

weekly worker



Corbyn's party: everything is happening in secret. But secrets have a habit of being told

- Letters and debate
- Middle classes
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- Turkey and Iran

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Towards a mass Communist Party

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Keep on marching...
but more is needed,
much more



LETTERS



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

Broad frontism

Last weekend I had the opportunity of attending RS21's annual event, 'Festival of the Oppressed'; as one of the better extant organisations within the British left, and one thankfully featuring a higher proportion of younger supporters, I don't think it should be too controversial to say that the general level of political consciousness and strategic understanding present within members of RS21 is in line with the general level of political consciousness and strategic understanding present within prominent segments of the wider British left.

On the positive side, I do believe that the efforts of the Marxist Unity Caucus and people with 'partyist' inclinations within RS21 to spread their political viewpoints and polemicise with members, new or otherwise, represents a positive streak, and that their future growth, or even outgrowth, within and near RS21 would indicate a favourable outlook for comrades who believe that these ideas can be popular and can convince people who otherwise hold misguided beliefs.

Negatively, however, RS21 itself is still an organisation superfluously heterogeneous both in its purported politics and internal organisation of members and actions. Eg, from the talks I went to, it was abjectly clear that, while a general theme was aimed at by the organisers, the talks themselves were often confused, relatively aimless and not clear in direction. Of course, my criticism of one event can be viewed as obstinate, but it points to a wider problem of RS21 - while it is not bureaucratic, in that it does not lend itself to the 'cult' bureaucracy of other left sects, it is bureaucratic akin to the broad frontism of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, People Before Profit, etc, and that the eventual fulfilment of mass communist politics requires eventually abandoning all that as an organisational formula.

Baris Graham
email

Embargo

Harlow Labour MP Chris Vince remains silent on the massacres taking place in the Gaza Strip, and now the government he supports is attempting to silence people protesting against those massacres.

It has been announced that the government will proscribe Palestine Action - a direct-action group that sprayed red paint on two Royal Air Force aircraft in protest at British military assistance to the Israel Defence Forces. The proposed ban would mean that people could be imprisoned simply for expressing approval of an organisation that protests against the genocide in the Gaza Strip, while Raytheon UK (based in Harlow) and other British companies profit from supplying the state of Israel with the means to commit that genocide. Perhaps some people would not feel the need to spray paint on warplanes if MPs such as Chris Vince did not refuse to answer letters from their constituents about the horrors taking place in the Gaza Strip.

Direct action is laudable, and plays an important role, but industrial action could make a decisive difference. Workers in Britain and around the world should follow the example of the dockers

in Marseilles and in Genoa, who recently refused to handle a ship with military supplies for Israel. We should be working in our unions to pass motions calling on workers to impose a total economic embargo on the state of Israel. There should be no tourism, trade or business links with it until the blockade of the Gaza Strip is lifted and the ceasefire re-established.

John Wake
Harlow

Ditch Labour

I am writing to you as a volunteer who has dedicated my own time to raise urgent concerns regarding the current trajectory of the Labour Party under Keir Starmer. I am reaching out to multiple socialist organisations across the UK and internationally to share these reflections and to urge unity and collaboration in confronting the dangerous direction our movement faces.

Recently Starmer issued a statement endorsing the US strike on Iran. This endorsement of aggressive military action signals a disturbing alignment of the UK government with US imperialism, escalating tensions in the Middle East and directly threatening the safety of people in the UK, Europe and beyond. The UK's siding with America drags us closer towards a war that is not ours to fight, endangering working class communities and undermining international peace.

While much public attention has focused on Labour's domestic policy shifts, international socialist organisations such as the Party of European Socialists, the Progressive Alliance and the Socialist International have issued clear statements advocating peace and justice in Palestine and the wider Middle East. Yet under Starmer's leadership, the Labour government maintains close ties with intelligence-sharing and military cooperation with Israel, contradicting these international commitments. Palestine Action's powerful statement, posted as a quote tweet directly to Keir Starmer on Twitter, reads: "It is *your* responsibility to not be a war criminal. It is *your* responsibility to not play an active military role in genocide. Now, it is our responsibility to do everything in our power to stop what *you* have allowed."

This captures the urgent need for accountability, while Palestine Action's courageous direct actions targeting companies complicit in Israeli military production and disrupting military operations linked to Gaza demonstrate the seriousness of resisting Labour's complicity in imperialist wars.

In light of these issues, I believe we must put sustained pressure on international socialist organisations such as the Party of European Socialists, the Progressive Alliance and the Socialist International to take a firmer stance by cutting ties, defunding any entities complicit in these injustices and ultimately banning the Labour Party from affiliation and observer status within these bodies due to its current direction. This also extends to Labour Party-affiliated trade unions, which must sever connections and withdraw financial support. Furthermore, there is a pressing need to encourage Labour MPs, councillors and mayors to resign *en masse* from their Labour whip and party membership in protest against the party's betrayal of socialist principles and its complicity in military cooperation with Israel.

I am also appalled by other issues, including the ongoing disability benefit reforms, which further

highlight the party's departure from its foundational values of justice and equality. Many disabled people are deeply worried about these changes, as the proposed cuts to personal independence payments and universal credit health elements threaten to push vulnerable individuals into greater hardship. Despite some Labour MPs opposing these cuts, the government's plans continue to cause significant anxiety within the disabled community.

Additionally, we must promote a boycott of US products, goods and companies operating here in the UK. By refusing to purchase from these corporations, we can reduce the flow of funds that indirectly reach the US treasury and finance ongoing wars in the Middle East, including those supporting Israel's military actions.

Since the Iraq war in the 2000s, we have witnessed a profound shift in the Labour Party's politics. With the return of a Labour government under Starmer - who represents a 'red Tory' approach rather than the socialist vision championed by Jeremy Corbyn - we face the urgent need for socialist organisations to unite and collaborate in opposing this betrayal. Only through collective pressure and solidarity can we challenge Labour's international affiliations and domestic policies that betray working class interests.

This is a critical moment for socialist organisations to reaffirm our commitment to peace, justice and international solidarity. The Labour Party's current trajectory betrays these principles and risks enabling imperialist wars that devastate working class people globally.

John Price
email

Fantasy lunch

Who wrote the heading for Eddie Ford's article on the change in Communist Party of Britain's position towards the Labour Party ('Game, set and match', June 19)? It appears to be out of sync with the full body of the article, which seemed to me to be conducting a change in the *Weekly Worker*/CPGB position to a more ameliorative, diplomatic engagement with the CPB.

Has there in fact been a behind-the-scenes, under-the-counter alteration of how *WW*/CPGB views the CPB and what does this indicate about the everlasting, dismal situation for the socialist movement in Britain? It does show a double standard at work. Why not come out in the open and tell us if you're returning to your first love - the real CPGB and its dutiful son, the CPB.

I suspect the work of secret ambassador Andrew Northall is at play here. Be careful you don't become the lunch on the table. With Robert Griffiths mooted to be retiring as general secretary, there is a palpable sense of change in the air - a new young guard in the offing. Diplomacy does have its attractions and benefits.

Elijah Traven
Hull

SPGB reforms

On their website, Talking About Socialism quote Jack Conrad as saying, regarding a programme TAS is drawing up: "My fear is that what they'll produce is something at least along the lines of the Socialist Party of Great Britain. This is a maximalist programme that rejects all notions of reform, all notions of transition between capitalism with capitalist state power and communism."

It is not clear what "rejects all notions of reform" means. If it means that the SPGB is opposed to reforms, it is wrong. The SPGB position

is that a socialist party should not itself advocate reforms (as measures to be taken by the state) - this on the grounds that having a reform programme will attract non-socialist support that will eventually lead to the party giving priority to trying to get these rather than socialism. The SPGB does not regard better wages and working conditions obtained from employers by workers' action as 'reforms'; this is part of the class struggle in which SPGB members, as workers themselves, participate and urge others to.

The SPGB is not against reforms that do improve things, even if only temporarily, for workers. In fact the SPGB is even prepared to countenance a minority of socialist MPs voting for some if it is considered that they would benefit the working class or the socialist movement. It is simply that as a party it doesn't advocate them or seek support on the basis of advocating them. What the SPGB is against is *reformism* as the strategy of pursuing reforms - either as a means of gradually improving working class conditions under capitalism or of supposedly raising working class consciousness (but actually encouraging reformist illusions). A socialist party doesn't need a programme as "immediate demands" to be realised under capitalism.

There is also the point that, faced with a growing socialist movement, the ruling class can be expected to offer all sorts of concessions (reforms) in a bid to try to stop it growing further. So, if it's reforms that you want, a good way to get them would be the build up of a strong socialist movement.

With regard to rejecting "all notions of transition", the SPGB position is that, once there is a majority of workers who are determined to establish socialism (a precondition for its establishment), capitalist ownership of the means of production can be abolished - and socialism (as the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production established, aka communism) - fairly rapidly after that majority has won control of political power and democratised it. There need be no period of working class administration of capitalism.

As for the owners of curry houses and fish and chip shops, once socialism is established, these won't become state property (as Jack Conrad and Mike Macnair assume), but wouldn't be owned by anyone. If those currently running these outlets wanted to continue doing this, they would be doing so as a free public service, not to sell a commodity, and would be entitled to access what they need on the same non-paying basis as everybody else. They wouldn't be part of some class of petty owners surviving into socialist society.

Adam Buick
SPGB

MacIntyre claims

Dr Christopher Kaczor (Letters, June 19) challenges my claim that Alasdair MacIntyre "routinely ridiculed the church's inability to see any political issue as pertinent except the legality of abortion" ('Philosophy in the ordinary world', June 5), and also asks for evidence that MacIntyre supported the legal prohibition of abortion.

To take the second point first, I refer Dr Kaczor to a lecture of MacIntyre's at Notre Dame in 2012, called 'Catholic instead of what?' "To whom do we owe justice?" MacIntyre asks. "Catholics rightly affirm that we owe it to the unborn child, asserting the identity of that

child with the child after birth." I take this to be strong evidence that he approved the prohibitionist agitation of the Catholic church, given that this was a lecture delivered to American Catholics, at least in part on the matter of their political duties.

His comments on the Irish referendum in two other lectures ("Absences in Aquinas, silences in Ireland" and, in passing, "Human dignity: a puzzling and possibly dangerous idea?") carry the strong implication that the Irish chose wrongly. If he did *not* in fact approve that position, then he would here have been guilty of far sneakier equivocations than anything Charles Kingsley ever accused John Henry Newman of. Thus I find these comments to be dispositive.

Kaczor's other objection is on firmer ground. The claim, as written in my article, is far too broad. I should rather have said that MacIntyre was a sharp critic of pursuing anti-abortion policies outside of broader commitments to justice. Indeed, such was his point in the lectures I have already quoted: if we owe the unborn child justice, as he said in 'Catholic instead of what?', "we owe it to the child throughout its life ... What we owe to each child in justice are the resources that will enable this child to become what she or he has it in her or him to become." Elsewhere, he compared anti-abortion campaigns, where they are not connected to such commitments to justice, to a man who, having saved someone from drowning in a dangerous sea, simply leaves them to die on the beach. Such a person would be "morally unintelligible".

I think this critique does fairly apply at least to the US Catholic Church hierarchy, which has repeatedly advised its flock over many electoral cycles that abortion is the "pre-eminent" issue to consider when voting, never mind that every other policy of the Republican Party - the only plausible anti-abortion ticket - is directly counterposed to the justice and human flourishing that MacIntyre was so concerned with. (Many tributes and obituaries have referred to his bafflement at being so popular among American conservatives.) That this undermines the church's action on other contentious issues is spectacularly obvious at the moment, with the Trump administration waging war on the US church for its aid of migrants.

That is what I had in mind, at any rate, but my formulation - in a throwaway line - was sloppy and overbroad, and I am happy to be corrected.

Paul Demarty
Plymouth

Well is dry

Kabul's water crisis: an inflection point for action is a report published in April 2025 by 'Mercy Corps' - a global non-governmental humanitarian aid organisation. The report claims that the Afghanistan capital faces a "multi-faceted water crisis", which poses an "existential threat" to Kabul's population of roughly six million.

The report identifies both historic and contemporary factors arising from Kabul's geographical location, the area's failing infrastructure, some geo-political factors - mainly involving aid and governmental oversight - and, of course, climate change. What the report fails to do is question the very economic and political system which created and exacerbates the crisis and can provide no long-term solutions.

Kabul is situated in an arid valley at the base of the Hindu Kush mountains. Having no major inland body of water nearby, it relies predominantly on groundwater which collects in natural aquifers, supplied by the melted snow and ice from the mountains. These aquifers - with a combined potential volume of more than five billion cubic metres (more than enough to supply the growing population of Kabul) - in turn supply the man-made, predominantly community borewells.

Surface water, such as that stored in reservoirs, and precipitation play a relatively minor role in Kabul's water supply. But Kabul's aquifer levels have dropped by up to 30 metres in the last decade - water extraction exceeds natural recharge by 44 million cubic metres each year. Nearly half of Kabul's borewells - the residents' main source of water - are already dried out, and those which remain are draining the aquifers at nearly double the rate at which they can be naturally replenished. Unicef, the United Nations children's fund, therefore predicts that Kabul's aquifers could completely dry up by as early as 2030.

The consequences are barely imaginable - mass migration, riots, further regional instability, disease, death and *Mad Max* levels of chaos and horror. Already by 2008, 40% of respondents to an *Oxfam* study cited water issues as the cause of tribal and community conflict.

Under decades of US imperialist intervention, Afghanistan's economy and infrastructure were subordinated to external geopolitical interests to the detriment of the domestic population. To a large extent, the USA used the country as a proxy in its continuation of the cold war against the Soviet Union. This meant that development and maintenance of community resources - such as water infrastructure - were neglected.

In addition to growing shortages of water, as much as 80% of Kabul's groundwater is contaminated with sewage, toxins and chemicals, which increase the risk of disease - especially among children and the elderly. This lack of available clean drinking water has forced the closure of schools and healthcare facilities. For those without access to well

water, the price of purchasing water has risen astronomically, placing additional economic pressures on an already struggling population. Some private water companies have begun extracting large amounts of 'public' groundwater from their own private wells and selling it back to Kabul's residents at vastly inflated prices.

Only about 20% of Kabul households are connected to piped running water from centralised sources and even they experience service that is sporadic at best. A majority of residents are therefore massively undersupplied with water, averaging about 20 litres per capita per day, compared to a recommended minimum level of 80 litres.

Access to regular, sufficient and clean water in Kabul is a privilege that follows class boundaries. Access to private boreholes, water tankers or imported water infrastructure comes at an ever-increasing cost, commodifying this basic human need. The working class, urban and suburban poor and modern peasantry - already alienated from the means of production - are increasingly alienated from natural resources like water too.

There have been a number of proposed water infrastructure projects, including the Panjshir River Pipeline and the Shah Toot Dam. Such projects, whilst not replacing the primary importance of natural aquifers, would significantly increase the role that surface water infrastructure plays in Kabul's water supply, as dams and reservoirs can help to manage the flow of water supply, reducing the need for excessive groundwater extraction and alleviating pressure on the city's vital aquifers.

Other, non-water infrastructure has also had a negative impact on the water supply. Kabul's rapid and sprawling urbanisation - specifically the paving of much of the city's surface area - has further decreased the ability of rainfall to naturally find its way to the aquifers - instead washing into gutters and into the Kabul River towards Pakistan.

Kabul's water crisis to some degree reflects Afghanistan's position in the global capitalist system: ie, subject to varying levels of imperialist domination, underdevelopment and economic

dependency. Infrastructure projects such as water management, whether NGO-led or otherwise, often reflect no more than the priorities of foreign actors rather than the needs of the population (although calming crises and countering potential uprisings will increasingly enter into the calculations of imperialist or colonial powers). The report itself highlights several projects, but these have been fragmented, unsustainable and technocratic, with little regard for the democratic participation or control by the population. Such technical fixes are doomed in isolation from a transformation of the political economy - from foreign-imposed neoliberal models to democratic planning.

Capitalism treats nature as an infinite reservoir of raw materials for profit, ignoring its limits - leaving aside the macro-level destruction of the planet through fossil fuel use, etc, on the micro level we see in Kabul the unregulated drilling of private wells, deforestation and unplanned urbanisation, which are all mentioned in the report.

Some of capitalism's 'answers' to the water crisis have included solar-powered pumps for wells to make water collection 'easier'. Far from addressing the fundamental issue, however, this cosmetic solution has actually served to intensify the problem further by encouraging faster, larger and sometimes unnecessary withdrawals of water from depleted aquifers. Looking to address short-term interests, as dictated by capitalism, has seen an overriding of long-term communal interests.

We should, of course, support calls for the socialisation of water resources under democratic planning and control, including investment in infrastructure which serves the population equally. We should not be opposed to aid organisations looking to alleviate some of the effects of climate change (*vis-à-vis* capitalism) 'on the ground' in areas most affected. However, if such goals are not linked to a political strategy and programme to overcome capitalism, then they are doomed to failure and the fatal exploitation of our planet will continue.

Examples like Kabul are just the start.

Carl Collins
email

Buy my book

Many thanks to Vin Wynn for his excellent review of my new book, *The colliers of the United Association of Durham and Northumberland* (c1825), in the last edition of the paper (Letters, June 19). Our launch of the replica banner and book on Saturday June 21 went brilliantly, with powerful and moving speeches, including from Mick Whelan of Aslef, and a hellfire burst of proletarian anger from offshore rig worker Kyle Griffith. The Jarrow and Gateshead East MP, Kate Osborne, spoke in the memory and tradition of 'Red Ellen', the dynamic Labour left MP of 1930s Jarrow March fame.

The book is £6, plus postage (call it £9), available from me at douglassdavid705@gmail.com (or else it's on sale at The Word in South Shields and the People's Bookshop in Durham). Email me your name and address and where you want it posting to. If you want to pay by cheque, I'll let you know which address to send it to - the cheque should be made out to Follonsby Wardley Miners Lodge Banner Community Heritage Association. Or else pay by bank transfer to the Coop Bank (sort code 08-92-99, account 65442360).

David J Douglass
South Shields

ACTION

Women chainmakers festival

Saturday June 28, 11am to 4pm: Family festival, Mary McArthur Gardens, Cradley Heath B64. Celebrate the 1910 women chainmakers' victorious 10-week strike against starvation wages. Entrance free. Organised by TUC Midlands: wolvestuc.org.uk/women-chainmakers-festival.

Barclays funds death

Saturday June 28, 12 noon: Demonstration. Assemble Islington Green, London N1. Barclays continues to finance the fossil fuels industry despite the climate emergency. It provides investment, loans and underwriting to arms companies supplying the Israeli military. Organised by Islington Palestine Solidarity Campaign: palestinecampaign.org/events/islington-barclays-funds-death.

Stop the far right

Saturday June 28, 1pm: Counter-protest, Whitehall (near Downing Street), London SW1. Oppose the far right seizing the 'grooming gangs' issue to stir up Islamophobia and racism. Organised by Stand Up to Racism: x.com/AntiRacismDay/status/1936082236836921651.

Unions East community festival

Sunday June 29, 1pm to 5pm: Free festival, Coronation Gardens (next to Leyton Orient), London E10. Celebrating solidarity in our community and our workplaces with music, debates and stalls. Organised by trade union branches in Hackney, Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest: unions-east.live.

Protest at Wimbledon - drop Barclays!

Monday June 30, 10am: Protest outside the tennis complex (opposite centre court), Church Road, London SW19. Demand the tournament sponsor, Barclays, stops bankrolling Palestinian genocide. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: palestinecampaign.org/events/protest-at-wimbledon-drop-barclays-2.

Stop the disability benefit cuts bill

Monday June 30, 4.30pm: Rally, Parliament Square, London SW1. If this bill passes, 70,000 people will lose disability benefits and hundreds of thousands will face benefit cuts of over £4,500 a year. Organised by Disabled People Against Cuts: www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1141305801364316.

Bolsheviks and programme - did it fail in 1917?

Thursday July 3, 6.30pm: Online discussion in the series, 'Building a Communist Party: past attempts and future prospects'. Speaker: Jack Conrad. Organised by Why Marx?: www.whymarx.com/sessions.

Dan Chatterton: Atheistic communistic scorcher

Thursday July 3, 6.30pm: Talk at Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Dan Chatterton was one of Victorian England's most radical voices - an atheist, republican and fierce critic of church and monarchy. Andrew Whitehead from *History Workshop Journal* explores Chatterton's fiery legacy. Entrance free. Organised in association with Islington Heritage. www.marx-memorial-library.org.uk/event/506.

Marxism 2025

Thursday July 3 to Sunday July 6: SWP annual school and festival of socialist ideas, Protein Studios, Shoreditch, London EC2. Over 100 sessions, including debates, workshops and a culture tent. Tickets: day £22.38 (£11.55), full event £49.46 (£33.22). Organised by Socialist Workers Party: socialistworker.co.uk/marxismfestival.

Preparing to take on Starmer and the bosses

Saturday July 5, 11am to 4.30pm: Conference, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1. Trade unionists and anti-cuts campaigners share experiences and discuss the way forward. Registration £10. Organised by National Shop Stewards Network: www.facebook.com/events/2891800431005086.

Sanctions now: no more F-35s for genocide

Saturday July 5, 1pm: North-west regional protest, BAE systems Samlesbury factory, main entrance, Myerscough Smithy Road, Blackburn BB2. Here they make rear fuselages for F-35 fighter jets. End F-35 production and demand BAE stop profiting from murder. Organised by Blackburn4Palestine: www.instagram.com/blackburn4palestine.

Defend the right to protest

Monday July 7, 9am: Protest outside City of London Magistrates Court, 1 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4. Defend Chris Nineham (StWC) and Ben Jamal (PSC), who are charged with public order offences at the January 18 Palestine protest. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk/events/24527.

Durham Miners Gala

Saturday July 12, 8am to 4pm: Rally and labour movement festival, The Racecourse, Green Lane, Old Elvet, Durham DH1. With over 50 brass bands and more than 100 trade union banners. Organised by Durham Miners Association: www.facebook.com/events/608746718196219.

Free Palestine: BDS at 20

Saturday July 12, 10.15am to 4.30pm: Conference, Central Hall Westminster, Storey's Gate, London SW1. How to escalate the targeted boycott campaigns, win further divestment from councils and universities, and step up the call for sanctions on Israel. Registration £13 (£7). Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: palestinecampaign.org/events/conference-free-palestine-bds-at-20.

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.

Online Communist Forum



Sunday June 29 5pm
‘Daddy’ Trump has Nato kowtowing - political report from CPGB’s Provisional Central Committee and discussion

Use this link to register:
communistparty.co.uk/ocf

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

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

SOLIDARITY

Carnival of the oppressed

Midsummer day's 350,000-strong Palestine demonstration in London was a defiant, disciplined protest against genocide, war and an increasingly repressive British state, writes Ian Spencer

On one of the hottest days of the year, hundreds of thousands came out yet again to protest against the widening war in the Middle East. Some marchers added the flag of Iran to that of Palestine, along with placards in support of Palestine Action. One simply read, "We are all Palestine Action". No-one is under any illusion that the proscription of Palestine Action is anything other than the latest in a long line of measures intended to stifle resistance to the Israel-US-UK axis of genocide in Gaza and ethnic cleansing of the whole of Palestine.

The fact that the US gave the green light to Israel's murderous attack on Iran is indisputable. The cant spouted by secretary of state Marco Rubio that Israel acted unilaterally in attacking Iran is believed by nobody. A scepticism wholly vindicated by what subsequently occurred - the use of US B-2 stealth bombers to drop 30,000 pound 'bunker buster' bombs and destroy Iranian uranium enrichment facilities.

The attack on Iran also provides useful cover for the intensification of attacks on the people of Gaza, where the tempo of murder has increased, as people desperately try to obtain what pitiful aid is allowed into the strip by the so-called Gaza Humanitarian Foundation.

The Orwellian language is lost on no-one. A 'humanitarian' foundation, which provides the bait for an IDF shooting gallery probably wins the prize for macabre irony. However, a close runner-up must be the use of anti-terror legislation against a group that is trying to stop genocide by a government supporting the forces perpetrating it.

The proscription of Palestine Action followed its highly successful - not to mention embarrassing - breach of security at RAF Brize Norton on June 20, where paint was sprayed into the engines, and crowbars were used to damage two Voyager aircraft. "Despite publicly condemning the Israeli government, Britain continues to send military cargo, fly spy planes over Gaza and refuel US/Israeli fighter jets," the group said in a statement, posting a video of the action on X. "Britain isn't just complicit: it's an active participant in the Gaza genocide and war crimes across the Middle East."

Predictably, Keir Starmer described the operation at Brize Norton as "vandalism", while home secretary Yvette Cooper added the wholly unsubstantiated claim that Iran may be funding Palestine Action, which has responded by describing her allegations as "unhinged". If successful in passing through parliament, the proscription of Palestine Action will come into effect on July 4.

Palestine Action is not a charity. It is under no obligation to publish its sources of funding. However, it accepts donations from individuals. It is also known that one of its donors is James 'Fergie' Chambers, an American communist who is heir to Cox Enterprises, a privately held global conglomerate, based in Atlanta, Georgia. Chambers is known to have helped to meet the legal costs of activists arrested after the group's interventions.

Playbook

The politicians' war playbook is looking increasingly complete. Fabricating 'evidence' of a future threat from Iran, with all its echoes of the lies around Iraqi 'weapons



Some want to defend, not Iran, but the theocratic regime

of mass destruction', is now the standard cover for imperialist intervention. As is well known, Benjamin Netanyahu has been saying that Iran's production of a nuclear weapon has been imminent for decades.

Make no mistake about it, the aim of the attack on Iran is not just 'regime change': it is to do what the US has done to Libya and Iraq - reduce it to a fragmented, weakened state, preferably under conditions of civil war. That will suit Israel, the US and the UK very nicely.

For the midsummer demonstrators in London the refusal to believe the lies, the defiance of all attempts to discredit them as 'hate marchers' or 'anti-Semitic' has been magnificent. Whether this is shown by the sheer numbers who come out, month after month, the creativity of the home-made placards, or the fact that the demonstrations are consistently made up of the full range of our diverse society is a reason for optimism, in what can look like increasingly dark days.

The demonstrators are from the very young to the very old. Some are pacifist, while others will support no war but the class war. Many are religious. The top prize for stoicism must go to Neturei Karta, the anti-Zionist Haredi Jewish group who are at every demonstration. Because the demonstrations take place on the Jewish Sabbath, they walk to the demo from their base in Hackney. The frock coats and fur hats of Heredi finery offered little comfort in the heat. But there they were, as ever, resolute in their support for the Palestinian people.

By contrast, the counter-demonstration, was a rag bag of around 120 deranged rightwingers, hard-core Zionists and Iranian monarchists, united only in their total disregard for humanity and a wish

to provoke us. The pro-Palestine marchers were having none of it. They were as disciplined as ever and wise to the likely outcome of any violence - an inevitable backlash by the state. The demonstration slowed somewhat as we passed the counter-demo. Some wanted to chant, "Shame on you" and more besides. Others wanted to take a picture - perhaps so that in the future, they will be able to show their grandchildren and say, 'These were the sort of people who supported genocide in those days.'

Iranian flag

Of course, there were those on the pro-Palestine demonstration who carried the current Iranian flag, some because they support the odious regime in Tehran because of religious conviction or, as with the Spartacist League contingent, because of a warped version of anti-imperialism.

Of course, we know that the main enemy is at home. But we are also united with the working class of Iran against the theocrats. Together we defend the Iranian people, not the regime.

Similarly, we may salute the courage of Palestine Action militants, who at least had some success at disrupting Israeli military supplies, but it can only ever be a drop in the ocean. As communists we stand unequivocally in opposition to the proscription of Palestine Action and in support of their militants, when they come to court. We must always defend the right of juries to reach a verdict guided by their conscience. It is fundamental to law that a 'crime' that aims to prevent huge destruction and actual genocide is justified.

It is also worth acknowledging that it is the interventions of Palestine Action that has pushed the more timid Palestine Solidarity Campaign to at last shift some focus to the factories in the UK producing arms

for Israel, exported under licences readily granted by the rightwing Labour government. But we also must acknowledge that substituting a conspiratorial group for the class cannot ultimately succeed: it will provoke a state backlash and lead to good militants languishing in prison.

There are no short cuts. What really needs to happen is for mass working class action to block the production and export of arms to Israel and the USA, including F-35

parts. Such action is growing around the world and last week led to a general strike in Italy.

Shipping giant Maersk announced on June 23 that it is divesting from companies linked to Israeli settlements. This is a good start, following the campaign by the Palestinian Youth Movement, and a worthy part of the wider movement for boycott, divestment and sanctions. "This sends a clear message to the global shipping industry," said PYM's Aisha Nizar. "Doing business with Israel's illegal settlements is no longer viable, and the world is watching to see who follows next."

Components

But she called for further action, arguing that Maersk still transports goods for the Israeli military, including F-35 components.²

The June 21 demonstration was notable for the almost complete absence of Labour Party banners, which has been the case from the outset. However, the absence of banners from manufacturing unions should also be a source of shame. There were banners from the likes of the University and College Union, the National Education Union and others from the public sector. Workers should seek ways to disrupt the supply lines to Israel and the unions are a good place to start. The consequences of failure are too ghastly to contemplate.

In the meantime, a crowdfunder posted on *Crowdfunder* on June 24 to raise £10,000 in legal fees to fight the proscription of Palestine Action raised more than £5,000 in its first hour. At the time of writing, it had reached £82,741, from 2,386 pledges and is growing by thousands a minute.³

We are the people. We will not be silent ●

Notes

1. www.reuters.com/world/uk/pro-palestinian-activists-say-they-damaged-planes-uk-military-base-2025-06-20.
2. www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/6/23/shipping-giant-maersk-divests-from-companies-linked-to-israeli-settlements.
3. www.crowdfunder.com/case/palestine-action.

Fighting fund

It can be done!

I was beginning to feel a little downhearted in the first few days of this week, because not very much in the shape of donations to the *Weekly Worker* fighting fund was coming our way.

But then what a change! In the last few days no fewer than five contributions, each for three-figure sums, landed in our account. Brilliant stuff from comrades SK, PM, JC, LM and AG - what a fantastic boost, thanks to your generosity!

Apart from those, there were only three other donations via bank transfer or standing order - thanks also to comrades DR (£20), TT (£10) and IS (£5). But comrades MS (£50) and JN (£11) used PayPal to help us out, while that well-known stalwart, comrade Hassan, handed his usual fiver to one of our team.

All that came to a rather useful £952 over the last week, taking our running total for June up to £2,075, with five days left

to reach our £2,750 target. In other words, we need another few comrades to dig deep and follow the example of this week's donors and see us home with the extra £675 we still need by next Monday (June 30).

It can be done! Please use PayPal or make a bank transfer to play your part (it's a bit late now to send us a cheque!). Go to the web address below to see how you can do your bit - and let's hope we end the month by meeting that target in full, so the *Weekly Worker* can continue to play its vital role in campaigning for what our movement lacks so badly - a single, united, democratic-centralist Marxist party! ●

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

CORBYNISM

Privileged information leaks

Everything is happening in secret. But secrets have a habit of being told. Meanwhile, yet another deadline has come and gone, reports **Carla Roberts**

For a few weeks, it looked like June 13 was going to be the day when the much-anticipated 'Corbyn party' would finally be launched. Karie Murphy - Corbyn's right-hand woman, when he was leader of the Labour Party, and chief organiser of Collective - told the representatives of the 60 or so groups involved to save the date - there would be a big announcement. Alas, the date came and went, without a peep. Perhaps somebody noticed that Friday the 13th is hardly the ideal date to announce anything without asking for a barrage of sarcasm. In any case, nothing happened.

According to the blog *The Left Lane*, July 22 might now be the 'big day'.¹ But seeing as this info comes from the June 11 minutes of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, which refers to an *April* meeting of Collective, this date is probably just as much of a non-starter.

We presume that there are differences of one sort or another between those at the top of Collective, which explain the ongoing delay. Sadly, we can only guess as to what these differences might be, because there is absolutely no openness. There is also no information about who might have been invited to those secret, second-tier, *real* negotiations (neither do most of the 60 groups know, it seems). Most likely it is 'high profile' individuals such as Jamie Driscoll, Alan Gibbons, Andrew Murray, Len McCluskey, Andrew Feinstein and Salma Yaqoob that are negotiating with Corbyn and Murphy about leadership positions, structures and maybe even a programme of some sort.

No decisions

Those issues are certainly not being discussed in the *official* WhatsApp group or the weekly meetings on Zoom that last a whopping 60 minutes and are tightly controlled by Karie Murphy. No real decisions are taken, no programme discussed, no draft constitution debated - it is just a way to give the representatives from the groups present a false sense of 'democracy'. Occasionally, somebody pipes up and asks an awkward question - but is then quickly told not to endanger the process.

For a long time, Corbyn argued *against* launching a party at all. He wanted Collective to be one of those 'umbrellas' that are supposed to 'unite the campaigns'. But he has since changed his mind somewhat, perhaps because of the strong showing of Reform in the May local elections; perhaps because of pressure from his closest collaborators; perhaps because he can see that the Labour Party under Keir Starmer is not going to allow him back in.

On June 14, he said the most he ever has about the subject - and it was not very much. Addressing a meeting organised by the Liverpool and Merseyside Independents, he declared:

I know many people are very frustrated that we didn't build a political party the day after whenever. It's okay if you want to blame me. There's a rule in my office that if something goes wrong it's my fault - that works very well. But I am determined that there will be, in a short time, a strong alternative, leftwing voice that brings people together



He's to be the Leader

... Today we have a message for all our friends and comrades in every independent group and in every socialist group all over the country: Come together and we will win. We will build a better world and a better society.²

Len McCluskey, former general secretary of Unite the union and Karie Murphy's partner, explained at the same event: "There are negotiations and discussions going on and they have been going on for a long time, in terms of bringing together a united front. And it is my view that what will be created in a very short period of time will be a credible leftwing alternative. I know who the leader of that party should be" (leading to chants of "Oh Jeremy Corbyn").

We understand that comrade McCluskey might have been having a little go here at people like Alan Gibbons (who as leader of the 'Liverpool Community Independents' was one of the main organisers of the event) and Jamie Driscoll, former metro mayor of the North of Tyne Combined Authority and now leader of his newly founded 'Majority UK' grouping. We hear that those two in particular are keen to be at the head of the new party or at least act as co-leaders alongside Corbyn.

We agree with McCluskey that neither of them would be particularly good at it. Driscoll is clearly a show pony.³ Gibbons, as former CLP secretary of Liverpool Walton, refused to speak out (or even allow the tabling of motions) in support of the Wavertree Four, who were expelled on fake anti-Semitism charges. When he was the leading member of Momentum's national constitutional group (having been elected on the Forward Momentum ticket), he refused to stand in solidarity with those expelled over the anti-Semitism smears and only criticised the suspensions of those who were victims of the 'second wave' of the witch-hunt, after Corbyn's defeat. Despite promising to make Momentum more democratic, he continued to enforce Jon Lansman's constitution, according to which anybody expelled from the Labour Party could not be a member of Momentum. So, when it was his turn to be expelled from Labour he had to, of course, leave Momentum

too - he later said he left because it was becoming "ineffective" ...

There are names of other potential (co-)leaders floating about, including Zahra Sultana MP. That would explain Andrew Feinstein's recent comment that he wished these talks were "open and transparent conversations", but "there are people who are in very sensitive positions that make it very difficult to make public some of the conversations that are taking place."⁴

Needless to say, in our view, a real democratic party should not be run by a single leader, appointed in secret negotiations, but by an accountable steering committee, whose members should be elected by the full party membership on the remit of their politics and who, crucially, should be recallable at any time by a simple majority of members.

What type?

So what kind of party can we expect Corbyn and his collaborators to launch? Programmatically, there will probably be a slightly longer version of the six tame points featured on the Collective website - and, I suspect, we will not find (m)any mentions of the word 'socialism' anywhere, judging by what Salma Yaqoob said at the We Demand Change summit in Sheffield on May 18: "We might not use the same kind of language that we've used before - we can perhaps be a bit more creative", because "not everybody involved will be a socialist".

She also let slip that there are no plans to establish branches or, indeed, political platforms, tendencies or factions that could openly organise to take on the leadership. So how exactly any dissent could be democratically expressed in the new Corbyn party is one of the many things that remain unclear.

The constitution written for the Liverpool Community Independents (by Gibbons?) is currently being handed round within Collective as an example that other local 'independent' groups might want to copy - we sincerely hope they will not, because it embodies the worst of what we might call the 'all power to the leader' type of bureaucratic structure.⁵ The single 'party leader', elected for a whopping four years, can only be got rid of by a no-confidence vote supported by a

two-thirds majority of the executive committee, for example. It is all geared up for election time and there is very little in terms of what rights members have (there is also no mention of the rights and duties of branches, for example). It is a bureaucratic nightmare.

It is unlikely that any national party will adopt quite so crass a constitution, especially as Corbyn is so indecisive. But it will probably be along those lines: a strong bureaucratic centre, affiliated organisations and very little democracy. We know that, at least for now, the 'localists' or 'federalists' like Feinstein, Gibbons and Driscoll have won and those with a more 'partyist' perspective have been pushed aside.

They include Pamela Fitzpatrick, co-director of the Justice Collective Ltd, who has played a leading role in getting Collective set up. But clearly she is not in charge - and is getting rather impatient. At a Zoom meeting organised by the Republican Labour Education Forum on June 19, she explained:

I got involved with a number of people in 2023 to think about forming a new party. It has been frustrating, to say the least. It has taken time to get to the point where we are hopefully launching a new party. But I cannot guarantee that, because I am not the person in control of that. I also cannot give you a list of policies, because the Collective doesn't have such a list.⁶

Like Corbyn, comrade Fitzpatrick suffers from Labourite illusions in the power of "the parliamentary process as the only way to really change things". But at least she argues for a

class-based party with a membership, democracy and a radical, clear programme, so that people don't pull in different directions. I think Jeremy Corbyn is the only leader who can unify the left. However, it shouldn't be built around any leader or messaging or getting celebrities on TV for that matter. It is about the policies and the programme. If a new party comes about, it will need a leader to register with the electoral commission. But the intention is that shortly after - and I hope that is what will happen, but you never know - there will be elections to elect a leader going forward.

Fitzpatrick was clearly having a dig here at those like Jamie Driscoll, who waffle on about the importance of "messaging", while resisting any political programme that could actually change society.⁷ Comrade Fitzpatrick's scepticism and hesitancy are hard to miss. As is the fact that she has just set up her own political mini-party in Harrow (called Arise⁸), which is another indication that the Corbyn party will be more of a federal coalition of some sort. Will we see more tiny 'parties' being formed, just so they can affiliate? Potemkin villages.

Insiders

The Socialist Party in England and Wales, one of the 11 organisations listed on Collective's website, seems to be less than certain that anything useful will come out of Collective. It recently announced its own, separate campaign for "the trade union movement to seriously discuss

founding a new anti-austerity, anti-war party". God knows what unions they have in mind - most remain firmly affiliated to Labour, hoping for a few crumbs from the table. No unions are involved in Collective, which SPEW obviously knows. Does it want the unions to start another campaign for yet another party? This petition is seriously ill-timed and rather pointless - it is no wonder that in two months, a measly 1,291 people (most of them SPEW members) have signed it.

Comrade Delta

The Socialist Workers Party too wants "union members to raise demands for their unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party" - again, without any indication what party those unions should support instead. Perhaps no party is better than the Labour Party? We disagree. Of course, the SWP wants a piece of the Corbyn action too, but was told very clearly that it would not be allowed in - we suspect that is due to its ongoing sect reputation, its image as rape apologists in the wake of the bungled investigation into 'Comrade Delta' (Martin Smith) and, to a lesser degree, its ongoing decision to welcome Zionists in its 'Stand Up to Racism' campaign. It has set up 'We Demand Change'⁹ as a way to sneak into the Corbyn Party and push for "a left alternative to Labour at the ballot box. This could say - no to austerity, refugees welcome and migrants aren't to blame, trans+ rights, free Palestine and climate action now".¹⁰ Just as well they are careful not to call these measly platitudes a 'programme'.

The Revolutionary Communist Party (formerly Socialist Appeal) is involved too and comrade Fitzpatrick mentioned that "the Communist Party of Great Britain came along right at the beginning, but then they withdrew again". We suspect she probably means the CPGB/ML, the Stalinist rump organisation run by the Brar family. Andrew Murray's recent article in the *Morning Star*, announcing that the Communist Party of Britain has now officially ditched auto-Labourism, is also an indication that the CPB wants to join Corbyn's Party.¹¹

Incidentally, we read on *The Left Lane* that not every organisation who wanted to has been allowed to join Collective - for example, the Network of Independent Socialists (NOIS) was shown the door, without any reason given. We suspect there will be more such decisions ●

Notes

1. theleftlane2024.substack.com/p/corbyn-set-to-launch-a-new-political.
2. www.youtube.com/watch?v=y122m1atwQY.
3. 'Have the localists won?' *Weekly Worker* June 6: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1541/have-the-localists-won.
4. 'Corbyn is coming' *Weekly Worker* May 15: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1538/corbyn-is-coming.
5. drive.google.com/file/d/1GQMA4mKueB4YfjQDBr_SEoXXY1cVY5Y/view.
6. drive.google.com/file/d/1giAimEnNgwWkARcEn-Pxy34VPDUTqWNZ/view.
7. 'Have the localists won?' *Weekly Worker* June 6: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1541/have-the-localists-won.
8. search.electoralcommission.org.uk/English/Registrations/PP18049.
9. 'Everyone wants to join' *Weekly Worker* May 22: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1539/everyone-wants-to-join.
10. *Socialist Worker* June 17 2025.
11. 'Game, set and match' *Weekly Worker* June 19: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1543/game-set-and-match.

OUR HISTORY

Completely different foundations

As with now, the economic significance and politics of the middle classes was being hotly debated among socialists back in the 1890s. Some claimed their growth as disproving Marxism. Others could only see proletarianisation. **Ben Lewis** has translated a highly pertinent passage from Karl Kautsky's *Anti-Bernstein* (1899), which offers still valuable insights. **Mike Macnair** provides the introduction

In the Forging Communist Unity discussions, we have been debating, among other issues, the political significance of the middle classes. The reason is that in the CPGB's *Draft programme* we argue for the need for a *minimum* programme that contains both decisive elements of extreme democracy and more limited elements of immediate socialisation (as, for example, of the pharmaceutical industry), and other immediate demands that strengthen the position of the working class under capitalism.

Part of the justification for this approach is that we argue that the working class must and can win political power under conditions where there are still substantial middle classes: both small businesses and family farms, and the employed middle class.¹ The 'dictatorship of the proletariat', which we in the CPGB call 'socialism' for short-hand (as writers in the early 20th century Second International did), is then the political class rule of the working class over the state and the middle classes. This will then provide a political framework for the more or less rapid socialisation of the assets of the middle classes: by promoting cooperatives in the case of small businesses, and by pressing the overproduction of specialist skills and knowledges, through expanded formal education, measures of workers' control and the rotation of managerial offices.²

We do not argue at length in the *Draft programme* for the real existence and political dynamics of the middle classes. That would be inconsistent with the purpose of a programme. Nonetheless, the issue is an important and debated one. A recent book that I propose to review (belatedly) in the near future is Dan Evans's 2023 *A nation of shopkeepers: the unstoppable rise of the petty bourgeoisie*, which argues that since Thatcher the petty bourgeoisie has been rising as a class in the UK. Evans points to a rise in the numbers of the 'classical' petty bourgeoisie (self-employment and micro-businesses), but also for the Ehrenreichs' "professional-managerial class"³ (which in the terms used in our *Draft programme* is merely the upper stratum of the employed middle class) and a "new petty bourgeoisie" below it, which consists, in essence, of university graduates employed in precarious jobs that do not use their qualifications.



Eduard Bernstein vs Karl Kautsky: revisionism vs nuance when it came to middle classes

The issue is not a new one. Comrade Ben Lewis has on his Patreon page, 'Marxism translated'⁴, been gradually translating Karl Kautsky's 1899 *Anti-Bernstein* (*Bernstein und das sozialdemokratische Programm: eine Antikritik*), and it happens that in the not long ago he arrived at Kautsky's discussion of the 'new middle class'. Ben suggested that this passage would be a useful contribution to the present discussion.

Polemics began

Anti-Bernstein was Kautsky's response to Eduard Bernstein's book of the same year, *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus* (in English *The preconditions of socialism*)⁵ - and to the 1896-97 *Neue Zeit* series on 'problems of socialism', on which the book was built. The polemics had begun when Bernstein proposed that the German SPD should support what would now be called 'humanitarian intervention' in favour of Christians oppressed in Ottoman Turkey, provoking polemic initially from Ernest Belfort Bax.

Bax argued that imperialism was a way for capitalism to escape from domestic overproduction/underconsumption and thereby stave off its expected collapse; Bernstein's response then segued into arguing that capitalism was not in danger of collapse - and thence towards a variant of Fabianism. This argument then produced sharp critiques from Parvus (Alexander Helphand/Gelfand/Israel Lazarevich

- unknown surname) and from Rosa Luxemburg.⁶ Kautsky was initially reluctant to write against Bernstein, hoping to win him back to Marxism by private correspondence, but was eventually driven to do so.

The shape of Kautsky's argument in the passage translated is given by its character as a response to Bernstein's argument in *Preconditions*. Bernstein used the middle classes for two purposes. In the first place, they allegedly showed that the economy was not dominated by exploitation, since income and property was (he argued) more or less evenly distributed between the capitalist, middle and working classes. In the second place, there was no tendency towards polarisation between capitalists and proletarians (or, if there was any such tendency in the economy, it was wholly displaced by counter-tendencies), since, as fast as the old peasantry and petty-bourgeoisie declined, the 'new middle class' grew faster.⁷

The passage extracted here follows Kautsky's critique of Bernstein's empirical claim about the distribution of income and property, and focuses on the 'new middle class'. His argument starts with the interesting theoretical claim that the 'new middle class' emerges because "the ruling and exploiting classes increasingly transfer their functions to paid intellectual labourers". The point is interesting, because it in a sense anticipates the Ehrenreichs' argument that the "professional-managerial

class" is distinguished from skilled workers by its *function* in reproducing the social order or managing those below.

Like the Ehrenreichs - and Evans - Kautsky sees the 'new middle class' as privileged by (formal) education. This, then, leads to the result in Kautsky's argument that the expansion of education in itself - demanded both by capital, to increase the supply of intellectual workers, and by labour, to overcome privilege - tends towards the proletarianisation of the 'new middle class'. Hence, Bernstein's argument - that the growth of the 'new middle class' disproves both the dominance of exploitation and the tendency of capitalism towards collapse - is false.

Collapse

The connection with the SPD's 'orthodox' theory of the inevitable collapse of capitalism, the *Zusammenbruch* or *Kladderadatsch*, is clear. In my opinion this theory was an oversimplified approach to the logic of the decline of capitalism, and in particular one that left out the role of the state other than as a repressive apparatus. Nonetheless, Bernstein's argument was also a critique of the claim in the 1880 Programme of the French Parti Ouvrier:

That the producers can be free only when they are in possession of the means of production (land, factories, ships, banks, credit);

That there are only two

forms under which the means of production can belong to them:

(1) The individual form which has never existed in a general state and which is increasingly eliminated by industrial progress;

(2) The collective form, the material and intellectual elements of which are constituted by the very development of capitalist society.

That is, that Bernstein claimed that the "individual form" of possession of the means of production was *not* "increasingly eliminated by industrial progress" - witness the persistence and growth of the middle classes. There was not, contrary to the 1891 Erfurt programme,⁸ a tendency for the middle classes to be proletarianised. Kautsky's argument was (if true) an effective response to this claim.

126 years later, it is plain, on the one hand, that Bernstein's Fabianism leads nowhere except to 'Labour' and such-like governments that cravenly do the bidding of US financial capital, to demoralisation and to *more rightwing* rightist governments. But it is also plain, on the other hand, that the story of the place of the middle classes is a lot more complex than the one Kautsky tells. It is for this reason that it will be useful to review Evans's book.

I should remark, however, on two points. The first is that present in Kautsky's story, but omitted from his theoretical explanation, is the action of the capitalist *state* in actively promoting the middle classes as a bulwark against the proletariat. Legislation to protect family farms was already a feature of western Germany in Kautsky's time; since then, there has been more extensive protection of *Mittelstand* firms. And so on, with the particulars varying from country to country.

The second is that Kautsky's critique of Bernstein is weakened, relative to those of Bax, Parvus and Luxemburg, by Kautsky's *methodological nationalism*. The result is a story that tells us something about Germany (as Bernstein's story also told us things about Germany) but does not locate the issues in the effects of the world market and of imperialism.

This text, then, tells us that the issue of the middle class - and specifically of the 'new middle class' - is not a novel problem for the left. But we should engage with Kautsky's arguments, especially on the proletarianisation of the new middle class, *critically* ●

Karl Kautsky's *Anti-Bernstein* (extract)

Before we turn from the subject of the increase in property ownership, let us briefly examine something else. Bernstein thinks that this increase is not in the number of capitalists, but in those strata of the population that, in terms of income, made up the middle class. This would, however, explain why he attaches so much importance to income tax statistics, which say nothing at all about the distribution of *property*. Some of his statements also point to such a view, even though in other places he speaks unambiguously of the increase in the number of capitalists.

If Bernstein had wanted to say nothing more than the middle class

is not dying out, but that a new one is taking the place of the old one, that the 'intelligentsia' is replacing the independent craftsmen and small merchants, we would have readily agreed with him. I should point out here that I recognised the emergence of this middle class as early as 1895 in a series of articles in *Die Neue Zeit* entitled 'The intelligentsia and social democracy'. I claimed that one of our party's most important tasks was to study the conditions for winning over this section of the population. As I put it, "A new middle class is forming. It is very strong in number and continuously increasing. Its growth is capable of concealing the demise of the entire

middle class caused by the decline of small business" (*Die Neue Zeit* XIII, 2, p16).

The main cause of the growth of this middle class is that the ruling and exploiting classes increasingly transfer their functions to paid intellectual labourers, who sell their services either by the piece - doctors, lawyers, artists - or for a fixed salary, such as civil servants of all kinds. In the Middle Ages, the clergy provided the scholars, doctors, artists and some of the administrative officials, while the nobility also took care of public administration, the courts, the police and, above all, military service. With the advent of the modern state and modern science,

the clergy and nobility were deprived of their functions, but they continued to exist as classes. They merely lost their social significance and, for the most part, their independence.

Since then, however, the functions assigned to them have been expanded upon more and more, and the number of workers performing them is growing from year to year, as the tasks that social development presents to the state, the community and science increase.

But early on the capitalist class also began to dispose of its functions in trade and industry and to transfer them to paid workers, merchants and technicians. At first, these were merely auxiliary

workers of the capitalist, to whom he transferred those parts of his functions of supervising, goading on and organising labour, purchasing the means of production and selling products, which he could not manage with the growing demands for special training in each of the individual functions. But eventually the system of shares rendered the capitalist completely superfluous. This system even hands over the management of the enterprise to a hireling. There can be no doubt that the share system helps to increase the number of well-paid employees and that it thus promotes the formation of the middle class. If Bernstein equates middle incomes with the propertied

classes, then he can certainly say that joint-stock companies contribute to their increase - but not through the fragmentation of the capital that they facilitate.

The intelligentsia is the fastest growing segment of the population. According to the German industrial census, the number of wage labourers grew by 62.6% between 1882 and 1895, whereas the number of white-collar workers increased by 118.9%. However, this rapid growth was not sufficient to paralyse the relative decline of entrepreneurship, which only grew by 1.3% in absolute terms. Of all company personnel in the German empire, the following percentages were:

	1882	1895
Entrepreneurs	39.6	28.7
Employees	2.8	4.4
Wage labourers	57.6	66.9

So even if we wanted to count both white-collar workers and entrepreneurs as ‘owners’, their combined percentage of the total workforce fell from 42.4% to 33.1% between 1882 and 1895. So even this would not lead us to Bernstein’s conclusions.

The same is true if we also take agriculture into account, as outlined in the statistics. We find the following percentages for those in work in the German empire:

		Self-employed	Employees	Labourers
Agriculture	1882	27.78	0.81	71.41
	1895	30.98	1.16	67.86
Industry	1882	34.41	1.55	64.04
	1895	24.90	3.18	71.92
Trade	1882	44.67	9.02	46.31
	1895	36.07	11.20	52.73
Total	1882	32.03	1.90	66.07
	1895	28.94	3.29	67.77

The increase in the number of civil servants in the state, municipal and church services and those employed in the liberal professions - 579,322 to 794,983, an increase of 37.2% - was slower than the increase in the number of white-collar workers in industry, but still faster than the growth in the population as a whole (14.5%).

These elements are therefore growing quickly. But we would be making a huge mistake if we simply assigned them to the propertied classes. The new middle class is growing on completely different foundations to the old one, which formed the solid bulwark of private ownership of the means of production, because its existence was based on it.

The new middle class rests on a completely different foundation. Private ownership of the means of production usually plays no role for this class. Wherever the middle class carries out the functions of independent labourers, it is almost always of minimal value - eg, painters, doctors, writers. Wherever the means of production function as capital, the mass of ‘brain workers’ appear as wage labourers, not as capitalists. That said, it would be equally incorrect to simply categorise the new middle class as proletarian.

This new middle class has emerged from the bourgeoisie, is linked to it by the most diverse conditions of society and kinship, and is equal to it in its standard of living. And a whole series of professions among the intelligentsia are still more closely connected with it: namely, those which render the capitalist superfluous by taking over his functions as directors and

sub-officials of his enterprises. But the functions of the capitalist also come with his attitude: ie, his hostility to the proletariat. In other professions among the intelligentsia, the professional activity involves displaying a certain political or religious sentiment. This is the case with political journalists, some court officials: eg, public prosecutors, policemen, clergymen, etc. The state, the church, capitalist publishers, etc only employ people in these professions who either share the views of their ‘employers’ or who are prepared to represent someone else’s views in return for payment. This also results in a divide between various people in the ‘intelligentsia’ and the proletariat.

Privileged

But the most far-reaching difference between the intelligentsia and the proletariat comes from the fact that the former makes up a privileged class. Its favoured position is based on the *privilege of education*. It has every interest in ensuring that the masses are educated enough to understand the importance of science and to bow down to it and its representatives, but its interests require it to oppose all endeavours that extend the circle of those with a higher professional education.

It is true that the capitalist mode of production requires large numbers in the intelligentsia. The feudal state’s school facilities were

not sufficient to produce them. The bourgeois regime therefore pushed everywhere for an improvement and expansion not only of comprehensive education, but higher education too. It was believed that this would not only promote the development of production, but also mitigate class antagonisms. Why? Well, since higher education elevated people to a bourgeois position, it seemed self-evident that the spread of higher education would generally entail generally elevating the proletariat to bourgeois living conditions.

But the bourgeois *standard of life* [written in English in the original - BL] is only the necessary correlate of higher education when it is a privilege. When education becomes universal, it does not raise the proletariat up into the class ranks of the bourgeoisie, but degrades the ‘brain worker’ to a proletarian. This, too, is a partial phenomenon of the process of impoverishment of the masses.

In countries where popular educational institutions are sufficiently developed to deprive education of its previous privileged position, hostility to education begins to take root among the intelligentsia. These classes, who are opposed to education, thus come into conflict with the needs of the modern mode of production, they become more hostile to progress than the capitalists themselves, and join forces with the most reactionary of the reactionaries - with guildsmen and agrarians. It is the blossom of modern science, the university professors and students, who are most zealously opposed to women entering university, who would like to see the Jewish intelligentsia excluded from all competition for

positions and functions, and who endeavour to make higher education as expensive as possible and to exclude the poor from it.

In doing so, they face the most energetic opposition from the proletariat, which, like every other privilege, also fights in the most resolute terms against education as a privilege.

Despite all obstacles, the spread of popular education is progressing, but one layer of the intelligentsia after another is falling into proletarianisation. Consider the vast number of merchants that our commercial schools, of musicians that our music schools, of sculptors and draughtsmen that our art schools, of mechanics and chemists that our trade schools produce year in, year out. And the process of capitalist concentration is also beginning in the fields of commerce, art and applied science; the amount of capital required to establish an independent, viable enterprise in these fields is constantly growing. Thus, to the same extent that the number of skilled workers in these fields is expanding, the prospect of them becoming independent entrepreneurs is diminishing, and their lot is increasingly becoming that of life-long wage labour.

At the same time, however, due to the rapid increase in the number of skilled labourers, things become hopeless for one stratum of the intelligentsia after another when they try to make ends meet by artificially restricting the number of their competitors. Here, too, the process of social impoverishment sets in, which is felt all the more painfully, because one’s own misery is measured directly against the rising standard of living of the bourgeoisie. Maintaining this standard of living, or at least the appearance of it, is a vital concern for brain workers. If, for manual labourers, physical impoverishment manifests itself above all in the deterioration of their housing, then their clothing, and only lastly in their food, then the reverse is true for brain workers. Money is saved on food first.

But, however much one clings to bourgeois appearances, for each of these proletarianised strata of the intelligentsia the time comes when they discover their proletarian heart, acquire an interest in the proletarian class struggle and eventually take an active part in it. So it was with the journeymen, the sculptors and the musicians. Others will follow.

When liberal economics points to the rapid growth of the ‘intelligentsia’ as a sign of the capitalist mode of production creating its own middle class, it forgets that, the faster this growth occurs, the faster the process of proletarianisation within the new middle class takes place.

Between the decidedly anti-proletarian, capitalist-minded strata of the intelligentsia and those who feel decidedly proletarian, however, there remains a broad stratum that feels neither proletarian nor capitalist, but sees itself as standing above class antagonisms.

This middle layer of the new middle class shares the ambiguity of its social position with the old petty bourgeoisie. It is therefore just as unreliable and fickle towards the proletariat as the latter. Today it might rage at capital’s greed; tomorrow it will be indignant at the proletariat’s bad manners. If today it calls on the proletariat to protect its human dignity, tomorrow it will stab it in the back to preserve social peace.

But two factors distinguish it from the old petty bourgeoisie. One is favourable, the other is not. Firstly, it differs from it in its broad

intellectual horizons and its trained capacity for abstract thought. It is the stratum of the population that most easily rises above class and social standing, feels idealistically elevated above momentary and special interests, and considers and represents the permanent needs of society as a whole.

But, on the other hand, it differs from the old petty bourgeoisie in its lack of combativeness. Before capital broke its back, the petty bourgeoisie was a highly combative and pugnacious class. The strata of the intelligentsia standing between the proletariat and capitalism lack all means of waging a persistent struggle against the ruling classes. Weak in numbers, without unified class interests and therefore also without a united organisation, without major possessions, but with the need to live a way of life like that of the capitalist, they can only fight in association with other classes that are themselves wealthy enough to provide them with the means of struggle and existence. The middle class of the intelligentsia, the ‘intellectual aristocracy’, could therefore be oppositional *en masse*, as long as the bourgeoisie itself was in opposition; it loses its oppositional combativeness and fighting ability when the latter settles down politically. It becomes squeamish and timid, declares all means of progress, apart from winning the favour of those in power, through persuasion, to be immoral. It becomes cowardly and Byzantine.

It hates the class struggle, preaches that it be abolished or at least toned down. Class struggle, to them, is revolt, rebellion, revolution; social reform must render it superfluous.

Making the break

When I wrote the following, I did so without aiming a polemical shot at Bernstein, because back then his transformation [away from Marxism to revisionism - BL] was only just beginning:

... among those who are not directly interested in capitalist exploitation, there is hardly a single independently thinking and honest educated person left who does not represent the ‘socio-political’ point of view, which states that something must be done for the workers. This ‘something’, however, can mean the most diverse things.

[Carl Ferdinand von] Stumm[-Halberg] and Eugen Richter, the patriarchal-absolutist entrepreneur and the Manchester man, no longer have a significant following among the intelligentsia. Indictments of capital and sympathy with the proletariat - at least with the exploited, if not with the fighting proletariat - have become fashionable, and [William] Harcourt’s words, “We are all socialists now”, are beginning to come true for these circles. However, it is not proletarian, revolutionary socialism to which our poets and painters, our scholars and journalists, etc pay homage in their salons and cafés, their studios and lecture theatres, but a kind of socialism that bears a desperate resemblance to that characterised as ‘true socialism’ by the *Communist manifesto* in 1847.

These elements often proclaim that nothing separates them from social democracy aside from proletarian brutality, but what really repels them is not outward appearances, but their own lack of insight or character. Even if they far surpass the

narrow-minded capitalists in insight, they still do not realise that it is impossible to rescue existing society and prevent the victory of the proletariat; they do not understand their powerlessness in the face of social development, or they lack the necessary selflessness, courage and strength to admit this to themselves and break with bourgeois society (*Die Neue Zeit* XIII, 2, pp76, 77).

Only a few dare, and can dare, to make this break. The proletariat certainly has loyal friends among these knights of the intellect. But they are silent supporters who desire proletarian victory, but can only openly come forward when this victory has been achieved. The proletariat cannot count on a strong influx of *fighters from the ranks* of these knights of the intellect, but at the same time it must only fear a few stubborn opponents from their ranks.

These few short points show how the growing intelligentsia is a class that raises important and interesting problems for the struggling proletariat. It would be an exaggeration to claim it entirely for the proletariat, but it would be even more erroneous simply to call it “the propertied” [as Bernstein does - BL]. In this stratum we find united within a narrow framework all the social antagonisms that characterise capitalist society in its entirety, but we also find the progress of the proletarian element in this microcosm, as well as in the social body as a whole.

This also settles Bernstein’s last objection to what he calls Marx’s ‘theory of collapse’.

The increase in the new middle class of the intelligentsia is just as undeniable as the increase in the physical prosperity of individual working classes. But neither phenomenon contradicts Marx’s teachings on the concentration of capital, the increase in the exploitation of the proletariat or the intensification of social antagonisms. The increase in the number of the propertied would certainly contradict the theory of collapse. But Bernstein did not demonstrate that this increase has taken place. Theoretical considerations and the statistical figures themselves both speak against it ●

Notes

- Also important is a point made by Moshé Machover: that the transition from capitalism to a planned economy will be a complex and difficult process of trial and error.
- Particularly in section 4: communistparty.co.uk/draft-programme/4-character-of-the-revolution.
- Compare the debate in M Macnair, ‘American “Blue Labour”?’ *Weekly Worker* April 15 2021 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1343/american-blue-labour), F de Haan, ‘Appeals of class society’, May 20 2021 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1348/appeals-of-class-society), M Macnair, ‘Centrality of class’ June 3 2021 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1350/centrality-of-class-mike-macnair-replies-to-foppe-), P Demarty, ‘Manufacturing consensus’, September 2 2021 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1361/manufacturing-consensus), F de Haan, ‘Addressing the central issues’, September 30 2021 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1365/addressing-the-central-issues), F de Haan, ‘On capitalism and class rule: moving beyond the “PMC debate”’ *Cosmonaut* February 9 2024 (cosmonautmag.com/2024/02/on-capitalism-and-class-rule-moving-beyond-the-pmc-debate).
- www.patreon.com/marxismtranslated.
- Edited and translated by H Tudor (Cambridge 1993). The 1909 ‘translation’ by EC Harvey under the title *Evolutionary socialism* (repeatedly reprinted) is, in fact, an abridged version.
- H Tudor and JM Tudor (ed and trans) *Marxism and social democracy: the revisionist debate 1896-1898* Cambridge 1988.
- See pp56-79.
- www.marxists.org/history/international/social-democracy/1891/erfurt-program.htm; the introductory paragraphs.

CLIMATE

Scientists warn of peril

Heat can be a bigger killer than floods and storms. Within three years we could pass the symbolic 1.5°C limit, but we do not need technological fixes that might well make things worse, writes **Eddie Ford**

The UK recently experienced an ‘official’ heat wave - recording the hottest day of the year at 33.2°C on June 21 at Charlwood, Surrey. The day before, the Met Office had issued an amber heat-health warning for the first time since September 2023 covering all regions of England, when the mercury hit 32.2°C in west London - the previous hottest day of 2025 - meaning that “the expected impacts are likely to be felt across the whole health service” with “potential for the whole population to be at risk” - especially those aged 65 and over or people with health conditions.¹

This heat wave is expected to cause 600 premature deaths, particularly in London and the West Midlands.² According to the UK Health Security Agency, more than 10,000 people died before their time in summer heatwaves between 2020 and 2024, with the government being criminally negligent for failing to properly prepare people for the extreme weather. A recent study by the journal *Energy Research and Social Science* estimated that 80% of homes overheat in the summer, making a bad situation worse, and the study also found that the use of air conditioning soared sevenfold to 21% of homes between 2011 and 2022 - obviously increasing carbon emissions for those able to afford air conditioning.³ And a previous study by the Climate Change Committee found that converted offices pose a “potentially deadly risk” in heatwaves, as weakened planning rules have resulted in fewer checks on post-Covid urban redevelopment - the Starmer government is especially keen to slash the ‘red tape’ that causes a delay to planning applications, even hoping that an “AI breakthrough” would accelerate the process.⁴

Such deadly heat as we saw at the weekend would have been expected only once every 2,500 years and the June heatwave is about 2° to 4°C hotter than in the past. Even more to the point, scientists have calculated that this deadly weekend heat in England is *100 times more likely* due to the human induced climate crisis.⁵ Temperatures in the UK rose above 40°C for the first time in 2022 and the Met Office said that the country had a 50/50 chance of temperatures soaring to that temperature again in the next 12 years, as the climate changes - perhaps even hitting 45°C, a staggering figure for a country once famed for its mild winters and cool summers.

Swiss Re, the insurance giant, published an alarming, but accurate, report on June 12, saying that extreme heat is more deadly than floods, earthquakes and hurricanes combined - with up to half a million people globally succumbing each year - pointing out it should be considered the “invisible peril”, because “the impacts are not as obvious as of other natural perils”.⁶ In its sobering words, with a clear trend to longer and hotter heatwaves, it is important to “shine a light” on the true cost to human life, our economy, infrastructure, agriculture and healthcare.

Breach

Also not unexpected, the planet could be doomed to breach the symbolic 1.5°C warming limit in as little as *three years*, according to more than 60 of the world’s leading



Death Valley, California

climate scientists in the most up-to-date assessment.⁷ Whatever the 2016 Paris agreement might say, there has been no serious attempt at implementation - quite the opposite, even if the likes of Reform UK and Donald Trump would have us believe that ‘net zero’ is ‘radical woke madness’. Countries have actually continued to burn *record* amounts of coal, oil and gas - with plans for more fossil fuel emissions - and merrily chop down carbon-rich forests. We are experiencing a worsening of extreme weather events and a rapid rise in global sea levels, threatening coastal communities. Things are all moving in the wrong direction.

Emit budget

As the *Earth System Science Data* journal comprehensively details, at the beginning of 2020 scientists estimated that humanity could only emit 500 billion more tonnes of CO₂ for a 50% chance of keeping warming to 1.5°C. However, by the start of this year the so-called ‘carbon budget’ had shrunk to 130 billion tonnes, largely due, of course, to the continued emission of CO₂ and other planet-warming greenhouse gases like methane - but also to general improvements in the scientific estimates and technology. It is getting easier to show how bad things are. If global CO₂ emissions stay at their current highs of about 40 billion tonnes a year, states the journal, then the best we get is roughly three years until that ‘carbon budget’ is exhausted.

Last year was the first on record when global average air temperatures were more than 1.5°C over those of the late 1800s. Yes, a single 12-month period is not considered a breach of the Paris agreement, with the record heat of 2024 given an extra boost by natural weather patterns, mainly El Niño. But surely undeniably human-induced warming (or capitalism) was by far the main reason for last year’s high temperatures reaching 1.36°C above pre-industrial levels, as estimated by *Earth System Science Data* and others. This current rate of warming is about 0.27°C per decade - much faster than anything in the

geological record - and, if emissions stay high, the planet is on track to reach 1.5°C of warming on that metric some time around 2030.

True, using carbon capture technology and suchlike, after this point long-term warming could in theory be brought back down by sucking impossibly large quantities of CO₂ back out of the atmosphere. But, even if this technology works as it should, it is no ‘Get out of jail’ card. Logically, as you exceed the 1.5°C limit by larger and larger amounts, it becomes less and less likely that removing CO₂ will reverse the warming caused by today’s emissions. It becomes a race that you can never win.

The study amply highlights the magnitude of the climate change that has already happened. A striking statistic is the rate at which extra heat is accumulating in the Earth’s climate system - or the ‘energy imbalance’, to use the jargon. Over the past decade or so, this rate of heating has been more than double that of the 1970s and 1980s, and an estimated 25% higher than the late 2000s and 2010s - a really large and disturbing number over such a short period. The recent uptick is fundamentally due to greenhouse gas emissions, but a reduction in the cooling effect from small particles called aerosols has also played a role, as this extra energy has to go somewhere - some goes into warming the land, raising air temperatures and melting the world’s ice. But about 90% of the excess heat is taken up by the oceans.

That fundamentally means a disruption to marine life, with plenty of evidence showing that the UK, for example, could see a boom in endangered species, such as sharks, rays and native oysters, moving habitats to respond to rising ocean temperatures - fishing communities have already noticed the difference, with reports of jellyfish swarming near beaches or Mediterranean octopuses hauled up in catches.⁸ But for every ‘winner’ like the Basking shark or Thornback ray, there are losers like the clam (some of which can live up to 500 years) that could struggle to adapt, as will

static creatures in general like the sea pen, which helps to build reefs and could lose up to 40% of their suitable habitat by the end of the century.

Warmer ocean waters take up more space, of course, in addition to the extra water that melting glaciers are adding to our seas - hence the rate of global sea-level rise has doubled since the 1990s, raising the risks of flooding for millions, as cities become inundated. But there is some source for optimism, as the authors of the study argue that the rate of emission increases appears to be slowing down a bit, as ‘clean’ technologies are getting rolled out despite the rhetorical efforts of Nigel Farage and Donald Trump - therefore “rapid and stringent” emission cuts are absolutely critical, as it is a dangerous folly to think that keeping below 1.5°C of warming is ‘safe’ and above 1.5°C is ‘dangerous’. In reality, every extra bit of warming increases the severity of many weather extremes, ice melt and sea-level rise - and conversely every bit of cooling can result in less harm and suffering. Every fraction matters.

Danger

As it is obvious that governments are not acting fast enough to prevent the planet’s temperature from rising dangerously, if not actively making things worse, there is increased pressure to cool down the planet, using various technological and geoengineering methods - especially in university engineering departments, by offering the carrot of increased funding. But as Marxists, though we endeavour to utilise science as much as possible, we must always argue against quack solutions based on delusions of quick techno-fixes, when what is required is a fundamental political reorganisation of society from top to bottom.⁹

For example, there is still the persistent idea of injecting sulphates into the atmosphere to reflect sunlight - even though this could obviously do more harm than good, because it causes acid rain and interferes with rainfall patterns. Now researchers are experimenting with alternatives to sulphates, looking for

substances that reflect sunlight, but are essentially regarded as benign - hoisting them into the stratosphere using weather balloons which are then recovered to see what changes this exposure causes. Is it harmless? Other ideas - including drilling holes in the Arctic ice in the winter and pumping seawater over existing ice floes in below freezing air temperatures to thicken them - are also being considered (that sounds like a bad science fiction film). Or how about spraying seawater to form clouds over the ocean also to reflect sunlight? Many risk the potentially disastrous blocking of the sunlight reaching the Earth’s surface, but you do not have to be a genius to strongly suspect that solar radiation management (SRM) could have serious unintended consequences - maybe disastrous ones such as shifting rains vital to food production.

Harvard University had intended to launch a high-altitude balloon equipped with propellers and sensors that could release a few kilograms of calcium carbonate, sulphuric acid or other materials high above the planet - which would then turn around and fly through the plume to measure how widely the particles disperse in order to estimate how much sunlight they reflect. But last year it had to halt the long-planned experiment, as there was so much opposition.¹⁰ Such ideas will not save us, even if the more naive journalists think otherwise.

Clearly, the urge to start developing geoengineering experiments runs the danger of reducing the drive to tackle the root cause of the climate emergency - the burning of fossil fuels. That in turn means overcoming capitalism and its inner logic of production for the sake of production, accumulation for the sake of accumulation. Yet, even if we put an end to capitalism tomorrow, it would still take *generations* to restore the damage already done.

By repeating such warnings and emphasising the all too real dangers of the climate crisis - even if not such an *imminent threat* as nuclear war - we are not behaving like left Jeremiahs in order to deflate the working class movement or dispirit people. Rather, simply telling the truth - the first duty of Marxists - and striving to equip the working class with the party that is so desperately needed. There is literally no time to waste ●

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Notes

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TURKEY

Order of the day

There is much common ground on the revolutionary left in Turkey when it comes to Israel's attack on Iran. However, **Esen Uslu** shows that there are distinguishing fault lines too

Israel's attack on Iran at the instigation of the Trump administration has put the ruling circles of Turkey into a topsy-turvy of indecision. It is not only president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his men in the government who were shaken, but also the loyal opposition. Consequently, left organisations, albeit uninfluential but keen to protest, also fell into disarray.

If we look at the government and a substantial portion of the state security apparatus, they felt the approaching shock earlier than most of the population. Their recent moves to bring the Kurdish freedom movement into the fold of anti-Iran as well as anti-Israel politics in Turkey, as well as in Syria and Iraq, required quite a substantial manoeuvre in domestic politics. However, the regime is timid in following up the new line with concrete steps: it is trying to delay taking decisions, such as forming a parliamentary special commission, until September, after the parliamentary recess.

Relinquishing Israel-friendly policies is also proving difficult. We must not forget that just before October 7 2023, Erdoğan welcomed Netanyahu in the Turkish House in New York. They held a joint press conference under Israeli and Turkish flags, where current foreign minister Hakan Fidan and the head of the National Intelligence Agency, İbrahim Kalın, were sitting next to them. A week later, Erdoğan, on his way back from a meeting in Azerbaijan, was happily declaring to the journalists accompanying him in his plane that Netanyahu would visit Turkey soon. It is quite difficult to change course so speedily!

While in Erdoğan's recent speeches there is anger against Israel and Netanyahu's policies, Turkey still exports substantial amount of goods to "Palestinians through Israeli ports" - a fig leaf to conceal the real destination. Azerbaijan continues to export fuel to Israel through a jointly operated pipeline to a Turkish port, where it is loaded onto tankers to be shipped to Israeli ports. International shipping companies continue to use Turkish ports as a stop-over for exporting armaments to Israel. While pro-government bodies are making a show of condemning Israel, independent gatherings demanding action on all the above have been brutally suppressed.

The Israeli and US attacks on Iran are merely condemned in diplomatic words by Erdoğan. However, those words remain empty gestures, as they are not backed by any concrete action in the international arena. As a tentative ceasefire is declared before the Nato summit, let us see what Turkey's government comes out with.

Meanwhile, the loyal opposition in the shape of the Republican People's Party (CHP) is busy trying to save its skin from Erdoğan's legal guard-dogs who are threatening the party by overruling its congress decisions on the grounds of an infraction of rules, and reinstating the old guard as caretakers - or else appointing a party 'administrator'. That is on top of keeping its elected mayors (including of Istanbul) and an ever growing number of their trusted lieutenants in jail. Despite that the CHP is expressing support for Erdoğan's newly adopted policy on Israel - provided he is upholding the 'national interest', of course!



Khamenei with Erdoğan in 2018: now everything has changed

There is a small but vocal circle within the state security apparatus that criticises Erdoğan on the grounds of letting down national defence. According to them, because of his commitment to pro-Islamist and pro-American policies, Erdoğan failed to check American influence over defence procurement and took some wrong steps that pushed the airforce into an inferior status in the region. In the navy, the construction of the 'much-needed' air-independent propulsion submarine fleet, equipped with domestic torpedoes and cruise missiles, slowed down, as the funds were diverted to flashy, grandiose projects, such as building a helicopter landing ship and an aircraft carrier. The procurement of an S-400 anti-aircraft missile system from Russia left Turkey out of the F-35 programme and also put an end to the modernisation of the existing F-16 fleet.

It is claimed that the Israeli-Iranian conflict showed once more the importance of anti-aircraft defence. Turkey should spend more money and effort to develop its own "steel dome" project and ape the Israeli iron-dome. And Turkey must develop intermediate-range ballistic missiles with the new hypersonic missile technology. Those who make such remarks do not utter the word yet, but their ultimate goal is to acquire 'nuclear' weapons as the 'top rung' of the ladder of defence.

This line of thought is supported by the usual nationalist jingo. However, the question, 'How could such things be achieved in the current crippled economic situation?', is answered by returning to Turkey's Kemalist roots and calling for more 'sacrifice from the people' for national defence. In the absence of a military dictatorship that seems impossible. I think Erdoğan knows that better than them, since those economic failures have put him on a downward slope, leading towards eventual electoral failure.

Left segment

The joint statement of the Communist Party of Israel and the Tudeh Party of Iran sets the tone for a large segment of the left:

We call upon on all progressive and freedom-loving forces in Israel, Iran and the world to unite in condemning this blatant and brutal violation of international law and to focus all efforts on prevention of a far-reaching, destructive military conflict and the establishment of peace in the Middle East.

The global public must go beyond mere concern expressed by the UN secretary-general over Israel's attack on Iran. All international mechanisms

available through the United Nations and its security council must be used to stop the region from plunging into a catastrophic, far-reaching war.¹

The Council of Cooperation of Left and Communist Forces of Iran (including the Communist Fedayeen Union Organisation, Socialist Workers Union, Communist Party of Iran, Hekmatist Communist Workers Party of Iran, Workers Path Organisation and Fedayeen (Minority) issued a joint statement:

The fascist Israeli government, the interventionist American regime, and its ruling elite must know that Iran's deeply class-based society, with millions of conscious and organised workers, whose revolutionary and justice-seeking thoughts are rooted in their very fabric, will not allow the destructive scenarios of Syria, Libya, Afghanistan or Iraq to be repeated.²

These statements set the tone for their counterparts in Turkey. I see no reason for quoting various left organisations thinking in parallel with Tudeh, which stood by the mullah regime. I think it is sufficient to quote from an article published in the *SolTV* written by Kemal Okuyan, the president of the (legal) Communist Party of Turkey:

The communist position on Iran today is, first and foremost, to work for a more resistant Iran in the face of US and Israeli aggression. As soon as you say, 'I am against both Israel and the mullahs' regime', even if what you say is true, you are not taking an independent stand and you are playing into the hands of Israel, an external power.

Of course, this attitude is not easy under the ruthless mullahs' regime. However, the policy of 'while Israel is beating up the mullahs, let's take advantage of the opportunity' ends either in treason or in being a lapdog for the occupiers or a collaborative government.³

However, those with genuine revolutionary credentials, such as comrade Mehmet Güneş, writing in the *Komün* journal, which is in close contact with Fedayeen, say something different:

Iran is under the open and naked attack of imperialism and Zionism, and we stand with the Iranian peoples, revolutionaries and communists against this attack. In addition, this attack is a continuation of the massacres committed in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria and is an imperialist attack

to crush not only the countries targeted by the war, but also the peoples and revolutionary forces of the whole region. The war in Iran is our war and, if imperialism wins in Iran and realises exactly what it wants, it means that we lose. Just as we are politically and morally opposed to Zionist Israel and western imperialism - all enemies of humanity, who razed Gaza to the ground and committed genocide against the Palestinian people - we are politically and morally opposed to the Iranian attack, which is a continuation of the Gaza attack. At the same time, we unhesitatingly see this attack as a stage of the class war that is going on worldwide...

In Turkey and Iran all these contradictions are at the most extreme level and, as the entire history of the revolution shows, our path is to make a revolution out of wars under all circumstances.⁴

DEM speech

The co-chair of the People's Equality and Democracy Party (DEM), Tülay Hatimoğlu, spoke at the DEM parliamentary group meeting on June 24. In her speech she dealt with the Israeli attack on Iran:

The true face of war is precisely this picture. The routes drawn by arrogant leaders are painted with the blood of civilians. The solution does not lie in the false security policies of the nation-state. The Iran-Israel war has shown us this once again. They call it national security - this is a trap. Nation-states that are unable to offer freedom to their own people are, by creating an absolute enemy from outside, trying to legitimise their own anti-democratic practices ... Regarding the anti-democratic practices, despotic approach and form of government in Iran, we state this very clearly. Iran must democratise, yes, but the antidote to this is not Israel's attack. We also say no to Israel's attack on Iran, and a clear no to an Iran-Israel war...

In the face of this dark picture, in the face of all these developments that have brought us to the brink of the third world war, of course we have a lot to do as the peoples of the whole world. We can see the light at the end of this dark tunnel, but how do we see it? The antidote is strong resistance against imperialism. It is through a common struggle against those who covet our freedoms, bread, brotherhood and peace, especially our right to life.⁵

The Turkish Workers Party in its recent communique says:

While the countries that want to establish sovereignty over the region turn the Middle East into their own playground by sending messages to each other through bombs, the people who are oppressed under the power struggles are the peoples who have to live with the threat of war.

Against the interventions of US imperialism and the Zionist regime that will lead the world to disaster, we stand by the struggle of the peoples of the Middle East for peace and freedom.

The Revolutionary Workers Party, known for its Trotskyite association, says in its statement:

Iran has the right to legitimate defence against the United States, as it does against Israel. No-one is obliged to give political support to the Iranian regime. However, there cannot be an anti-imperialist position that does not recognise Iran's right to legitimate defence against imperialist/Zionist terror and does not support Iran's legitimate defence against the US. The US and Israel have not the slightest interest in the struggle for freedom of the working people or oppressed women of Iran. A new collaborator shah regime cannot have the slightest interest in the Iranian peoples' yearning for freedom. The road to freedom - not only in Iran, but also in west Asia [Middle East] and Turkey - passes through the defeat of imperialism.⁶

There is also a joint statement signed by eight smaller organisations. It is apparently a compromise, since each organisation's own statement differs from the middle-of-the-road text. However, it ends with the following call:

We warn the government:

There is the blood of peoples in the capital you are gaining! Put an end to this hypocrisy as soon as possible and immediately stop giving war support to Israel!

We appeal to the international community:

Everyone must do all they can to stop this aggression before more blood is shed, before our planet is further destroyed, before peoples from all countries suffer more. This war escalated by the imperialist-Zionist alliance and the ruling powers can only be stopped by the peoples' growing solidarity and struggle for independent, equal, peaceful and democratic coexistence!⁷

As readers will see, there is much common ground on the revolutionary left in response to Israel's attack on Iran. However, there are quite distinct fault lines. The prickliest question is whether to stand by Iran despite its regime in the face of the most brutal attack of US imperialism and its war-dog, Israel. All ifs and buts emanate from this. However, unless there is also support for Iran and the wish for a defeat or at least a setback for its imperialist attackers, any critique of the Iranian regime will not mean much - apart from expressing blatant or sheepish support for the aggressors ●

Notes

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STATEMENT

War, genocide and ceasefire

Iranian left - within the country and without - must facilitate, encourage and take full advantage of any loosening of the ayatollahs' grip, through an immediate programme designed to defend the lives and interests of the broad mass of the population

It is all looking very choreographed. After American B-2 bombers and cruise missiles struck Iran's nuclear facilities at Fordow, Natanz and Esfahan on June 21, there came a token retaliation. On June 23 Iran launched missiles at the US Al Udeid military base in Qatar. Advanced warning was given and none got through. A US-brokered ceasefire between Israel and Iran followed. It can only be fragile and temporary.

The present crisis was triggered by Israel's full-scale attack on June 13: Operation Rising Lion. Israel claimed that Iran lay just weeks away from making nine nuclear weapons - a widely derided lie. Doubtless the International Atomic Energy Agency board declared Iran in breach of its obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty for the first time in what was a *highly political* 19 to 3 vote (there were 11 abstentions). But that hardly amounts to the imminent threat of Israel becoming a "victim of a nuclear holocaust".

In the making

Indeed, Iranian negotiators seem to have been under the impression that a deal with the US was within reach in the next round of talks in Oman (due to have taken place on June 15). No less to the point, Israel's operation was "eight months in the making" and America's own military operation likewise "took months and weeks of positioning and preparation" (Pete Hegseth).

Why did Israel attack when it did? Netanyahu saw a window of opportunity to achieve two long-held strategic objectives. First, knock out - or at the least thoroughly degrade - a regional rival. Second, use conflict with Iran as a cover to 'finish the job' with the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. Mass expulsions would coincide with, or be followed by, annexations and the realisation of the Zionist dream of a Greater Israel.

Benjamin Netanyahu, along with most Zionists, cynically paints Iran as being "singularly hellbent on Israel's annihilation". Naturally, the Tehran regime pays lip-service to opposing Israel and calls for "a single, democratic Palestinian state" through "holding a referendum of all the original inhabitants", including Muslims, Jews and Christians. Hardly practical - requiring, one presumes, the exodus, or expulsion, of all post-1948 migrants (them and their offspring and descendants). However, as shown by June 13 and subsequent events, Iran is in no position to do anything about Palestine. Israel is militarily strong, Iran pathetically weak. Not that the ayatollahs actually want to help the Palestinians - well, apart, that is, from using them as pawns when and if the opportunity arises.

Had Iran the technical wherewithal to build, launch and deliver a nuclear warhead that could destroy Tel Aviv or Haifa, it would be highly unlikely to embark on any such *suicidal* course. After all, what would happen immediately afterwards? Total destruction. Israel has at least 140 nuclear warheads. And the Tehran regime is concerned with one thing above all else - survival. That is why, perhaps, it might have calculated on achieving a near-ready nuclear weapon capability in order to act as a deterrent. It is not gripped by some Islamic death wish - a racist commonplace peddled in the Israeli media.



Keep on marching ... but, more, much more, is needed

Of course, what began on June 13 was never a war of conquest. Israel simply lacks the military capacity to do that. Nor did the US want to take such a course. Iran has a population of around 90 million. An invading army would not be greeted as liberators by the mass of the population. No, on the contrary, it would face determined resistance of the kind seen in Iraq - except on a far bigger and more deadly scale.

Netanyahu talked of regime change. However, for a *managed* regime change to happen there would need to be an alternative regime waiting in the wings. You cannot bring about regime change with bombs and missiles launched from F-14s, F-16s, F-35s and B-2s. There was certainly no credible 'great leader' about to be parachuted in by the US-Israel, who would galvanise the Iranian population behind them. The Mujahadeen-e-Khalq of Maryam Rajavi is almost universally regarded as a crazy, weird cult ... and it certainly has no mass base in Iran itself. As for the royalists and Reza Pahlavi - though he is heavily financed and promoted by the US and Israel - no serious commentator rates his chances. Some upper-class exiles like to imagine his father, Mohammad Reza, as an enlightened despot, but within Iran itself few want to swap the theocracy they know and hate for a return to a monarchy that their parents hated and overthrew.

Here in Britain we should certainly keep marching. Solidarity

with Palestinians, especially those in Gaza, is rightly joined with 'Hands off Iran' calls. However, more must be done. Workers at airports and ports can be won to refuse to handle goods, especially arms, headed for Israel. Such agitation would be more than timely.

Defeat

Expecting workers at Rolls Royce, BAE Systems or Leonardo to strike and maybe put themselves out of a much needed job is an altogether bigger ask. Moralistic attacks on ordinary workers should, though, be avoided at all cost. However, despite remaining in the realms of the symbolic, it is quite right to demand that the UK government rescind all export licences for military-related goods going to Israel.

David Lammy sheds crocodile tears over Gaza, but will, for example, do nothing to block the delivery of UK-made spares for Israel's F-35s. He dares not upset Trump and the US. Maintaining the recent trade deal with the US matters infinitely more than the lives of Palestinians.

We must openly declare for the revolutionary defeat of our 'own' side: that is, Israel, its US sponsor and its UK and other such enablers. What that poses is going beyond the 'strike and street' politics of protest doggedly pursued by the Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Party in England and Wales, Revolutionary Communist Party and the other confessional sects. We need to

embrace the politics of power.

Jeremy Corbyn's much touted new outfit is worse than useless here. The same goes for George Galloway's Workers Party of Britain and the Green Party, even if led by the soft left's latest messiah, the born-again Zack Polanski. Such organisations are verbally committed to doing little more than tinkering with the system. They accept the existing constitution, the existing state and the existing capitalist socio-economic order. None of them even so much as question wage slavery.

They claim to want a peaceful, just and democratic capitalism. But capitalism is unpeaceful, unjust and undemocratic. So their effective role is to reinforce ideological illusions ... and thereby ultimately serve capitalism. No, what is needed is a principled, mass Communist Party. Only such a party, organised on an international scale, can lead the working class to state power and put an end to the global capitalist system of greed, imperialist exploitation ... and war.

Defence

What about Iran? We have no corresponding wish to see Iran defeated. The Iranian left - within the country and without - must, of course, facilitate, encourage and take full advantage of any loosening of the ayatollah's grip, through an immediate programme designed to defend the lives and interests of the broad mass of the population.

Demands should certainly be raised for a rigorous and comprehensive rationing system. Everyone must receive according to their needs. Basic goods should be distributed for free or strictly price-capped. This is a particularly urgent question, especially for the precariat, who have in recent weeks seen their incomes drop almost to zero.

The huge black-market rackets run by regime insiders are widely known. These criminals should suffer confiscation of all ill-gotten gains and receive suitable punishment.

Local volunteer committees came together to handle the challenges of the Covid pandemic. Something like that needs to be encouraged under conditions of war and near war. Elected neighbourhood committees could monitor price caps, help establish early-warning systems, along with locating suitable air raid shelters in the metro system, deep tunnels and basements.

Privatised industries, such as telecommunications, steel, water and power generation, must immediately be brought back under direct state control. Those companies withholding the payment of wages should face confiscation. Banks and insurance companies must be nationalised and the country's \$6.3 billion foreign debt repudiated.

The regime must not be allowed to blame its humiliating inability to defend the country on the left and other progressive forces. Root out Mossad agents in the state apparatus, yes. Otherwise release all political prisoners, annul all restrictive laws directed against women, socialists and trade union activists.

Programme

Above all, the mass of the population needs to be won to a programme that preserves the unity of the country and makes it truly *worth defending* from Israeli (and US) aggression. That can only be done by demanding:

- the right of Kurdistan, Baluchistan, to self-determination;
- the equality of men and women, freedom of speech and assembly;
- the separation of mosque and state;
- secularism in all spheres of public life;
- ending all restrictions on workers' self-organisation;
- the arming of the whole population;
- abolition of the standing army, the Revolutionary Guards and the Basij.

Crucially, theocratic rule must be ended. Elections to a constituent assembly, working class state power and the fullest democracy then become realisable. But more still is needed. Proletarian internationalism is vital. An isolated revolution in Iran would suffer sanctions, air attacks and sabotage a hundred times worse than anything we have seen so far. To survive, the revolution must spread to Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt and come to the rescue of Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza.

The idea of working class rule can also, of course, reach into Israel, Russia, Europe, China and America itself. If we are going to save humanity from the real and growing danger of big-power conflict and nuclear war, that is our best hope.

It is: socialism or barbarism.
CPGB Provisional Central Committee
June 24 2025

IRAN

Besieged, battered and badly led

Even before the bombing, Iran was an economic wreck. Years of sanctions and endemic corruption have produced poverty for millions. Michael Roberts describes a failed state

Although Donald Trump had proposed a two-week interval for Iran to negotiate a 'surrender' deal, a few days later he joined in the Israeli assault with the USA's own bombing. The Iranian people are suffering heavily, but this only adds another horrific dimension to the economic crisis in Iran itself and the long suffering of its people.

Iran's economic performance over the past two decades reveals a persistent pattern of decline. According to the World Economic Outlook report published by the International Monetary Fund in October 2024, Iran's nominal gross domestic product was estimated at approximately \$434 billion. Given a population of nearly 90 million, per capita income is very low - 117th in the world.

Annual inflation is currently around 40%, with soaring food prices and shortages of basic necessities. Approximately 33% of Iranians live below the official poverty line. The youth unemployment rate is near 20%, with half of men aged between 25 and 40 being unemployed and not actively seeking work. Over the past two decades, one of the most pressing structural issues facing Iran has been its inability to generate sufficient employment opportunities, despite a young and growing population. Millions of university graduates remain excluded from the labour force, as there is no work for them.

Energy crisis

In the last year, despite a wealth of fossil fuel reserves, the country has faced a severe energy crisis, with an electricity shortfall of 50% of its total generation capacity,¹ resulting in production losses estimated at 30%-40%. The depletion of water resources has meant that major dam reservoirs supplying Tehran have reached critically low levels, at just 7% of full capacity.

How has the Iranian economy been reduced to such low levels in a country with many natural resources and a relatively well educated workforce? The answer is twofold: first, it is the result of the failures of successive corrupt regimes, starting with the CIA's 1953 coup against Iran's elected prime minister, Mohammad Mossadegh, to install the pro-imperialist Pahlavi dynasty under the shah, who ruled as absolute monarch for two decades; and then, of course, the Iranian revolution of 1979 eventually installed a clerical autocracy supported by a military elite that owns and controls large sections of the economy.

The second reason is the unending efforts of the imperialist powers who used to rule Persia to weaken and strangle independent economic development - first through the



Abadan refinery: oil

coup of 1953 and then with massive sanctions on Iran's exports and the blocking of any foreign investment and technology. Using the excuse of the mullahs' funding and support for religious guerrilla forces like Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon, and for Bashar al-Assad's (now overthrown) government in Syria, the western powers have done everything they can to weaken and destroy the living standards of the Iranian people. The loss of income from sanctions is estimated at an accumulated \$12 trillion over the last 12 years of sanctions.

Iran is a failed capitalist state because of this. With 10% of the world's proven oil reserves and 15% of its gas reserves, Iran could be an "energy superpower"² like Saudi Arabia. But, because it has a regime in power that is anathema to Israel, the Sunni sheikhs and the west, it has not been allowed to develop. The failure of the regime both under the shah and then under the mullahs is revealed by the movement in the profitability of Iranian capital over the decades.

The global economic crisis of the 1970s saw a sharp fall in profitability, laying the economic basis for the failure of the Pahlavi dynasty and its overthrow. However, the mullahs were unable to turn things around at all until the oil price spurt of the late 1990s. This commodity boom came to an end in the 2010s and profitability dropped again.

The Iranian economy expanded from a very low level in the golden age of growth in the 1960s, but then in the late 1970s the economy sank under the shah. It was no better during the tumultuous period of the 1980s under the mullahs, as low oil prices set in. Growth picked up a little in the 2000s, when oil prices rose. But since 2010, with lower oil prices and increased sanctions, there has been stagnation.

Oil proceeds represent about 18% of GDP and the hydrocarbon sector provides 60% of government revenues and 80% of the total annual value of both exports and foreign currency earnings. So everything depends on the price of oil: a \$1 drop in the price of crude oil on the international market reduces Iran's oil revenues by \$1 billion! Despite sanctions and lack of investment, Iran manages to export about 1.5 million barrels of crude oil per day and another 1 million per day in petroleum products.

Military crisis

But these revenues are sucked dry by the demands of the mullahs and the military. The combined budgets of the large religious foundations called bonyads³ are 30% of total government spending. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) controls about one third of Iran's economy through subsidiaries and trusts. The IRGC has over one hundred companies with an annual revenue of \$12 billion. It gets the bulk of major infrastructure projects. In 2024, the IRGC received around 51% of all oil and gas revenues.

Iran has been forced to spend hugely on the military - partly to defend the regime from the west and Israel, but also partly to sustain the military elite that keeps the mullahs in power. The most costly of Iran's defence expenditure is its nuclear programme, approaching a cumulative \$500 billion that could have been spent productively on technology and on raising wage incomes. As a result of this nuclear programme, aimed as a deterrent from attack by Israel and the west, sanctions have led to the disappearance of inward foreign investment to help develop the economy.

The government has zig-zagged between state-directed control and pro-market 'liberalisation' in desperate efforts to boost the productive sectors. In 2005, state assets were estimated at \$120 billion, but half have been privatised since then. The result is that the economy is drained by the mullahs and the military elite, while there is little or no investment by the capitalist sectors.

Former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad says 60% of national wealth is controlled by just 300 people - most of whom shift their wealth abroad to buy foreign real estate and/or salt it away in secret accounts. According to the World Inequality Database, the top 1% of Iranians by wealth own 30% of all national wealth and the top 10% own nearly two-thirds, while the bottom 50% own just 3.5%.

Privatisations and the inequalities of wealth have produced a ruling elite that is split between the religious fundamentalists backed by the military and a business faction that seeks accommodation with the west. These latter 'reformists' are pro-market and want to get the sanctions lifted, whatever the concessions to the west. If the mullahs fall, they will be quick to move to join the imperialist camp and seek peace with Israel on the latter's terms, just as the Arab sheikhdoms have done.

Neither wing of the elite is interested in improving the conditions of Iran's working class. An average worker's wage is around \$150-\$200 a month, with many leaving the small towns, where poverty reigns, seeking work in the big cities. The reality is that average incomes have hardly budged since the 1980s.

Before the twelve-day war, labour unrest had been rising, as workers demanded higher wages to keep up with inflation. The High Council of Labour recently proposed a living wage benchmark of 23.4 million tomans, but workers argued that the real cost of living is at least 29 million tomans. The government's proposed minimum wage of 14 million tomans has sparked outrage, as it is far below the poverty line. According to the state-run Iranian Labour News Agency, a petition demanding a 70% wage increase had garnered over 25,000 signatures from workers. Ali Moqaddasi-Zadeh, head of the Islamic Labour Councils in South Khorasan, warned last February: "With a 23 million toman living cost estimate, workers will be forced into slum living and homelessness. Next year will be one of extreme inflation and hardship unless the government takes action."⁴

Housing crisis

The housing crisis further compounds the problem, with 45% of household incomes spent on rent. Workers report that even renting a single room is becoming unaffordable. With inflation accelerating, even staple foods cannot be paid for. The cost of poultry has forced citizens into long queues to buy affordable chicken in many cities. Iran's food inflation has surged to over 35%. State-controlled media have been reporting long bread lines in major cities, reminiscent of wartime rationing. Many bakeries have been forced to shut down due to rising flour and ingredient costs.

In the first half of this year, Iran's economy continued to stagnate with a struggling energy sector, a rapid depreciation of the national currency and an inflation rate exceeding 40%, causing a severe decline in purchasing power ●

Michael Roberts blogs at
thenextrecession.wordpress.com

Notes

1. www.iranintl.com/en/202412282835.
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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

For Trump Iran was a triumph

Nowhere else to go

Donald Trump's decision to attack Iran was a predictable betrayal of his pitch to voters. But, asks **Paul Demarty**, who else are they to vote for? Especially when it comes to elections, memories are short

As widely expected, Donald Trump decided to join Israel's war of aggression against Iran over the weekend. A combined wave of bunker-buster bombs and cruise missiles hit Iran's core nuclear facilities. Not two days later, after a polite Iranian retaliation, Trump succeeded - despite Israel's best efforts - in ramming through a ceasefire. ("They don't know what the fuck they're doing," a plainly irritated Trump told reporters about his bellicose Israeli and Iranian 'partners'.)

One relatively minor subplot to this drama is that it would seem, in spite of peace later breaking out, to represent a betrayal of Trump's supporters. His platform in international politics during his various election campaigns was straightforward: he would not start any new Middle East wars; he would get America out of the region, all the better to confront China in the far east, which he considered a far more serious 'threat' than Iran. Such a position was hardly stupid, of course: China is a peer rival to the US; Iran is a significant power in the region, but no more. America's antipathy towards the Islamic Republic is partly a matter of old wounds and unavenged humiliations, and partly one of backing its own favoured regional strongmen - Israel and Saudi Arabia - against a regime that these latter considered a threat. (The Saudis have recently defrosted their relations with Tehran, however.)

Trump appealed to an isolationist instinct in parts of the American populace, fed by decades of disaster in the 'war on terror'. It was not principled, but transactional. Why should the US spend so much money on defending Europe? Why couldn't the Europeans pay their own way? And, above all, why should American lives be wasted in the pursuit of quixotic and unachievable aims in the Gulf?

Yet it was not only war-weary, rust-belt Americans who backed Trump, but the Israeli right. Bibi Netanyahu plainly preferred to have him in the White House than any given Democrat. Israeli 'interference' in US elections frankly dwarfs any efforts made by the Russians, though it is passed over in polite silence by a pliant media class. Netanyahu plainly rated his chances highly of dragging the US president along with him, wherever he wanted to go. There was always a contradiction there, which played out in rapid succession from Operation Midnight Hammer to the June 24 ceasefire.

Popularity

There can be no doubt that Trump's decision to get directly involved, however briefly, has hurt his popularity with his own base. His approval ratings have taken a hit. At the upper reaches of the Maga movement, splits are equally obvious.



Storming the Capitol 2021: Maga base is not about to go Democrat

Tucker Carlson, the far-right broadcaster, conducted a brutal interview with Ted Cruz, the chair of the Senate Commerce Committee, on the Israel-Iran war, in which he did an admirable job of showing Cruz up as the bigoted buffoon that he is. This was plainly a proxy battle against those forces in the government pushing for a US intervention in this war. In the event, it appears it was far too late. The US and Israel had been discussing this operation for months, even simulating the attacks that ultimately took place. The whole process of US 'negotiations' with Iran that took place over the last couple of months turns out to have been just one of a number of 'options'. Carlson considers this 'backstabbing' the epitome of smart politics.

Indeed, that was precisely the justification offered by vice-president JD Vance to waverers: "I empathise with Americans who are exhausted after 25 years of wars in the Middle East," he told NBC's *Meet the press*. "But the difference is that back then we had dumb presidents. And now we have a president who actually knows how to accomplish America's national security objectives."

It would not be a good use of time to refute this claim in any depth. One objection that jumps right out at you is that, for four of those 25 years, the dumb president in charge was a certain Donald J Trump. If it truly was his overriding objective to disengage from all these "dumb" wars, why did he *not* disengage from any of them? He negotiated withdrawal from Afghanistan, but kicked the can down the road until it was Joe Biden's problem. Was he not supposed to be the decisive, strong and very smart man who would sort all this out?

The truth is that Trump is strong *relative* to his political supporters and rivals within the Republican Party, who have proved unable to replace him. Yet, despite his self-presentation, he is weak-willed. He is easily manipulated by his associates; indeed, he is *so* easily manipulated that it is difficult to get any sustained policy out of him, since rival courtiers can easily push

him between different courses. He is in one respect pathetically beholden to public opinion, fearing to do anything that could allow enemies to present him as "weak". Thus he is easily talked out of de-escalation, and talked into adventures like this week's bombing runs (and, in his first term, the assassination of Qasem Soleimani). It is plausibly the fact that he has been made to look foolish and pliable by Netanyahu that led to his later *volte face*.

For those Trump supporters who really had hopes for an end to these hopeless entanglements, there is a choice: stick or twist. Among the most ideologically committed, this is a choice about loyalty to the man or to the programme. For Carlson, it seems, the programme won - not altogether surprising, since he is known to have privately expressed contempt for Trump. (Carlson is a New England 'blue blood'; vulgar wheeler-dealers from the outer boroughs are not really his style.) For others, loyalty wins out. It is hardly surprising to see Vance come onside, since he is after all a member of the administration and moreover a craven lickspittle - but others could be named from the Maga mediasphere. The deep vein of hatred among rightwing Americans for Iran will help them swallow the humiliation.

Swing votes

It is all too easy, however, to fall into the trap of viewing Trump's support through the lens of his hardcore fans. They are, after all, so spectacularly detestable (or deplorable, indeed, as Hillary Clinton would say).

Yet much of Trump's vote is in fact strangely passive. It is counterintuitive, given how much political energy has been invested in treating Trump as a world-historic ogre, but there it is. He activates non-voters at a much higher rate than his mainstream opponents. These voters, when polled last year, typically had a vague sense that the economy was 'bad' and it would be better if somebody ran America 'like a business'. They want the border 'under control', without showing any great appetite for mass

deportations. They may have chafed against political correctness, without having thereby had their souls eaten by the anti-woke hysteria got up by the far right. They are cynical about America's pretensions to global moral leadership. They are predominantly young and male, and have no more than a high-school education.

These are the people who swung the key states for him. Vance's pabulum about "dumb presidents" was not for Tucker Carlson's benefit, but for them. Their attraction to Trump, on this basis, was not wholly senseless. As people on relatively low incomes, they will have been hit harder by inflation than many, and suffered under many other economic pressures wholly alien to the Democrats' most passionate supporters, who are now college-educated and tend to live in the big cities. Their communities are more likely to furnish the soldiers whose job it will be, in the end, to die for the follies of the Washington foreign-policy elite.

Fix it

It may seem foolish to expect Trump to fix any of this (certainly now) - but then it was absolutely certain that Hillary Clinton and then Kamala Harris were *not* going to fix it. They had no interest in doing so. What exactly was Harris's pitch to voters, anyway? Can anyone say without desperately Googling for 10 minutes? For a time, it seemed merely to be that people should show gratitude that they were fortunate enough to live in the same world as her.

Even if you did not really believe Trump's promises, you might fairly say that there was a five percent chance he would 'fix' everything. Five is a bigger number than zero. And only something from outside the perfectly honed political machines of the major parties could be said to have any chance at all. (For this reason, Bernie Sanders often polled better head-to-head with Trump than Clinton and other 'moderate' Democrats, though it is doubtful that this would have continued in a general election.)

The trouble is that you would still be wrong, as indeed Trump's passive support has turned out to be. This is no matter of contingency. The idea of a strong man sweeping aside corrupt and incompetent elites is an enduring one, but has proven itself time and again illusory. No large-scale society can be governed truly autocratically: the new leader needs his own caste of elites to actually do the job, which will usually be sourced from within the existing political class anyway. Even with a true purge, those who replace the old swamp-dwellers will quickly prove to be as corrupt and incompetent (perhaps more so), given how high a price is placed on obedience and personal loyalty under such regimes. So it turns out

that defence secretary Pete Hegseth is no less a warmonger than his Democrat predecessors - merely less sober; and so on.

In the various election post-mortems that followed Trump's victory last year, Democrat elites frequently grumbled about the influence of 'low-information voters', in a way that seemed to imply that we are all born as 'high-information', and are merely pushed out of this prelapsarian condition by the machinations of bad actors. In truth, the strong-man illusion is endemic to a society that pretends to be democratic, while in fact assigning the functions of government to professional elites in the interests of capital-owners - and all the more so to a society whose great electoral contest is over a monarchical presidency.

It is true that the voters I described do not have the requisite political education to act consistently in their own interests. Yet what could actually provide such an education? Not better civics classes, or more thorough censorship of 'misinformation', but ongoing political engagement, itself in a context where the real structures of power are unveiled and put properly in question.

That is the job of a *party*, and a real one, rather than the bureaucratically administered campaigning apparatuses running things in DC. It is the vigorous internal life of a democratically organised party that - through involving members in *choices* between candidates, officials and programmes, and the debates pertaining to these choices - can get us to a higher aggregate level of political intelligence. In so doing, of course, party organisation solves the 'old elite'/new elite' problem: ordinary members are trained in the kind of decision-making required in administration, and so set in train the withering away of the professionalised administrative state altogether.

Of course, it only makes sense to build such an organisation if your goal really is to drastically flatten the hierarchies of society at large. The first such parties were working class organisations, with bourgeois equivalents springing up in response; with the decline of the workers' movement, all such parties have steadily fallen under the control of the bureaucracy. The creation of a truly democratic political culture in the United States, as in every other country, therefore falls to the socialist left, who may not succeed immediately in making inroads into the passive Trump vote, but *could* in time, if it built a truly functional, principled party.

Without that, the result of Trump's backstabbing will be further alienation and ultimately despair. As the last week's events show, the stakes could not be higher ●

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