interests of working people. Removing the entire capitalist class - with their parasitical accumulation of vast amounts of income, wealth and power - would more than ensure that the basic needs of working people can be met.

Raising immediate demands, which are driven by what working people actually need, proceeds from where the class is now, but also challenges and potentially breaks the current artificial restrictions imposed by bourgeois society, also providing a real glimpse of what a socialist and future communist society can actually be like. This, of course, has been the essence of all political and strategic programmes and manifestos produced and sought to be applied since the establishment of the (real) Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920 to the present-day Communist Party of Britain.

Have we always got the exact composition, detail or wording right in all cases? No, obviously not. But we are a million times closer to the real communist tradition, programme, strategy and tactics than any of the ultra-left gnats, blowflies and fleas which try to irritate us and take us off course. More importantly, none of the irritants have anything like a credible strategy of programme to seriously revolutionise this society from capitalism to socialism.

One has grave doubts that they have any such wish or intention. They exist solely to attack, sabotage and undermine every real effort by the working class movement to improve conditions in the here and now, not build a real movement for socialism.

**Andrew Northall**  
Kettering

## Stalinist democrat

Before I reply to Gerry Downing (Letters, April 10), I would like to say that, where it can be avoided, we should oppose the strategy of fighting on two fronts. Graham Durham, the editor of *Socialist Labour Bulletin*, believes that the working class should have fought on two fronts during World War II; ie, opposing Hitler and Churchill at the same time (Letters, April 10). A sure recipe for defeat. I assume that Graham is a Trotskyist, or

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sympathetic, because this was the Trotskyist position in World War II. They blindly adopted Lenin's defeatist position from World War I, regardless of the changed circumstances.

As for Gerry Downing, like all Trotskyists, he views Trotsky as the 'Miss Snow White' of the Russian Revolution, but people who have studied Russian revolutionary history with a bit more depth have a more balanced view. Most Trotskyists are not even aware that Trotsky sided with those who wanted Lenin removed from the leadership of the party during the period of the anti-Lenin conspiracy in July 1917.

After the premature attempt to seize power in the July days, which Lenin opposed, warrants were issued for his and Zinoviev's arrest. They went into hiding after rumours spread that Lenin was an agent of the German General Staff. There was a debate in the party about whether he should give himself up and present himself to the courts. Lenin was charged with high treason. He was wavering about handing himself in. Stalin was firmly against Lenin surrendering. According to the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)*, Kamenev, Rykov, Trotsky and others, even before the congress, had argued for Lenin to appear before the counterrevolutionary court.

In his biography on Stalin, Trotsky confessed that those who opposed Lenin handing himself in were proved right, but he remained silent about his own position, claiming he took no part in the discussions. The fact that Trotsky voluntarily handed himself in suggests that he would have had the same attitude towards Lenin. This question was discussed at the 6th Congress of the Bolsheviks, when the Trotskyist group joined the party. Even if Trotsky was absent from the 6th Congress, his position on whether Lenin should appear in court would have been canvassed. His silence on his position can only mean he was in favour of Lenin handing himself in.

In her memoirs Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, wrote that Stalin saved Lenin's life. She should have also said that by saving Lenin's life Stalin saved the revolution. We all know what would have happened, had Lenin surrendered. Look what happened to Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht later. Although Stalin led the camp of those opposed to Lenin delivering himself up, later in the anti-Stalin campaign, Khrushchev went beyond exposing some of Stalin's misdeeds and attempted to crudely falsify history by claiming that Stalin wanted to hand Lenin over to the courts. Khrushchev disregarded the evidence provided by Krupskaya, and indeed by Trotsky himself, about Stalin's role in the July Days.

The Trotskyist world view stemmed from his method. During the debate about the role of trade unions under socialism, Lenin made a remark about Trotsky's method: "All his theses are based on 'general principle' - an approach which is in itself fundamentally wrong" (*Collected works* Vol 32, p22).

The lack of concrete dialectical analysis had earlier led Trotsky to oppose Lenin's theory that socialism was possible in one country as part of the world revolutionary process. See Lenin on the slogan of a 'United States of the World' (1915, Vol 21, p342), where he suggests the possibility of socialism in a single country; and see Trotsky's later argument in *Nashe Slovo* (February 1916),

where he argues that it is hopeless to struggle for working class rule in any country taken separately.

Trotsky wrote *The Stalin school of falsification*, but forgot to mention that he himself falsified history by claiming that the theory of socialism in one country was invented by Stalin and expressed the counterrevolutionary interest of the socialist bureaucracy. Regardless of whether we agree with Lenin or not, Trotsky was prepared to mislead a whole generation of communists who followed him about the origins of socialism in one country. Stalin was definitely not going against Lenin when he put forward this line. He was going against Trotskyism.

This is not about denigrating Trotsky's role in the revolution. He played a very important and leading role, regardless of the later anti-Trotsky campaign by the Stalinist faction. However, in the light of the collapse of the Soviet Union what is needed now is an objective, balanced appraisal of these events and the participants. Part of the reason for the collapse of the Soviet Union is that after the banning of factions in 1921 - proposed by Lenin with the support of Trotsky and Stalin - Leninism left the camp of democratic socialism.

We need to totally oppose the way Stalin treated his political rivals in the party, but claiming he was a counterrevolutionary is going too far, in my view. His ultra-left, mistaken support for the social-fascism line is not what we would expect from a counterrevolutionary. And the nuclear blackmail directed against him at the end of World War II should also be taken into account, when explaining his restraint in openly aiding revolution in the western sphere of influence in the immediate post-war period.

As for Downing's continuing claim that Donald Trump is installing a fascist regime in America, I will take Downing seriously when president Trump purges Congress, and bans all political opposition.

**Tony Clark**  
For Democratic Socialism

## Steel and coal

So at long last it seems that Sir Keir Starmer has finally worked out that you cannot make new steel without a blast furnace. More than that, the blast furnace requires coke, which apparently comes from coal!

So, with the government having created a hostile environment for coal mining and made it clear it did not approve of the proposed new mine in Whitehaven, the West Cumbria Mining company did not bother appealing against the very silly legal objection to the mine placed before the High Court. This comes at the end of seven years of objections by Lakeside environmental campaigners and Friends of the Earth, three regional county council public enquiries, an independent national legal and technical enquiry, and reconsideration by the secretary of state - during which every legal, technical and environmental hurdle was cleared and found in favour of the new mine.

Then came the Labour government's pledge to stop all coal contracts and licences. Energy secretary Ed Miliband (whose obsession with coal is worse than Margaret Thatcher's) promised a coal-free, oil-free, gas-free Britain. Seizing on a judgement for a new oil well that the drillers had not taken into account - all the emissions which would result in the lifetime of the well - the learned judge turned down the application. Oh joy, as Friends of the Earth and Lakeside campaigners rushed to court yet

again to object the mine on the same grounds. By the way, Friends of the Earth *et al* are not short of a bob or two - they have a permanent team of top barristers and solicitors working for them. In all the legal enquiries and objections, they never asked about those emissions. If it was so vital, why not?

It is very easy to work out the answer. The response would not matter, because they know and we know we need the steel: it will be made, and so the coal via coke will be burned, and those emissions will take place. If you want to conclude from the answer that in order to stop such emissions we must not produce steel, fine - but then the country would rapidly comes to a halt: no building construction, no wind turbines, no railway lines, no planes, ships, cars, buses, etc. So they know, and we know, that the intention was only to stop emissions in Britain: only to stop coke from coal being produced here, only steel production here. The problem is that the world needs virgin steel and the UK's use of it is essential.

So has Starmer really learned basic metallurgy at last? Of course not - the stopping of all primary steel production has been planned for at least the last three years. What has happened is that the Scunthorpe steelworkers have finally seen through the lies that everyone, including Unite the Union, has been telling them; that closure of the furnaces means unemployment.

Despite the long garden path that offshore workers have been led on, there is no 'just transition' - electric arcs do not make new steel, and in any case, their production would mean the need to employ 200 workers, not the 2,500 employed by use of the blast furnace. If the use of oil and gas wells ends, whole areas of industry would shut down and steel production would end. Unite has even invited Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and Just Stop Oil onto its Save Our Industry platforms and marches. It has been riding two horses going in opposite directions with one arsehole (not that there is any shortage of arseholes in the trade union movement!).

So Starmer might nationalise steel and keep the blast furnaces, but if he retains the 2/3 carbon tax on steel, its production will always be in debt. The reason the Chinese cannot continue hacking it is that they are crippled with a carbon tax which nobody else carries. You cannot make primary steel production work in either private or nationalised industry with a carbon tax and net-zero perspectives. Does he seriously think we do not know this?

What about coal? Are we going to develop new mines after all? No, just ship it in from Japan! But carbon emissions will be much greater, as it will be shipped in via diesel tankers, following what is anyway a much higher rate of emission from Japanese mines (or Chinese mines, because we are not sure whether this would actually be Chinese coal being retitled Japanese coal to avoid the higher Trump tariff). It seems that 'cutting our nose to spite their face' is part of the sorry story of this whole saga.

It is time to start telling the truth. The workers in steel and offshore industries must take control of campaigning themselves rather than leave it in the hands of full-time officers with another agenda. My book, *Coal, climate and the total destruction of the British mining industry*, which plots the trajectory of this wilful betrayal is available from douglassdavid705@gmail.com if you want to read that sad, sorry story.

**David Douglass**  
email

# ACTION

## The CPGB and the 1926 general strike

**Thursday April 24, 6.30pm:** Online session in the series, 'Our history'. Speaker: Jack Conrad.  
Organised by Why Marx?: [www.whymarx.com/sessions](http://www.whymarx.com/sessions).

## Boycott Barclays - stop arming Israel

**Saturday April 26:** Day of action outside Barclays Bank branches nationwide. Barclays provides financial services worth over £6 billion to arms companies. Demand Barclays ends its complicity in Israel's genocide. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: [palestinecampaign.org/events/boycott-barclays-day-of-action-3](http://palestinecampaign.org/events/boycott-barclays-day-of-action-3).

## Blockade Lakenheath

**Saturday April 26, 12 noon:** Protest outside the main gate, USAF Lakenheath, Brandon Road, Lakenheath IP27. Stop the return of US nuclear weapons to Britain. Coaches from London and Manchester. Organised by Lakenheath Alliance for Peace: [lakenheathallianceforpeace.org.uk/peace-camp-events](http://lakenheathallianceforpeace.org.uk/peace-camp-events)

## Build a city-wide movement to defeat the cuts

**Saturday April 26, 12 noon:** Conference, Comfort Inn, Station Street, Birmingham B5. Debate how to end the cuts and win a needs budget for Birmingham. Also mobilise solidarity action with the striking Birmingham bin workers - no to strike breaking. Organised by West Midlands National Shop Stewards Network: [www.shopstewards.net](http://www.shopstewards.net).

## Bristol's radical history

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

## Do workers need protecting from AI?

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

## Welfare, not warfare

**Wednesday April 30, 7pm:** Public meeting, Elisabeth House, 2 Hurlock Street, London N5. Starmer's government is introducing massive hikes in military spending, while imposing disability and welfare cuts. Speakers include Chris Nineham (Stop the War) and Kate Hudson (CND). Organised by Islington Stop the War: [x.com/STWuk/status/1912067749238485059](http://x.com/STWuk/status/1912067749238485059).

## Squatting London: the politics of property

**Wednesday April 30, 7pm:** Book event, Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1. Author Samuel Burgum introduces his account of the real lives of London's squatters, challenging the logic of property which underpins the city. Tickets £3. Organised by Housmans Bookshop: [housmans.com/event/book-talk-squatting-london-with-samuel-burgum](http://housmans.com/event/book-talk-squatting-london-with-samuel-burgum).

## The shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes

**Wednesday April 30, 9pm:** Four-part drama-documentary TV series, Disney+. Recounting the killing of Jean Charles de Menezes by the Metropolitan Police at Stockwell underground station in 2005, after he was wrongly identified as a terrorist suspect. Production by Etta Pictures and KDJ Productions: [www.facebook.com/DisneyPlusUK/videos/685951200576804](http://www.facebook.com/DisneyPlusUK/videos/685951200576804).

## May Day open day

**Thursday May 1, 10.30am to 3pm:** Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Visit for tours, displays and stalls, while the May Day march assembles outside. Organised by Marx Memorial Library: [www.marx-memorial-library.org.uk/event/502](http://www.marx-memorial-library.org.uk/event/502)

## London May Day march and rally

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

## Is British politics getting more Americanized?

**Thursday May 1, 7.30pm:** Public meeting, Wesley Memorial Church, New Inn Hall Street, Oxford OX1. Organised by Oxford Communist Corresponding Society: [x.com/CCSoc/status/1905322121036771583](http://x.com/CCSoc/status/1905322121036771583).

## What it means to be human

**Tuesday May 6, 6.30pm:** Series of talks on social and biological anthropology. This talk is online only, via Zoom: 'Romani and Egyptians in Albania's informal recycling economy'. Speaker: Arba Bekteshi. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: [www.facebook.com/events/1881787289248052](http://www.facebook.com/events/1881787289248052).

## Nakba Day workplace action for Palestine

**Thursday May 15:** Nationwide actions in solidarity with Palestinian workers. Demand an end to government and corporate complicity in Israel's atrocities. Demand an immediate ceasefire, end arms sales to Israel, support BDS and free Palestine. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: [palestinecampaign.org/events](http://palestinecampaign.org/events).

## Nakba 77: free Palestine, end the genocide

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

## CPGB wills

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



**GAZA**

# White coats, red blood

Mass killing in Gaza is but a prelude to ethnic cleansing. And, aided and abetted by the US and UK, Israeli forces are committing war crimes against Palestinian medical personnel with complete impunity, writes **Ian Spencer**

**T**he last fully functioning hospital in Gaza, the al Ahli in Gaza City, has been bombed by Israel. The attack destroyed its intensive care, surgical facilities, pharmacy and laboratories. The al Ahli Hospital was a small one, which is probably why it had escaped until now. However, it was caring for many more patients than it was built for, following the destruction of the Al-Shifa medical complex in April 2024.

The Israel Defence Forces issued a warning less than 20 minutes prior to the attack, on Palm Sunday (April 13), which also destroyed nearby civilian facilities, including St Philip's Church (the Anglican Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem runs the hospital). A child died because of the rushed evacuation. UK foreign secretary David Lammy made a rare effort to criticise Israel by calling the attack "deplorable" - but apparently not deplorable enough for the UK to revoke any more arms export licences to the Zionist terrorist state.

The IDF used their customary lie to 'justify' their terrorism - that the hospital contained a "command and control centre used by Hamas". As in all the other times it used this fabrication, the IDF produced no credible evidence. It is not as if the IDF has not been caught lying before about attacks on medical workers.

On March 23 the IDF attacked a convoy of Palestinian Red Crescent Society ambulances, a UN car and a fire truck from Gaza's civil defence. 15 emergency workers were killed - an atrocity so disgusting that even Keir Starmer has called for an inquiry into the incident. It was one of his rare breaks with the US government line, just as Benjamin Netanyahu became the first head of government to visit the US president at the White House, following Trump's mercurial imposition of tariffs across the world.<sup>1</sup>

The IDF originally claimed that they had opened fire because the convoy was acting "suspiciously" in darkness, without headlights or flashing lights. However, mobile phone footage from one of the dead paramedics showed that all the vehicles were lit up, as one would expect of a convoy of ambulances responding to a call to rescue the wounded, following an earlier IDF attack on a car.

The phone footage lasted more than five minutes and showed the paramedics in high-visibility uniforms and included the last prayers of Refat Radwan, as Israeli soldiers were heard approaching the vehicles. The IDF account was further refuted by the testimony of paramedic, Munther Abed, who survived the murderous attack. One other paramedic, Assad al-Nassara, was forcibly abducted by IDF troops and, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, is being held "in an Israeli place of detention".<sup>2</sup>

The IDF soldiers tried to cover up their crime by burying the bodies of the 15 medical workers "to protect them from wild animals", according to IDF sources. After the emergence of the phone footage, originally shared by *The New York Times*, the IDF admitted that its original account was inaccurate, attributing the report to the soldiers involved.

On April 15, an Israeli strike hit the Kuwaiti Field Hospital in the Mawasi area of Khan Younis, killing one medical worker and wounding a further 10. As a result of all this



**Outraged by UK complicity**

there are now very few hospital beds left in Gaza, and many wounded are now accommodated in tents. A mere 21 out of 36 hospitals remain "just partly functional", while the rest have been totally destroyed.<sup>3</sup> Article 18 (4th Geneva Convention) states that hospitals must never be attacked and additional protocol I (1977) states that deliberate attacks on medical workers constitute a war crime.

## Full scale

Since the resumption of full-scale genocide on March 18 over 1,000 people have been killed in Gaza. The official death toll of the war, compiled with the greatest difficulty by the Gaza health ministry (GHM), is 51,000, of which children make up 17,492. If the 'missing, presumed dead' are added, this figure rises to 61,700. In addition, 111,588 have been wounded - many gravely, with life-changing injuries.

Of the Gazans killed since the genocide began, only 40% have been men aged 18-59. Children make up 33.1%, women aged 18-59 18.3% and the elderly over 60 8.6%.<sup>4</sup> It is a demographic consistent with the pattern of indiscriminate bombing of civilian areas.

However, the GHM has consistently under-reported the likely death figures from trauma because of the practical difficulty of recording data. In January 2025, a peer-reviewed article in *The Lancet* estimated that the GHM had, up to that point, under-estimated by 41%! Moreover, its figures "underestimate the full impact of the military operation in Gaza, as they do not account for non-trauma-related deaths resulting from health service disruption, food insecurity, and inadequate water and sanitation".<sup>5</sup>

Since Israel violated the ceasefire on March 18, there has been a critical shortage of medical and food supplies. About 36% of the Strip has now been designated as no-go zones, and are subject to displacement orders affecting 390,000 people. Israel has blockaded humanitarian aid from entering these zones and distribution outside of them has been hindered by constant bombardment.<sup>6</sup>

There is aid available, but repeated requests to collect it from the Karem Shalom border crossing have been refused by Israel. The blockade has even included preventing the distribution of vaccines for childhood diseases - 37% of medications and 59% of medical supplies are at zero stock. The destruction of medical imaging is further hindering treatment of trauma patients, while fuel shortages shut down those hospitals dependent on generators.

Israel has cut power to Gaza's southern desalination plant, denying clean water to 600,000 people. Unicef estimates that access to drinking water for one million people, including 400,000 children, has dropped from 16 litres a day during the ceasefire to just six, making it likely that people will have to rely on unsafe sources, just to survive. Children are, of course, particularly susceptible to death from contaminated water, due to diarrhoea-induced dehydration and electrolyte imbalance.<sup>7</sup>

Bombardment and displacement orders have closed 15% of all nutrition sites, interrupting treatment for malnourished children. This has been compounded across the strip by the destruction of crops, fishing boats and the annihilation of domestic cattle.

And, of course, the genocide is not confined to the Gaza Strip or medical personnel. A further 905 have been

killed in the West Bank, 181 of whom are children, and 7,370 wounded. In Jenin the IDF targeted the Al Tafawk Children's Centre. Education as much as health is a priority target for Israel, it seems. Genocide, after all, is not only concerned with the eradication of people, but their culture too.

## Co-belligerents

From the outset of the genocide, the UK and USA have been co-belligerents alongside Israel. The Royal Airforce has conducted at least 518 intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance flights around Gaza since December 2023. The flights have taken off from RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus, using 14 Squadron's Shadow R1 aircraft.

The aircraft can track vehicle convoys, monitor buildings and gather real-time battlefield intelligence. Following questions to parliament, the UK government insists that the flights are purely to assist Israel to recover hostages taken on October 7 2023. However, once the RAF shares intelligence with Israel or the US, it loses control over how it is used. One is certainly entitled to ask, when a bomb massacres Palestinians sheltering in tents or the vicinity of a hospital, where did the intelligence for these attacks come from?

Analysis by Action on Armed Violence found that the RAF conducted 24 flights in the two weeks leading up to and including the day of Israel's deadly attack on the Nuseirat refugee camp on June 8 2024, which reportedly killed 274 Palestinians and injured over 700. In another case, on February 13 2024, an RAF Shadow R1 most likely landed at Israel's Nevatim Air Base, which hosts the country's F-35 squadron, which has carried out extensive airstrikes in Gaza.

The flights have taken place under Conservative and Labour administrations, with 303 sorties under Rishi Sunak's government and 215 under Sir Keir Starmer's watch. At the very least, this leaves the UK government open to the charge of complicity in genocide at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and war crimes at the International Criminal Court (ICC), where Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant are both indicted, with warrants issued for their arrest.<sup>8</sup>

The UK, as a signatory to the Arms Trade Treaty and Geneva conventions, is legally obliged to ensure that its military intelligence is not used to facilitate war crimes. The UK government has admitted in court that "Israel is not committed to upholding humanitarian law", yet continues to support it with intelligence gathered from RAF Akrotiri.

While the UK government repeatedly stonewalls parliamentary questions about the RAF role in Cyprus and Gaza, it is also true that RAF Akrotiri is regularly used by US airforce flights of heavy transport aircraft, which facilitate the transfer of ordinance and logistical support directly to Israel, including for F-35 aircraft.<sup>9</sup>

The government acknowledges that Israel acts in violation of international law, including through the use of F-35 aircraft against civilian targets. With one eye on international courts, it has made a token gesture by restricting 50 of the 350 arms export licences to Israel, but it does not embargo parts supplied for F-35s.<sup>10</sup>

Long before and throughout the current war, Israel has been wholly indifferent to international law. Now with the support of Trump to "finish the job", it knows that it can act with complete impunity. While criticism of 'Genocide Joe' may have had some marginal restraining effect due to the impending election, it now looks as if the US will let nothing stand in the way of Israel's murder, especially when there is a real-estate opportunity for the US on the table.

Trump too has shown a willingness to abandon the rules-based order and a complete contempt for multilateral institutions, such as the UN, the World Health Organisation and both the IJC and ICC. In place of the 'rules-based order' we are likely to see naked force and territorial acquisition. Just as 'manifest destiny' was used as a justification for the genocide of native Americans, 'MAGA' will be used to justify Israel's 'final solution' in Palestine.

Join us for the national demonstration in central London on May 17, marking the 77th anniversary of the Nakba. End the genocide! ●

## Notes

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## USA

# Breaking with playing dead

How to respond to Trump's whirlwind of tariffs, chaos and oppression? Democrats have their 'Hands Off' protests. Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez their 'Fight Oligarchy' tour. **Matt Strupp** and **Ben Lenz** of the Marxist Unity Group want independent socialist organisation

**T**here are a lot of questions about how these early days of this second Trump administration compare with his first - and where it is going in terms of its ability to keep up the current pace of attacks on free speech and working class standards of living.

The ethos right now appears to be that of the tech industry: a 'move fast and break things' attitude, exemplified by Elon Musk as a special government employee in the administration. Is this a temporary phase where they break things and then try to rebuild them in their image? Or do they keep on breaking things, and Musk is slated to be a special government employee only for a short time? Will the courts be able to enforce any decision they make against the Trump administration, because there is a sort of imperial presidency in the United States? After all, federal law enforcement and the military are under the presidency - against which decisions would need to be enforced. Also, will the financial markets continue to react negatively to Trump's tariffs, and will that slow things down?

What would provide real opposition to a rightwing administration, though, is mass popular resistance, with strikes, etc, providing pressure from below. There are already significant protests at weekends, though decidedly liberal. The Hands Off protests in cities around the country recently included the slogan, 'Hands off Nato', but with no mention of Palestine or Gaza. In reality they delivered a pro-Democratic Party political message.

The Trump administration's treatment of pro-Palestine speech has been to turbocharge the repression of pro-Palestine speech which took place under the Biden administration, especially on college campuses; that has been fused with a deportation crusade.

For example, Mahmoud Khalil, a legal, permanent resident of the USA, was a spokesperson for the pro-Palestine encampment at Columbia University last year. But in March 2025, ICE agents showed up at his New York City apartment and told him his student visa had been revoked (even though he did not have a student visa, but a Green Card). He was arrested and immediately shipped to a Louisiana deep detention facility. ICE claims that under immigration law the secretary of state can deport anyone as a threat to national security, totally circumventing the first amendment to the constitution, and a *habeas corpus* case is now pending in New Jersey, following Khalil's "beliefs, statements or associations" that made him deportable.

Persecution now frequently follows pro-Palestine speech, such as in the case of Rümeysa Öztürk at Tufts University: she was arrested and held in Louisiana like Khalil, after authoring a pro-Palestine article in the local student newspaper. Universities have reported students having their visas revoked without any record of public pro-Palestine speech or activism on their part, seemingly merely based on their country of origin, which could be China and or one of the Middle East countries.

Trump has also reclassified Latin American gangs as 'foreign terrorist organisations', rapidly deporting hundreds on creative evidence, thanks to the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 (last used to intern Japanese Americans in World War II). To top it all, the Trump administration now has a deal with the



**Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Bernie Sanders: 'Fight Oligarchy'**

regime of El Salvador's self-confessed dictator, Nayib Bukele, allowing the USA to use it as a 'storage facility' for deportees.

As to the US workers' movement, two major unions, the Teamsters and the United Auto Workers, have seen their leadership replaced in recent years. Sean O'Brien won the Teamsters' presidency, despite the fact that during the election campaign he cosied up to Trump, speaking at the Republican National Convention (after the Democratic National Convention refused to invite him). Shawn Fain, UAW president, is treading a line between celebrating the tariffs for supposedly bringing back domestic car manufacturing and protesting against the attacks on pro-Palestine activism and free speech.

While thousands of federal workers have been laid off from government agencies, there is hope of overcoming sectional divisions among them: the recently-formed Federal Unionists Network, which has signs of rank-and-file activism, may be fruitful. It opposes, for instance, the proposed legislation to restrict federal workers' collective bargaining. The fact that federal workers have no right to strike is oppression and the whole labour movement should respond.

Against the background of all this, there is some tension between the establishment wing of the Democratic Party, currently voting for significant cuts, and Democrat media figures, who see the tactic right now is one of 'playing dead': let the Trump administration embarrass itself, make everyone angry at it, and in future years the Democrats can run on a 'We're the competent ones' platform and sweep into office.

Clearly, the Democratic Party is not a 'normal' political party: it has no mass membership, though activist NGOs and trade unions are associated with its apparatus. Many who identify with it are dissatisfied with that stance and some Democratic Party politicians, including Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, have publicly denounced 'playing dead'. They have been on a nationwide Fight Oligarchy tour, including to more conservative or rural places, often drawing in bigger crowds than the Kamala Harris election rallies did.

The message is definitely aimed at the Democratic Party: it should be fighting oligarchy with a social democratic message and accepting the union movement as its base. But there is no mention at Fight Oligarchy events of independent organisation or political expression for the working class - such as in a socialist or working class party. Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez have previously received

endorsement from the Democratic Socialists of America, but the pair are not promoting the DSA at these rallies. They are cultivating a separate base within the Democratic Party. The DSA is itself oriented toward the Hands Off protests, having agreed to participate critically, putting forward a pro-Palestine and anti-Democratic Party message. While some DSA chapters are involved organisationally in the Sanders/Ocasio-Cortez Fight Oligarchy tour, others have tables outside criticising what Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez are saying.

But how to turn anti-oligarchy or anti-Trump sentiment into an independent political expression? This is a major question going forward. At the DSA's national convention this August there will be proposals around organisational questions, political orientation and the creation of an independent socialist party within the USA's electoral structure. But there are very fraught questions, such as how to navigate constituencies and electoral laws, when it might be justifiable to use the Democratic Party primary, seek an independent ballot line or maintain control of that. The Democratic Party's internal selection processes in many US states are run by the establishment. Were an independent workers' ballot line to be achieved, however, how would the party's internal democratic processes actually control who is on the ballot?

All these questions and more are currently being explored on the left in terms of how to channel the anti-Trump energy into effective, independent political expression. But the Trump administration continues to move fast and try to break things. Hopefully the response to that will be more and more unrest and resistance. However, the Democrats are not even trying to capture that right now, because, as I have said, they want to 'play dead'.

So how can we ensure that resistance does not just dissipate? How it gets channelled into an independent political expression is the most relevant question ●

**Matt Strupp**

## Factions and tariffs

One DSA current has been responding to the tariffs specifically: that is, the more trade unionist-oriented part of the DSA, associated with Bread and Roses and with *Jacobin*. This response is that, 'While Trump's tariffs are bad, let's not do something crazy like complain about tariffs in general or have articles about how we dislike them because they push toward reaction. After all, we might want to use tariffs in future to push for stronger labour laws internationally.'

This is connected to the strong support from US industry and the US labour movement for tariffs since World War II. Cross-class responses are associated with the DSA right: formations like Groundwork and the Socialist Majority Caucus oppose tariffs for the same reasons the Democrats do: 'Why are we breaking trade?' Obviously, there is an incomplete analysis of imperialism.

The Marxist Unity Group has not as a body talked about this much yet, but generally this is just an extension - a new stage - of the US empire. This is an interesting juncture in US foreign policy, since after the 70s and the end of the Bretton Woods system, there has been a really big shift away from industry. The USA entered the 70s in an increasingly difficult-to-sustain trade balance situation, as it tried to prop up the global gold reserve system - which in turn backs the Keynesian international order - allowing states to run their domestic policies independently.

All that ended with Nixon, who pushed general mercantilist politics originating in the American Revolution. Outside of slavery, probably the most important question in US elections up to the 'Progressive Era' has been the question of tariffs. A constant back and forth between the Democrats - generally anti-tariff and associated with northern workers - and southern, including southern slave, capital that wanted free trade with Britain. Northern capital is very pro-tariff and associated with the Republican Party. Historically, there was a major fight, in part because virtually all US taxes came through the tariff system, right up until a constitutional amendment bringing in an income tax system. This shift has allowed radical back-and-forth changes among US tariff policies, and

then a shift back to relatively normal tariff rates for the USA - all of which may well have increased the effect of the great depression.

The USA became the guarantor of the world capitalist order through creating the Bretton Woods system. With high US inflation this became untenable from the 1960s and 70s, forcing the Nixon administration to shift towards a more pro-China policy and the creation of free trade that allowed the growth of the Asian tigers through high balance-of-trade debt and big, positive, export-driven economies. The USA has been backstopping that system for a long time - bringing in the emergency greenbacks paper currency system during the Civil War, for example. Trump's tariff policy right now, while it is really incompetent, is responding to a real set of problems from a US point of view. The USA has been backing the World Trade Organisation, International Monetary Fund and the like in the capitalist international order - as was the UK before, which similarly led to a weakening industrial base.

This puts the USA in a position that, while right now it still has dominance *vis-à-vis* China, that is becoming increasingly untenable, unless the USA makes some fairly serious foreign policy changes. This strategy is not necessarily going to work. But it really explains, from a US point of view, why these tariffs are being used. They need to be understood as a response to China, as a response to a declining US economic advantage, and as a response to its declining unipolar moment ●

**Ben Lenz**

These two pieces are based on openings given to the April 13 Online Communist Forum

## Fighting fund

## Below par

**A**s readers will know, because of rising costs we have been obliged to increase not only our subscription prices, but the monthly target for the *Weekly Worker* fighting fund.

This month our comrades have been involved in sending numerous reminders to those subscribers who have not yet increased their subs - most of them respond quickly, and immediately arrange to up their regular payments. A good example this week was comrade JB, who not only increased his sub from the old rate of £5 per month to £8, but also set up a new regular monthly payment of £50. Brilliant, comrade!

Having said that, there are still a good number who have not yet responded to our request. If you're one of them, please make the required change as soon as possible!

Anyway, over the last week a number of handy contributions have come our way. In addition to JB, thanks also to PM (another £50 donation!), MS (£25), and AR (£5). All the above were via PayPal, while comrade Hassan handed his regular £5 note to one of our comrades.

Then there was the usual batch

of standing orders, as well as one-off bank transfers. Thanks here go to PB (£70), TR (£40), TW (£25), OG (£24), SA (£12), PM and CC (£10 each) and MD (£8).

All that came to £334 raised in the last seven days, taking our running total up to £907. But unfortunately that is well below par, as more than half the month has now gone and the target is, of course, £2,750! So we haven't yet reached even a third of what we need!

True, we're about to enter that part of the month where a number of substantial standing orders come our way, but, on their own, they'll be nowhere near enough to get us home. So can you help? Please send us a cheque, make a bank transfer or click on our PayPal button. For help in doing any of the above please go to the web address below.

Let's make sure we reach that target! ●

**Robbie Rix**

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



# IRAN



A billet of highly enriched uranium

## Jaw-jaw flipside of war-war

US-Iran negotiations appear to have gone well. Leave aside Israel, there has been a positive response across the Middle East. Even the EU, China and Russia are happy. So, asks **Yassamine Mather**, what could possibly go wrong?

**O**n April 12, US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff participated in the Trump administration's inaugural indirect negotiations with Iranian representatives, including foreign minister Abbas Araqchi, held in Muscat, the capital of Oman. Both sides claimed the talks were going well.

Araqchi stated that the recent discussions between the Islamic Republic and the United States (the first such talks involving a Trump administration, including during his 2017-21 term) were held in a "productive, calm and positive atmosphere". He emphasised that both parties had reached a mutual understanding to continue the dialogue, with the next meeting likely to occur a week later. According to Araqchi, there is a shared desire from both Iran and the US to reach an agreement shortly. He stressed that neither side is interested in prolonging negotiations just for talking; rather, the goal is to achieve tangible results.

From the American side, the White House echoed this sentiment, characterising the talks as "very positive and constructive". In an official statement, the White House acknowledged the complexity of the issues at hand, but noted that direct communication from Witkoff marked a step forward in the effort to reach a mutually beneficial outcome. It confirmed that both delegations agreed to reconvene next Saturday to continue the discussions. The first round was summed up as "substantive, excellent".

Iran's supreme leader seemed to remain optimistic. In his first comments on the Oman talks, ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the "first steps" in the negotiations were "good" and that, despite "pessimism toward the other side", he was "neither too pessimistic nor too optimistic" about the talks - adding that the country's entire political agenda should not be tied to talks with the US, as was the case during the original Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) nuclear negotiations in 2015.

According to Iran's deputy foreign minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi, these were indirect negotiations, with the delegations seated in separate rooms. However, according to unnamed sources, Araqchi and Witkoff did meet in a corridor and exchanged pleasantries. Given this bizarre scenario, Iran's Islamic Republic could maintain the claim that its delegation did not directly negotiate, while Trump can continue telling his audience that the two sides met face-to-face.

However, as with any other negotiations involving Trump and his administration, by April 14 the US president was blaming Iran for delaying the outcome. He told reporters that he believes Iran is deliberately stalling. It is difficult to understand what he means, as a schedule had been agreed in Oman. Trump also warned once again that Iran must stop any efforts to build nuclear weapons or face "severe consequences" that could include "a military attack on nuclear facilities".

There is some confusion about where the second round of talks will take place. Iran is claiming they will continue in Oman, while the US says the talks will resume in Rome.

As for both sides' negotiators, while Iran's foreign minister is a veteran of nuclear negotiations, having worked as Zarif's deputy in the first round of the JCPOA talks, Steve Witkoff is very much a newcomer. However, given the many disadvantages that Iran's Islamic Republic faces in dialogue with the world hegemon power, none of this matters, when it comes to the US upper hand.

Witkoff is a billionaire real-estate investor, and former attorney. He is the founder and CEO of the Witkoff Group, known for acquiring high-profile properties like the Woolworth Building and the Park Lane Hotel. Witkoff began his career as a real estate lawyer, before moving into investment and development, amassing a fortune that reached \$2 billion by 2025.

Though he lacked formal diplomatic experience, Witkoff played a significant role in brokering a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in January 2025. We are told that his direct and forceful approach was

essential to securing a six-week truce and a large-scale hostage-prisoner exchange. However, a subsequent Israeli ceasefire plan - reportedly based on Witkoff's proposal - sparked a backlash and was rejected by Hamas.

Witkoff also acts as Trump's unofficial liaison to Russian president Vladimir Putin. He was involved in negotiating a US-Russia prisoner exchange and took part in discussions aimed at ending the war in Ukraine. His favourable remarks about Putin and controversial statements regarding Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories attracted criticism from Ukraine and some US lawmakers. Witkoff has long been close to Donald Trump and was a speaker at the 2024 Republican National Convention.

As for Abbas Araqchi, he has served as Iran's minister of foreign affairs since August 2024. He previously held roles as foreign ministry spokesperson and ambassador to Finland and Japan, and was Iran's chief nuclear negotiator under president Hassan Rouhani. He holds degrees in international relations and political science, and a PhD in political thought from the University of Kent. Araqchi joined the foreign ministry in 1989 and previously held various senior roles, including deputy foreign minister and dean of the School of International Relations. As the current foreign minister under president Masoud Pezeshkian, he has emphasised the importance of 2025 for Iran's nuclear policy, amid tensions related to a returning Trump presidency and economic pressures.

### Reaction

**Russia:** The Iranian foreign minister is travelling to Moscow before the second round. However, it is unlikely that Trump is concerned about such a visit. Russia and China support the diplomatic resolution of the nuclear dispute between Iran and the west. It is unlikely that Russia would welcome nuclear weapons in a country so close to its southern borders and at the moment it is not keen on another war in the Middle East.

Russia has voiced support for renewed nuclear negotiations between Iran and the US, with Moscow

publicly endorsing the dialogue as a positive move toward easing Middle East tensions. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov affirmed Russia's full backing for the talks, stating they could foster "de-escalation" around Iran's nuclear activities.

Moscow has proposed acting as a mediator between Washington and Tehran to advance a peaceful resolution. This aligns with Russia's broader strategy of leveraging diplomacy to reinforce its influence in the region, while safeguarding its geopolitical interests.

Despite advocating dialogue, Russia has explicitly ruled out military support for Iran in the event of US or Israeli strikes. Deputy foreign minister Andrei Rudenko clarified that Moscow would not intervene militarily, underscoring Russia's intent to avoid direct involvement in a potential conflict.

**China:** Beijing has consistently opposed US unilateral sanctions against Iran, urging a revival of multilateral diplomacy and full compliance with the JCPOA. In March 2025, Beijing hosted trilateral discussions with Iran and Russia, emphasising the importance of dialogue and mutual respect in resolving disputes over Iran's nuclear activities.

As Iran's largest trading partner, China continues to import substantial volumes of Iranian oil despite US restrictions. To bypass sanctions, Chinese entities employ tactics such as routing transactions through small-scale 'teapot' refineries and conducting trade in yuan via regional banks, thereby avoiding US-controlled financial channels. Additionally, China has faced allegations of supplying dual-use materials that may bolster Iran's ballistic missile capabilities, reflecting some strategic alignment between the two countries.

Beijing has denounced US sanctions targeting Chinese firms engaged with Iran as breaches of international law. In response, China has implemented countermeasures, including tariffs and sanctions against American corporations.

**European Union:** Although the EU

has publicly expressed cautious support for renewed nuclear negotiations between the US and Iran, EU leaders feel left out of these negotiations. After the US withdrawal from the JCPOA during the first term of Trump's presidency, most European countries contemplating economic or trade deals with Iran faced secondary sanctions and this hurt European capital. In addition, the EU's engagement with the US on Iran's nuclear programme occurs amid broader transatlantic tensions. The EU has paused retaliatory tariffs on the US for 90 days to allow for negotiations following Trump's suspension of certain global tariffs.

This week, French foreign minister Jean-Noël Barrot voiced serious concerns over the ongoing nuclear negotiations. According to Barrot, any potential agreement must be compatible with European security interests and he called for rigorous oversight of the talks to prevent the undermining of 'regional and global stability'.

The French minister cautioned that failure to establish a verifiable, lasting agreement to curb Iran's nuclear ambitions could escalate into military conflict - a scenario he deemed "nearly unavoidable". He pointed to the urgency of the matter, stressing that the window for diplomatic solutions is rapidly closing, as the 2015 nuclear deal reaches its expiration point in October 2025.

### Arab states

There is little free press in the Arab countries. However, official and semi-official media outlets in Persian Gulf countries - particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates - have expressed cautious optimism regarding the talks. The deployment of US aircraft carriers to the region, coinciding with the negotiations, is seen as a tactical move to apply pressure on Iran and deter regional escalation.

The Arab press has emphasised what they described as "US dominance", referring to the weakened "axis of resistance" and declaring that it would be a major drive for Tehran to reach a deal. According to the website



of Saudi-funded Al Arabia TV, “US power dominates the negotiations”, while the US aircraft carrier, USS Carl Vinson, has neared Iran to mark increased military presence in the region.

Lebanese political writer and academic Radwan al-Sayed wrote in the prominent pan-Arab Saudi daily Asharq al-Awsat that Iran is entering negotiations with Trump “from a position of weakness,” highlighting its failure to unify the various “resistance” fronts as it has long aimed to do.

Al-Sayed notes that several of Iran’s so-called regional proxies - especially Hamas and Hezbollah - have become “scattered” and have endured setbacks, while Iraqi Shia militias are currently preoccupied with upcoming elections, as the Iraqi government warns against “any defiance to the US.”

An unnamed Arab diplomatic source told Al Arabiya TV’s website that Iran is “showing great flexibility” regarding the nuclear issue and “may be ready” to open discussions on its allied militias in the region, especially now that these groups have “failed to achieve their goals.”

Iraqi writer and political analyst Yahya al-Kubisi argued in the London-based daily *Al-Arab* that the “Iraq card” is likely to feature prominently in the US-Iran discussions. He questioned whether the American demand for the disarmament of Iraqi Shia militias is a genuine objective or simply a “bargaining chip” to trade against concessions on Iran’s nuclear programme and regional role.

Several Arab media outlets referenced a Reuters report noting that Europeans are being “sidelined in US-Iran nuclear talks despite holding the key card”.<sup>1</sup>

The Qatar-linked *Al-Araby al-Jadeed* described the situation in a headline as “a US marginalisation of the Europeans”, while the website of Qatari-based *Al-Jazeera* ran a piece citing warnings from observers and diplomats about Washington’s decision not to coordinate with Europe in the upcoming negotiations.

Arab street

Iran positions itself as a foremost opponent of western “arrogance”, notably challenging US and Israeli policies. Contrary to its supporters in the west, Iran’s Islamic Republic does not use the term, ‘imperialism’, as it is associated with Marxism. However, its stance against the west, although illusory, has many supporters among ordinary Arabs, through discontent

with their own governments - perceived rightly as corrupt and too close to the western powers.

Iran’s slogans in support of Hamas and Islamic Jihad mean it has gained support across the Arab world, even among Sunnis. The Islamic Republic has been very successful in promoting its message of “Islamic unity” and opposition to Zionism and the US through Arab-language TV channels, religious networks and social media.

In Lebanon Hezbollah’s base remains loyal to Iran, while in Iraq the poorer sections of the Shia population are aligned with the pro-Iran militia. However, there have also been large protests *against* Iran’s influence. Meanwhile, in Palestine Iran is praised for standing by Gaza. As for North Africa (eg, Algeria and Tunisia), Iran is less influential there, but is respected by some leftists and pan-Arabists.

So it is understandable why the current talks will have consequences for Iran’s standing on the Arab street. If US-Iran talks lead to a deal or rapprochement, Iran’s image will take a hit among ordinary Arabs. The Islamic Republic has built much of this grassroots appeal on being anti-American.

If it suddenly appears to be cosying up to the US, some ordinary Arabs might feel betrayed or see it as hypocritical. Groups that once looked to Iran for ideological leadership might distance themselves or lose enthusiasm. On the other hand, if there is economic improvement for the Shia republic, the country’s soft power will be boosted, potentially allowing Iran to spend more on regional allies, such as Hezbollah or militias in Iraq, and increase support for Gaza.

If this translates to stronger ‘resistance’ movements, some parts of the Arab street might still admire Iran for supporting ‘the cause’, regardless of the US talks.

If the talks fail, or escalate into increased tension, Iran may regain its ‘resistance’ aura. The US will be seen as being aggressive or unreasonable, and Iran could frame itself as the defiant underdog again. Arab public opinion would likely split - some will see Iran as the only power standing up to the US/Israel/Saudi-led order, while others will see it as fuelling instability.

What we have to remember is that the Arab street dynamics are fluid: ideology, class, sect and local grievances all shape how people respond. A student protester in Egypt or Tunisia or a Shi’a farmer in southern Iraq will view US-Iran

talks very differently. However, Iran’s rulers have worked hard to gain their current position among ordinary Arabs and they will be conscious of the consequences of various scenarios unfolding with these talks.

Iranian response

Unusually for the Iranian press, which is often divided along factional lines, reporting and analysis of the talks in ‘reformist’ and ‘conservative’ sections of the media have been remarkably similar.

Pro-reform papers like *Sharq* have expressed hope for “real negotiations”, while others have framed the first meeting as a step toward lifting US sanctions. Conservative outlets such as *Qods* and *Khorasan* emphasised “constructive signs”, while *Jaam-e Jam* and *Agah* stressed Iran’s “upper hand” and preconditions for negotiations. As for the hard-line *Vatan-e Emruz*, it supported the talks, but underscored Iran’s refusal to concede anything beyond nuclear issues, calling the process “calculated”.

The exception to all this was *Keyhan*, an ultra-conservative outlet, which stood out as the primary sceptic, warning against trusting the US and advising against tying Iran’s fate to negotiations. However, its editor, Hossein Shariatmadari, acknowledged via the Fars News Agency that the US draft focused on trust-building, omitting prior demands like dismantling Iran’s nuclear programme.

The English-language *Tehran Times* questioned whether the positive start would yield lasting results, while Press TV and the Fars News Agency highlighted discrepancies between US private and public stances, noting that closed-door talks reportedly focused solely on nuclear issues, contrasting with Washington’s aggressive public rhetoric.

This rare consensus among reformist and conservative media suggests a strategic alignment in Iran’s approach to easing sanctions and reducing tensions. The recovery of the Iranian currency, the rial, underlines domestic stakes in successful diplomacy,<sup>2</sup> while critical voices like *Keyhan* reflect a lingering distrust of US intentions. The coverage indicates Tehran’s emphasis on projecting strength and unity, while cautiously exploring diplomatic conclusions.

As for Iranians in exile, in response to the threats of the US government, more than 300 “civil society activists” - some of them former prisoners of the Islamic Republic and some on the left - have issued a statement addressed to the UN secretary-general, reminding him that the Iran-Iraq war was not merely a conflict against Saddam Hussein’s regime, but a broader struggle against global powers that backed him.

In spite of Saddam’s use of chemical weapons, supplied by countries like Germany, and widespread international political and military support (including from eastern as well as western blocs), the letter talks of the devastating legacy of these chemical attacks for many victims today and reminds the UN general secretary that Saddam Hussein acted as a proxy for foreign powers, highlighting Iran’s perception of facing not just Iraq, but a coalition of hostile international forces:

Despite our criticisms of the government and its policies, we believe that Iran’s independence, security and democracy must be shaped by the people themselves, without foreign interference. Democracy cannot be achieved through the intervention of foreign powers, especially those that openly display tyrannical tendencies and support the criminal Israeli regime, sending advanced weapons and

financial and political support to support it. We are not just concerned about Iran, but we are concerned about world peace. For the past 15 months, the Israeli regime has blatantly violated all human rights norms and rules of international humanitarian law, the values of peace, democracy, humanity, and the credibility of international institutions, and has continued to violate human rights with the support of the United States and some European governments ...<sup>3</sup>

Although it is understandable why some Iranian activists have felt the need to issue such a public statement, I do not see any value in such efforts. The Iranian government has used the US withdrawal from the JCPOA to enhance its nuclear programme, and the left should call for a nuclear-free Middle East, including when it comes to Israel and Iran. Addressing the UN is irrelevant, as the institution is not in a position to make a difference as far as Trump’s war plans are concerned. Some of the signatories have been accused of appeasing Iran’s rulers.

Having said that, let me add that we are not in the same position as 2007 or 2009, when Hands Off the People of Iran was active in the Stop the War Coalition. Mechanical repetition of the slogans of that period only demonstrates the irrelevance of those on the British left who do not understand global politics and seem to be oblivious to basic facts. The world situation has changed, and the war in Gaza has changed the region. Iran’s Islamic Republic is in a much weaker position.

Doubts

This week I was asked by a reporter why I thought Trump wanted to revive a nuclear deal, from which he walked out eight years ago. It is very difficult to know what has caused this change of heart (if that is genuinely the case). One reason could be that the US president wants to clear the deck as far as lingering cold wars are concerned, so that he can concentrate on a trade war with China. Closing down China’s access to cheap Iranian oil can be an incentive.

In 2016 Trump’s excuse for reneging on JCPOA was that Barack Obama had made “a bad deal”, and that it had not been ratified by Congress and the Senate. Now that he controls both houses, he can easily rely on their approval, whatever the outcome of the talks.

Questions remain about what the US is demanding now. Iran seems to be celebrating the fact that there is no demand for dismantling all of Iran’s nuclear facilities. Such a call will not be acceptable in Tehran.

Both Iran and the US want speedy negotiations and, in the case of Iran, need them, as sanctions have paralysed its economy. However, as always, negotiations can also lead to war and again we can envisage a rapid *military* response by the US, should talks fail ●

Notes

- 1. www.reuters.com/world/europeans-sidelined-us-iran-nuclear-talks-despite-holding-key-card-2025-04-10.
- 2. The rial’s rebound from over 1,050,000 to 876,000 against the US dollar was widely covered, with *Setareh Sobh* linking its recovery to optimism about a potential deal.
- 3. www.etemadonline.com/-بخش-سیاسی-9/706406-ایران-ترامپ-جامعه-مدنی (summary and translation by YM).

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What we fight for

■ Without organisation the working class is nothing; with the highest form of organisation it is everything.

■ There exists no real Communist Party today. There are many so-called ‘parties’ on the left. In reality they are confessional sects. Members who disagree with the prescribed ‘line’ are expected to gag themselves in public. Either that or face expulsion.

■ Communists operate according to the principles of democratic centralism. Through ongoing debate we seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support agreed actions, members should have the right to speak openly and form temporary or permanent factions.

■ Communists oppose all imperialist wars and occupations but constantly strive to bring to the fore the fundamental question—ending war is bound up with ending capitalism.

■ Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of working class and progressive parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of national sectionalism. It is an internationalist duty to uphold the principle, ‘One state, one party’.

■ The working class must be organised globally. Without a global Communist Party, a Communist International, the struggle against capital is weakened and lacks coordination.

■ Communists have no interest apart from the working class as a whole. They differ only in recognising the importance of Marxism as a guide to practice. That theory is no dogma, but must be constantly added to and enriched.

■ Capitalism in its ceaseless search for profit puts the future of humanity at risk. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, exploitation and crisis. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally.

■ The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote.

■ We will use the most militant methods objective circumstances allow to achieve a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, a united, federal Ireland and a United States of Europe.

■ Communists favour industrial unions. Bureaucracy and class compromise must be fought and the trade unions transformed into schools for communism.

■ Communists are champions of the oppressed. Women’s oppression, combating racism and chauvinism, and the struggle for peace and ecological sustainability are just as much working class questions as pay, trade union rights and demands for high-quality health, housing and education.

■ Socialism represents victory in the battle for democracy. It is the rule of the working class. Socialism is either democratic or, as with Stalin’s Soviet Union, it turns into its opposite.

■ Socialism is the first stage of the worldwide transition to communism - a system which knows neither wars, exploitation, money, classes, states nor nations. Communism is general freedom and the real beginning of human history.

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# weekly worker

Last thing  
we need is a  
labour dictator

## Socialism and star power

Owen Jones gets it wrong: the bourgeois media's idea of leadership offers the left no shortcut to power, argues **Paul Demarty**. We need a party that is democratic, principled and mass

It is safe to say that, for Keir Starmer's Labour government, opinion polls do not make a pretty sight just at the moment.

For months, each successive survey has found, for all practical purposes, a three-way tie between Labour, the Tories and Reform - each lurking at around 23%-25%. On its face, this is remarkable. Though it is largely an effect of the perverse electoral arithmetic of our 'first past the post' system, Labour has a huge, crushing majority. Any plan it could come up with should be, theoretically, straightforward to push through and get started. The Tories were electorally eviscerated (deservedly so by any measure), and have remained largely anonymous at the dispatch box.

Yet the government has struggled at every step. It barely had a honeymoon period at all. There have been palace coups (Morgan McSweeney's defenestration of Sue Gray), petty corruption scandals, a split over attacks on pensioners, endless flip-flops, among other disasters. The yellow press has been having a field day - and so, of course, has Reform, which threatens to make inroads in the same long-time Labour seats nabbed by Boris Johnson in 2019.

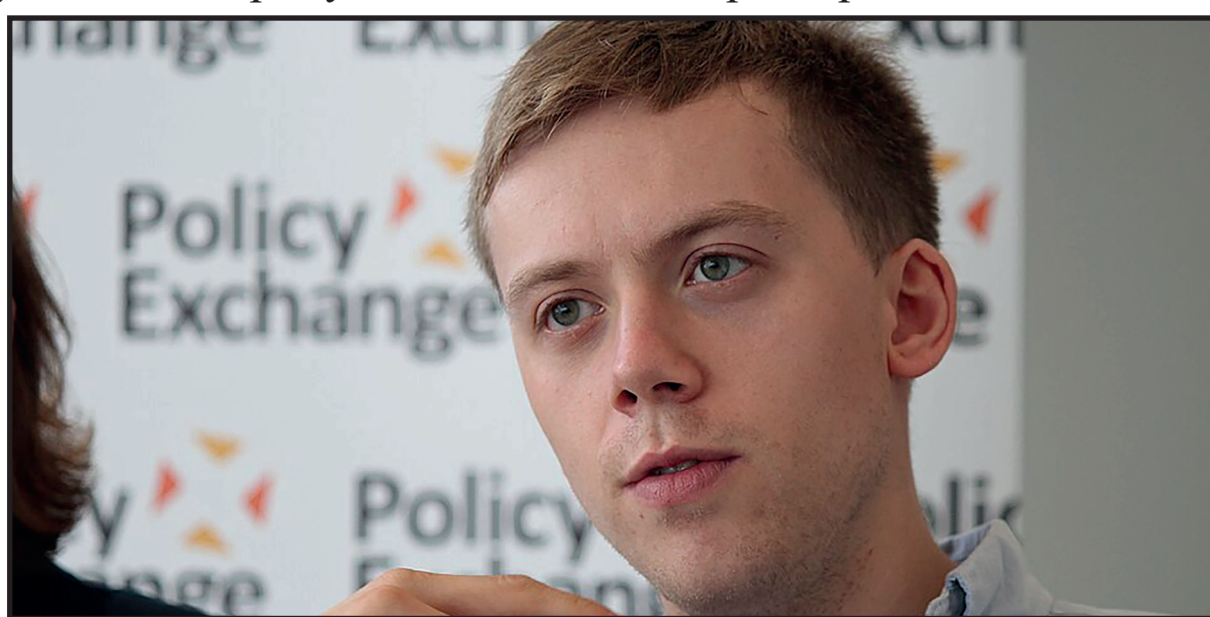
In such circumstances, a far-right revival is only to be expected. But so is some life to Labour's left. We saw that towards the end of Tony Blair's government, with a mass anti-war movement and then some limited electoral success for the Respect front put together by George Galloway and the Socialist Workers Party. At the moment, there is nothing much. George Galloway's Workers Party of Britain suffered a washout and seems moribund. The Greens, if we can count them, poll modestly ahead of their 2024 showing, but seem to have hit a ceiling. The various attempts to build something on the ruins of Corbynism have floundered, not least on Jeremy Corbyn's reluctance to take the reins.

### Crisis of leadership

What are we supposed to make of this? Writing in *The Guardian*, Owen Jones, having rehearsed the aforementioned situation, has his answer: "The main hurdle is obvious: an absence of leadership." We cannot blame everything on a biased media, which, of course, "doesn't help", because

witness how Citibanker-turned-equality-guru Gary Stevenson is reaching millions through YouTube, TikTok and Instagram. Despite the likes of Elon Musk gaming algorithms in favour of the Trumpian right, it is easier for the left to reach the wider electorate than ever. The left has just failed badly to harness social media platforms for its own advantage.

The job of such a leader is "appealing to older, overwhelmingly white voters, who live in towns and hold more socially conservative views, and younger, more diverse citizens in urban communities, who tend to be more



Owen Jones: no, not me, shucks

socially progressive". That entails:

shift[ing] the debate from the 'culture wars' to economic justice. The former is intended to drive the left into defensive territory and, as Ronald Reagan astutely observed, in politics, "if you're explaining, you're losing". But if the left drew attention to inequality and disintegrating public services, and made the case for taxing the rich, the right would be forced to explain itself instead.

This is hardly an astonishing argument coming from Jones - long ago a gadfly on the Labour far left, but since the surprise breakthrough success of his book *Chavs* a wholly mediatised figure. 'Leadership', conceived in this way as a matter of 'cutting through' to various atomised electoral constituencies, comes naturally as an idea to media people, who as a collective do most of the arbitration on the question of who is a 'good' or a 'bad' leader. Notoriously, Jones spent a good chunk of the Corbyn years trying to replace Jeremy with someone 'better', to no great effect.

It is still worth considering, however, simply because it is the default model of leadership in bourgeois electoral systems. It is not the only model of leadership available to the left, of course. To take a (not unproblematic) example: when Leon Trotsky opened the 1938 transitional programme with the famous formulation that "the world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterised by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat", he was not talking mainly about a crisis of individual leaders, but parties; and the working class in his mind was not a bunch of random demographic categories, but an organised force, even in the absence of good leadership. If the Jones model of leadership is to be rejected, the questions follow: in the name of what, and why?

Jones's prescription is unabashedly a matter of 'one-man management', and the first troublesome matter is: who gets to be

the big man then? How is that to be decided? Jones is too coy to seek the mantle himself, of course (and I doubt he overestimates his popularity with small-town social conservatives). He names Mick Lynch, the outgoing Rail, Maritime and Transport union general secretary, who entertained us all greatly during a recent strike by his cruel and unusual treatment of various TV news anchors. But it seems unlikely that Lynch, who has earned his retirement, is terribly interested.

Who else then? Jones seems baffled that nobody seems keen to grasp the opportunity, considering it a matter of the left "run[ning] at full pelt away from an open goal". We leave aside the question of why for now. Imagine that there was a bit more initiative on the part of the big beasts of the left. Lynch throws his railwayman's cap into the ring; Galloway his fedora; Corbyn his pruning shears. The default result would be three people fighting on separate, but similar, platforms for the same votes. All, moreover, would be generals without armies - the disunity itself would be enough to make sure of that.

Within the broad traditions of the labour movement, this would be a simpler thing - the contest would be over the leadership of a party. The party would have democratic or pseudo-democratic means of picking leaders and, having decided, the winner would be able to count on the efforts of the supporters of all. However, we do not have a party for these men to fight over, unfortunately. Corbyn clearly hopes, one day, to rejoin Labour. Lynch has always fought shy of the question. Galloway has a tendency of cycling between pseudo-party brands for his own personality - the WPB being the latest.

The bourgeois media sees parties as an annoying obstacle to its own prerogative as the picker of winners. It prefers systems like that of the United States, where parties do not select their own candidates, the matter instead being devolved to primary voters who are not in any real sense members. Figures like Emmanuel Macron, who

broke through an ailing party system in France to set himself up as a centrist Bonaparte, also tend to get admiration.

Suppose that, somehow, some figure *does* emerge to sweep other contenders aside with their sheer charisma, circumventing the sabotage efforts of the bourgeois media. A left that obediently followed such a leader would, immediately, find itself in a practical contradiction: the egalitarian impulse that in fact motivates socialist politics would conflict with the need to promote the great leader. It would not, in the course of its struggle, build up the cadres that could break this dependence; so it would succeed as an obedience cult, or not at all.

It is thus not terribly surprising that cultish left groups have an appalling record of success in the long term. We could mention the US Revolutionary Communist Party, which has for the last several decades been building a cult of its founder, Bob Avakian, or more dismally tiny sects like this country's Workers' Institute of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, which ended up with its few remaining adherents imprisoned in the south London house of leader Aravindan Balakrishnan.

### Heel turn

One larger-than-life socialist personality who *did* succeed in creating a state regime around his person was Benito Mussolini. I do not intend, by bringing up the founder of fascism, to conduct a shabby *reductio ad Hitlerum* argument, but do so merely because the case is somewhat instructive. Mussolini was a major figure on the left of the Italian Socialist Party prior to (in the jargon of professional wrestling) his 'heel turn'. In order to *become* a plausible candidate for power, he had to abandon any conception of socialism as an egalitarian project, which he had already done years prior, attempting to reconstruct socialist politics on the basis of Nietzschean ideas about the will to power. His conversion to fierce, irridentist nationalism during the war years ensured that, by the 1920s, he was hardly a general without an army

- indeed, he had an army precisely of demobilised soldiers at his command.

Conducting politics as a search for a great leader, then, tends to determine, or at least constrain, the viable political options. Jones insists that his prescription "does not mean throwing minorities under a publicly owned bus". But why not? If the great leader decides that some piece of shallow demagoguery about immigrants will serve the needs of the moment, on the 'Paris is worth a Mass' theory, then how exactly is Jones to resist? Either we have institutional machinery to dethrone the leader or we don't; either such machinery is democratic or it isn't.

The traditional socialist answer here - at least since the German social democratic movement decisively rejected the labour-monarchism of Ferdinand Lassalle and his successors - is to organise parties on a democratic basis, so that leaders are accountable to the party. This is a difficult thing to bootstrap, but if done well, the result is levelling up. Talented individuals have the space to excel, but not at the cost of the political coherence of the organisation. (Mussolini, after all, was expelled from the Partito Socialista Italiano for his warmongering.)

### Competition

Leaders emerge at every level of the organisation, and enough of them that there is less danger of the emergence of personal fiefdoms within it. The multiplicity of leaders leads inevitably to competition over the political line, which draws the mass membership into decision-making, by creating more leaders. The institutional strength of the party permits the construction of serious alternative media platforms dedicated to substantive struggles over ideas and policy - not the vacuous horse-race punditry that so blights the bourgeois media.

Leadership, in this model, is not about 'cutting through' with a single dart of viral social-media content. It is about doing so after the Javier Milei fashion - with a chainsaw. Through partyism, the socialist left delegitimises the institutional structure of bourgeois politics that selects leaders - not merely (as we are largely reduced to today) by laboriously pointing out instances of bias and corruption, but by providing, indeed by *being*, an alternative.

The downside, of course, is that we are very far from providing such a threat. The appeal of the Jones approach - and he is very far from the only leftist who basically thinks of politics in this way - is that all the ingredients *seem* to be there already. It *seems* like the path of least resistance. Yet it is doomed - it subjects our movement to the tyranny of the media apparatus and, even if that can somehow be overcome, corrupts the very objectives that we suppose ourselves to seek in the first place.

The hard road, alas, is the fastest one in the end ●

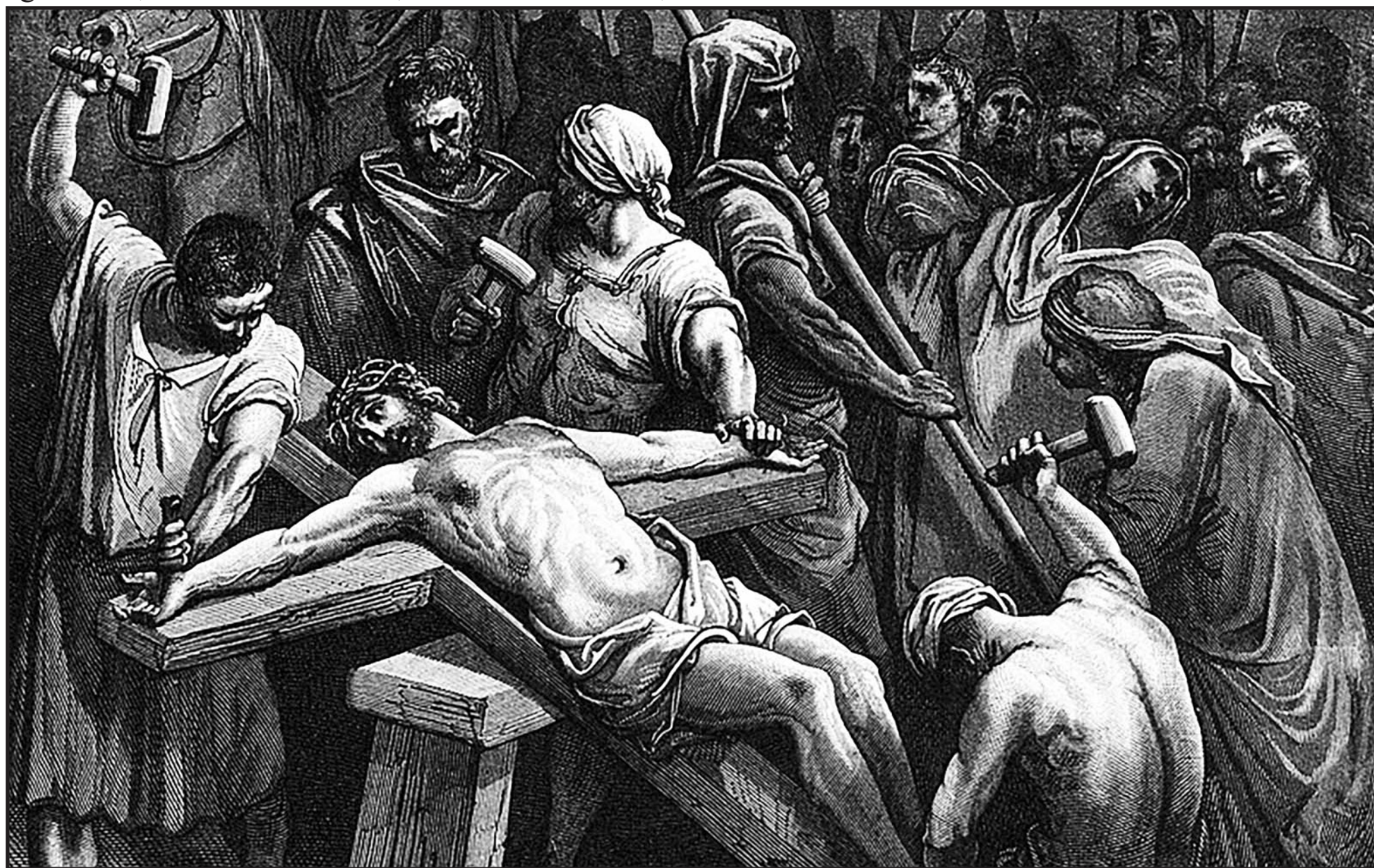
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## SUPPLEMENT

# LIFE, DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Easter Sunday is the most important date in the Christian calendar. After a short life packed full of miracles, their man-god died an agonising death on a Roman cross - only to rise, three days later, from Hades, born again. But, asks **Jack Conrad**, what about the real, flesh-and-blood Jesus?



Gustave Doré 'Crucifixion of Jesus' (1866). Jesus fervently expected a miraculous military victory. He had no thought of being a sacrificial lamb

**B**y removing obvious fabulation, drawing on what we know about ancient Palestine, bringing out the class interests crouched behind the religious traditions, disputes and compromises, it is possible to establish a historically plausible Jesus. Given the importance of his myth in shaping western culture, a more than worthwhile exercise.

We are told that Jesus was raised in Galilee, a region with close linguistic, cultural and historical ties with Samaria and Judea in the south. Though dominated by peasant agriculture, the growth of opulent urban centres, such as Sepphoris and Tiberias, testify to the presence of a Hellenised minority, the commercialisation of life and intensified exploitation of the basic producers. The Romans extracted tribute either through client kings or direct rule. We know that class conflicts intensified and took the form of riots, social-banditry, guerrilla actions and on occasion full-scale revolt.

In the *New Testament*, the gospels of Matthew and Luke tell us that Jesus' earthly 'legal' father was Joseph, a humble carpenter (Mark fails to mention him, while John does, but only once). Jesus - ie, Yeshua bar Yosef - must have been charismatic, self-confident and brave. Well educated too. Jesus was certainly a rabbi - a religious teacher and preacher. And during the course of his ministry, beginning in Galilee, he

appears to have come to believe himself/aspires to be, not just a prophet, but *the* messiah (or anointed one), who would deliver the Jewish people from Roman rule (and end the days of the robber empires).

Jesus proved to be a superb political organiser, strategist and self-publicist. He spoke of himself as the 'son of David' or 'son of god'. By saying this he certainly did not mean to imply that he was a man-god - a blasphemous concept for Jews. That is why two of the gospels - Matthew and Luke - are interesting, in that they leave in the family tree that purportedly proved that *through Joseph* he was biologically directly related to king David "14 generations" before (and all the way back to the first man, Adam).<sup>1</sup> Luke iii provides a much longer list, compared with Matthew, and a genealogy which also contains many different names (passages in the *Old Testament*, such as 1 Chronicles iii, 19, contradict both Matthew and Luke - so much for the 'inerrancy' of the *Bible*).

The prophet Micah had predicted that the messiah would be born in Bethlehem - the royal seat of the semi-mythical David. By placing his birth in this Judean town, Jesus and his early propagandists were proclaiming him to be the lawful king, as opposed to the Herodian upstarts.

It was like some canny medieval peasant leader announcing themselves to be the direct heir of Harold Godwinson and hence the true Saxon king of England against the Plantagenet or

Angevine descendants of William of Normandy. Roman domination was initially imposed through Herodian kings, who were Idumean in background (ie, from the region to the south of Judea). Despite overseeing the building of the 'second' Temple in Jerusalem, they were widely despised as foreigners and Roman puppets. The Dead Sea scrolls exude an uncompromising rejection, disgust and hostility for the king - presumably Herod, or one of his successors. He is condemned as "boastful" and a "son of Belial".<sup>2</sup>

Jesus' claim to be 'king of the Jews' was unmistakably political. He was proclaiming himself to be the leader of a popular revolution that would bring forth a communistic 'kingdom of god'. No pie in the sky when you die. The slogan, 'kingdom of god', was of this world and was widely used by fourth-party, zealot, sicarii and other such *practical* anti-Roman revolutionary forces, mentioned by Flavius Josephus, a near contemporary of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> The 'kingdom of god' conjured up an idealised vision of the old theocratic system introduced by the Persian king, Cyrus, when he oversaw the return of the Jewish elite from their Babylonian exile in the 6th century BCE.

Their 'kingdom of god' would, though, see the poor gain and the rich suffer:

[B]lessed be you poor, for yours is the kingdom of god .... But woe unto you that are

rich ... Woe unto you that are full now, for you shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.<sup>4</sup>

This imminent class retribution was not to be confined to Israel alone. The Jews were Yahweh's revolutionary vanguard. Through them Jesus' plan was for a universal utopia. From Jerusalem a "world theocracy", with Jesus at its head, would redeem "all nations".<sup>5</sup> Then onwards peace reigns: swords are beaten into ploughshares and the wolf lies down with the lamb.

Samuel Brandon argued, crucially in his noted 1967 study, that Jesus and the zealots were part of the same revolutionary movement.<sup>6</sup> In other words, they shared many of the same ideological aims and assumptions. Unmistakably true. Of course, Jesus was no zealot. He was an apocalyptic revolutionary, similar to John the Baptist, the essenes and their like. As Hyman Maccoby emphasises, Jesus "believed in the miraculous character of the coming salvation, as described in the writings of the scriptural prophets".<sup>7</sup> He was not interested in military strategy or tactics. Rome would be beaten without either conventional or guerrilla war. Nevertheless, though Jesus did not train his followers in the use of arms, five of his 12 inner circle of disciples clearly came from the ranks of the practical revolutionaries and retained guerrilla nicknames (including Peter Barjonah



# SUPPLEMENT

- ‘outlaw’; Simon - the zealot; James and John - the ‘sons of thunder’; and Judas Iscariot - the ‘dagger-man’).

This is not surprising. Jesus was no pacifist: “I come not to send peace, but a sword!”<sup>8</sup> While liberation would have a military aspect, primarily it depended on supernatural assistance. There would be a decisive battle, where a tiny army of the righteous overcome overwhelmingly superior odds. In the *Bible* Gideon fought and won against the Midianites with only 300 men - he fancifully told the other 20,000 men in his army to “return home”.<sup>9</sup> So the methods of Jesus and the guerrilla fighters differed, but were hardly incompatible. They differed on the *degree* that their strategy relied on divine intervention.

Either way, the zealots were unlikely to have actively opposed Jesus. He might have been a factional opponent, but he was no enemy. His mass movement would at the very least have been seen by the zealots as a sea to swim in - a tremendous opportunity to further spread their influence.

So Jesus did not stand aloof from the growing revolutionary movement that palpably existed in 1st century Palestine. On the contrary, he was its product and for a short time its personification.

The notion that Jesus opposed violence is a pretty transparent, later Christian invention, designed to placate the Roman authorities and overcome their fear that the followers of the dead man-god were dangerous subversives. The real Jesus would never have said “Resist not evil”. The idea is a monstrosity, fit only for the despairing appeasers. Jewish scripture is packed with countless examples of prophets fighting what they saw as evil - not least foreign oppressors. The real Jesus preached the ‘good news’ within the popular Jewish tradition against evil. He appears determined to save every ‘lost sheep of Israel’, including, perhaps, social outcasts and transgressors, such as the hated tax-collectors, for the coming apocalypse. Salvation depended on a total life change.

After the execution of John the Baptist Jesus reveals himself to be not simply a prophetic ‘preparer of the way’, but the messiah. “Whom say you that I am?” he asks his disciples. “You are the Christ,” answers Peter.<sup>10</sup> This was an extraordinary claim, but one fully within the Jewish thought-world. He was not and would not have been thought of as mad. In biblical tradition there had been prophets and even prophet-rulers (Moses and Samuel). Jesus was claiming to be the messiah-king: ie, the final king. In Jesus the spiritual and secular would be joined. A bold idea, which must have “aroused tremendous enthusiasm in his followers, and great hope in the country generally”.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps this explains why, after he was agonisingly killed on a Roman cross, the Jesus party refused to believe he had really died. His claimed status put him in terms of myth at least on a par with Elijah: he would return at the appointed hour to lead Yahweh’s chosen people to victory.

*New Testament* (re)writers are at pains to play down or deny Jesus’ assumed royal titles. Claiming to be ‘king of the Jews’ was to openly rebel against Rome. Instead they concentrate on terms like ‘messiah’ or ‘christ’, which they portray as being other-worldly. The Jews, and the disciples, are shown as not understanding such concepts, though they repeatedly occur in their sacred writings and had surely thoroughly internalised them. Nevertheless, the truth occasionally flashes through the fog of falsification and that allows us to make sense of Jesus’ short revolutionary career.

## March on Jerusalem

The biblical account of the so-called transfiguration on Mount Hermon described in Mark involved no mere change in the “appearance” of Jesus’ “face” and “clothes”.<sup>12</sup> No, it was the crowning (or anointing) of king Jesus by his closest disciples, Peter, James and John. Having trekked to the far north and into Syria-Phoenicia, one disciple seems to have crowned him, while the other two acted as the prophets, Moses and Elijah.<sup>13</sup> Like the biblical Saul, David and Solomon, the new king was through the ceremony “turned into another man”.<sup>14</sup>

And, having been crowned, the prophet-king began a carefully planned royal progress towards his capital city, Jerusalem. The idea would have been to preach at each stop and build up a mass movement - a movement which we would expect to have been overwhelmingly made up of peasants longing for deliverance from oppression, exploitation and poverty. Jesus and his party promise, of course, not only to speak on behalf of the poor: they promise to practically bring about

their salvation by cancelling debts, redistributing land and restoring the ancient covenant with Yahweh. A conservative-revolutionary message that clearly resonated.

Hence to understand the popularity of Jesus and his party we have to recognise the leader-follower dialectic - a determining relationship that cannot be ignored or skirted around, as is the case with standard Christian theology, which pictures Jesus as a strange man-god, urging people to pay their taxes and love their Roman and Herodian enemies. The real Jesus party would have done the exact opposite. Without that they would never have got a hearing, let alone a mass following - which in turn made them into an instrument of mass revolt.

From Mount Hermon the royal procession makes its way south, into Galilee, then over to the east bank of the Jordan and Peraea, before reaching Jericho. King Jesus is greeted by enthusiastic crowds and has already built up a sizeable entourage (which must have taken considerable organisation and substantial donations from rich sympathisers to maintain - five loaves and two fishes would not have been anywhere near enough). Jesus, note, not only preaches that the poor are to inherit the world: the rich must sell all they have - that or they will be damned to the fires of hell: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of god.”<sup>15</sup>

All the while Jesus has 12 close disciples acting for him - their number symbolising the traditional so-called 12 tribes of Israel. A kind of political committee/royal court. He also sends out before him 70 more into “every city and place” - 70 being a significant number in Jewish culture - the law-making council, the sanhedrin, had 70 members; Israel’s original top god, El, had 70 children, etc. Jesus performs many - prearranged? - miracles. The blind are given sight, cripples walk, etc (cities and towns were teeming with professional beggars, no doubt including the professionally crippled and blind). The suggestion that Jesus urged people to keep quiet about these nature-defying wonders is truly hard to swallow.

Finally, he triumphantly enters a swollen Jerusalem - either during the spring Passover or possibly in the autumn festival of the tabernacles. Pilgrims could double the normal population. Then there was the additional influx provided by the Jesus movement itself.

Symbolism is vital for all such apocalyptic revolutionaries. Jesus rides in upon an ass’s foal (thus fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah ix, 9). There is no doubt what the masses think - pilgrims from the peasant countryside and native Jerusalem proletarians. They greet Jesus with unrestrained joy and proclaim him ‘son of David’ and ‘king of Israel’ - as argued, both revolutionary/royal titles. Palm branches are strewn before him and, showing their defiance of Rome, the crowd cries out, ‘Hosanna’ (save us).

With the help of the masses Jesus and his lightly armed followers force their way into the temple complex that crowns the city heights. Zealot and other fourth party militants perhaps play a role. Suffice to say, the religious police of the high priest are easily dispersed. Jesus angrily drives the venal sadducee priesthood out from the complex. They “have made it a den of robbers”.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, the other priests carry on with their duties.

The Romans and their agents would have viewed these events as a nuisance rather than anything much else. Little rebellions at festival times were not uncommon. Nevertheless, in possession of the temple complex, Jesus and his followers were protected by the “multitude” from the poor quarter of the city. The priesthood is said to have been “afraid of the people”.<sup>17</sup> It debated theology with Jesus, but could do no more.

Jesus fervently expected a miracle. There would be a tremendous battle: on the one side, the Romans and their quislings; on the other, his disciples alongside “12 legions of angels”.<sup>18</sup> Jesus, his disciples and his angels will assuredly win. The defiled temple will then be destroyed and rebuilt in “three days”.<sup>19</sup> Simultaneously, the dead rise and Yahweh, with Jesus sitting at his right hand, judge all the nations.

Jesus waited seven days for the apocalyptic arrival of god’s kingdom. It was expected to come on the eighth. At the last supper he expectantly says: “I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine [juice, not alcohol] until that day I drink it in the new kingdom of god.” Having taken himself to the garden of Gethsemane - just outside the temple complex and the city walls - Jesus prayed his heart out. But “the hour” did not arrive. A cohort of Roman soldiers (300-600

men) and the religious police did. Perhaps they were guided by the supposed turncoat Judas, perhaps not (Karl Kautsky, in his marvellous *Foundations of Christianity* [1908], says that the idea of anyone in the sadducee party of the high priests not knowing what Jesus looked like is just too improbable.<sup>20</sup> In other words, the whole story of Judas and his ‘30 pieces of silver’ treachery is fake).

## Trial and execution

Jesus was easily captured. (In Mark a naked, running, youth narrowly escapes - frankly, I do not have a clue what this aspect of the story is about. Were Jesus and his closest lieutenants about to carry out a miracle-bringing human sacrifice?<sup>21</sup>) It is a grossly unequal contest. His disciples only had “two swords”. “It is enough,” Jesus had assured them.<sup>22</sup> There was a brief skirmish, according to the biblical account. Supposedly Jesus then says, “No more of this”, and rebukes the disciple, Simon Peter, who injured Malchus, a “slave of the high priest”. His right ear had been lopped off. Miraculously, Jesus heals him. Jesus is thereby presented as being opposed to bloodshed: “for all who take the sword will perish by the sword”.<sup>23</sup> Obviously a fabricated interpolation. We have already seen Jesus promising cataclysmic violence and arming his followers, albeit with only two swords (the angels though would have been fully equipped for the final battle).

Interrogated by the high priest, Jesus was quickly handed over to the Roman governor, Pilate, as a political prisoner. Without fuss or bother Jesus was found guilty of sedition - he was forbidding the payment of Caesar’s taxes and had proclaimed himself king of the Jews.

Jesus - the real Jesus, that is - had no thought or intent of delivering himself up as a sacrificial lamb. He had expected an awesome miracle and glory, not capture and total failure. The gospels report his dejection and refusal to “answer, not even to a single charge”.<sup>24</sup>

Pilate was doubtless confronted by Jerusalem’s revolutionary crowd. It would have been demanding Jesus’ freedom, not crying, “Away with him, crucify him”.<sup>25</sup> There was certainly no custom in occupied Palestine whereby the population could gain the release of any condemned prisoner “whom they wanted”.<sup>26</sup> Pilate did not seek to “release him”. The notion of Pilate’s “innocence” is as absurd as the blood guilt of the Jews. Obviously yet another later, pro-Roman, insert.

After whipping, beating and spitting upon him, Pilate had Jesus thrown into prison. Then, perhaps straightaway, perhaps after a number of months, he had him sent to an agonising death. Jesus was paraded through the streets, guarded by a “whole battalion”. Pilate’s plan was to humiliate the king of the Jews and demonstrate his powerlessness.

Jesus is stripped and a (royal) scarlet robe is draped over his shoulders. To complete the picture, a “crown of thorns” is mockingly planted on his head and a “reed” placed in his right hand.<sup>27</sup> He is crucified along with two other rebels and derided by the Romans and their collaborating allies. Over his head, on Pilate’s orders, they “put the charge against him” - “This is the king of the Jews”.<sup>28</sup>

John has the chief priests objecting. That has the ring of truth. They wanted Pilate to write, “This man said he was king of the Jews”. Pilate has none of it. John puts these blunt words in his mouth: “What I have written I have written”.<sup>29</sup> The last words of Jesus are heart-rending: ‘*Eli, eli, lama sabachthani?*’ (My god, my god, why hast thou forsaken me?)<sup>30</sup> Yahweh had not acted. There were no angels, no last battle. Jesus was a brave revolutionary, who wrongly staked all on divine intervention.

There are supposedly miraculous happenings at his moment of death. Saints rise from their graves and walk about. There are earthquakes. The curtain in the temple is torn in two. Even more preposterous, the *Bible* has it that it is the Roman centurion and guard who are first to declare that the man they have just killed is “Truly son of god”.<sup>31</sup> Actually for them it was just like any other day’s work. The execution of rebel ringleaders was a common occurrence for the Roman garrison.

The Roman execution of Jesus surely came as a stunning shock. His followers must have been mortified. Nevertheless the Jesus party survives the death of its founder-leader. Indeed it grows rapidly. The Acts report a big increase from 120 cadre to several thousand in the immediate aftermath of his crucifixion. These core recruits were, of course, fellow Jews - including perhaps

not a few essenes, baptists and guerrilla fighters. People undoubtedly inspired by Jesus’ attempted apocalyptic coup and the subsequent story that his body had disappeared and had, like Elijah, risen to heaven (the Romans blamed his disciples, saying they had secretly removed the corpse from its tomb - a slightly more likely scenario). All fervently expected imminent deliverance through the return of Jesus: “the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of god is at hand”.<sup>32</sup> That remains official Christian doctrine, though for most the second coming, the *parousia*, is no longer imminent. Incidentally, the Shia tradition of Islam has something similar. It still awaits the return of Abul-Qassem Mohammed, the 12th imam, the mahdi, who ‘disappeared’ in 941.

Anyway, the social atmosphere in 1st century Judea was feverish. People must also have been desperate - after all, they were banking on a dead leader and the armed intervention of Yahweh’s legions of angels. The party, commonly called the nazarenes or nazoreans, was now led by James - the brother of Jesus. This is hardly surprising. The followers of Jesus presented him as king of the Jews. He was, they claimed, genealogically of David’s line. The election of James was therefore perfectly natural in terms of continuity and inheritance. The nazorean tradition being closely followed by some Muslims: Abdullah II of Jordan and Rahim al-Husseini, the Aga Khan, are supposedly able to trace their lineage directly back to the prophet, Mohammed, himself.

## Jesus, James, Paul

Surely it is a sound argument that to know James is to know Jesus. Who would be more like Jesus in terms of beliefs, expectations and practices? His closest living relative, who is chosen by Jesus’ cadres as his successor? Or Paul, who never saw Jesus alive, only in visions? Who defended and continued Jesus’ programme? Was it James and other intimates in Palestine? Or was it Paul, a Roman citizen, who, as Saul or Saulus, admits he was a persecutor of Jesus’ followers? Suffice to say, *all* Christian churches maintain that it was the latter. Paul, with his convenient dreams and reliance on the doctrine of faith, was apparently more in touch with the authentic Jesus - the so-called Christ in heaven - than James and the family of Jesus.

To establish this reversal of common sense, and reality, the gospels go to great lengths to denigrate the family of Jesus, his brothers and disciples. They are constantly belittled, portrayed as stupid and lacking in faith. “I have no family,” says the Jesus of the gospels. The disciples are repeatedly chided for failing to understand that Jesus and his kingdom are “not of this world”. Peter famously denies Jesus three times before the cock crows due to lack of faith. Etc, etc.

Although James is elected head of the Jerusalem community and was also supposedly of the Davidic family line, he is almost entirely absent from the Christian tradition. He has been reduced or cut out altogether, so embarrassing is he. Nor does James appear in the *Koran* - though Muslim dietary laws are based on his directives set out for the overseas communities, as recorded in the Acts.<sup>33</sup> Arabs were being drawn to monotheism long before Mohammed - and the ideological influence of the Jews (and perhaps the nazoreans) is unmistakable in Islam.

The gospels, as they come down to us, have obviously been overwritten to remove or downgrade Jesus’ family, not least his brother and successor. James peers out as a shadowy figure, as if through frosted glass. Sometimes he is disguised as James the Lesser, in other places as James, the brother of John, or James, the son of Zebedee. Such characters make a cursory and insubstantial appearance in the gospels. However, James does suddenly pop up in the 12th book of the Acts as the main source of authority in Jerusalem. Evidently his other *obscure* titles are due to redaction. Paul’s letters openly acknowledge the true relationship between James and Jesus. James is straightforwardly called “the brother of the lord”.

Not surprisingly, church fathers faced acute problems. The more ethereal Jesus is made, the more James sticks out like a sore thumb. Origen (185-254) therefore roundly attacked those of his contemporaries who, on the basis of reading Josephus, unproblematically credited James with being biologically related to Jesus, and fantastically linked the fall of Jerusalem in 70 with the death of James rather than Jesus. In *Contra Celsus* Origen quotes from what we now know are forged passages inserted into in Josephus’s *Jewish antiquities*:

Now this writer, although not believing in Jesus as the Christ, in seeking after the cause



of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, whereas he ought to have said that the conspiracy against Jesus was the cause of these calamities befalling the people, since they put to death Christ, who was a prophet, says nevertheless - being, although against his will, not far from the truth - that these disasters happened to the Jews as a punishment for the death of James the Just, who was a brother of Jesus (called Christ) - the Jews having put him to death, although he was a man most distinguished for his justice. Paul, a genuine disciple of Jesus, says that he regarded this James as a brother of the lord, not so much on account of their relationship by blood, or of their being brought up together, as because of his virtue and doctrine. If, then, he says that it was on account of James that the desolation of Jerusalem was made to overtake the Jews, how should it not be more in accordance with reason to say that it happened on account (of the death) of Jesus Christ, of whose divinity so many churches are witnesses, composed of those who have been convened from a flood of sins, and who have joined themselves to the creator, and who refer all their actions to his good pleasure.<sup>34</sup>

In book two of his *Church history* Eusebius (260-340), bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, cites Josephus in a similar vein:

James was so admirable a man and so celebrated among all for his justice, that the more sensible even of the Jews were of the opinion that this was the cause of the siege of Jerusalem, which happened to them immediately after his martyrdom for no other reason than their daring act against him .... Josephus, at least, has not hesitated to testify this in his writings, where he says, These things happened to the Jews to avenge James the Just, who was a brother of Jesus, that is called the Christ. For the Jews slew him, although he was a most just man.<sup>35</sup>

Obviously we must discount the idea that Josephus authored anything about Jerusalem being destroyed because the Jews bear collective guilt for the death of James (as they are supposed to have done for the killing of Jesus in official church doctrine). That said, while Eusebius unambiguously writes of the election of James, like Origen, he too seeks to divorce Jesus from all earthly biological relations:

Then James, whom the ancients surnamed ‘the Just’ on account of the excellence of his virtue, is recorded to have been the first to be made bishop of the church of Jerusalem. This James was called the brother of the lord because he was known as a son of Joseph. and Joseph was supposed to be the father of Christ, because the virgin, being betrothed to him, was found with child by the holy ghost before they came together, as the account of the holy gospels shows.<sup>36</sup>

Eusebius was prepared to grant that the *New Testament* letter of James, “the first of the so-called Catholic epistles”, might be used for instructional purposes, but questioned its authenticity.<sup>37</sup> For Robert Eisenman, one of the translators of the Dead Sea scrolls, this was in part because “its content and theological approach were so alien to him”.<sup>38</sup> It exudes wonderful class hatred and promises the certainty of retribution: “Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you.”<sup>39</sup>

In the 4th century Jerome finally decides that Jesus and James were cousins. In other sources too the relationship is distanced. Jesus’ brothers, including James, become half-brothers, stepbrothers or milk brothers. A theological construction carried over into the *Koran* by Mohammed and his followers in the 7th century. A divine Jesus has no need for an earthly father, uncles, brothers or sisters. There is also the growing cult of Mary’s perpetual virginity. Joseph could not have had any children with her. Augustine, in the 5th century, firmly establishes this as Catholic doctrine. Jesus thereby becomes what Sir James Frazer called a “dying and reviving god” like Adonis, Attis, Dionysus and Osiris.<sup>40</sup>

That does not mean James cannot be restored to his rightful place. We can unearth James and in so doing his brother, Jesus, also comes into fuller view. Actually the most reliable biblical testimonies concerning James and his role in the nazorean party can be found in Paul’s letters. Given all we know, they seem to be accurate enough - above all because they paint a picture

of conflict between Paul and James.

Paul, repeatedly, disagrees with the rulings on diet, circumcision and observation of Jewish laws and taboos handed down by the Jerusalem council. Paul even denigrates what he calls “leaders”, “pillars”, “archapostles” and those “who consider themselves important” or “write their own references”.<sup>41</sup> In other words, the apostles - chief amongst them James. Paul freely admits those leaders whom he calls Peter and Cephas were willing to defer to the authority of James.<sup>42</sup>

## Other gospels

So the relationship between Jesus and James and the latter’s standing is attested to in the Acts and Paul’s letters. In them and tangential gospel accounts we find that, besides James, there were three other brothers of Jesus - they are called Simon, Jude and Joses. A sister, Salome, is also mentioned in Matthew. Furthermore, where the established canon is evasive or eerily silent about James, the early and non-canonical (gnostic) gospel of Thomas puts these words into the mouth of Jesus. Having been asked, “who will be great over us” after “you have gone?”, ‘Thomas’ has Jesus say this: “In the place where you are to go, go to James the Just, for whose sake heaven and earth came into existence.”<sup>43</sup> The mystical gnostics, it should be noted, credited James with supernatural powers. Of course, it is not that the gospel of Thomas (written in Coptic in something like 90) should be thought of as historically reliable. It is full of mythological invention. What distinguishes its account is simply that in certain key areas it is not inverted by the *same* mythology as the standard versions.

A profusion of other gospels are known to have existed before the *New Testament* was finalised with Constantine, and the incorporation of the church as an arm of the Roman state. Scholars imagine a single source, the so-called Q gospel (Q standing for ‘*Quelle*’ which means ‘source’ in German). It was apparently written in the 50s.<sup>44</sup> Fragments were discovered in the Egyptian desert. But there could conceivably have been many sources. We know that other gospels were written and some still exist in whole or part. Eg, the gospel of Ebonites, the gospel of Philip, the gospel of the Hebrews, the gospel of Mathias, the gospel of Peter, the gospel of Mary, etc.<sup>45</sup> It is said by upright Christians that they lacked historical and literary merit and thereby “excluded” themselves “from the *New Testament*”.<sup>46</sup> Clearly untrue. Such gospels were destroyed, driven underground or marginalised because they contradicted established Christian doctrine ... not least when it came to James. From them and other such literature we certainly learn that James plays a role of “overarching importance”.<sup>47</sup>

There is further evidence about the standing of James to be found in the writings of Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis, (c310/20-403) and the priest and saint Jerome (347-420). Epiphanius suggests that James was appointed directly by Jesus from the heights of heaven. Hence James was the “first whom the lord entrusted his throne upon earth”. Jerome too provides an account of how James was either “ordained” or “elected” as bishop of Jerusalem.<sup>48</sup> By their own admission these authors base themselves on earlier sources - writers whose works have either been destroyed or lost. Eg, Hegesippus (c90-180), a church leader in Palestine, and Clement of Alexandria (c150-215). There is another Clement (c30-97), this time of Rome, whose name was attached to what we now know as the Pseudoclementine (‘pseudo’ as in ‘falsely attributed’).

Works such as the *Recognitions of Clement*, as Eisenman reminds us, are “no more ‘pseudo’” than the gospels, Acts and the other Christian literature we now possess from that period.<sup>49</sup> Eg, none of the now standard four gospels were authored by a single individual - hence we certainly have a Pseudomattthew, a Pseudomark, a Pseudoluke and a Pseudojohn. Revealingly, though the account of the Pseudoclementine material is highly mythologised: it includes letters purportedly from Paul to James and from Clement to James. James is straightforwardly addressed as “bishop of bishops” or “archbishop”. So there is not a shadow of doubt that James served as leader of the Jesus party after the death of his brother and remained in that post till his own execution in 62 (he was succeeded by Cephas, a first cousin).

Strangely, the Acts exhibit a highly significant silence about the election of James - surely a defining moment for the post-Jesus nazorean movement. The first chapter, which deals with the replacement of Judas Iscariot after

his purported treachery and suicide, is a crude mythical invention - Judas is in all probability Jude: ie, one of the brothers of Jesus. That aside, the story of the “eleven” getting together to elect another apostle is in all likelihood a cynical overwrite for the election of James. In the Acts it is rather a non-event, with which to begin the official history of the early church. “Mattias” is chosen, after the casting of “lots”, over “Joseph called Barabas”.<sup>50</sup> The redactors were determined to blacken the name of Jesus’ closest associates or remove them where they could. There is a striking parallel here to the way Stalin’s propagandists demonised or airbrushed out Kamenev and Zinoviev and other members of Lenin’s inner circle after his death.

Whatever the exact truth, an obvious question presents itself. Why was the early church so eager to play down or obliterate the role of James? We have already touched upon the embarrassment concerning the blood relationship between Jesus and James. But there was more to it than that. The answer, already in part alluded to, is threefold.

Firstly, James, the successor of “the lord”, has to be counted amongst those who opposed the Roman oppressors. That in turn would put Jesus in the same camp as the Jewish revolution. The Jesus party, headed by James, took an active role - perhaps a leading one - in preparing the ground for the great anti-Roman uprising of 66.

Secondly, James exhibited neither in thought nor practice the slightest trace or hint of Christianity. He was single-mindedly, not to say fanatically, Jewish. He observed the minutiae of Jewish religious law and demanded that other Jews did the same.

Thirdly, there is abundant evidence that there was a fundamental and acrimonious schism between the community led by James and Paul - who having concocted “weird religious fantasies partially from Judaism and partially from Hellenism”, so as to transform the death of Jesus into a “cosmic sacrifice”, was the *real* “founder of Christianity as a new religion”.<sup>51</sup> Note, besides Hyam Maccoby, “countless” other historians likewise recognise Paul as the *real* founder of Christianity.<sup>52</sup>

None of this would have been to the liking of the early church.

## Nazoreans

The seething discontent that characterised the period from the imposition of Roman direct rule in 6 to the revolution of May 66 worked like a social acid on the old methods of control and produced a crop of courageous messiahs who found themselves a substantial following. Josephus, an upper-class Jew, mentions a handful by name or title - eg, Theudas, a “false” prophet from Egypt - but all the indications are that as a type they were numerous. After the defeat of one, another arose. Some - for example, John the Baptist, who, though he never claimed to be the messiah, led a messianic movement - were relatively peaceful. Though such “religious frauds” did not “murder”, Josephus calls them “evil men”. They were “cheats and deceivers” and “schemed to bring about revolutionary changes”. The Romans typically responded by sending in troops. John was beheaded by order of Herod Antipas. Others fought fire with fire. These “wizards” gained “many adherents”, reports Josephus. They agitated for the masses to “seize” their “liberty” and “threatened with death those that would henceforth continue to be subject and obedient to the Roman authority”. There was an unmistakable class content. The “well-to-do” were killed and their houses “plundered”.<sup>53</sup>

Clearly there existed a blurred line between the rural revolutionary and the criminal rebel. Kautsky draws a parallel between 1st century Palestine and the situation in 1905-08 Russia, when anarchist bands looted the countryside. We in our time have seen similar manifestations occur in Northern Ireland. Mainstream loyalist and fringe republican paramilitaries indulge in drug-running, protectionism and plain theft. Certain individuals enrich themselves and live in plebeian luxury.

Having said that, it is clear that Josephus, just like present-day establishment political, media and business figures, cannot but concede the moral superiority of revolutionaries who give their all fighting for the interests of those below: eg, Rosa Luxemburg, John Maclean, James Connolly, Antonio Gramsci, Che Guevara. Josephus wants to dismiss them as mere bandits. But they are, he grudgingly admits, prepared to suffer torture rather than submit. Josephus himself fatefully chose the slippery road of treachery and moral surrender. Having fought as a military commander in the first phase of the

Jewish revolution, he defected to the Romans and eventually appears to have come to a sticky end in Rome.

From Josephus it is clear that the masses were not united behind a single party leadership. Yet, inhabiting the rarefied atmosphere of the aristocracy, Josephus would have had only the vaguest knowledge of the politics of the extreme left of his day. One should take his description as a rough sketch, on a par with the excruciating caricatures of the left that occasionally come from the more intelligent writers in the mainstream bourgeois media. Instinct alone tells us that mass politics in 1st century Palestine were far more variegated than described by Josephus. In the *Talmud* we find the claim that “Israel did not go into captivity until there had come into existence 24 varieties of sectaries”.<sup>54</sup> A pared down version of the modern 57 varieties quip.

Where do James and the post-Jesus nazoreans fit in here? They were apocalyptic revolutionaries only different from the movement founded by John the Baptist, in that they could confidently name the messiah. It was surely another advantage that their man had safely risen to heaven. He was still alive and could neither be captured nor killed. Jesus would come and deliver his people at the appointed hour (in this respect the nazorean story of king Jesus is akin to the British myth of the sleeping king Arthur).

The potency of this Elijah-like combination is shown in the Acts. Seven weeks after the crucifixion of Jesus the nazorean party was gaining many recruits and was widely acclaimed by a Jewish population that had, according to the gospels, just been clamouring for his death. Here is what Acts says:

And all that believed were together, and had all things in common; and sold their possessions and goods, and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising god and having favour with all the people. And the lord god added to their number day by day those who should be saved.<sup>55</sup>

Acts was composed in the second half of the 1st century and is overtly Pauline. Nevertheless, though an apologia for Paul and unmistakably Christian, Acts not only shows the communistic nazoreans finding “favour with all the people”: as a community the party uses and worships in the Jerusalem temple. Evidently the nazoreans were neither Christian nor Jewish-Christians. They were Jews by birth and Jews by conviction. Hence they diligently kept the laws of Moses and observed the Sabbath. So we should not see the nazoreans as revolutionaries when it came to social values. On the contrary, they were strictly conservative - traditionalists who denounced the transgressions, immorality and clawing greed of the upper classes.

James - their prince regent - in particular was renowned for his saintly devotion. Jerome refers to a story about James, which says that such was his religious fame that people “earnestly sought to touch the hem of his clothing”.<sup>56</sup> Eusebius quotes Hegesippus (c110-c180) and his now lost *Memoirs* (book five). So frequently did James pray that his knees became “hard like those of a camel”. As with the most extreme Jews of his day, he “drank no wine nor strong drink, nor did he eat flesh”. Furthermore James seems to have taken a vow of celibacy in order to preserve his ‘righteousness’ (*zaddik* in Hebrew). “[H]e was holy from his mother’s womb.” So it was James, not Mary, who was the perpetual virgin. Making sure no-one missed his holiness, “he wore not woollen, but linen, garments” and refused to use a “razor on his head”.<sup>57</sup>

Besides such evidence we can also arrive at similar results from passages in the Acts and Paul’s letters to the Galatians and Corinthians, albeit using simple inference. For example, unlike the “pillars” in Jerusalem, Paul tells his followers that they can eat “everything sold in the meat market”.<sup>58</sup> He also instructs Jews to break the taboo outlawing table fellowship with gentiles. The biblical image of Jesus magically transforming water into wine, the man-god who like a heathen equates the bread and wine of the last supper with his body and blood, and who freely associates with prostitutes and Roman centurions, was unmistakably designed to produce apoplexy amongst the nazoreans. A deliberately insulting reversal of their beliefs, laws and attitudes.

It is of the greatest significance that Jerome and Eusebius insist that James wore the mitre of the high priest and actually entered the inner



# SUPPLEMENT

sanctum, or ‘holy of holies’, in the Jerusalem temple. “He alone was permitted to enter into the holy place,” says Eusebius (by tradition no-one apart from the high priest, who enacted the annual Yom Kippur ritual there, was allowed in).<sup>59</sup> So it appears that James functioned as an opposition (righteous or zaddokite) high priest. Whether he stood before the ark in the ‘holy of holies’ just once or on a regular, annual basis is a moot point.

Either way, James could only have crossed the threshold of the inner sanctum, to pray for the people on Yom Kippur, if he had the active support of the masses. In other words, against the morality, ritual and the feeble statelet wielded by the high priesthood there stood another power - the morality, ritual and mobilised masses of the fourth philosophy. Put yet another way, Jerusalem was gripped by dual power. Josephus candidly admits that there was “mutual enmity and class warfare” between the high priests, on the one hand, and the “priests and leaders of the masses in Jerusalem, on the other”.<sup>60</sup>

With all this in mind it is hardly surprising that the nazoreans were still overwhelmingly lower class. One of their party names - along with the Qumran community - was ‘the poor’. This social composition continued after the first beginnings and is referred to by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians:

[N]ot many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were noble of birth; but god chose what is foolish in the world to shame the strong, god chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of god.<sup>61</sup>

The plebeian character of the nazorean mass base perhaps explains why we possess so little direct evidence of exact organisation and ideology. The leaders were surely persuasive, eloquent and educated. But their party culture was oral, not written. Alan Millard is surely right, however, when he argues that first-hand written reports, even if they were just rough notes, about Jesus “could have been made during his lifetime”.<sup>62</sup> Nonetheless, while such material *could* have made its way into the gospels, we have no hard evidence as to whether or not that happened. Either way, the rank and file were overwhelmingly illiterate. The teachings and sayings of Jesus were therefore transmitted orally and that afforded considerable room for exaggeration and downright fabrication.

However, being seared into the minds of even the most unsophisticated amongst the congregation, the most famous phrases and stories could not be easily expunged by later redactors. Eg, Acts tells of a well-off married couple, Ananias and Sapphira, who, having joined the nazoreans, “kept back some of the proceeds” from the sale of their property.<sup>63</sup> They both instantly fall down dead when reproached by the apostles. In Luke we read that a man “clothed in purple and fine linen” goes to Hades and “torment” and the “flames” simply because he is rich. The poor man, Lazarus, in contrast finds comfort in “Abraham’s bosom”.<sup>64</sup> The letter of James, written in the 1st century, is, as we have seen, full of loathing for the rich, once again simply because they are rich. The poor have been “chosen by god” to be “heirs of the kingdom which he has promised”. The rich “oppress you”, “drag you to court” and “blaspheme”, says James.<sup>65</sup> The poor are urged to await the “coming of the lord” and class revenge.

Almost immediately after the execution of Jesus, his party finds a remarkable response to their message in the poor quarters of Jerusalem. Their headquarters were situated in a district called Ophel in the cramped lower city. The atmosphere must have been close to collective madness. There is ecstatic talk of miracles and cures; of the coming messiah and ending Roman rule. In modern terminology, the masses refuse to be ruled in the old way. Recruits came in their thousands and the better off brought all their possessions with them. The nazorean leaders address huge crowds from the steps of the temple - only the temple enclosure has space enough to accommodate those who want to hear them. Any fear that might have demoralised them or held them back after Jesus was executed, vanishes. The masses breathe courage into the cadre. Psychologically they become inspired. The ‘spirit’ is upon them.

The sadducees respond by having the religious police arrest those whom the Acts call Peter and John. They were preaching resurrection - Jesus being their proof. But the actual interrogation that

followed the next day concerns the healing of a cripple. He is hauled in as a witness. The apostles refuse to be intimidated and boldly proclaim the name of their messiah. No religious or state crime has been committed, or so they reportedly maintain. The high priest made threats, but he decides to release them “because of the people”.<sup>66</sup> The nazoreans had scored an important tactical victory and were further emboldened. Some 5,000 more purportedly join their ranks.

Not long after, worried by the ever increasing numbers attracted to the nazorean meetings in the temple enclosure, the high priest and sadducees have all the apostles arrested and confined to a “common prison” - presumably the temple dungeon.<sup>67</sup> However, when the religious police go to fetch them for interrogation, they are horrified to discover them gone, vanished, flown. Presumably sympathisers, not an angel, had sprung them. Far from keeping heads down, the apostles are once again found “standing in the temple and teaching the people”.<sup>68</sup> Without violence, “for they are afraid of being stoned by the people”, the guards bring them before the sanhedrin (the 70-strong supreme religious council). They are ordered to stop their preaching. Speaking on behalf of them all, Peter refuses. A pharisee named Gamaliel eloquently urges caution. So, after roughing them up and warning them not to “speak in the name of Jesus”, they “let them go”.<sup>69</sup> Again to no effect. Every day nazoreans continue their meetings at private homes and in the temple enclosure.

It is in this context that the Acts introduce Stephen (a Greek name). The sadducees have him seized and falsely accused of blasphemy. Stephen defends himself bravely, but, deaf to his pleas, they have him stoned to death.

There is, we know, an interregnum in terms of the Roman power structure in 36-37 with the departure of Pilate and the preparation for war against the Arabs. Under such conditions Jonathan, the high priest, exercises greater autonomy. The Acts report that Saul (Paul) takes a lead not only in the killing of Stephen, but in the “great persecution” against the “church in Jerusalem”, initiated by Jonathan, that followed. Robert Eisenman disputes the veracity of the Stephen story. He argues at length, and persuasively, that the martyrdom of Stephen is an overwrite for an attempt on the life of James.

Eisenman reckons that James was attacked by Paul and a gang of hired thugs, who participated in Jonathan’s pogrom against the nazoreans and *other* oppositionists. We find confirmation of this thesis in the Pseudoclementine. A grand debate in the temple enclosure between the sadducean hierarchy, the pharisees, the baptists, the Samaritans and the nazoreans headed by James is reported in tit-for-tat detail. Of course, the nazoreans are presented as winning the argument hands down. So, on the second day of the debate, presumably at a prearranged moment, Saul (Paul) and his men stage a riot. Book one of *Recognitions* contains the following account:

[H]e began to drive all into confusion with shouting, and to undo what had been arranged with much labour, and at the same time to reproach the priests, and to enrage them with revilings and abuse, and, like a madman, to excite everyone to murder, saying, “What do ye? Why do ye hesitate? Oh sluggish and inert, why do we not lay hands upon them, and pull all these fellows to pieces?” When he had said this, he first, seizing a strong brand from the altar, set the example of smiting. Then others also, seeing him, were carried away with like readiness. Then ensued a tumult on either side, of the beating and the beaten. Much blood is shed; there is a confused flight, in the midst of which that enemy attacked James, and threw him headlong from the top of the steps; and supposing him to be dead, he [Saul-Paul] cared not to inflict further violence upon him.<sup>70</sup>

Though with both legs broken, James survives. He retreats to Jericho, along with 5,000 followers. The standard narrative then proceeds with Saul (Paul) in chase - with the blessing of Jonathan the high priest - and then having his vision of Jesus and losing his sight for three days. He then turns nazorean and later adopts the Latinised form of his name.

## First Christians

Paul proves himself brilliant when it came to winning non-Jews to convert to a sympathising level of Judaism. Full conversion involved circumcision and observance of all of the laws and taboos. ‘God-fearers’ or ‘proselytes of the gate’ were a kind of partial or half-way

conversion. They were not required to undergo circumcision nor change their nationality. God-fearers only had to accept the seven laws of the sons of Noah and revere the Jews as a ‘nation of priests’.

## First Christians

It is his converts who are first called Christians. Possibly James encouraged Paul to take up missionary work abroad, when he presented himself to the Jerusalem council three years after his road-to-Damascus ‘experience’. Paul says he tried to see the apostles, but only met “James the brother of the lord”.<sup>71</sup> He travelled to Cyprus, Galatia, Syria, Macedonia and Greece and persuaded many of the uncircumcised to accept Jesus as redeemer. Yet so determined was Paul to maintain the growth of his overseas communities that he embarks on a process of whittling away the specifically Jewish elements of the faith.

As numbers ballooned a Christian bureaucracy emerged from amongst the elite of self-sacrificing enthusiasts. The most talented propagandists became full timers. Deacons were chosen to oversee common meals, look after places of worship and manage the finances needed to support the professional preachers, the widows and orphans, the prisoners and the visiting strangers. Soon came the appointment of bishops in Damascus, Antioch, Athens, Carthage, Alexandria and Rome. Though not the representative of this bureaucracy, Paul paved the way in terms of theology. At first his programme would have been no more than implicit, a tendency. Laws and taboos should be moderated, not discarded. However, soon his teachings start to explicitly diverge from nazoreanism and Judaism itself.

Paul’s mature views are to be found in his letters or epistles. Written some time in the 50s and 60s, they are in the most part considered “the genuine work of Paul”.<sup>72</sup> This Pauline material forms the earliest texts contained in the *New Testament*. In them we find Paul expounding upon the divine nature of Jesus. The death of Jesus is recounted in terms of the death and rebirth of a man-god.

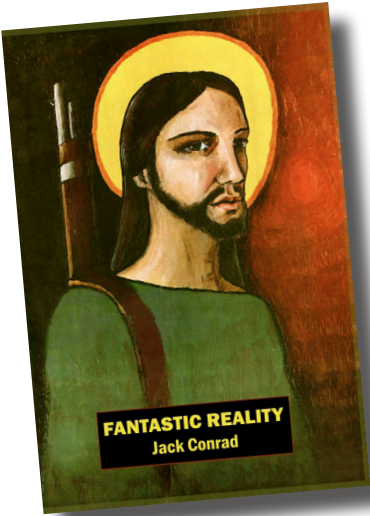
By the 2nd century we have direct evidence of Christians celebrating Pascha (Easter) with Jesus being presented as the Passover lamb who willingly sacrifices himself in order to redeem humanity. In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul had already said: “Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our paschai lamb, has been sacrificed.”<sup>73</sup>

Paul effectively dismisses Jewish laws as outdated and believes that the distinction between Jew and gentile ought to be abolished. He openly courts the Romans and the powers-that-be. Christian doctrine is still underdeveloped. There is no trinity, no virgin birth. But what we know as the gospels of today owe their Hellenistic mysticism and pro-Romanism to Paul. With his innovations acting as mediation, the whole Jesus story is gradually retold and turned into something entirely at odds with the nazorean tradition. The only nazorean document in the *New Testament* that survives the Pauline revision more, rather than less, intact, is the letter of James. Presumably due to its fame ●

## Notes

- Matthew i,17.
- R Eisenman and M Wise *The Dead Sea scrolls uncovered* Longmead 1992, p65.
- Josephus writes of a “fourth philosophic sect” that gained “a great many followers” in 1st century Palestine (F Josephus *Jewish antiquities* Ware 2006, p774). The other three parties were the sadducees (high priest conciliators of Roman imperialism), pharisees (accommodating religious intelligentsia) and the essenes (camp-dwelling apocalyptic communistic revolutionaries).
- Luke vi,20-25.
- H Schonfield *The passover plot* London 1977, p24.
- See SGF Brandon *Jesus and the zealots* Manchester 1967.
- H Maccoby *Revolution in Judea* London 1973, pp157-58.
- Matthew x,34.
- Judges vii,2.
- Mark viii,29. ‘Christ’, Greek for ‘anointed one’ (ie, messiah).
- H Maccoby *Revolution in Judea* London 1973, p163.
- thebiblejourney.org/biblejourney/1/5-jesus-journeys-beyond-galilee/jesus-is-changed-on-the-slopes-of-mount-hermon.
- Mark ix,4.
- I Samuel x,6.
- Mark x,25.
- Mark xi,17.
- Mark xi,32.
- Matthew xxvi,53.
- Matthew xxvi,62.
- K Kautsky *Foundations of Christianity* New York NY 1972, p367.
- Morton Smith, a Columbia university academic, claimed in 1958 to have discovered a longer version of

- Mark, found in a letter allegedly written by Clement of Alexandria. The running youth is there, of course. In Smith’s account, however, Jesus, a magician and miracle-worker, had, as was his practice, just baptised him during a secret nocturnal ceremony. A mystical experience that allowed them both to ascend to heaven and brought about spiritual and physical union of the two of them. In other words, Jesus had sex with those whom he baptised. Understandably, Smith attracted a lot of attention and it turns out that his long version of Mark somehow disappeared in 1990, leading to all manner of - largely well founded - speculation about its authenticity and, not surprisingly, accusations of forgery and Smith perpetrating a hoax (see M Smith *Clement of Alexandria and the secret gospel of Mark* Cambridge MA, 1973).
- Luke xxii,38.
  - Matthew xxvi,52.
  - Matthew xxvii,14.
  - John xv,19.
  - Matthew xxvii,15.
  - Matthew xxvii,28.
  - Matthew xxvii,37.
  - John ix,21,22.
  - Mathew xxvii,46.
  - Matthew xxvii,54.
  - Mark i,14-15.
  - Acts xv,20-29.
  - www.newadvent.org/fathers/04161.htm.
  - www.newadvent.org/fathers/250102.htm.
  - Ibid*.
  - Ibid*.
  - R Eisenman *James the brother of Jesus* London 1997, p3.
  - James v,1.
  - J Frazer *The golden rough: a study in magic and religion* Ware 1993, p386.
  - Galatians ii,9 and I Corinthians iii,1-9; v,12; viii,1; x,12; etc.
  - Galatians ii,10-12.
  - Thomas xii.
  - See BL Mack *The lost gospel* Shaftsbury 1993.
  - See NR James *The apocryphal New Testament* Oxford 1969.
  - Ibid* ppxi-xii.
  - R Eisenman *James the brother of Jesus*, London 1997, p75.
  - Quoted in *ibid* p200
  - Ibid* p71.
  - Acts i,23-26.
  - H Maccoby *The mythmaker: Paul and the invention of Christianity* New York NY 1986, p204.
  - James D Tabour writes that “countless books have been written in the past hundred years arguing that Paul is the ‘founder’ of Christianity”. Besides his own *Paul and Jesus* (2012), he cites Joseph Klausner’s, *From Jesus to Paul* (1942), as still being worth a look. But there are many others besides: eg, Albert Schweitzer’s *The mysticism of the Paul the Apostle* (1931), Gerd Lüdemann’s *Paul the founder of Christianity* (2001), Hugh Schonfield’s *Those incredible Christians* (1969) and Barrie Wilson’s *How Jesus became Christian* (2008).
  - R Eisenman *James the brother of Jesus*, London 1997, p75.
  - Quoted in H Schonfield *The Pentecost revolution* Shaftsbury 1985, p259.
  - Acts ii,44-47.
  - Quoted in R Eisenman *James the brother of Jesus* London 1997, p239.
  - www.newadvent.org/fathers/250102.htm.
  - I Corinthians x,25.
  - www.newadvent.org/fathers/250102.htm.
  - Quoted in R Eisenman *James the brother of Jesus* London 1997, p318.
  - I Corinthians i,26-30.
  - AR Millard *Reading and writing at the time of Jesus* Sheffield 2001, p12.
  - Acts v,2.
  - Luke xvi,19.
  - James ii,5-7.
  - Acts iv,21.
  - Acts v,18.
  - Acts v,25.
  - Acts v,40.
  - web.archive.org/web/20150416140128/www.compassionatespirit.com/Recognitions/Book-1.htm.
  - Galatians i,19.
  - H Maccoby *Revolution in Judea* London 1973, p235.
  - I Corinthians v, 7-8.



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