

weekly worker



Martin Luther and the Hobbesian demand for civility and speech control in the communist movement

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Towards a mass Communist Party

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LETTERS



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

Fascist attack

I have just watched disturbing footage of a fascist attack on the SWP's Marxism 2025 festival in London. Unfortunately, all YouTube clips of this seem to be from fascist sources, so I will not give the link, but they can be easily searched for using keywords.

The SWP comrades outnumbered the fash, fought bravely and damage seems to be not too bad. But this shows the confidence of UK fascists, given the election of Trump and rise of Reform. Even in the bad old days of the late 1970s and early 1980s groups like the National Front and British Movement never felt confident enough to attack actual Marxist events. That has clearly changed.

Also, SWP security has sadly never been good and protecting their members has never been a priority. One group of SWP stewards who could mix it with fascists back in the day were expelled by Tony Cliff for "squadism" and "laddish behaviour" and famously went on to form Red Action.

I have my differences with the SWP - however, solidarity with them on this occasion.

Paul O'Keeffe
USA

Transition truths

Surely the simple answer to both Adam Buick and Robin Cox (Letters, July 5), who is quoting him, are at least twofold: that, should a majority (which I assume is defined as 50% plus one) vote for socialism (which the Socialist Party of Great Britain defines as full communism), all the necessary preconditions for full communism are absolutely not in place.

In my letter of June 12 I defined this full communism (or 'socialism' for the SPGB) as being: "a stateless, moneyless, free association of producers, where people would work voluntarily as a pleasure, choose to produce the necessary goods and services in relative abundance to enable all needs and wants to be met, and people would freely access all the goods and services they require. People would consciously choose to work responsibly and people would equally consciously (and conscientiously) choose to access goods and services responsibly".

What reasonable guarantee could there possibly be that the 50%+ who chose to vote for SPGB parliamentary candidates were *all* fully imbued with the necessary advanced communist consciousness?

People might vote SPGB for a whole host of reasons other than being completely convinced they should work for nothing and for the good of society and allowing everyone else to literally freely access everything they produce. They might just like the idea of 'socialism' without any real understanding of what it actually means. They may think socialism means something very different. They may just like the images of Adam or Robin on the ballot paper.

And what about the up to 49% of those who did not even superficially vote SPGB, let alone allegedly for full communism? How could a full communist society possibly operate with such numbers *not* persuaded by the case for free labour or for *responsible* free access to goods and services? Surely, the *great majority* of the working population would need to be fully imbued with that advanced communist consciousness for such a society to work, and not be fatally undermined by a fairly significant

non-socialist minority.

Obviously, one would like such advanced socialist and communist consciousness to develop, become as widespread and as rapidly as possible, but the new working class power would surely have to preside over a lengthy period of time when there remained significant numbers who were assuredly *not* advanced communists.

Incidentally, no real socialist or communist is suggesting that, when the working class has assumed political and state power, it would then *preside over capitalism*, or *manage capitalism* for a lengthy period of time. All we are saying is that *at the point of assuming state power*, the working class - the new ruling class - would have inherited a capitalist economic and social system. *After that point* it would, of course, proceed rapidly to socialise the major concentrations of capitalism and place them under the democratic control of the new ruling working class, and start to plan production to meet needs. To assert otherwise is really to be playing with words and silly games.

Robin Cox repeats one of the bases of the SPGB claim for 'instant full socialism': ie, there is immediate productive capacity to produce all the goods and services everyone might need or even want. He even repeats the assertion that currently the world produces more than enough food for everyone, and it is simply distributional problems which prevent this being equitably distributed. Simply wrong on both basic counts.

There may be the *potential* capacity to produce all the socially useful goods and services people may need or want, but there would need to be a huge amount of work both to close down all the current production which is not socially useful (even dangerous or downright destructive) and replace it with socially useful production and to the levels required to ensure abundance. We are surely talking of decades at least.

I have heard the glib repeated SPGB assertion that 'there is already enough food produced' many, many times and therefore decided to look into this in more detail. I assume not even the SPGB would be so crass as to suggest we should be sending surplus supermarket ready meals to the third world.

Is there *really* currently enough food being produced in the world to feed eight billion people? No. We are a million miles from such a position. The truer scientific claim is that there is a *theoretical potential* to produce enough food, but that would require a series of vast, radical and wide-ranging measures and changes to existing production, which would take an even longer period of time than conversion of all industry to socially useful production.

Huge amounts of existing agricultural production has nothing whatsoever to do with meeting the nutritional needs of eight billion people. It is often cash crop production for industry or other purposes - or nutritionally incredibly wasteful and geared to meet the market needs of the minority of the population in the 'advanced' capitalist states. It also requires whole sets of radical changes to existing agricultural land to make it more productive and geared to nutrition, and also measures to bring into production whole new tracts of land through land reclamation, irrigation, etc. Such radical changes to world agriculture would require years, if not decades, to come to full fruition.

No-one is suggesting that the period following the assumption of state power by the working class and the years - decades - required to implement all the above necessary preconditions

for full communism would in any way be 'managing capitalism'. Or any form of hybrid capitalism and socialism. It would indeed be the 'lower stage of communism' - aka 'socialism' - as it emerged from capitalist society, as Marx put it.

Through the immediate socialisation of all the major centres of capital, socialism would clearly be the dominant mode of production in the new working class-ruled society, although still having to be based on remuneration for labour and also a sensible rational system for fairly allocating goods and services to people in the absence of the complete abundance of all goods and services. This suggests the existence of some form of monetary system.

I suspect that *full communist consciousness* will only be developed and among the required *vast majority of the working population only after* the material conditions have been created, which, as I say, could well take decades. It could indeed take generations for old capitalist behaviour, prejudices and thinking (capitalist and reactionary consciousness) to be largely eliminated from the population.

During this period, you would also have the problem of the overthrown classes and their active supporters, plus the substantial minority of those who did not even vote for 'socialism'. This suggests some form of *state apparatus* would be required for an extended period, albeit one in the hands of the majority ruling class. This also suggests a stage of socialism *before* a stage of full communism, as the latter, by definition, would be stateless.

So a transitional period, which commences with the assumption of political and state power by the working class - transitional in the sense of being between capitalism and (full) communism, but in reality a necessary interim stage of socialism (or lower phase of communism), in which all the necessary conditions for full communism are gradually implemented.

Andrew Northall
Kettering

Transition nuance

Two letters last week (July 3) - from Gary Levi and Moshé Machover - respond to my introduction to Ben Lewis's translation of Kautsky on the 'new middle classes'.

Comrade Levi is correct that Kautsky disavows the *Zusammenbruchstheorie* elsewhere in the *Anti-Bernstein* and I agree with his recommendation of Simon Clarke's *Marx's theory of crisis* as good reading for leftists on this much-debated topic. That said, I think it is reasonably clear from their biographies that Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel *did* defend a *Zusammenbruchstheorie* and that it was important to their strategic conceptions, which actually shaped the politics of the SPD: that is, of building up the workers' movement and the workers' political voice under the capitalist regime, as opposed *either* to coalition politics *or* to attempting to convert immediate strike or single-issue campaigns into an insurrectionary struggle for power.

The validity of the approach depended on the idea that capitalism *would of its own accord* fall into *Zusammenbruch* - that is, into a form of crisis that went beyond a 'normal' cyclical financial crisis - so that it threatened the ability of the rulers to go on in the old way (Lenin's formula). If this was wrong, then the SPD's, and the Bolsheviks', "revolutionary but not revolution-making" policy would be indefensible. The only available real choices would then be insurrectionism - either in the form of mass-strikism

or of armed struggle - or some form of Fabianism. This was the argument of the cold war former MI6 and CIA authors (Carl Schorske, Peter Nettl, and so on) who used Luxemburg and other left critics of the SPD's approach as a political instrument in support of Fabianism.

I do not think that the *Zusammenbruchstheorie* was completely wrong. What I think was wrong about it was the omission of the *state* order and, in consequence, the place of war in any actual *Zusammenbruch*.

Comrade Machover's letter corrects my over-general statement of his oral comment at an Online Communist Forum meeting. This is obviously useful. But I am not sure that it is possible to make such a clean divide between the abolition of capitalism and the supersession of markets as he makes in his letter. The first reason for this is that the withdrawal of capital is a normal day-to-day measure of capitalist coercion of governments and becomes more acute if the capitalist class loses political power. To defeat this unavoidably involves *Kriegssozialismus* ('war socialism'): that is, immediate (though unavoidably defective) planning 'in kind' of necessary productive activities which capital is refusing to perform.

The second reason concerns the transition *to* capitalism - and the point the Marxist economist, John Harrison, made in 1978, that *Capital* describes a counter-factual, purified capitalism, with a view to the critique of the Proudhonists and the left Ricardians who imagined a market economy without capital (by different means). *Capital* volume 1 among other features shows that small commodity production, by the laws of monetary market relations themselves, tends through marginal differences in personal productivity and luck to evolve into small groups of proto-capitalists and proto-workers. This dynamic has been empirically shown at work in studies of late medieval peasant and artisan production. Hence, by socialising *large* capital we have not wholly eliminated *capitalism*.

In consequence of these two points, I think that a messy transition, with a certain amount of 'waste and chaos', is unavoidable.

Mike Macnair
Oxford

Irrelevant?

Tony Greenstein is one of the most tireless, indefatigable fighters in political life. On the street, on the rostrum, on the road he risks health, wealth and freedom for his cause. And then we have his regular blog and his excellent book, *Zionism during the holocaust*.

But in a letter to the *Weekly Worker* (May 1) he announced that he has cancelled his subscription because we "seem to have lost all sense of direction and perspective". He goes on to describe the hazardous times we live in and contrasts that urgency with the CPGB's attempt at forging communist unity. This is apparently an error, because "One thing is very clear. We are not in a revolutionary or pre-revolutionary era" - nothing like Russia after three years of war, I suppose.

He writes of the unions, the Labour Party and the climate crisis and contends: "Yet, instead of engaging with these questions, the *Weekly Worker* and CPGB have turned their backs on the living political struggle in favour of an irrelevant unity project. The idea that revolutionaries, Marxists and reformists should unite in one mass party is rejected out of hand in favour of an unrealisable sectarian project." A clue here as to what he thinks we really

need - "revolutionaries, Marxists and reformists should unite in one mass party". He fails to tell us how well that has worked in the past.

In the *Weekly Worker* of July 3, however, it seems that, happily, Tony has not cancelled his connection to the CPGB after all. There is a certain triumphalist note: "I accused you of turning your backs on the living political struggle in favour of an irrelevant unity project. It didn't surprise me that no-one in the CPGB wished to engage with my argument, because to do so would raise too many uncomfortable questions." And now, problems with Talking About Socialism show that he was right all along, it seems. Again we see the times we are living in and the indifference shown by CPGB to all that's going on.

I'd have thought that Tony might just have noticed some of the articles lately in the *Weekly Worker*. He could have seen reports and pictures of the Palestine demonstrations, articles on Gaza and Iran, on freedom of speech, on climate change - there's quite a lot of stuff, Tony, not just FCU. Thousands of copies of the paper are distributed at the demonstrations too!

There are urgent questions facing the working class, and the whole of humanity, now and there have been for quite some time. For instance, currently: Gaza, Sudan, Haiti - plus, of course, the UK and USA. Since, say, 1950 Korea, Kenya, Vietnam, South Africa, Iraq ... and many, many more. Should we drop everything and concentrate on one at a time?

There is a link to all this, Tony: it's called capital - profit for the sake of profit, accumulation for the sake of accumulation. What is needed? The end of capitalism. How can this be done? By the efforts of the organised working class. How can the working class be organised? By the building of a mass Communist Party.

But Tony doesn't seem to be so keen on resolving everything we can at once. He ends his latest mail with his way forward. "Our first and foremost task is preventing a far-right government and rebuilding the left." And "The distinctions between reformism and revolutionary socialism are theoretical abstractions today, when the need to defend democratic gains won in past ages, such as freedom of speech, are all too obvious."

So we don't need to move forward: we need to regain what has been lost. Well, good luck with that, Tony - perhaps Corbyn and Sultana can help you out.

Jim Nelson
Email

Programme

Tony Greenstein suffers from what most of the Trotskyoid left suffers from: the belief that the Marxist programme is only relevant during a r-r-revolutionary situation. In the meantime we should just bring the left together around some sort of warmed-over left reformism and keep our 'Marxism' for Socialist Sunday School speechifying.

For such comrades, Marxism is a parody or some sort of Storming the Winter Palace Re-enactment Society. Either that or it involves a dishonest and patronising approach to the working class: let's trick people into a revolutionary crisis and then - tah-dah!, we reveal the Marxist programme. Of course, by then it will be too late, and counterrevolution will be the most likely outcome.

Classical Marxism and a genuine communist programme does offer a framework and strategy for addressing the immediate concerns of the working class and connecting this to the battle for working class state power through a minimum and maximum programme. It is comrade

Greenstein who proposes these be disconnected by suggesting a fight for reforms in the here and now (and the future be damned).

Comrade Greenstein says the priority is to prevent a far-right government and to rebuild the left. But what sort of left? To do what? None of the problems he outlines can be solved positively under a left reformist capitalist government. He outlines the genocide in Gaza, the attacks on democratic rights, a lack of working class industrial militancy. Will warmed-over left reformism answer these problems?

Since the defeat of the Miners' Great Strike we have seen attempt after attempt to lash together a left that thinks the distinction between reform and revolution is a chimera or a "theoretical abstraction", as comrade Greenstein puts it: Socialist Labour Party, Socialist Alliance, Respect, Tusc, Left Unity, *und so weiter*, ad nauseum.

For comrades like Tony, there is no connection between the working class leading and winning the battles for free speech, opposing imperialism and itself conquering state power. It is not 'unity between sects' that will alter the balance of power: it is winning the working class to an understanding it needs its own party to take state power. Only a Marxist programme offers that possibility. Maybe we should try that for a change?

Martin Greenfield
Australia

Liquidate!

I am very sad to hear that the Forging Communist Unity talks have broken down. I, and other comrades here in the Netherlands, have been following the talks with decreasing enthusiasm over the last months. The biggest drop in enthusiasm for many of us was the pulling out of the RS21 comrades, who represented by far the largest group in the talks.

I want to urge the CPGB and the pro-fusion faction in Prometheus to start to work in, strengthen and eventually fuse with the Marxist Unity Caucus (MUC) in RS21. Certainly they can use your experience and knowledge on organising and Marxism. In doing so, I don't care whether you keep the name and organisational structure of the CPGB or not. Certainly I think it would be a good idea to keep the *Weekly Worker* fully as it is now: a paper for open polemic on and for Marxist unity, and one which I very much enjoy reading every week.

You have repeatedly assured us that, if it came to be so, the CPGB would have no problem being a minority and fighting for your points. I say, fight for your points together with the MUC in RS21, which is by far the biggest organisation in Britain that has any hope of becoming the (proto-) party formation which you seek to build.

Of course, it could be the case that the MUC has some fundamental disagreements with you, such that you don't wish to work inside the caucus (factions within factions). In that case, I say fight alongside them on the points you agree with in RS21! I repeat, they can certainly use your knowledge and experience (both RS21 and MUC).

This letter is my own opinion and not sanctioned by any organisation.

Elise van der Doelen
Revolutionary Socialist Party and ROOD

Bring it on!

Within his other central *dissections*, Jack Conrad provides both an extremely clear and very helpful outline of the CPGB's stances around how to secure a successful Marxist revolution in these complex modern times of ours ('One step

back', July 3).

However, when it comes to how that scenario is to be reached *in the first place* there's a glaring lack of recognition, a peculiar absence of simplest understanding about what can only be called factors and forces of a 'real' world - where very wrongly *indeed* he dismisses the importance and powerfulness of revolutionary success or even just progress in one country providing encouragement in others (even, yes, being 'inspirational'). It's just normal to human behaviour, and certainly where a huge dollop of well-grounded/intelligently derived optimism amounts to *lifeblood* in the building of any Communist Party or overall movement.

Counterrevolutionary forces and activities of the capitalist-imperialist status quo - of its ruthless and when necessary outright *brutal* measures for self-preservation - will exist and be deployed regardless of any cleverly conceived plan to avoid that onslaught. So the immediate application of extensive socialist measures will be required. Objective factors and imperatives will dominate over any subjective others. In short (nonetheless in worldly completeness): 'Bring it all on!' ... ie, when or wherever given that utterly magnificent chance.

Bruno Kretzschmar
Email

Starmer out

There is no-one on the left who wouldn't sympathise with John Price's sentiments on the open treachery of the present Labour leader and those who support him (Letters, June 26). However, calling on Labour MPs to resign from the Labour Party is not the way forward. Starmer, who I suspect is a deep-state plant, just happens to be the most rightwing of the post-war Labour leaders. This strange person came from nowhere and is now carrying out the most extreme attacks on the working class.

But the odd thing is, although everyone on the left opposes Starmer, they have allowed him to get away with his crimes. Where is the anti-Starmer campaign which the working class is crying out for? Starmer on his present course is leading the Labour Party to defeat in the next general election, where many Labour MPs are going to lose their seats, if the Labour Party doesn't get rid of him. So what should the left do?

We shouldn't be calling on Labour MPs to ditch the party. Rather, what is urgently needed is a short-term 'Starmer out' campaign. Just as the Labour right conducted an effective campaign with the support of the establishment press to get rid of Jeremy Corbyn, we should be calling on the left inside and outside the Labour Party to initiate a campaign against Starmer, with the support of the left press. We need to get rid of this fellow as soon as possible - meaning put pressure on the Labour and trade union establishment to remove him from the leadership.

The way to get him removed from the leadership is to start a 'Starmer out' campaign.

Tony Clark
For Democratic Socialism

Responsible

First of all, calling for "Death to the IDF" is not going to solve any problems in the world. Free speech actually includes the proviso that it's used in a responsible way. Otherwise it's a millstone around our necks with every performance in every theatre in the country

- for example, being disrupted indefinitely because irresponsible people think it's their right to shout 'Fire!' whenever they want. Rights and responsibilities go hand in hand and we shouldn't forget that.

As Anne McShane's article last week pointed out, Bob Vylan clarified his statement later by saying, "We are for the dismantling of a violent military machine!" ('Well done, Kneecap and Bob Vylan', July 3). That makes more sense and brings the debate away from just trite, throwaway statements to the issue at hand, and to reason rather than irrational emotionalism.

Let's remember that Israel Defence Forces soldiers are as much part of the mass ideological manipulation as everybody else. Members of the IDF, like the rest of us, have been brainwashed from birth to accept the divisive, malevolent system we live in today. Israeli children are raised, if not to hate Palestinians, at least to see them as a separate people, not deserving of the same rights and privileges. I lived in Israel for lengthy periods and the Israeli children would tell you the most horrendous stories about Palestinians - the very worst stories about the very worst acts allegedly perpetrated by Palestinians, which could just as well have been made-up propaganda. One of the first Israelis I ever spoke to warned me not to go into the occupied territories, as I would be "raped" by Palestinians. So this is the ideological setting for people growing up in Israel, or for people visiting Israel (I did eventually visit the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza, and had very positive experiences).

Undoubtedly, the IDF have committed war crimes. They have targeted young children - a sniper bullet through the head is their preferred method of murder. They target pregnant women and boast about how shooting them means 'killing two people with one bullet'. There's no equivocation about IDF war crimes, which a lot of the world has accepted and justified, but the members of the IDF are as much a part of the ideological brainwashing as Hamas.

The eradication of the IDF would not get to the heart of the matter, which is that, from day one most people - through whatever cultural and maybe even some well-meaning initiatives - are taught in one way or another to hate a certain other people and to accept the systems of finance, economics and government that respectively indebt us, enslave us, and manipulate us.

If we want to support the Palestinian cause, we should support Yvette Cooper which is an organisation founded on the same day that Palestine Action was closed down and that wants to use militant direct action in order to undermine the Israeli military war machine and Britain's participation in it. Isn't it the irony of ironies that practically on the same day that Palestine Action was proscribed as a 'terrorist organisation', foreign secretary David Lammy was photographed shaking hands with the interim Syrian president, Ahmed al-Sharaa, whose proscribed organisation, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, forms a major part of the present transitional Syrian government.

I support Yvette Cooper and wish them all success. It's the activities of Yvette Cooper that have the potential to bring about positive change in Gaza and elsewhere - not trite statements by sham artists jumping on bandwagons.

Louis Shawcross
County Down

ACTION

GM pensions: divest from genocide

Friday July 11, 9am: Protest outside Greater Manchester Pension Fund HQ, 5 Manchester Road, Droylsden M43. Demand GMPF divests from Israeli apartheid, fossil fuels and the arms industry. Organised by Greater Manchester Friends of Palestine: www.facebook.com/events/1495796818071151.

End Rolls-Royce complicity in genocide

Friday July 11, 6pm: Protest outside Rolls-Royce HQ, 90 York Way, London N1. Rolls-Royce helps construct the F-35 fighter jets that Israel uses to bombard Gaza. Organised by London Campaign Against Arms Trade: www.facebook.com/events/1426141325065956.

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.

Trump, imperialism and the Middle East

National speaking tour with holocaust survivor Stephen Kapos and other prominent anti-war activists.

Tuesday July 15, 7pm: SET Woolwich, Beresford Street, London SE18.

Wednesday July 16, 7pm: The Old Library, 3 Gibb St, Birmingham B9.

Thursday July 17, 6.30pm: Hamilton House, Stokes Croft, Bristol BS1.

Tuesday July 22, 7pm: Renfield Centre, 260 Bath Street, Glasgow G2.

Wednesday July 23, 7pm: 67 Westgate Road, Newcastle NE1.

Thursday July 24, 7pm: FMH, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2.

Tuesday July 29, 7pm: Main Hall, 112 Deepdale Road, Preston PR1.

Wednesday July 30, 6.30pm: Casa Bar, 29 Hope Street, Liverpool L1.

Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk/events.

Lewisham council - divest now

Wednesday July 16, 6.30pm: Protest outside Lewisham Town Hall, 1 Catford Road, London SE6. Demand Lewisham council divests its pension fund from companies complicit in Israel's genocide. Organised by Lewisham Palestine Solidarity Campaign: palestinecampaign.org/events/protest-lewisham-council-divest-now.

The programme of a new Communist Party

Thursday July 17, 6.30pm: Online discussion in the series, 'Building a Communist Party: past attempts and future prospects'. Roundtable discussion with speakers invited from CPGB, *Prometheus* and Talking About Socialism. Organised by Why Marx?: www.whymarx.com/sessions.

Tolpuddle Martyrs festival

Friday July 18 to Sunday July 20: Annual commemoration festival, Tolpuddle Martyrs Museum, Dorchester Road, Tolpuddle DT2. Tickets £65. Organised by Tolpuddle Martyrs: www.tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk/festival.

National march for Palestine

Saturday July 19, 12 noon: National demonstration. Assemble Embankment tube station, London WC2. End the genocide. Stop arming Israel. Stop starving Gaza. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk/events/national-march-for-palestine-2.

Big Ride for Palestine

Cycling events in seven cities. The Big Ride combines cycling with practical solidarity and raising awareness of the Palestine genocide.

July 19: Cardiff; **July 26:** Bristol; **August 2:** Birmingham and Manchester; **August 9:** London and Sheffield; **August 16:** Newcastle.

Organised by The Big Ride for Palestine: www.thebigride4palestine.com/big-ride-2025.

Birmingham bin strike megapicket II

Friday July 25, 6am: Solidarity action on five picket lines across Birmingham. Support bin workers facing pay cuts of up to £8,000. Free Thursday night accommodation. Organised by Strike Map: actionnetwork.org/events/megapicketii-25-july-2025.

Troublemakers at work

Saturday July 26, 9.30am to 4.45pm: Conference, Central Hall, Oldham Street, Manchester M1. Rank-and-file workers discuss how to organise in unions and build strength to win disputes. Registration £15 (£5). Organised by Troublemakers At Work: troublemakersat.work/conference-2025.

Stand up for choice

Saturday September 6, 2pm: Counter-protest. Assemble at the Millicent Fawcett statue, Parliament Square, London SW1. Oppose anti-abortion groups and stand up for the right to choose. Organised by Abortion Rights: www.facebook.com/Abortionrightsuk.

Remember Burston Strike School

Sunday September 7, 10.30am to 4pm: Rally, Diss Road, Burston, Norfolk IP22. Commemorate the longest strike in history. Free entry. Organised by Unite the Union and the TUC: burstonstrikeschool.wordpress.com/2025-rally.

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.

PARTY



After the 'comrade Delta' rape scandal, the SWP is seen as a liability

Still waiting for Jeremy

Factional differences in the Corbyn movement have been fought out in secret and then leaked to the bourgeois press. Both sides show not the least understanding of the transparency, democracy and programme that our class urgently needs, says **Carla Roberts**

It would be difficult to think of a more efficient way to mess up the launch of the new Jeremy Corbyn party than the sorry charade we have witnessed over the last week or so. Yes, negotiations have been going on for almost two years now and everybody knew something was brewing, but Zarah Sultana's sudden announcement on July 3 that she was leaving the Labour Party to "co-lead the founding of a new party" with Corbyn did come as something of a surprise - not least to the 60 organisations officially involved in that strange melange otherwise known as Collective (and, or so it appeared, to the man himself).¹

As soon as she issued her statement, there were rumours swirling of Corbyn being deeply unhappy. And then, less than an hour later, *Sunday Times* journalist Gabriel Pogrund tweeted: "Exclusive: I understand Jeremy Corbyn has not agreed to join the new left party with Zarah Sultana yet. He is furious and bewildered at the way it has been launched without consultation."²

Pogrund is the author of the 2020 book, *Left out: the inside story of Labour under Corbyn*, which paints a not entirely unsympathetic picture of Corbyn as a leader who simply could not deal with the accusations of anti-Semitism and "retreated". He interviewed many people close to Corbyn and clearly retains a working relationship with at least some of them.

The fact that he was onto something was paradoxically confirmed by Corbyn's online silence. It took the independent MP until 1.38pm on Friday July 4 to release his own statement: "Congratulations to Zarah Sultana on her principled

decision to leave the Labour Party. I am delighted that she will help us build a real alternative."³ It does not take a genius to see the substantial difference between "help us build a real alternative" and Sultana's formulation of being the co-leader. Corbyn's statement was supposed to limit the damage - instead, the rumour mill went into overdrive.

News of a fraught Zoom meeting of the 'inner Corbyn circle' preceding Sultana's announcement quickly started to spread. This secretive Organising Group, put together by Corbyn and his allies, is where the actual decisions about the new Corbyn party are being taken, with Collective having been well and truly sidelined many months ago (there are just too many of the weird and wonderful involved). Of course, there are no minutes and no official reports available, because this is all happening in secret. Still, we soon got to hear that there were 30 present at the afternoon OG Zoom call of July 3 and that a vote on the proposed leadership of the new party had taken place. Apparently Corbyn and his camp lost by 10 votes to 20.

Two leaks

It took until Sunday July 6 to get a fuller picture. Sadly, it was not Corbyn or Sultana who told the left (or the working class, for that matter) what had actually happened - but, once again, it was Gabriel Pogrund, writing in *The Sunday Times*. At least one person involved in the OG must have given this Murdoch journalist extensive background information about the ill-tempered Zoom meeting. Clearly, this is somebody on the losing side - ie, in the Corbyn camp.

Somebody for whom secret meetings, backroom deals and shaping politics by leaking information to bourgeois journalists comes as second nature. That is, after all, how Labourites do politics. Instead of fighting openly for the politics they believe in, it is all about the dark arts of manoeuvring and spin.

Most people I have spoken to point the finger at Karie Murphy, Corbyn's right-hand woman when he was Labour leader. But she was not actually at the OG meeting, we understand. She was on a plane at the time. Still, that does not mean she would not know what happened.

In any case, we read in *The Sunday Times* that at the said July 3 OG meeting:

[Andrew] Feinstein anonymously submitted a memo arguing for a party co-led by Sultana and Corbyn. Corbyn's allies had submitted their own, arguing that only he had the authority to be leader and ought to do it alone. Corbyn himself agrees - not due to a desire to be front and centre again, some close to him say, but rather because he believes joint leaderships do not work.

In the event, [Salma] Yaqoob, who chaired the meeting, called a vote on both papers. Corbyn's allies were dismayed, arguing the group had no authority to vote on anything and that such an exercise undermined the dialogue and consensus supposed to be at the heart of any venture.

Yaqoob, wielding the digital gavel, passed [sic] ahead anyway, stating most of those on the call wanted a vote on the two options. Corbyn and his allies boycotted the

contest, saying some kind of wider democratic event was needed to make such a decision. In turn, Feinstein and his allies were able to vote and claim victory. This prompted Sultana's post a short time later: the new party was born.⁴

Leaving aside that Pogrund is wrong to state that Sultana's announcement had somehow led to the immediate launch of a new party - she had been careful to write that she would only co-lead "the founding of a new party" - the article does show the rather embarrassing next chapter in the sorry saga. It is embellished with screenshots from the WhatsApp group of the bigger, now sidelined, Collective outfit. It shows the clearly disgruntled group admin, Karie Murphy, removing, one after the other, members of the winning side - apparently in revenge for 'ambushing' Corbyn at the OG meeting: Karie Murphy "removed" Andrew Feinstein and Salma Yaqoob. She also removed two comrades named Huseyin and Leah.

It is quite likely that these screenshots come from a second leak, from the other side - ie, the Feinstein/Yaqoob faction, whose members, according to Pogrund, "share a sense of frustration that Corbyn has not been decisive enough since his election victory as an independent in July last year. They sympathise with him over the traumatic experience of his leadership and subsequent suspension from the Labour Party for alleged anti-Semitism, but believe time is of the essence".

This 'Get a move on' faction now also seems to include Andrew Murray, the former Straight Leftist and *Morning Star* political commentator,

who served as an adviser to Corbyn from 2018 to 2020, when he did his stint of entry work. Incidentally, Murray rates the chances of a party launch as "60%-70%. Probably within the next three or four months."⁵ He reported, in a July 7 article, that "the [OG] meeting, which I attended, believed the party would work best with both Corbyn and Sultana at the helm. It did not take up a separate proposal for Corbyn to be sole leader. Sultana's resignation and her announcement of the new leadership were putting into practice that collective decision, which she had told the meeting she would do."⁶

Andrew Murray

So, according to Murray, Corbyn should not have been very surprised about Sultana's move. Or were he and his close allies shocked that the (admittedly limited) democracy of the OG meeting was not simply overturned, when it turned out the decision taken was not to his liking? Pogrund tells us that Corbyn "implored Sultana to delete her message, to no avail. His wife Laura Alvarez, the Mexican socialist and former coffee bean importer, did the same. She, too, was ignored."⁷

It is also worth asking whether or not comrade Murray's presence at these meetings is on behalf of the Stop the War Coalition, the *Morning Star* or as a semi-detached member of the CPB? Does the CPB's executive committee exercise control? If not, why not? Does he take his cue nowadays from John Rees and Lindsey German and his Counterfire mates? Or is comrade Murray still really committed to

Straight Leftism and its Communist Liaison offshoot? Answers on a postcard.

As an aside, *real* communists would argue against *any* such directly elected leaders - interim, co or otherwise. It creates overly powerful Bonaparte(s). A truly democratic party should be led by a transparently elected leadership *committee* which is fully accountable to those who elected them. And, most importantly, they should be recallable, at all times.

In any case, we understand that Corbyn was dismayed because he wanted to ‘soft-launch’ the new venture in the autumn - at least according to none other than Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who writes on his blog: “As Jeremy Corbyn told me when I met him in London a fortnight ago, an independent party will be created in the autumn.”⁸ Perhaps the plan was to launch it on the eve of Labour Party conference (which starts on September 28) or to coincide with the government’s next budget. Who knows? Certainly not the working class in Britain, who this new party presumably wants to represent.

The *Sunday Times* article makes for extremely concerning reading indeed, chiefly because the disagreements between ‘Team Jeremy’ and ‘Team Zarah’ seem to be about nothing political at all. Can this all really just be about timing and having either one or two ‘interim leaders’?

Months ago

The much more important question of ‘What kind of party?’ was settled a couple of months ago - negatively, from our perspective. We know there used to be two ‘camps’ on the question - we previously called one of them the ‘partyists’, because those comrades were arguing for a membership organisation of some sort, with a national structure and local branches (Pamela Fitzpatrick and Karie Murphy, the two directors of Justice Collective Ltd, as well as Murphy’s partner, Len McCluskey, former general secretary of Unite). Then there were the ‘federalists/localists’, who argued for a looser network of pre-existing or newly formed, so-called ‘independent’ local groups, which included Andrew Feinstein, Jamie Driscoll and, crucially, Jeremy Corbyn himself.

We know that a couple of months ago the federalists had won, and that the preparations for the new organisation were focusing on a structure that had started to look like a diffuse network, with no democracy, either vertically or horizontally, but with, perhaps, a (relatively) strong centre. Or no centre at all, which is what Andrew Feinstein has been arguing for. He wants local groups to do their own

thing in loose collaboration until after the 2026 local elections, and only then to hold a delegate convention to vote on a new constitution.

No hard left

Corbyn might have said a couple of weeks ago in Liverpool that “all socialist groups” should get ready to join - but he clearly does not want the larger ‘hard’ left groups to play any *official* role, because very soon they would be in effective control at a local level, not least by exercising hegemony over the largely formless ‘soft’ left mass. Their early involvement is certainly seen as potentially off-putting. The Socialist Workers Party in particular has a very bad reputation, especially following the ‘comrade Delta’ rape crisis. Despite that, Corbyn throws them the occasional crumb to keep them keen.

Meanwhile, the Socialist Party in England and Wales’ electoral front, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition - while being one of the few groups officially listed on the Collective website⁹ - is preparing to stand in the next round of local elections (and doubtless readying itself for its usual statistically irrelevant vote). In parallel, SPEW is campaigning for “the trade unions” (which ones, exactly?) to lead a Labour Party mark 2 (which, if it ever saw the light of day, would not, of course, turn out to be a farcical re-run of the Labour Party mark 1 founded in 1900).

Laughably, it demands that the Corbyn project adopt a revolutionary programme. If only SPEW would adopt one itself! The Alan Woods Revolutionary Communist Party comes from the same Militant stable and, in the form of its Fiona Lali poster girl, makes the exact same *fake* argument as SPEW. Only a few years ago the Woods group - then called Socialist Appeal - swore that it was committed body and soul to the 1918 Fabian clause four of Labour’s constitution. Now, while it cynically markets itself with r-r-revolutionary phrase-mongering, any sort of programme is notable by its absence.

As for the SWP, it is completely at sea, with its new, third generation leadership of Lewis Neilsen and Tomáš Tengely-Evans. Its utterly pointless broad front, We Demand Change, effectively acts as a recruiting sergeant for Zack Polanski. His ‘Back Zack’ leadership campaign has seen a surge of people joining the Green Party ... most from the befuddled left - for example, John McDonnell’s former economic adviser, James Meadway,¹⁰ and Michael Chessum, long-time fellow traveller of the pro-imperialist Alliance for Workers’ Liberty.¹¹ Having Green radicals sharing WDC platforms does, though,

lend a certain respectability to an SWP that is desperate for respectability. But the real winner is, of course, Polanski.

The SWP’s central committee has recently ‘clarified’ that it does not want the current efforts by Team Jeremy or Team Zarah to culminate in any sort of a proper party. Instead it is arguing for a “socialist electoral alternative” to “bring together the fragmented groups of independents” on an absolutely *minimalist* platform of demands (“no to austerity and cuts, refugees welcome, fight racism, women’s and LGBT+ liberation, welfare not warfare, free Palestine and real action on climate change”). The SWP, you will be pleased to hear, “would be prepared to offer our members as candidates in such a grouping”.¹²

Of course, there are SWPers involved in many local ‘independent’ groups already and WDC might become their chosen umbrella in some constituencies. I suspect SWP thinking is that they can Hoover up a few recruits. The looser, the more politically vague and formless the Corbyn party is, the better for the SWP. A classic case of putting the interests of a confessional sect above the interests of a working class that urgently requires its own, highly organised, politically coherent, political party if it is to act against the existential dangers of World War III and runaway climate change.

Differences

We understand that, about a month ago, it seemed like the Corbyn party was just about to be launched - but that Corbyn and/or those around him got cold feet and called it off. This continued dithering seems to have infuriated even soft federalists like Feinstein, who might have been emboldened by the recent polling by ‘More in Common’, according to which a party “to the left of Labour and led by Jeremy Corbyn” could pick up 10% of the vote (32% among 18-24-year-olds), reducing the vote for the Greens from 9% to 5%.¹³ We also hear that Sultana was about to be expelled from Labour, and that this is the reason why she might have moved quickly. Of course, once again, we are only guessing.

The tactic of railroading Corbyn and his supporters might have worked. The jury is still out. It seems obvious that waiting for Corbyn to move decisively or to take strong action on anything is like waiting for hell to freeze over. And indeed, over 80,000 people have already signed the appeal issued by Team Zarah¹⁴ (according to Sultana, the counter on the website is broken and shows ‘only’ just over 62,000, as we go to press).

But the fact that both sides have chosen *The Sunday Times* of all papers as a vehicle to fight out their differences leaves a bad taste in the mouth. So far, no other members of the Socialist Campaign Group have chosen to jump, though we hear that Jon Trickett at least is keeping a close watch. John McDonnell, former shadow chancellor, who remains suspended from the Parliamentary Labour Party, has declared that he will *not* join Team Jeremy on this occasion. This self-declared Trotskyist is, in fact, a Labourite body and soul (in fact, so is Corbyn).

The four other MPs in Corbyn’s Independent Alliance are also involved in the negotiations, but their politics vary massively. Shockat Adam, MP for Leicester South, is the most leftwing, but that is not saying much. In a recent interview with Novara Media, he indicated he would be up for joining a Corbyn party, but argued against this being a socialist or even a left party: “If we call ourselves ‘left’, people on the other side of the spectrum might feel alienated”!¹⁵

This whole sorry episode should make it crystal-clear that *none* of the people involved in the topmost echelons of the Corbyn project have

the slightest notion about how to build a viable working class party. Political differences, even if they are ‘just’ about what kind of interim leader there should be or when the soft launch takes place, should be discussed *openly*. There are massive questions that need to be addressed in forming a new party - brushing differences under the carpet (and, worse, leaking them to the bourgeois press) is absolutely the wrong way to go about things.

Fatal secrecy

“The manipulators and the sectarians thrive in secrecy”, Ken Loach quite rightly warned on Sunday’s ‘Crispin Flintoff Show’: “We need a democratic, principled and open party. This kind of secrecy is fatal and if we were open, they could not be able to infiltrate or leak from our WhatsApp groups. I fear there are cliques and egos involved that are pulling in different directions. Instead of this secrecy, we should have a delegate conference to take the key decisions, with delegates elected at regional conferences, in which everybody is allowed to participate, every group and every individual who wants to. And then we need to be prepared for when they come for us - and they will come for us.”¹⁶

The two sides might pretend to have ‘made up’ for now: Corbyn appeared together with Feinstein at the SWP’s Marxism event last weekend. However, a Zoom meeting of groups involved in Collective, which was supposed to take place on Monday July 7 to inform the various ‘stake holders’ about the way forward, was cancelled at the last minute. Clearly, there is still no agreement on how to handle what are petty disputes.

We should expect similar differences in the near future, though the fault lines are far from sharply defined. This explains why Feinstein, who was in the Corbyn camp on the ‘party question’, is now leading the faction opposing him. Pamela Fitzpatrick, one of the few people who dared to openly argue her case for a proper party, now strongly backs the federalist Corbyn. What a mess and muddle!

Incredibly, it looks like none of the arguments are over the *programme* of the new party. A few weeks back, the organisations participating in Collective were shown - on screen, and very briefly - the draft ‘programme’. It is as dire as one would expect, with ‘sensible’ compromise positions

around nationalisations, ‘tax the rich’ and the kind of tame ‘motherhood and apple pie’ demands we saw in Corbyn’s Labour manifesto, *For the many, not the few*. Those leading the new organisation might have been separated from the Labour Party (through expulsion or resignation) - but few, if any of them, have broken from Labourism. They are hoping to replace Keir Starmer’s Labour Party with a slightly better version - but one that continues to think within the mental cage of the nation, constitutionalism and the rule of law. A dead end.

Communists fight in the Labour Party - when we can - because we understand that it is an important arena of the class struggle, just like the trade unions. In and by themselves, neither will bring about communism. But we have to engage with all those millions of people who are involved with or look to these organisations - in order to convince them to join us in the fight for communism.

Similarly in the Corbyn/Sultana party: if it really does ever see the light of day, it is unlikely to be the kind of party we actually need. Communists will be using every available avenue to argue for a truly democratic structure with faction rights and the kind of radical Marxist programme that actually presents a real, systematic alternative to this rotten system ●

Notes

- 1. x.com/zarahsultana/status/1940850950681554996.
- 2. x.com/Gabriel_Pogrud/status/1940865333570801752.
- 3. x.com/jeremycorbyn/status/194111160130187547.
- 4. www.thetimes.com/uk/politics/article/texts-show-team-corbyn-opposed-new-party-minutes-after-launch-0phz8xm8z.
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- 13. www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cedg56670qdo.
- 14. x.com/zarahsultana/status/1941971133449842747.
- 15. novaramedia.com/2025/05/27/the-new-party-beyond-london.
- 16. www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDnLHUm37u4.

Fighting fund

Standing orders!

Thanks very much to all the comrades who contributed to the *Weekly Worker* fighting fund over the last seven days. I reported last week that we already had £286 after just two days, but now the £438 that came our way over the last week takes our running total for July up to £724 towards our £2,750 target.

Thanks first of all to comrade AC for his brilliant £100 donation, but others who also contributed by bank transfer, including by standing order, were FK (£41), JM (£35), CG, DV and NH (£30 each), RG (£25), JD (£20), IS and RD (£12) and SM (£10). Then there were five handy PayPal contributions from GB (£50), ST (£20), MH (£10), AK (£8) and GP (£5).

But I have to say that we’re quite a bit below the going rate with almost a third of the month already gone. So I’d be really pleased if you could make a donation - or even a regular

donation by setting up a monthly standing order. To find out all the ways in which you can help us get there, please go to the web address below. But, as I say, standing orders are easily the best of the lot - for one thing, we get the whole sum, unlike with PayPal, which deducts a small charge.

And if you’re one of those who’ve been donating by standing order for a long time, have you thought of increasing what you contribute, now that our costs have gone up by so much? We’d be really grateful if you could do that!

Let’s hope we meet that target again in July - please play your part! ●

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

GAZA

Tony Blair and the banality of evil

BCG and the Tony Blair Institute have modelled plans for Israel to relocate Palestinians out of Gaza, a second Nakba, a war crime, for which all involved ought to be publicly tried and, if found guilty, suitably punished, says **Eddie Ford**

For decades now there has been a concerted campaign to say that comparisons between the Israeli government and Hitler's regime are somehow 'anti-Semitic'. Of course, the crimes of the Nazi's involved the death of millions across the face of the whole of mainland Europe. But what Israel has done, and proposes to do, with the Palestinian population in Gaza inevitably - and rightly - leads to just such a comparison.

How else do you respond to the latest comments by Israel's defence minister, Israel Katz, except by resorting to Nazi imagery? He is clearly advocating the ethnic cleansing of the entire Palestinian people of Gaza - a war crime that has clear genocidal intentions. According to *Haaretz*, Katz has ordered Israel's military to prepare for establishing a camp on the ruins of the city of Rafah, which he has grotesquely called a "humanitarian city".¹ At a briefing for Israeli journalists, the minister said, in blood-chilling terms, that all Palestinians would go through "security screening" before entering, and once inside would not be allowed to leave - presumably a prelude to expulsion into Egypt's Sinai, that or death through disease and starvation. Israeli forces would control the perimeter of the site and initially "move" in 600,000 Palestinians. Eventually the entire population of Gaza would be confined there, and Israel aims to implement "the emigration plan, which will happen", says Katz - a scheme that immediately conjures up images of the mass transportation of Jews for resettlement in lands conquered to the east.

First Nakba

Obviously, what is intended is a second Nakba - more devastating than the first one, between 1947 and 1949, especially as a grim fate must surely await those Palestinians who refuse to follow Israeli orders to move into the vast concentration camp. But this hideous scheme has the blessing of the Donald Trump administration. After all, he has already suggested that the Palestinians should leave Gaza in order to "clean out" the strip and Benjamin Netanyahu has enthusiastically promoted forced deportation, often presenting it for good reason as a US project, given that the Israeli war machine is an extension of US power. And, of course, within the Netanyahu coalition cabinet there are eager advocates of new Zionist settlements in Gaza, like finance minister Bezalel Smotrich, who openly advocates a Greater Israel.

Katz has declared that work on the "humanitarian city" could start during a 'ceasefire' that could possibly arise from the visit that Netanyahu made to Washington at the beginning of the week - this being the first meeting between himself and Trump since the Israeli-US triumph in the 12 Day War with Iran. As well as preparing for the ethnic cleansing of the Gazan population, the Israeli PM told Trump that Israel would nominate him for a Nobel peace prize - at which point you can either laugh or cry. But, I suppose, it makes perfect sense. After all, the Nobel peace prize has always been awarded to those who have done some sort of service to the 'international community', well, that or to those who need to be flattered.

Hannah Arendt famously talked about the "banality of evil" in relation to Adolf Eichmann and his 1961 trial in Jerusalem, saying that



Forced to move time and again

he was neither a sociopath nor a fanatic, but merely a mundane and average bureaucrat managing the task of mass extermination.² Mossad hunted Eichmann down and secretly smuggled him out of Argentina for a high publicity show trial before the world's press and media.

Actually, Eichmann was no average bureaucrat. A committed Nazi, he participated in the January 1942 Wannsee conference which prepared the way for the implementation of the genocidal Final Solution. Anyway, in Jerusalem Eichmann admitted neither guilt for his actions nor hatred for those trying him, claiming he bore no responsibility because he was simply "doing his job" and "obeyed the law" according to the *Führerprinzip* system. This is what caught Arendt's attention - though, of course, that line of defence did him no good before an Israeli court intent on arriving at a death sentence. He was hanged in 1962.

But update Arendt to 2025 with the notion that he was just a consultant providing a service for a government client. A *Financial Times* investigating team ran a big splash on July 4 about the Boston Consulting Group - one of the world's big three management consulting firms - that had modelled the costs of "relocating" Palestinians from Gaza, and entered into a multimillion-dollar contract to help launch the grossly misnamed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation. This was deliberately created so that Israel could, with a good conscience, kick out UNRWA with its 400 distribution sites and replace them with four 'food aid hubs'. GHF is, of course, integral to the Israeli genocide. Huge numbers displace themselves ... and risk being shot, either by trigger-happy IDF troops, or contractors. So far at least 400 have been killed.³

Then the *FT* ran a follow-up on July 5 about the involvement of the Tony Blair Institute with the BCG, participating in a 'post-war' Gaza plan that imagined kick-starting the strip with a "Trump Riviera" and an "Elon Musk Smart Manufacturing Zone"

- led by Israeli companies under a redevelopment programme called the 'Great Trust'. In line with Trump's proposals, it suggested the possibility of paying half a million Palestinians to leave the area and attracting private investors to develop Gaza.⁴

Dodgy dossiers

Everyone will be familiar with former PM Tony Blair and his obvious lies in dodgy dossiers about Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction", its supposed ability to launch biological weapons within 45 minutes of an order to do so, and so on - all with the intention of providing a justification for the invasion of Iraq. In other words, the guy has form. And now, states the *FT*, a TBI document says that the genocidal war against the Gazan people had "created a once-in-a-century opportunity to rebuild Gaza from first principles" as a "secure, modern, prosperous society".

In June 2025, the BCG formally terminated its contract with the GHF, claiming that the work it had done was "pro bono". However, the *Washington Post* reported that the BCG submitted invoices of over \$1 million per month and it was later revealed by the *FT* that the BCG's work was more extensive than previously disclosed, covering more than \$4 million of contracted work. This included modelling work on the post-war reconstruction of Gaza, with cost estimates for giving hundreds of thousands of Gazans 'relocation packages' worth \$9,000 per person in exchange for them leaving the territory - all entirely voluntarily, of course! They then got out their spreadsheets and estimated the 'living costs' for the Gazans who had agreed to 'voluntary relocation' would include \$5,000 for subsidised rent for four years and subsidised food for a year, assuming that a quarter of Gazans would leave, and that three-quarters of those relocated would never return. The model calculated relocation outside Gaza to be \$23,000 cheaper, per Palestinian, than the costs of providing support to them in Gaza during reconstruction - so, a

'bargain'.

One person familiar with the details of the project tried to make out that there should not be any controversy, as "there is no coercive element here and the plan is not incentivising people to leave", as the 25% figure is merely a "plug number" - apparently "it is not a plan to empty Gaza". For all that, the BCG then fired two senior partners, both from the firm's US defence and security practice, calling the work they oversaw for the GHF "unauthorised", issuing a statement on July 6 saying it "fully disavows" the individuals concerned and claimed it "was not paid for any of this work" - more dissembling and scapegoating.⁵

As for the lying TBI, its first response was to sternly tell the *FT* that "your story is categorically wrong" and it "had no input whatever into its contents". When the paper provided details of a 12-person message group used for the project - including two TBI staff, BCG consultants and Israeli business executives - and also an unpublished document called the 'Gaza Economic Blueprint', the TBI quickly changed its tune. Now it claims it "never said" that the TBI "knew nothing about what this group was working on or that they weren't on calls in which the group discussed their plans". The TBI has always had 'honourable intentions', because Blair had sought a "better Gaza for Gazans" for the past two decades, just like previously he had sought a better Iraq for Iraqis! "It has never been about relocating Gazans," the TBI informed the *FT*, which is a proposal that it "has never authored, developed or endorsed".

It is a disgusting story, in which all are guilty - BCG, TBI, Israeli capitalists and government - all are involved in some way with the Gaza genocide.

Yes, the Keir Starmer government is fully complicit with genocide too - allowing UK firms to sell parts for F-35s used by Israel to bomb and massacre Palestinians. Then look at the fake moral outrage of the government

- and the official opposition - over Glastonbury, Kneecap and Bob Vylan - who should be applauded for their integrity and courage in calling out as *evil* the war crimes committed by Israel and its accomplices.

Then we have Lisa Nandy, culture secretary, complaining that BBC executives or reporters are not being sacked for transmitting their performances. But rather than BBC staff and freelancers being sacked, why isn't Nandy herself, David Lammy, Yvette Cooper and Sir Keir being hauled up before the courts?

Different regime

Well, of course, it won't happen ... but, with a different regime and different courts, it would. Remember, that is something that Marxists talked about, of course. Long before the Bolsheviks were in government, they debated the death sentence. While Marxists generally oppose the death penalty, it was Plekhanov, the Menshevik leader, who raised an obvious objection - do we not want to shoot the tsar after a show trial?

When the Romanovs were killed at Ekaterinburg on the orders of the Ural soviet, Lenin was furious - not because he was shedding any tears for the royal family, but rather because he wanted to put these people on trial before the world, with Leon Trotsky acting as the chief prosecutor. He wanted them found guilty, because they *were* guilty.

That is very much our attitude, and not just towards the obvious war criminals like Benjamin Netanyahu, Bezalel Smotrich and Israel Katz. CEOs of arms companies, consultancy firms and non-profits which aid and assist the genocide must be made to answer for their crimes too ●

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SOLIDARITY

Defend right to protest

Proscribing Palestine Action marks yet another attempt to silence those raising the alarm over the ongoing genocide in Gaza. Those MPs voting against an increasingly authoritarian government are to be congratulated, argues **Ian Spencer**

On July 2 - the day that the home secretary, Yvette Cooper, announced the proscription of Palestine Action - she posed, without a hint of irony, for a photo opportunity in the colours of the Women's Social and Political Union.

That was a group which used direct action to win the right to vote for women and whose 'merch' is available in the Houses of Parliament gift shop. The suffragettes also used a couple of bombs, which killed four people, and attempted to set fire to Lloyd George's house, among other actions, but were never proscribed. Yet now MPs have voted by 385 to 26 to ban an organisation which has harmed no-one, but tries to prevent the UK from enabling genocide in Gaza.

Labour MPs who voted against the ban were Diane Abbott, Tahir Ali, Ian Byrne, Imran Hussain, Clive Lewis, Grahame Morris, Nadia Whittome, Kim Johnson and Richard Burgon. Others, who had already had the Labour whip removed, were John McDonnell and Zarah Sultana. Then there was Jeremy Corbyn and his Independent Alliance, the Greens and the Lib Dems. The Scottish National Party abstained.

Zara Sultana, who recently resigned from the Labour Party - allegedly to form a left-of-Labour mass party with Jeremy Corbyn - said during the parliamentary debate that banning PA "lumps a non-violent network of students, nurses, teachers, firefighters and peace-campaigners - ordinary people, my constituents and yours - with neo-Nazi militias and mass casualty cults". A spokesperson for PA said: "We are confident that this unlawful order will be overturned. As United Nations experts have made clear, spraying red paint and disrupting the British-based operations of Israel's largest weapons firm, Elbit Systems, is not terrorism."

Terrorists

Banning PA puts it legally in the same category as al Qaeda, Islamic State and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, al Qaeda's affiliate in Syria. On the day the PA ban came into force (July 5) David Lammy was being photographed shaking hands with Ahmed al-Sharaa, interim president of Syria and long-time leader of HTS! Lammy was the first UK minister to visit Syria since the outbreak of civil war, which began 14 years ago. But, of course, Lammy had been given permission to go - after all, Donald Trump had already signed an executive order lifting sanctions on Syria at the end of June and I daresay there are lucrative contracts to be had for 'rebuilding' the country.¹

The PA stunt that sparked the ban was its high profile (and for the Royal Air Force, highly embarrassing) breach of security at Brize Norton in Oxfordshire on June 20, in which two aircraft were redecorated with red paint, symbolising Palestinian bloodshed. Allegedly there was also damage done with crow bars. The ever-reliable BBC assures us that the action caused £7 million worth of damage to Voyager aircraft, which are used for refuelling and transport.² The RAF routinely flies over Gaza for surveillance purposes.

Four PA militants were arrested and appeared at Westminster magistrates' court on July 3, where they entered no pleas and were remanded in custody. As they were led away, the packed public gallery applauded



Pushed into action around arms production and exports

their actions and there were chants of "Free Palestine". All four will appear before the central criminal court at the Old Bailey on July 18 at 10am. They will surely receive the support of those who salute their courage and resourcefulness. Prior to proscription, charges against those arrested in PA interventions tended to be for criminal damage or conspiracy to commit criminal damage. From now on the charges will be based on the Terrorism Act 2000.

On July 4, high court judge Justice Chamberlain denied PA's request for a temporary block on proscription. Raza Husain KC, barrister for the PA, said: "This is the first time in our history that a direct-action civil disobedience group, which does not advocate violence, has been sought to be proscribed as terrorists."³ At the time of writing, the Crowd Justice page, funding the legal opposition to the proscription of PA, had raised over £300,000 from more than 8,000 pledges.⁴

On the day the banning of PA came into force 29 people were arrested at a large demonstration in Parliament Square, where some held up placards reading, "I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action." These included the Reverend Sue Parfitt, an 83-year-old retired priest, who now faces charges under the Terrorism Act 2000 and potentially 14 years in prison.

The Palestine Solidarity Campaign has issued a statement on the banning of PA:

There is a long and noble tradition of the use of direct action by protest movements that includes the suffragettes, the movement against apartheid in South Africa, and peace and anti-war campaigners. In 1996, for example, activists from the Ploughshares movement disarmed warplanes bound for Indonesia and were acquitted in court after arguing at their trial that they took their action to prevent the greater crime of genocide in East Timor. In the 'Fairford Five' trial

in 2004, protestors who sabotaged US military aircraft argued that their acts were justified to prevent the planes from participating in an illegal war. One of the lawyers who made this case was Keir Starmer.⁵

Since the proscription of PA, another group, named 'Yvette Cooper' in 'honour' of the home secretary, has sprung up to carry out direct action to disrupt the arms supply to Israel. On July 4 it targeted Time Logistics, which transports weaponry for Israel's biggest weapons firm, and posted on X a video purportedly showing a lorry belonging to the company daubed with red paint.⁶ 'Yvette Cooper' already has over 6,000 followers on X and describes itself as "A direct action group aimed at ending British complicity with genocide. Our name is a parody, but the mission is real."⁷

Effective

Of course, the real reason for the ban on PA is the fact that not only has it been effective symbolically in shaming the arms manufacturers who enable the genocide: it has also had members acquitted by juries who were not afraid of being guided by their conscience. This should come as no surprise. Most British people (around 57% in a recent poll) now support a total arms embargo on Israel. Half support supermarkets boycotting Israeli goods (already carried out by the Cooperative), while only 16% are opposed.⁸

Information obtained by PA, using a freedom of information request, has also revealed that the government had come under pressure from Israel to 'do something' to prevent interruption of Israeli arms production and commerce in the UK. It is clear that pressure was being brought by Israeli embassy officials and representatives from Elbit Systems to push the police into cracking down on PA, as well as on the judiciary, to make it harder to use a jury's freedom of conscience to reach a verdict. Inconvenient for those attempting to stamp out protest.⁹

Another factor in the proscription of PA may well have been its effectiveness in shifting the PSC in the direction of action against arms production in the UK. PA was founded in July 2020 and has carried out numerous attacks on companies such as Elbit Systems, Israel's largest arms manufacturer, which has numerous sites and sub-contractors in the UK. However, the PSC has always resolutely opposed the use of illegal action and tends to focus on demonstrations, the BDS campaign and attempting to influence politicians.

However, in June the PSC called for action against the arms factories making weapons for Israel. This led to protests outside Lockheed Martin UK in Havant, Hampshire and a range of other plants. A welcome departure for the PSC. It is imperative to influence workers in the arms industries. However, moralistic grandstanding will not do the job. We should not expect workers acting as individuals to make themselves unemployed. But the unions, not least the GMB, can be won to oppose Israeli genocide and back an arms embargo imposed from below. Transport workers are particularly important here. In Italy, France, Morocco and Greece, among others, dockers have interrupted the supply of military materiel intended for the IDF.

On July 8 dock workers at the port of Piraeus in Greece said they will refuse to unload a container ship carrying military-grade steel to Israel when it arrives on July 12. Enedep, the union of dockworkers, declared:

The dockworkers of Piraeus will not be complicit. We will not unload military steel from the Ever Golden - no to Greece's involvement, freedom for Palestine. The port of Piraeus is not an advanced outpost of the US, Nato, the EU or the war profiteers. It is not a transshipment station for deadly cargo. It is a place of work and struggle for the working class.

As we have done in the past, we will not unload a single inch of this murderous cargo.¹⁰

In the meantime, Israel seems intent on creating a giant concentration camp in what was once the city of Rafa. The plan by defence minister Israel Katz is to move 600,000 and eventually the whole 2.2 million population to a "humanitarian city". One Israeli human rights lawyer condemned it as nothing less than an "operational plan for a crime against humanity. It's about population transfer to the southern tip of the Gaza Strip in preparation for deportation outside the strip."

Trump seems to be on board. Benjamin Netanyahu - the indicted war criminal with a warrant out for his arrest - has said: "We're working with the United States very closely about finding countries that will seek to realise what they always say - that they wanted to give the Palestinians a better future."¹¹ In return, Israel will nominate Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize - which even by Nobel standards, would be one of the most disreputable 'honours' ever seen ●

Notes

1. www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0rvp21kjkpo.
2. www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cyl1jeiw4xeo.
3. www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c93901n9z0qo.
4. www.crowdjustice.com/case/palestine-action.
5. palestinecampaign.org/psc-statement-on-government-plans-to-proscribe-non-violent-direct-action-group-palestine-action-as-terrorists.
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7. www.newarab.com/news/yvette-cooper-protest-group-targets-israel-linked-firms.
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11. www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jul/07/israeli-minister-reveals-plan-to-force-population-of-gaza-into-camp-on-ruins-of-rafa.

TAS

Get back to the talking

Being in a majority is nicer than being in a minority, but without minorities accepting being in a minority, there can be no hope of meaningful communist unity. **Scott Evans** reports on the June 30 TAS meeting

As things stand, the Forging Communist Unity process appears to be on its last legs. On May 29, Talking About Socialism suspended its participation in the process until July 6, to work on its own alternative programme to that of the CPGB. On June 11, Nick Wrack posted an article on the TAS website titled 'Communist unity - a change is needed'. On June 25, TAS members voted in favour of a motion to pull out of the Forging Communist Unity process due to there being "no prospect of achieving any worthwhile or meaningful unity with the CPGB from the current FCU process".

So, in less than a month the agenda passed from ongoing discussion and preparations for co-organising Communist University, to a pause for programme writing, to completely pulling out. It was at least clarified at the TAS members meeting on June 30 - open to all to attend - that TAS will still be attending Communist University, which is great news. Hopefully meeting in-person can help to rekindle the process.

Minority?

The original proposal from TAS to enter into a unity process was and is commendable. The process was being conducted openly, disagreements were being expressed frankly. In so doing, the organisations involved were treating outside observers with respect, leaving it up to them to judge the pace and quality of the process.

This front-loads the hard work of political unity, clarifying agreements and disagreements on fundamental principles of goal and strategy. This is not only more democratic, but, when unity is finally achieved, front-loading the hard work of achieving unity through open political debate makes the organisation that much more robust, healthy and resistant to splitting. Patiently sticking to principled Marxist political strategy is the only realistic way forward.

Despite that clearly positive aspect of what we have been through with FCU, I suspect the seeds of this were sewn early on. Not by 'insults' coming from the CPGB, but by the reluctance of TAS leaders to participate in a fusion process where CPGB members formed the majority.

The TAS meeting on June 30 lasted around 1 hour, 25 minutes, with a 25-minute introduction from comrade Nick Wrack, and around 15 minutes to finish, divided between himself and comrade Ed Potts. Other comrades were given just *three minutes* each to give their views in between. There was a bit of consternation about this, as that is barely enough to even get the outline of one or two points in. It was countered that this allowed more people to speak (around 12 did by my count, not including the chair nor comrades Potts and Wrack). Why limit the meeting to such a short time? With a meeting as important as one like this, the chair should allow contrary points to be developed and fully discussed. Of course, you do have to cut people



Minorities became majorities: 9th Bolshevik congress in 1920: (sitting, left to right) Yenukidze, Kalinin, Bukharin, Tomsky, Lashevich, Kamenev, Preobrazhensky, Serebryakov, Lenin, and Rykov in front

off when they repeat themselves or wander widely off topic. TAS has taken a more flexible approach in their meetings before.

Both comrades Wrack and Potts said they were offended that they had been accused of being unwilling to be in a minority. But in his closing remarks, comrade Wrack did say: "Communist unity with the CPGB under present conditions, with the forces involved, will amount to nothing more than the CPGB"; and also: "Comrades who are watching won't join an organisation that is simply the CPGB with an extra handful, which is what it will be now."

Is that not just a context-specific version of refusing to be in a minority? Specifically, refusing to be in a minority in which CPGB members - free to vote how they please - form the majority. I suspect that if at some point it became clear that the pro-talks wing of *Prometheus* had largely aligned with the CPGB, then we would be facing a similar threat to walk just further into the future.

CPGB comrades have repeatedly said that we are patient about the pace of discussions, so the complaint about not having much time to develop their programme between their busy jobs and 'CPGB insults' does not hold water - it sounds like TAS members themselves were unhappy that the agenda was quickly bounced from programme to the question of pulling out.

Similarly, in the event of the CPGB's *Draft programme* being the clear favourite, any major disagreement with it could have been put forward in the shape of amendments, including ripping out or adding in whole sections. All the comrades would be required to do would be to convince others of their point of view and, if they do not believe that would be possible, then they are either not very confident in their own positions or

they are treating CPGB members as too dogmatic or irrational to be reasoned with (which would be pretty uncharitable, to put it lightly).

Even if the programme came through a founding conference with nothing more than some minor fiddling and a fresh coat of paint, would it have been so intolerable to form a faction with the aim of replacing the programme with a substantially different draft?

Culture

I am sorry to have to inflict another discussion of organisational culture on regular readers of this paper, but it was another theme of the meeting.¹

The main point was, I think, made by comrade Casey. No organisation on the left is perfect, and no organisation ever will be. The left has some particular cultural issues now, and in the hoped-for future mass Communist Party it will have others (guarding against a drift to the right, as the German SPD left failed to do in the early 20th century, will be one task). It is, I think, somewhat ridiculous to suggest that the CPGB has such a 'bad culture' that it is unworthy of even being engaged with. Indeed, it is clearly one of the only organisations on the left capable of going through a fusion process that is this open and honest about political disagreements. That alone is worth its weight in gold.

Is there anything more concrete about the CPGB that makes it so intolerable to work within a similarly functioning organisation as a minority? The CPGB is democratic: the PCC is elected annually on an individual basis; any member can propose amendments to the *Draft programme*, the draft rules, and so on; any member can write in a letter; every member is allowed to privately contact any other member - including the leadership itself - to discuss political disagreements or whatever else. And the CPGB has clearly

stated from the beginning that organisational discipline would be dissolved in the event of a fusion conference, so there would be no CPGB bloc voting. You can say that perhaps it is unfortunate that comrade Jack Conrad has held a leadership position for so long, but it is not an easy problem to solve: any fused organisation must have as one of its priorities experimenting with methods for ensuring regular rotation of all officials, including elected leaders.²

On the name 'Communist Party of Great Britain', which comrade Wrack seems to be very strongly opposed to, I am fond of comrade Lawrence Parker's suggestion of 'Communist Unity Group',³ but one would hope that someone really committed to unity would be able to put aside any hatred for the name 'CPGB' for the sake of unity - the same going for whatever logo a founding conference chose.

Finally, on the complaint of dodgy reporting: disagreement over reports is partially just an inevitable feature of the style of reporting the CPGB pursues, whereby we quickly summarise points of agreement and then try our best to bring disagreements to the forefront,⁴ which are intended to be resolved or, perhaps, crystallise with a further back-and-forth following a report. This is a good approach, but it does come with barbs. Summarising hours-long meetings is very difficult, and it is basically a tradition at this point that CPGB aggregate reports often annoy some member, no matter who writes them. The accusation that these reports contained lies - ie, *deliberate* misrepresentation - has not been substantiated, as far as I am aware.

Charity

What about 'bad faith' and insults? Democratic politics can only function properly if most people most of the time operate according to the principle of 'charity'.⁵ This means addressing people's

arguments directly, treating people as rational actors and interpreting their arguments or demands in the best possible light.

Most of the left, it seems to me, is pretty terrible at this, when it comes to inter-group disagreement, and as a result makes itself incapable of effective democratic politics. I do not think the CPGB is always great at this, but it is always much better than most of the left, some of which do not consider even the existence of other organisations worth acknowledging.

With that said, treating people charitably on an intellectual level does not entail a need to be nice to them - though obviously we should criticise in a comradely fashion or else goodwill could be progressively eroded over time. We all get angry and frustrated, especially when the stakes are so high, and insults will sometimes result. If comrades see insults alone as worthy of walking, which I am not saying the TAS leaders do (though the frequency with which this is brought up by some would seem to imply that is the case), this may honestly be a serviceable working definition of 'unserious'.

Not quick

I would not myself be quick to call someone a 'Pol Potist' - especially not someone I was currently trying to win over - but this is not even a contentless insult like, say, 'stupid prick': it has definite political content, which should be fairly clear, even if you disagree with it. It is not unreasonable for the thought to walk away to cross your mind in a heated moment, but those who are serious and committed and have not lost sight of the stakes have a duty to help the unsure and the inexperienced not to lose sight of the bigger picture and the ultimate prize.

I will end by paraphrasing something comrade Moshé Machover said during the meeting, expressing the disappointment which is no doubt shared by at least a handful of interested outside observers: if not these organisations, then who? And, if not now, then when? ●

Notes

1. I have written about 'bad culture' in a - perhaps somewhat convoluted - *Weekly Worker* letter (February 27 2025): www.weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1527/letters.
2. I have also commented on leadership rotation before (Letters, January 23 2025): www.weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1522/letters.
3. talkingaboutsocialism.org/whats-in-a-name-our-red-banner-of-communist-unity.
4. Of course, these are by definition perceived disagreements, and, if you disagree that they really exist, you can say so.
5. Treating people charitably means resisting any urge to dismiss them as stupid or otherwise irrational, to resist treating their beliefs as stemming from an underlying psychological problem like unaccounted-for trauma, unconscious bigotry or some personality disorder like narcissism, and to resist treating someone's arguments as coming from some subconscious or conscious malign intent or hidden agenda and throw terms like 'bad faith' at them. If one does feel it necessary to call someone out for something like malign intent, one just has to be careful to properly substantiate it, and do it alongside addressing what that person is actually arguing. The latter is particularly important, because, whether or not we think the messenger is sincere and has good intentions, there will be people observing who sincerely hold those same ideas. This applies to taking on forces like Reform UK too.

FCU

Civility and its discontents

Lessons from Martin Luther and the Hobbesian demand for speech controls. Can we build a workable communist movement without ruthless truthfulness, even at the cost of giving offence? **Paul Demarty** thinks not

The (hopefully temporary) withdrawal of the Talking About Socialism group from the Forging Communist Unity project a few weeks ago was a setback.

Yet in a certain respect it represented progress. We have had a few run-ins with the leaders of this tendency over the years, drawn close only for relations to collapse. On most of these occasions, the substantive reasons offered have been trivial, if not the differences in method that led, precisely, to the prominence of such trivialities. This time round, we are at least fighting - or are hopefully soon to be fighting - over something that really does matter. Indeed on this it matters more than anything else: programme.

The obstacles to our commencement of this battle - or, who knows, an outbreak of spontaneous agreement! - are principally the TAS comrades' feeling of unpreparedness. As they wrote in their letter announcing a pause in their engagement in FCU, to allow them to finish "produc[ing] our own draft programme for consideration in the FCU process. We have not so far been able to do so. For that we apologise". That is all fair enough - we do not believe in hurrying such matters.

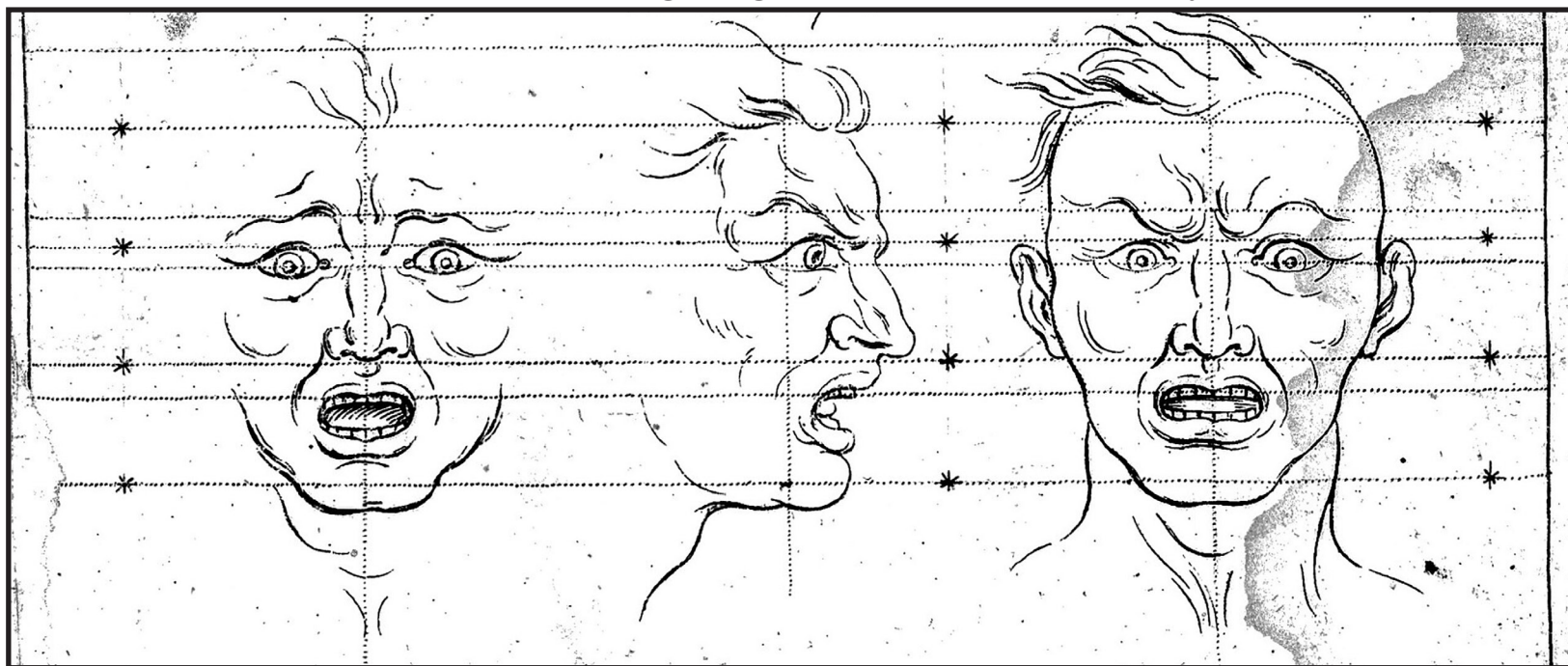
Yet underlying this problem is another running difficulty - the comrades continue to believe that we are just too *rude*, that we traffic in accusations of political unsoundness that are beyond the bounds of 'comradely argument'. At the last TAS meeting, which several CPGB members attended, Nick Wrack objected to the accusation of Bakuninism, and constructed various other political criticisms of a policy of pursuing revolution in a single country as an accusation that he secretly wanted to set himself up as a British Pol Pot.

Melvyn Bragg

By chance, *In our time* - the upper-middlebrow BBC radio programme in which Melvyn Bragg has amiable discussions with various intelligent guests - chose, last week, to produce an episode on civility, especially in political life. His guests were historians, and, interestingly, chose as the meaningful historical frame European history since the Renaissance and the early modern period.²

The narrative goes something like this: the ascendant merchant class of Italy needed its own rules of conduct and internal culture - what Bourdieu called *habitus* - apart from that of the pre-existing class of aristocrats, descended, ultimately, from the grandees of the old empire. The spread of sets of rules of civility, sped by the invention of the printing press, provided an essential part of this formation. These ideas of civil conduct spread internationally, such that upwardly mobile layers as far afield as Britain adopted an essentially 'Italianate' version of the same.

Yet Europe was on the brink of an ideological crisis - the Protestant reformation. The man who lit the touch-paper, the German Augustinian friar, Martin Luther, could justly be rebuked with many things: his anti-Semitism, his conservatism in relation to the revolutionary elements of the Reformation, and so forth. But he could never be fairly accused of mincing his words. His criticisms of the Catholic church - its sale of



Charles le Brun 'Fear' from his 'Caractères des passions' (c1720)

indulgences, the idle parasitism of its religious orders, its arrogation to itself of matters which properly belonged to 'god's grace' alone - were stated baldly, and he did not move from them, going on famously to denounce the Pope as anti-Christ.

Moreover, he took up his ideological cudgels against those, like Erasmus, who agreed with much of the substance of his case, but supposed that open doctrinal warfare on the established religion of Europe was not the way to go about things. Their politeness seemed very commendable, but in the end simply dragged them into the anti-Christian mire. Excremental imagery is common in Luther's polemics, perhaps coincident on his own rather severe bowel problems (as the hosts of Chapo Trap House once quipped, if Napoleon is history on horseback, Luther is history on the toilet).

To modern readers - especially largely atheist readerships like that of this paper - the back and forth between Luther and his Catholic opponents may seem hopelessly overheated, given that the points in dispute are basically recondite details of Augustinian theology. I ask the indulgence - no pun intended - of such readers here; even if it is obscure for us, these were extremely grave matters for the contestants, having to do ultimately with whether the uncounted masses of Europe were to lose the favour of providence on Earth and burn in eternal hellfire thereafter. The sheer devastation of the later wars of religion tended, rather, to underline the point for zealous Catholics, Lutherans and Calvinists.

Contemporaneously with this period of war, we meet the next great hero of the *In our time* panel: Thomas Hobbes, the first major modern figure of English political thought. He is best known for his theory of the state along absolutist lines, as laid out in *Leviathan*, but Hobbes had also undertaken the Grand Tour in his youth and picked up Italian ideas about civility. These he applied especially to religious matters - unsurprisingly, given the bitterness of religious conflict in the 17th century and the role religion played in the civil war. (He was, of course, on the wrong side, and spent some considerable time in exile in Paris.) For Hobbes, the essential thing was always the proper functioning of the state and, to ensure its functioning, gentlemen in good

standing had to abstain from zealotry and treat ideological opponents with the greatest civility.

Hobbes had an advantage over the zealots he opposed, however, which was that he did not in fact share any of their substantive views. By the standards of his own day, he was vulnerable to accusations of atheism, though he would not be so described today. His views are comparable to the later Deist movement, or - in a different, but more pertinent, way - to those of his contemporary, the famous French statesman, Cardinal Richelieu, whose religious views, though formally Catholic, were wholly determined by a specific view of *France* as a favoured nation. (Richelieu happily armed Protestant armies against Catholic ones in the wars of the time, so as to knock the hated Habsburgs down a peg.)

Having spun things against Hobbes's view in the foregoing, we cannot dismiss it as wholly senseless. After all, the wars of this century were no small matter. Something like eight million people perished in the overlapping series of central European conflicts called the Thirty Years War. If discretion and polite conduct could draw the sting of such devastation, then it was surely worth the cost. In truth, it probably could not have done - that conflict was fired in the minds of many of its soldiers by religious disputations, but its real engine was indisputably the rivalry between the Habsburg and Bourbon dynasties, and surely would not have dragged on half as long without such vast material interests at play.

Friendship

Hobbes's view is nonetheless intelligible, to say the least, and transfers more plausibly to the smaller scale of individuals, families and communities of friends. We all - don't we? - put things delicately, avoid sore spots, because we do not want to undermine some friendship. This is not *obviously* wrong. Friendships, in the narrow sense of merely having cordial relationships with people close to you in time and space, are valuable in themselves; their preservation is good. This view was put remarkably bluntly by Nietzsche in *Human, all too human*:

Just think to yourself some time how different are the feelings, how divided the opinions, even among the closest acquaintances; how even the same opinions

have quite a different place or intensity in the heads of your friends than in your own; how many hundreds of times there is occasion for misunderstanding or hostile flight. After all that, you will say to yourself: 'How unsure is the ground on which all our bonds and friendships rest; how near we are to cold downpours or ill weather; how lonely is every man!' ... [And you] will admit to [yourself] that there are, indeed, friends, but they were brought to you by error and deception about yourself; and they must have learned to be silent in order to remain your friend; for almost always, such human relationships rest on the fact that a certain few things are never said.³

Nietzsche's view has the advantage of placing upfront the cost - of silence, of retreat from the truth. Which poses the problem acutely: we have two competing goods - friendship and truthfulness. The decision to be made is not whether or not either truly matter, but what order they go in - which, in extremis, is to be sacrificed to the other.

It is impossible to make that decision in a vacuum. Yet it seems that at least the *possibility* of truthfulness, even at the cost of friction, is something essential to friendship - that, pertinently, distinguishes it from good relations between managers and subordinates. I once stood on a London Bridge train platform with two Millwall casuals. The driver - a woman - made some announcement over the PA, audible through the open doors, and one of the casuals joked that, if the driver was female, he wasn't getting on after all. His friend pointed out that he had no objections to women drivers, when it was his wife picking him up from the pub - the justice of which point was immediately conceded. This seems to me a picture of real friendship, as opposed to mere comity.

If truthfulness is to be preferred, civility can only ever be conditional. *Needless* offence is, of course, to be avoided, but where there are real disagreements, or even just real dilemmas to be worked through, things must be posed sharply. When we come to the point of decision, the stakes of the decision must be understood by all in their true historical and theoretical depth.

Conditions of friendship transfer quite straightforwardly to political

comradeship. It is *essentially* a relationship of putative equals, like friendship and unlike that between manager and subordinate (though, unfortunately, the managerial model is all too common in practice on the left), and one in which all participants are interested in truthfulness. To smooth over disagreements in the hope of getting along is merely to undermine the very purpose of the relationship. Indeed, the problems with keeping disagreements bottled up are starkly illustrated by the botched launch of the 'Corbyn party' in the last week.

Back to Wrack

So we return to comrade Wrack's complaints about 'Bakuninism', etc. It is clear from the foregoing that this is, unfortunately, a regression to the level of unseriousness. Bakunin is a major figure in the history of the workers' movement, and enormously significant movements have been built essentially on his ideas (for instance, the large anarcho-syndicalist organisations that grew in southern Europe and Latin America in the early 20th century). It is no insult to be accused of Bakuninism, but a *political criticism*.

As for Pol Pot - the trouble, of course, is that *Pol Pot* did not intend to become the Pol Pot of Cambodia. (Trotsky famously wrote that if Stalin had known in 1917 what he would have become by 1937, he would have shot himself.) The problem is the *politics*. How do we avoid getting stuck with the choice of brutality or capitulation? There is no way of talking seriously about this that ignores the moral stakes of the discussion.

Should we reach the organisational strength required for the general population to take us seriously, we will find that they want to know how we are to avoid repeating the disasters of the last century. They are *quite right* to seek such assurances. How are we to make such assurances to suspicious workers if we cannot even discuss them honestly amongst ourselves without having a shit-fit? ●

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Notes

1. Nick Wrack and Edmund Potts, 'Putting things on hold' *Weekly Worker* June 5: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1541/putting-things-on-hold.
2. www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m002f9f4.
3. F Nietzsche (RJ Hollingdale trans) *Human, all too human* London 2015, p239.

REVIEW

Profitably poisoned cabins

Tristan Loraine and Sandra Skibsted (directors) *This is your captain speaking* (screened at 2025 Raindance Film Festival). Distribution awaited

With tiresome queues through airport security over, air travellers aim to sit back in their seats and relax as best they can. But the air they breathe during the flight carries the kind of cocktail they would refuse if they had a choice.

This is your captain speaking relates the decades-long fight that cabin and flight crews have had to engage in against airlines in attempting to make their work environment healthy and not life-threatening. They are battling on to this day without much progress to show for it.

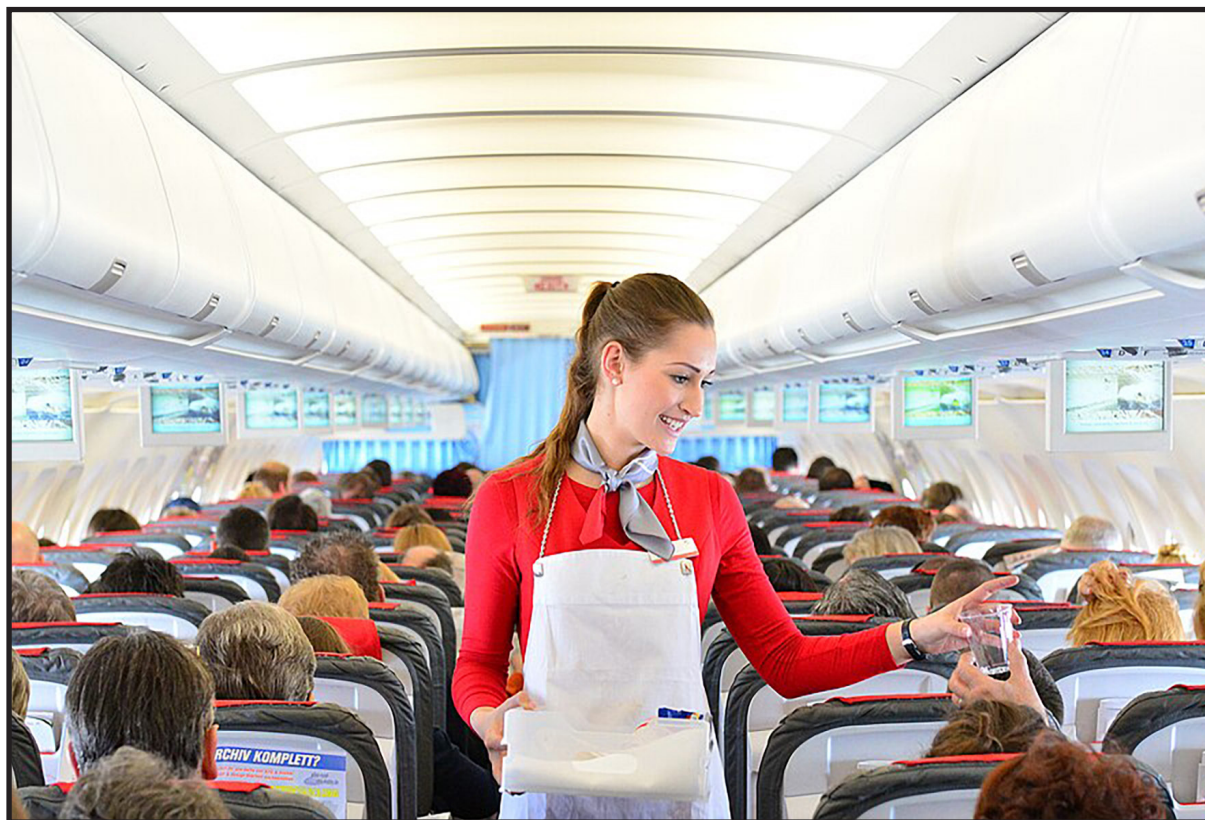
Co-directed by former airline pilot Tristan Loraine and experienced filmmaker Sandra Skibsted, this documentary is scathing in its exposure of many years of obfuscation, obstruction and inaction from airline operators and aircraft manufacturers that have also led to many millions of air travellers being exposed to toxic cabin air. Since the 1960s, when civilian jet travel took off, there have been an estimated 100 billion passenger journeys by air. While the film focuses primarily on aircraft as a work environment, featuring unions that organise aircrew, from flight attendants to pilots, its findings are relevant to every person who has ever flown or will fly in the near future.

Design flaw

Publicly unacknowledged, the basic problem is a design flaw, accepted as such by the aircraft industry, that has become integral to all jet engine planes since their widespread introduction over six decades ago. Propeller planes had used somewhat heavy, freestanding pumps to introduce and maintain clean air at breathable pressure in aircrew and passenger spaces while flying. But a cheaper option became available once jet engines were the universal means of aircraft propulsion: take 'bleed air' from around those engines, cool and pipe it directly into the aircraft. This is air taken from the compressor stage of the jet engine's gas turbine, upstream of its fuel-burning sections.

Investigation by the film-makers uncovered 'lost' research in the public domain dating back to the 1950s, which showed that aircraft engineers at the time were fully aware of what was happening. And indeed, after early military jet pilots complained of fumes, fighter pilots have worn oxygen masks while flying. This obvious precaution speaks volumes: the fumes from even optimally functioning jet engines are too toxic to risk airforce pilots breathing it. But, when it comes to civil aircraft, apparently, anything goes. (Currently only Boeing 787 series planes are free of this particular problem; they use an electronically controlled air system.)

With the film's researchers uncovering veiled layers of what was causing problems for those working on board civil airliners, the dangers are all too evident. The first and foremost problem derives from engine-oil additives - organophosphorus (OP) compounds designed to cut down engine corrosion. The most common of these is tricresyl phosphate (TCP). One of TCP's three isomers has been known since the 1930s to be extremely toxic, having once mistakenly been used as a human abortifacient, with disabling and fatal results. In 1937, 60 South Africans were poisoned by contaminated cooking oil stored



Passengers and crew: toxic air

in lubrication oil drums; similarly, several thousand people in Morocco were poisoned in 1959 after using cooking oil contaminated with jet plane lubrication oil.

It is not as if the toxic effects of many OP compounds are unknown - what with warnings about the toxicity of OP pesticides and the resultant morbidity and mortality in individuals experiencing acute high-level exposure and chronic lower-level exposure. After all, several OPs with extremely high toxicity are used as chemical warfare agents. There are valid concerns that TCP and its variants can produce cancer, induce abortion and inflict serious neurological damage on fetuses during the first trimester of pregnancy, at a time when some women would not necessarily know they were pregnant. And, as stated in the film, there is no known safe limit - whether parts per million or parts per billion - up in the air. Few tests have been carried out on cabin air to determine how much pollutant is present in normal conditions or even during high-pollution spikes.

The film's director took state-of-the-art test equipment on board while travelling as a passenger on several flights: he found pollution levels multiple times higher than in the domestic kitchen, which he had been officially informed was the benchmark level that would be present. Clearly, the official level was an invention. To this day, aircraft engines using oil containing OP additives still have air circulating around them bled into the aircraft cabin, and OP is but the most toxic component of a cocktail of compounds that independent testing has discovered in cabin air as a result.

Following extreme incidents of engine fumes in aircraft cabins - so-called 'fume events' - trade unions have brought some claims against airlines, but, apart from a very few isolated cases, they have been dismissed as 'one-offs' by company apologists. In other words, there has so far been no positive outcome for flight crews. Oversight authorities in leading capitalist countries, including the USA's Federal Aviation Administration, were not at all keen to rock the boat and endanger those multimillions in profits that the aircraft industry enjoys. As one

unnamed industrialist quoted in the film remarks, "The FAA doesn't tell us what to do!"

As things stand, it seems that manufacturers of airframes and engines, as well as airline operators, are still untouchable, thanks to what is in effect bourgeois state protection. The UK's Civil Aviation Authority implements international standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation, just like the FAA. The prime duty of the CAA - a public corporation of the department for transport - is to regulate aviation safety in the UK.

Oil loss

Misting in cabins during flight reflects oil loss in an engine, but this is the tip of the iceberg. At other times, while nothing more than a characteristic OP 'smelly socks' aroma pervades cabins, OP compounds - for which there are no safe levels of exposure - are still present in the air breathed for hours at a time by those assured they are being safely carried in that metal tube speeding through the sky. In addition, there are inevitably invisible particles and gaseous thermal breakdown products of fuel oil - almost certainly carcinogenic themselves. The CAA claims that onboard air circulation systems "remove bacteria, viruses and other particles" - but this is only effective if they are maintained and replaced at regular intervals. However, such mechanical filtration will not remove gaseous pollutants - that requires absorption at a molecular level. And, therefore, cabin air pollution continues, with the CAA muddying the waters to quell consumer and worker anger.

Go to the CAA webpage and you will have to drill down five levels before you find anything on cabin air quality.¹ What you get at that point is flannel. The CAA claims: "Based on the available data submitted through our Mandatory Occurrence Reporting process, occurrences relating to engine bleed air are rare, forming only a very small proportion of the total number of fume event reports we receive each year." As the film reports, this reflects massive underreporting of serious events and is of dubious value in relation to ongoing pollution at a level that 'merely' causes sore eyes and throats.

Cavalierly, in its 'Our statement on fume events', the CAA also claims that when passengers do complain of "irritation to the eyes, nose and throat", these "symptoms usually resolve once the fumes or smell have disappeared. Long-term ill health due to any toxic effect from cabin air is understood to be very unlikely, *although such a link cannot be ruled out*" (emphasis added). In fact, a major reason why long-term ill health cannot be ruled out is the absence of sensors installed on aircraft to detect and give warning to rising levels of OP and other components of the toxic air pumped from engines into the cabin. This delays emergency measures until it is almost too late; some incidents have led to the pilots

being incapacitated during a flight. Both acute and chronic effects of inhaling such pollutants are indeed concerning to health professionals, precisely because they can lead to cancer, foetal abnormality and other long-term illnesses.

In its 2024 report, the Committee on the Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment issued a statement on 'Aircraft Cabin Air Quality',² which says in part: "Regarding OPs, the committee concluded that it was unlikely that exposure to organophosphates at the low levels reported in aircraft cabin air would have adverse effects on aircrew" (emphasis added). Of course, "unlikely" here is the universal saviour of expert opinion. Other experts beg to differ, as evidenced in the film. When one was asked what was the safe limit for TCP, he answered, "Zero". And indeed, while the effect on aircrew is most important, the effect on ordinary passengers is hardly considered.

The lack of progress in resolving this danger in favour of crew and passengers suggests more direct means, by unions especially, are needed. Industrial action to force the aviation industry to act and protect workers' health must surely be on the table. In parallel, the rights of air travellers not to be poisoned ranks highly in what any political organisation of the working class needs to add to its campaigning armoury - which, of course, means communist parties in every country of the world. This is a worldwide problem, after all ●

Jim Moody

Notes

1. www.caa.co.uk/passengers-and-public/passenger-guidance/health-guidance/health-information-for-passengers/passenger-health-faqs-the-aircraft-cabin-your-health-and-comfort
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Online Communist Forum



Sunday July 13 5pm
**Wars in the Middle East
 and their global context**
Speaker: Mohsen Shahmanesh
(former editor of *Iran Bulletin*)

Use this link to register:
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 Labour Party Marxists: www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk
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Secretary@labourpartymarxists.org.uk

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

ECONOMICS

Development or debt

Trump did not bother sending anyone to the Seville development conference. Meanwhile, says **Michael Roberts**, the gap between rich and poor countries remains unchanged, and with aid cuts and growing debts billions face poverty, ill health and an avoidable death

Last week, world leaders gathered in Seville, Spain for a UN aid summit for developing countries. This is the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development.¹ At least 50 major figures, including French president Emmanuel Macron, EU chief Ursula von der Leyen and UN secretary general António Guterres were there. The conference was supposed to boost flagging support for global development - the so-called sustainable development goals set decades ago by the UN, with the aim of taking the poor countries and their people out of poverty.²

These laudable aims have, like many UN initiatives in the 21st century, proven unsustainable. As world leaders pontificated last week in Seville, the reality is that the gap between the rich countries and the rest of the world has not closed - on the contrary, it has widened. And instead of renewed efforts to boost funding for the so-called developing world, the opposite is happening. US president Donald Trump has gutted the funding and personnel of the US development agency, USAID, whose budget is expected to fall from \$60 billion in 2024 to less than \$30 billion in 2026. Germany, Britain and France, among other rich economies, are also making cuts in order to finance huge rises in arms spending for war.

Aid slashed

The G7 countries, which together account for around three-quarters of all official development assistance, are set to slash their aid spending by 28% for 2026, compared to 2024 levels. This would be the biggest cut since the G7 was established in 1975 - and indeed in aid records going back to 1960.

Next year will mark the third consecutive year of decline in G7 aid spending - a trend not seen since the 1990s. If these cuts go ahead, G7 aid levels in 2026 will crash by \$44 billion to just \$112 billion. The cuts are being driven primarily by the US (down \$33 billion), Germany (down \$3.5 billion), the UK (down \$5 billion) and France (down \$3 billion).



Ursula von der Leyen, President of European Commission, at the G7 summit in Canada, June 2025

The international charity, Oxfam, says the cuts to development aid are the largest since 1960³ and the UN puts the growing gap between what is needed for sustainable development and what is delivered at \$4 trillion. "The G7's retreat from the world is unprecedented and couldn't come at a worse time - with hunger, poverty and climate harm intensifying. The G7 cannot claim to build bridges on the one hand, while tearing them down with the other. It sends a shameful message to the global south - that G7 ideals of collaboration mean nothing," said Oxfam international executive director Amitabh Behar.

Poor countries are not only getting less financial support: they are experiencing an ever-rising burden of debt owed to the rich countries' banks and financial institutions. The total external debt of the least developed countries has more than tripled in 15 years, according to the UN. Total debt in the so-called emerging economies (excluding China) has reached 126% of their GDP. Total external debt stock of the poor countries hit at an all-time high of \$8.8 trillion in 2023 - up 2.4% on the previous year.

Debt repayments are now greater than new inflows of credit and capital. In 2023, low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), excluding China, experienced a net outflow to the private sector of \$30 billion on long-term

debt - a major drain on development. Since 2022, foreign private creditors have extracted nearly \$141 billion more in debt service payments from public-sector borrowers in developing economies than they disbursed in new financing. According to Timothy Taylor in *Conversable Economist*, "For two years in a row now, the external creditors of developing economies have been pulling out more than they have been putting in."⁴

The total debt servicing costs (principal plus interest payments) of all LMICs reached an all-time high of \$1.4 trillion in 2023. Excluding China, debt servicing costs climbed to a record of \$971 billion in 2023 - an increase of 19.7% over the previous year and more than double the amounts seen a decade ago.

Will it happen?

A recent report commissioned by the late Pope Francis and coordinated by Nobel laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz reckons that 3.3 billion people live in countries that fork out more on interest payments than on health.⁵ Recent data from the UN's trade and development body, Unctad, reveal that 54 countries spend over 10% of their tax revenues on interest payments alone.⁶ The average interest burden for developing countries, as a share of tax revenues, has almost doubled since 2011, and 2.7 billion people live in countries that spend more on debt than on education.

Global aid for nutrition will fall by 44% in 2025, compared to 2022: the end of just \$128 million worth of US-funded child nutrition programmes for a million children will result in an extra 163,500 child deaths a year. At the same time, 2.3 million children suffering from severe acute malnutrition - the most lethal form of undernutrition - are now at risk of losing life-saving treatments. One in five dollars of aid to poor countries' health budgets are to be cut or are under threat: The World Health Organisation reports that almost three-quarters of its country offices are seeing serious disruptions to health services, and in about a quarter of the countries where it operates some health facilities have already been forced to shut down completely. US aid cuts could lead to as many as three million preventable deaths every year, with 95 million people losing access to healthcare. This includes children dying from vaccine-preventable diseases, pregnant women losing access to care, and rising deaths from malaria, tuberculosis and human immunodeficiency viruses.

According to a report by Unctad published for the Seville conference, sectors critical to the 'sustainable development goals' suffered in particular from a drop in foreign investment. Investment flows to developing countries for infrastructure fell 35%, renewable energy 31%, water and sanitation 30% and agrifood systems 19%. Only the health sector saw growth. Projects rose by about one fifth in number and value, but total volumes remained small - under \$15 billion.

Before the conference in Seville began, the US announced that it would not be attending or agreeing to any plan. So other governments made a declaration. They came up with a feeble proposal - not binding on themselves and with no justification for implementing it - namely that the various development banks around the world should triple their lending capacity, particularly for "essential social spending". And there should be "more cooperation against tax evasion". Some hope. In reality, loans and bonds to carry out sustainability goals have declined.

Previously I showed that the countries of the so-called global south are not 'catching up' with the rich imperialist countries of the so-called global north either in income per person, in productivity or by any index of human development.⁷ At the same time, the huge inequalities of income and wealth, between and within countries, continue to worsen.

What is the answer? Not more loans from banks and governments at exorbitant and rising interest rates (the UK or Germany borrows at 3%-4%, while developing countries are charged 6%-8%), but instead the cancellation and writing off of existing debt burdens for poor countries (I do not like the term, 'debt forgiveness', as there is nothing to forgive!).

And then what is needed is a global plan for public investment in the global south, aimed at infrastructure, health, education and public services, alongside support for employment-creating technologies and industries. This could easily be financed by the rich countries with a wealth tax on the very rich and by public ownership of the major banks and multinationals that currently dominate global finance.

Of course, that will not happen without revolutionary change ●

Michael Roberts blogs at
thenextrecession.wordpress.com

Notes

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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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Summer Offensive

On the way

As we reported a month ago, the CPGB launched our Summer Offensive at the end of May. This is a period of intense fundraising conducted by members and supporters of our organisation every year.

Comrades take initiatives to raise funds, and contact sympathisers and people even on the most distant periphery of the party for donations. The principle is an important one. We are able to pursue an independent political line because we work to raise funds, rather than depending on subsidies from the trade union bureaucracy, or from 'socialist' or 'anti-imperialist' states, which would inevitably come with political strings attached.

Our Summer Offensive strengthens our ability to

publish, to distribute literature on demonstrations and at public events, and to promote initiatives like Communist University. This year we are also concerned to assist with the recent highly increased costs of printing and posting the *Weekly Worker*.

At our May aggregate, we set a target of £20,000, and pledges made at that meeting already covered half of this amount. The cash is rolling in: so far, we have £6,775 in hand - some of this is part of the initial pledges, some from elsewhere. But we still need to raise more. If you support our ideas and want to help us reach an even wider audience, why not visit communistparty.co.uk/donate and contribute to the Summer Offensive today? ●

Tim Browning

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weekly Worker

People have turned to the market

Cashing in on obesity crisis

Weight loss drugs feature regularly in the media. They work in the short term, but what about the long term? And what about the side effects? **James Linney** looks at the background and provides the answers

You may have read in the news last week that the weight loss injection, Mounjaro, has finally been made available to treat obesity on the NHS. *The Independent*, for example, announced: "Mounjaro weight loss jabs now available from GPs."¹ Yet beyond the headlines, as I will discuss, the reality is quite different - in fact it will remain impossible for the majority of people to get this treatment from their GP for many years to come.

Mounjaro, or one of the other weight loss injections - a group of medications known as GLP-1s - has been a regular feature in the media over the past few years; in fact, I cannot think of any other type of medication that comes anywhere close to GLP-1s, in terms of hitting the headlines. Here, I will consider their astonishing journey from a little-used fourth-line treatment for type 2 diabetes to the most talked about and profitable medications in the world.

GLP-1 medications - or to give them their full name, glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonists - despite the sudden media interest, have actually been around for decades. In a 1987 paper published in *The Lancet*, scientists first identified Glucagon-like peptide-1 as a human intestinal hormone that stimulates insulin production in the pancreas and lowers blood sugar.² In the following years attempts were made to develop this hormone into a treatment for type 2 diabetes. A breakthrough came in the 1990s, when research on the saliva of Gila monsters³ led to the discovery of exendin-4 - a molecule very similar to the human hormone, GLP-1, but much more stable. This was the basis for the development of all the GLP-1 medications now available to treat both type 2 diabetes and obesity.

Early versions

It was not until 2005 that the first GLP-1 medication was approved. Exenatide (marketed as Byetta), started being used. As we have seen, it worked by stimulating the pancreas to produce more insulin, helping to transport ingested glucose into cells where it is needed. These early versions of GLP medications were not favoured, as they required multiple injections a day, but they paved the way for other GLP-1 diabetes treatments, which were more convenient, once-daily or once-weekly injections. Soon there were multiple products on the market, such as dulaglutide (Trulicity), liraglutide (Victoza) and semaglutide (Ozempic).

In time, clinicians noticed that patients on these medications were losing significant weight. Further research revealed that GLP-1s not only help regulate blood sugar, but also activate receptors in the gut and brain, making people feel fuller, slowing digestion and reducing food cravings. Excitement grew: had researchers stumbled onto a medical cure for obesity? For pharmaceutical companies, this was like hitting the jackpot. They quickly began tweaking and patenting versions of the drugs to



Little and Large

market them specifically for weight loss.

Obesity is arguably the biggest global threat to health (excluding those resulting from potential environmental breakdown). Since 1990, global obesity rates have more than doubled and adolescent obesity has quadrupled. According to the World Health Organisation, in 2022 one in eight people globally were living with obesity.⁴ By 2050, over half of the world's population is projected to be obese.⁵ Obesity is not only a disease in itself, but a major risk factor for others - type 2 diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, liver disease and cancer, to name a few.

Despite all the life-prolonging and life-improving medical advances of modern times, over the past 50 years there had been almost no scientifically proven advances in treating obesity until GLP-1s. The best treatment we had was an old and drastic one: major surgery with a gastric bypass or sleeve gastrectomy.

This has not prevented global weight loss markets growing into a multi-billion-dollar industry, which continues to grow exponentially and is predicted to be worth over \$400 billion by 2030.⁶ This industry is in the business of promoting treatments which have absolutely no proven long-term weight-loss benefits, and which can in fact often cause harm - equating to unregulated snake oil salesmanship, distracting us from dealing with the real problems. From meal replacement shakes to keto diets, to intermittent fasting, most of these 'solutions' fail in the long run, causing people to regain weight and feel demoralised.

It is important to emphasise - people with obesity are not to blame for their disease. Few other diseases are so often met with blame and stigma. People are told they lack the willpower to "eat less and move more", which only adds harm to those already suffering. This attitude reflects a profound misunderstanding of what obesity is: a complex interplay between genetics and environment.

Genetics have not changed in the last 40 years - but the environment has. We now live in an obesogenic world. Industrial food production is dominated by a few multinational corporations, whose main goal is, of course, profit. As Chris van Tulleken outlines in his book, *Ultra-processed people*, modern food is designed to be addictive, easy to consume quickly, and engineered to override natural

hunger signals.

Ultra-processing strips out nutrition in favour of hyper-palatable food, full of industrial chemicals, with soft textures that require little chewing. These products often masquerade as 'natural' or even healthy. The result is no accident - it has been manufactured.

Good treatment?

Let us turn back to the GLP-1 medications then, to consider two questions: firstly, are they any good at treating obesity? Secondly, and more importantly, what are the chances they will meaningfully help to reverse the obesity trends?

The answer to the first question is essentially that, yes, they are pretty good treatments - used correctly, they have the potential to be a useful tool, alongside diet and lifestyle changes, to help people with obesity lose weight. Most trials have compared the GLP-1 plus diet and exercise support to a placebo with diet and exercise. Of the older GLP-1s, Liraglutide (Saxenda) resulted in 8% of body weight lost at 56 weeks, and Semaglutide (Wegovy) 14.8% at 68 weeks. Tirzepatide (Mounjaro) was associated with an even bigger, statistically significant reduction in body weight from baseline, compared with placebo, of about 20%.⁷ Keep in mind that even a 5%-10% weight loss can significantly improve health outcomes, so a 20% loss of body weight can be transformative.

But we do need to keep in mind that it is still relatively early days, so these studies are not involving huge numbers of people. The big question of how people will do in maintaining their weight loss in the long term (over many years) remains unanswered. Concerningly, a recent analysis of 11 studies of older and newer GLP-1 weight-loss drugs by the University of Oxford found that most patients regained their lost weight 10 months after stopping their treatment, raising the possibility that to maintain their weight loss people may have to be on the medication for many years, if not life - great news for the drug companies.

GLP-1s can also commonly cause side effects. Most are mild and short-lived - nausea, diarrhoea, headaches - but rare, serious effects like pancreatitis and gallbladder disorders can occur.

The established evidence in favour of GLP-1s to promote weight loss has resulted in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

recommending the use of semaglutide (Wegovy) in the specialist NHS weight-loss service (Tier 3), alongside support for a reduced-calorie diet and increased physical activity, since back in 2023⁸, and Mounjaro since December 2024. Despite this, the availability of GLP-1s on the NHS has been very restricted and postcode-dependent. Some areas do not even have a specialist Tier 3 clinic, whilst those that do are so overwhelmed that waiting lists are often more than two years and they have had to stop accepting new referrals. The primary reason why GPs are not allowed to prescribe these medications to people who qualify (ie, if they have a BMI greater than 35 and an obesity-related complication) is due to cost - the medications were priced so high that paying for them would have risked bankrupting primary care.

Even since June, when NHS England decided to make Mounjaro available on the NHS, it is only made available to a tiny percentage of people - only people with a BMI above 40 and with four different specific co-morbidities will qualify in the first 12 months, and after that the plan is to very gradually make it available for more people over a 12-year period.

NHS demotion

This denial of treatment has meant that many thousands of people have sourced the medications through private providers and the fact that they could choose to do this was quite unusual.

No sooner had NICE recommended GLP-1s for treating obesity in 2023, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) made the decision for them to be available to buy on a private prescription from registered pharmacies. Usually the MHRA would only sanction private prescriptions for medications where the safety and effectiveness were well established - for example, some antibiotics for mild infections, or oral contraceptives - which have been around for decades. But here, with GLP-1s, we have a new treatment for obesity for which very little long-term effectiveness and safety data is available, yet it can be immediately issued on private prescription. This has meant there is very little in the way of monitoring a patient's side effects or adverse events that would routinely happen for drugs prescribed on the NHS; in addition, pharmacies provide very little or no support with diet and lifestyle changes that should always go alongside taking them.

I am sure that here we have an example of big pharma lobbying overruling any monitoring or safety considerations - clearly there was simply too much money to be made to wait for the NHS to start providing them. The cost of GLP-1s is very high - the price for Mounjaro, for example, is somewhere between £198 and £249 per month for the maintenance dose (15mg), meaning they are simply unaffordable for many people. Often they start buying the medication, get a good effect and start losing weight, but

can only afford to do so for a limited amount of time. Then they regain lost weight, until they can afford it again at a later date, and so on.

Of course, none of this matters much to the pharmaceutical companies - as long as the sales keep rolling in, long-term health outcomes are irrelevant. And for the likes of Novo Nordisk and Eli Lilly, business is very good. Of the 10 most profitable medications globally in 2025, three (Ozempic, Wegovy and Mounjaro) are GLP-1s, which are forecast to equate to over \$50 billion.

Desperate people are looking for cheaper, less regulated sources - fuelling a black market, with many buying them on social media or from unlicensed pharmacies online, putting them at risk of buying harmful, counterfeit injections or their inappropriate use - not to help promote the health of those with obesity, but as a cosmetic treatment to help people lose a bit of weight for their holiday.

Finally, turning to my second question - can GLP-1s help slow down or reverse the rising obesity rates in the UK? Sadly, the answer must be no - it is very unlikely. Partly this is due to the way they are being denied to people who could benefit from them on the NHS - where they should be prescribed, alongside fully funded diet and lifestyle education and support from dietitians, psychologists and specialist doctors. The reality of the NHS funding and workforce crisis makes that currently impossible, and this is being fully exploited by pharmaceutical companies and private prescribers to make enormous profits.

More broadly, the global obesity crisis is a complex issue: its causes are more than people's increasing appetites - and so GLP-1s, although a potentially useful tool for an individual's weight loss, will never be the answer in itself. The solution will have to come from a radical rethinking, not just of how food is produced, but an overcoming of the illogical and harmful essence of capitalism itself. A system that in its insatiable need to create new markets and accumulate profit has resulted in a food industry that insists on overconsumption of ultra-processed food and pharmaceutical companies driven not to improve health, but, first and foremost, to sell their products ●

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