

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity

weekly worker



Behind Sharm El-Sheikh bonhomie, the Gaza deal is full of 'known unknowns' and even more 'unknown unknowns'

- Letters and debate
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Towards a mass Communist Party

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Above all, Jane Goodall showed us what chimpanzees can teach us about human nature

LETTERS

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

Rosenberg reply

I thank C Duran for the kind words about my Rosenberg article (Letters, October 9)

The name of the Rosenberg's Fund for children is absolutely correct - and I also contribute to it monthly and appreciate the information they send, which lets us know where the money goes and the purpose for it. From very few organisations do we get that kind of detail and I apologise for my error (brain slower than fingers sometimes!).

On other issues, I absolutely disagree with C Duran. It is not a "working class" issue whether Ethel Rosenberg should be exonerated. She was sent to death by the powers that be (although how far up that went is open to question, given that the question has gone through several presidents), knowing that she was innocent. She was sent to death because the FBI blackmailed her brother into lying on oath. Why? Because the FBI wanted her to persuade Julius to plead guilty - something, as I said, he would never do and she would never try to persuade him to do.

She should be exonerated because her trial and her execution were based on lies, and she, her family and those that demonstrated for them (including my parents, grandparents and me from the age of four!) are owed the admission of the open knowledge of her innocence and the guilt of her accusers.

I also deliberately did not mention the book that C Duran suggests, because I dislike it. There have been many books and articles written about the Rosenbergs, and it is correct that the one suggested is the only one written solely about Ethel. But it is written from a feminist point of view and downplays - at some points almost disparages - her politics. Many communist couples in that era, specifically those with children, chose to have one partner not involved in the political struggle, because of the possibility of arrest, imprisonment, the need to go underground, or even death.

Clearly, Ethel and Julius were a communist couple, and both went to their deaths believing in the principles they stood for. And, in my view, any book written about either one must recognise this and put it front and centre.

Gaby Rubin
London

Radical recipe?

SteveFreeman considers the distinction between social monarchism, social republicanism and democratic republicanism ('Republicanism and the split', October 2).

Britain needs fundamental, radical reconstruction. We must develop clear underlying principles from which our policies arise. We can differ over priorities, but not principles. Our fundamental principle must be establishing a level playing field for all - economically and politically. Media reform is an essential precondition for both.

We must go beyond nationalising utilities, to taking over the banks, which we have already paid for. As a minimum, we must establish a national bank, and provide every citizen with an account in it. We must break the stranglehold of inherited wealth and power, with a maximum inheritance of £1 million and 20 acres of land. This will recognise the disproportionate price of homes in the southeast, particularly in London. Hopefully, by

increasing housebuilding and driving out foreign property owners, the regional discrepancy of house prices can be improved.

The inherited power in the House of Lords must go now. The monarchy should also be abolished, but retains mass support, so it would be a tactical mistake to go for this in our first manifesto, as this might cost us the election. We must win over opinion on this.

In our first term, we must get the Murdochs, Barclays, etc out of our national press, reform the BBC and set up our own local radio stations. We must ensure the press is self-financing, not subsidised by commercial corporations. We must have public enquiries into royal finances (Prince Andrew, etc), publishing their reports ahead of the 2029 general election, informing our next manifesto. We will then have the ground preferred for an open and honest public debate.

How much further we should go with nationalisation longer-term are questions over our programme, not our principles. I have no objection to small businesses accumulating wealth, so long as they respect the rights of workers and pay their taxes. After the death of the proprietor and their spouse/partner, death duties should absorb the accumulated wealth into public ownership.

There should be a maximum differential between highest and lowest paid in public companies and workers represented on company boards.

Alan Faith
email

Marx's 'mistake'

Marx used 'dictatorship of the proletariat' interchangeably with 'working class rule', but Peter Manson writes that I don't understand the term. (Letters, October 9). I have a political dictionary which perfectly explains 'dictatorship of the proletariat' and its origins.

As I have pointed out in the past, Lenin also gave a perfect definition of what 'dictatorship' means, regardless of class content. I endorse Lenin's definition completely: it means rule untrammelled by any law. You have a dictatorship when those who are ruling are untrammelled by law and are not accountable to an elected body. If you are accountable and rule within law, then this cannot be a dictatorship, based on Lenin's definition. Dictatorship essentially means anti-democratic rule.

Marx wrote that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat. He was mistakenly using an anti-democratic term, taken from Blanqui, to describe working class rule. Dictatorship is a form of rule and democracy is another form of rule. The essence of class society is class rule which can take either form, depending on the situation. Dictatorship is not the essence of class rule: it is a form of rule.

The term was never used in *The communist manifesto*, nor do we find it in Engels' *Socialism: utopian and scientific*. However, Engels was forced to criticise those who were interpreting it in an anti-democratic way. The reason why this was going on was because the term itself was anti-democratic and lent itself to the abuse of political power. Out of deference to Marx, Engels never pointed out that it was anti-democratic.

And we saw this later in action in the Soviet Union with Stalin. If the Soviet Union had practised democratic socialism, Stalin's negative side would have been restrained. Without democratic socialism his negative side was given full rein.

The issue is not about the meaning of the term, but why some Marxists

insist on using an anti-democratic term to describe socialist rule. One of the reasons is that there is a totalitarian tendency on the left, as well as a democratic tendency. Those who unconsciously represent the totalitarian tendency are usually the ones who insist on the official suppression of factions in the party, and they prefer the term 'dictatorship'. Lenin mostly gave expression to the democracy tendency in socialism to begin with, but later gave way to the totalitarian tendency, when he sought the suppression of factions in the party.

I am not saying I am against dictatorship in all situations: what I am saying is that terminologically it is an incorrect name for socialist rule in a normal situation. It amazes me that some Marxists, after the experience of the communist movement, still want to use an anti-democratic term for socialist rule.

Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin and Mao all deserve some degree of criticism, as surprising as this may seem to some communist circles. At the political level, the place to begin is Marx's mistake in using an anti-democratic term for working class rule.

Tony Clark
For Democratic Socialism

Stuck record

Tony Clark is like the proverbial stuck record. Every so often he just regurgitates his pet conspiracy theory on the 'dictatorship of the proletariat':

■ Marx and Engels were originally "democratic socialists", but subsequently adopted Blanquism - the belief in violent rules by enlightened minorities.

■ Marxism was thereby diverted from its historical mission of identifying a scientific path for the emancipation of the proletariat.

■ This hijacking happened after 1848, as there is no mention of the dictatorship of the proletariat in *The communist manifesto*.

Where to begin? Well, as I am sure the anti-Leninists and anti-communists will readily point out, Marx and Engels actually used the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat' very few times. On the relatively few occasions they did, it was *always* as an explicit replacement of the rule or dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by the *rule of the working class* and wider working masses. Being based on the *majority* working class and working people, this rule, or dictatorship, of the working class was inherently a *democratic* rule or form of governance.

It is true the Marx and Engels team did not use the term in *The communist manifesto* - a short, hard-hitting, agitational pamphlet, published rapidly in response to the revolutionary upheavals across Europe, to attempt to inject a distinct proletarian communist perspective into these events.

However, the meaning and essence of what became the DoP was clearly established in that document. The "line of march" for the then emerging proletariat lay in "the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie", establishing "the sway of the proletariat". The "immediate aims of the proletariat" include the "overthrow of the bourgeoisie, conquest of power by the proletariat". Later in the text, "the first step in the (proletarian) revolution is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class".

In summary, the basic tasks of the proletariat were to overthrow the rule, the political (or state) power of the bourgeoisie, and *replace it* by the *rule*, the political/state power of the proletariat. It is this state power held by the (majority) working class which Marx and Engels occasionally described later as 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'.

So, for Marx and Engels, the term

meant nothing more (or less) than the *political rule* or state power by the (majority) working class over the rest of society, including the recently overthrown ruling classes, and the wider working masses. Yes, the word 'dictatorship' in the 20th century acquired all sorts of nasty connotations with regimes such as Mussolini's in Italy, Franco's in Spain or Hitler's in Germany. But you can't simply take these more recent connotations, project them back into the 19th century, and assert these are what Marx and Engels really meant when they used the term, 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. They simply meant 'rule of the proletariat' as a vital stage to effect the transition from capitalism to socialism and ultimately communism.

Tony, of course, references Lenin's famous and somewhat brutal definition of 'dictatorship' as being "authority untrammelled by any laws, absolutely unrestricted by any rules whatever, and based directly on force" (*The proletarian revolution and the renegade Kautsky*, 1918; 'A contribution to the history of the question of the dictatorship', 1920).

The particularly assertive - even aggressive - language is hardly surprising, given that Lenin as the leader of the ruling Bolshevik Party and soviet government was ferociously trying to defend the socialist revolution and soviet power (ie, representing the majority of workers and peasants) against far more ferocious attempts to drown the revolution and soviet power in blood - ably assisted by revisionists and opportunists abroad who, terrified by the sight and reality of a real proletarian revolution in Russia, were desperately trying to legitimise the whole programme, strategy and tactics of the Bolshevik/Communist Party.

But Lenin's very sharp language, invoked in extremely perilous times, also reflected some basic universal truths and realities. For all classes, the possession of real political power means to have effective control of *state* power. *All* states, even the most apparently democratic, are *ultimately* based on their ability to use force, organised violence, even terrorism, to defend their continued existences.

No sovereign political power basing itself in the possession of material state power can in fact be

bound or restricted by any laws - either the ones it 'inherits' from a previous state power, or the ones it makes itself.

In generally stable constitutional conditions, the state may most often choose to remain within those laws, especially those it has promulgated itself, particularly if it is attempting to project its rule and legitimacy in the eyes of the people. But, in the final analysis, if required to do so for 'reasons of state', it can perfectly well violate or even ignore its own laws wholesale.

Throughout history up to the present day, we have numerous examples of states ultimately relying on force and violence to protect their positions and their classes, and violating or ignoring their own laws if necessary to do so. These flow from being the *sovereign powers* in their societies.

The important question always asked by true Marxists and communists is in whose class interests does the sovereign state power exist? And how can we change things so it is the working class and working people in command of society? There is a common, continuous thread of thinking from Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and communist leaders up to the present day. The (majority) working class must win political (state) power in order to replace capitalism with socialism.

Winning political or state power is to *rule* over society. As it is the majority class in society, working class rule is inherently *democratic* rule, in the Greek definition of the original word, meaning rule by the people.

Being the rule or state power of the majority class, this type of rule is *qualitatively different* from all previous types of rule (or dictatorships) by minority classes. This new rule rests on the collective organisation and power of the majority working people, mainly through their active involvement and consent. But, in the final analysis, it can also resort to using force or even open violence to defend the sovereign power (rule) of the working people. In extreme conditions, it can choose not to be bound by some existing laws, as it in fact made those laws: it can supersede them at any time, as it is the sovereign power.

Andrew Northall
Kettering

Fighting fund

Help us get there!

Well, we're now halfway through October, but I'm afraid the *Weekly Worker* is rather short of the halfway mark, when it comes to this month's fighting fund.

There have, of course, been quite a few handy donations. Topping the list is comrade JC with his brilliant £100, followed by comrade PB with her usual £80 monthly contribution. Also donating via bank transfer or standing order were AN (£50 - he actually donated this last week, but somehow we didn't include it in last week's column!), TW (£25), OG (£24), plus PM and CC (a tenner each).

Then we had quite a few contributions via PayPal: top of the list was US comrade PM for his excellent £50, followed by ST (£20), AB (£11), JV (£7), not to mention four comrades who donated a fiver - thank you, AR, SO, RD and GP.

All that came to £407, taking our running total for October up to £1,054. Well, at least we've

got the first grand, but, don't forget, the monthly target is actually £2,750, so we're well behind the going rate. But I'm confident we can make up some ground over the next week or so, when quite a few sizable standing orders come our way. But they won't be enough to see us home on their own - we need a good few more of our readers to help us get there.

So please do your best to help us out. We need to raise that extra £1,696 in the next two weeks and two days! You can do it, so don't be shy! Play your part in helping to ensure that the *Weekly Worker* can continue to play its vital role in the campaign for the united working class party we so desperately need! ●

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

OBITUARY

She gave us the truth

Scientist, animal rights activist and an extraordinary revolutionary. Above all, though, Jane Goodall showed us what chimpanzees can teach us about human nature. She should be an inspiration for us all, says **Chris Knight**

Jane Goodall died on October 1, aged 91. She will be remembered not only as a passionate animal rights activist, but as the scientist who made history as the first to describe chimpanzee life in the wild, instead of just in a zoo.

Goodall was a vegetarian and, eventually, a vegan. Fortunately, she was too honest to project her values onto the chimpanzees she spent her life studying. Shunning theoretical arguments in favour of reportage, she gave us the truth.

In the pre-Goodall era, chimps had been viewed as loveable vegetarians, munching fruit in the trees, while living in peace and harmony. 'Nature good, culture bad' was a widespread popular assumption. The idea was that only humans had lost touch with nature - so much so that they manufactured artificial weapons, shed blood, patrolled territorial boundaries and waged war against creatures of their own kind.

Goodall changed all this. In 1960, she set out to study the chimps living in a forested region of what is now Tanzania, helping establish the Gombe Stream Reserve. At first, the animals ran off on catching sight of a human intruder, so she could only view them through binoculars. Over time, however, Goodall's patience produced rewards. Having won the trust of a particular chimpanzee, she gave him a name - 'David Graybeard'.

Had Goodall been scientifically trained, she would not have been allowed to do this. Names should be avoided - so it was said - to prevent observers from investing chimps inappropriately with human emotions. The correct procedure was to label each animal with a number.

Untrained as she was - lacking even a degree - she took no notice. She named and followed one chimp after another until eventually she could identify every one. She was delighted to discover how each had its own unique personality and network of relationships. Their facial expressions, hugs, kisses, pats on the back and gestures of reassurance seemed immediately comprehensible, because human body language is essentially the same. As Goodall settled into chimpanzee society, she felt at home.

Apes and violence

Although she never lost those feelings, they soon became tinged with alarm. Her new friends were certainly not vegetarians. From time to time, the whole community would be seized with frenzy. A colobus monkey had been noticed high up in the trees. Several chimps would start climbing towards it, while others blocked off its escape routes. Without powerful canines or piercing weapons, the chimp hunters had difficulty killing the helpless creature, once it had been caught. Often they would begin eating the monkey while it was still alive, rival males pulling in different directions until it eventually died from being torn apart.

Still more alarming to Goodall were the internal fights. Rival male groups would mount raids into one another's territory, searching for an isolated victim to kill. Many of Goodall's feminist admirers criticised her for describing such things, accusing her of contributing to the reactionary idea that male violence and warfare are inescapable, being inherited from



Jane Goodall: won the trust of chimpanzees, beginning with David Graybeard

our ape-like ancestors. Of course, Goodall's actual position was always that while bloodthirsty violence is part of human nature, harmony and cooperation are consistent with our nature too.

I remember attending a scholarly meeting in London, where, to a shocked audience, Goodall revealed the gory details of warfare between neighbouring chimpanzees. Years later, she recalled her feelings on first witnessing such scenes:

Often when I woke in the night, horrific pictures sprang unbidden to my mind - Satan cupping his hand below Sniff's chin to drink the blood that welled from a great wound on his face; old Rodolf, usually so benign, standing upright to hurl a four-pound rock at Godi's prostrate body; Jomeo tearing a strip of skin from Dé's thigh; Figan, charging and hitting, again and again, the stricken, quivering body of Goliath, one of his childhood heroes.¹

When a conflict involves many males

on each side, casualty rates can be high. Her observations meant that Goodall was reaching conclusions about our closest animal relatives in a completely fresh way, in many respects at variance with accepted wisdom.

Apes and tools

When I first began thinking about chimpanzees, a widespread view was that the emergence of our species was made possible in the first instance by an 'opposable thumb'. Once our thumbs could swivel round and connect up with our fingers, so it was said, our ape-like ancestors could at last begin holding objects with a precision grip - a precondition for the manufacture of stone tools.

Then came Jane Goodall. 'David Graybeard' had shown her how he and other chimps make ingenious tools for pulling fruit within reach, catching and eating termites and numerous other tasks. The opposable thumb narrative now seemed irrelevant. Chimps possess an opposable thumb for very good reasons, since they routinely grip overhead branches to steady

themselves and keep upright, as they move through the trees. In addition to apes and many other primates, it is now known that opossums, pandas, koalas and even some frogs all have opposable thumbs!

I had never been happy with idea that the critical development in human origins was the evolution of an opposable thumb. I felt it was a way of side-stepping the real issues - the fundamentally *social* questions central to the argument of Marx in his *Early writings* and Engels in *The origin of the family, private property and the state*. Labour can be performed with or without tools. According to Marx in his early writings, labour came into existence from the moment individuals began producing food, shelter and other necessities of life not merely for themselves as individuals, but for *one another's* benefit.²

It would have been at least a million years before the stone tools made by our distant human ancestors became involved in incipient forms of genuine labour. Certain of the tools made from wood or stone had points or sharp edges designed for cutting

into flesh. Hunting? Scavenging? These were certainly possibilities, but fighting would equally have been an option. Imagine Goodall's chimpanzees attempting to kill one another using specially designed stone weapons. Had our ancestors continued behaving like apes, the most likely consequence of tool-use would have been extinction.

Apes and Engels

As I began taking an interest in chimpanzees during the 1960s, I was hesitantly aligning myself with the prevailing Marxist current on my campus at Sussex University. I remember pestering my Militant Tendency comrades with questions about how communism would work. Did history provide evidence of a revolution whose enduring outcome measured up to the revolutionaries' hopes and ideals?

As I carefully studied Engels, I became inspired by his argument that humanity itself must have undergone some kind of revolution to arrive at language and symbolic culture. In his own words, systems of primate dominance have "a certain value in drawing conclusions regarding human societies - but only in a negative sense". There are no obvious evolutionary continuities. As ape males fight over access to females, jealousies explode into violence. Engels continues: "Mutual toleration among the adult males, freedom from jealousy, was, however, the first condition for the building of those large and enduring groups in the midst of which alone the transition from animal to man could be achieved."³ Engels was explaining that, for our ape-like ancestors to become fully human, a social revolution was required.

I can imagine sectarians on the left dismissing Goodall as a middle class scientist and climate activist, having little in common with Marxism. In my view, attitudes of that kind are absurd. Spending so much of her life interacting with chimpanzees, Goodall was never likely to find proletarian class politics particularly relevant.

But, before turning away, readers should give themselves a treat. Watch Netflix's astonishing 'Famous last words' interview with Jane Goodall.⁴ Describing herself as a resolute anti-fascist, she lashes out at Elon Musk, Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin and - with special venom - Benjamin Netanyahu. Eyes flickering with rage and humour, she said she would love to put them on one of Musk's rockets to a distant planet, leaving the rest of us alone.

For a thinker to qualify as a revolutionary, they need not necessarily champion Marx. The litmus test is whether they base their political activism on science. In that respect, Jane Goodall was an extraordinary revolutionary - an example and inspiration to us all ●

Notes

1. J Goodall *Through a window: thirty years with the chimpanzees of Gombe* London 1991.
2. "Insofar as man is human and thus in so far as his feelings and so on are human, the affirmation of the object by another person is equally his own enjoyment" - quote from Karl Marx. See D McLennan (ed) *Early texts* Hoboken NJ 1972, pp178-79.
3. www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1884/origin-family/ch02.htm
4. edition.cnn.com/2025/10/06/politics/video/jane-goodall-netflix-famous-last-words-posthumous-interview-vrtc

MIDDLE EAST

Deal, doubts and power dynamics

Infamous words come to mind: the Gaza deal is full of 'known unknowns' and even more 'unknown unknowns'. **Yassamine Mather** looks behind the photo-ops, handshakes and bonhomie at Sharm El-Sheikh

On October 13, what was billed as a "peace summit" over Gaza was co-hosted in Egypt by president Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and, of course, Donald Trump.

But, beneath the diplomatic facade, Sharm El-Sheikh played out very much like a day of photo-ops, handshakes and theatrical posturing. Trump greeted, patted and joked with each of head of state and prime minister in turn - the boss acknowledging his subordinates. He referred to the emir of the United Arab Emirates as a "rich man" and, in a patronising manner, announced that French president, Emmanuel Macron, and presumably others had answered his call within 20 minutes. And then came the crack about Italian premier Giorgia Meloni being okay with being called a "beautiful woman", unlike some Americans!

Mahmoud Abbas, the corrupt and incompetent leader of the Palestinian Authority, was kept very much in the background. However, while Benjamin Netanyahu was invited, he declined to attend - his office gave the proximity to the Jewish holiday, Simchat Torah, as the official reason. Iran's Islamic Republic was invited too but also declined to send anyone (more on this below).

Despite all the media attention and the bonhomie, we still do not know anything concrete about the deal that now carries the signatures of European and Middle Eastern leaders. In the infamous words of Donald Rumsfeld, former US defence secretary, the so called 'peace' deal is full of 'known unknowns' - and, of course, even more 'unknown unknowns'.

Second stage

What follows are some of the obvious points of contention that are expected to dominate the upcoming negotiations. However, this is very limited in the absence of any details regarding the substantial issues.

Firstly, Hamas has consistently refused to disarm, insisting it will only do so once a sovereign Palestinian state is established. In its initial response to the new plan, the group again made no mention of surrendering weapons - suggesting its position remains unchanged.

For its part, Israel, while publicly accepting the Trump-backed plan in full, has opposed the idea of the Palestinian Authority taking part in the governing of post-war Gaza - Netanyahu's stance is clear. Hamas, meanwhile, has declared it expects to participate in Gaza's future as part of "a unified Palestinian movement". Some Arab media outlets suggest that the Beijing Accord, which facilitated reconciliation between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, could be revived.

Of course, the plan itself does not clarify who will actually govern Gaza, once Israeli forces have withdrawn. It refers to a vague entity - a "technocratic, apolitical Palestinian committee" - being responsible for daily administrative matters (provided that none of its members belong to Hamas!). However, there is no explanation of who will appoint these technocrats, how they will be chosen, or by what authority they will act. Reports suggest that clan heads and community figures are being discreetly consulted for potential names, but there is no transparent process.

Similarly, a mysterious 'Board of Peace' is mentioned as having ultimate authority over Gaza's governance, though its composition, selection



Heads of state, prime ministers and secretary generals

mechanism and powers are entirely undefined.

It remains unclear who the other guarantors of the agreement will be. Will they include Qatar, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, or the Palestinian Authority - or some combination of the above? The identity of these parties is not a trivial matter: in any agreement, the first step toward accountability is knowing who is bound by it, what obligations they assume and what rights they have.

Will these regional actors merely endorse the plan, or will they act as guarantors responsible for enforcing it? Will they participate in the post-withdrawal security or governance mechanisms in Gaza? None of these essential questions are answered.

The plan also makes no mention of which laws or legal principles will govern its implementation. Even basic contracts specify which state's law applies. For intergovernmental accords, reference is usually made to international law. Of course, as Ziyad Motala in *Middle East Eye* reminds us, "If Gaza has taught us anything, it is not that the so-called rules-based international order has collapsed; it is that it never truly existed."

International law has long served as a tool of power - a way for the strong to mask their domination with legality. The west has treated it as a moral badge, even while breaking it without consequence. To confirm this, in the proposed peace deal, there is nothing - no jurisdiction, no rules of interpretation, no dispute-resolution mechanism. If disagreements arise, who will adjudicate them? There is no provision for arbitration, mediation or referral to international courts. Without such mechanisms, each party can interpret the plan however they wish, guaranteeing chaos during implementation.

Another key sticking point concerns the timeline and scope of Israeli troop withdrawals. Israel's initial pull-back leaves it in control of roughly 58% of Gaza; subsequent stages would reduce this to 40% and later 18%, according to the White House.

The final stage envisions a "security perimeter" to remain "until Gaza is properly secure from any resurgent terror threat". The wording is again deliberately vague, providing no clear timeline or verification mechanism for a complete Israeli withdrawal - something Hamas will almost certainly challenge.

Article 16 states that withdrawal will be based on the "standards, milestones and time frames linked to demilitarisation" agreed upon by Israel, the International Security Force, unnamed guarantors and the

US. Since neither the ISF nor the guarantors have been established, this provision basically gives Israel veto power over its withdrawal.

It also opens a dangerous loophole: withdrawal is conditional not only on the absence of "threats" to Israel, but also on "security for Gaza's citizens". This could allow Israel - or allied forces - to claim that Palestinian groups or internal unrest justify indefinite delay.

Historical echoes

The rule has long been clear: America tolerates Israeli actions against Palestinians, but not when they endanger US interests or regional stability. When Washington concludes that Israel has gone too far, it says 'Enough!' - and Israeli leaders retreat.

Back in late 1948, during Operation Horev, Israeli forces pushed briefly into Sinai to encircle the remnants of the Egyptian army. The Truman administration reacted at once, instructing US ambassador James McDonald to deliver a sharp warning to prime minister David Ben-Gurion, demanding an immediate withdrawal. Under pressure, Ben-Gurion complied within days. The pattern has not changed much today. According to *Haaretz*, Trump leaned hard on Netanyahu to accept the Gaza plan, especially after the Doha attack shifted US priorities. Once again, the 'US dog wags the Israeli tail'.

America will always shield Israel from destruction, but it will not let Jerusalem shape the region's balance of power. Netanyahu knows US support is becoming a political headache in Washington - even for Republicans - so he is walking a tightrope. His current deference to Trump shows just how careful that balancing act has become.

The 'peace plan' also references earlier proposals, including Trump's 2020 plan and the Saudi-French initiative, yet these documents contradict each other. They fail to define what "reform" of the Palestinian Authority means or who will judge whether it has met those conditions. Since Israel's staged withdrawals are tied to PA "reform", this vagueness provides a perfect pretext to exclude the PA from governance altogether - consistent with Netanyahu's public statements and Trump's comments on his flight back to the US.

No penalties are defined for breaches of the agreement. While the plan mentions that regional parties (unnamed) will guarantee Hamas's compliance, no-one is assigned to guarantee that Israel fulfils its obligations. Given Israel's repeated violations of past accords - and Netanyahu's declaration that the Israel

Defence Forces will remain in most of Gaza indefinitely - this uneven playing field lets one side get away with anything.

The initial ceasefire of January 15 2025 provides a worrying example: after Hamas released many of its captives, as agreed, Israel unilaterally resumed blockades and bombing, claiming the deal's conditions had not been met. Nothing prevents a similar scenario here. Netanyahu has expanded the definition of "demilitarisation" to include "all military, terror and offensive infrastructure" - language so broad that it could indefinitely delay withdrawal.

The 58% currently under Israeli control includes Gaza's agricultural heartland. Without access to these lands, Gazans will remain dependent on international aid indefinitely. Meanwhile, Israeli settlers wait at the borders, ready to move in, as soon as the opportunity arises. But, even if Hamas accepts the plan in full, Israel could maintain its hold on 40% of Gaza indefinitely, claiming ongoing "security threats". The vague language allows Israel to frame any resistance as a violation of the ceasefire.

Berlin Wall

Effectively, Israel has established a Berlin Wall-style division within Gaza - one that could endure for years. Reconstruction, economic revival and governance all remain subject to Israeli discretion. The plan's first phase mentions rebuilding hospitals and bakeries, but not the 92% of homes destroyed.

Even as key Arab states publicly condemn Israel's war, leaked US documents reveal growing security coordination with Israel's military. Those same networks - strained after Israel's airstrike in Qatar - may now oversee the ceasefire's enforcement. Over the past three years, facilitated by the US, senior military officials from Israel and six Arab states met for joint planning in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan and Qatar.

Inside Gaza, internal rivalries have surfaced. The Doghmush clan - long infamous for kidnappings, smuggling and recently collaborating with the Israelis - is engaged in armed clashes with Hamas. Dozens have been killed as Hamas "restores order".

Netanyahu's pledge to annihilate Hamas has predictably come to nothing. It was, after all, nothing more than an excuse for continuing the war in Gaza (along with getting the captives back). But excuses can have a life of their own. Hence the Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* claims that Netanyahu's acceptance of Trump's 20-point plan amounted

to a "complete surrender to Hamas": Gaza was neither demilitarised nor cleared, and Hamas remains intact - evidence that, beneath the rhetoric, the deal merely freezes the conflict under a new name.

Like the people in Gaza we may celebrate the pause in fighting and the release of hundreds of prisoners, but the future remains completely uncertain.

Iran

Iran's refusal to go to Sharm El-Sheikh is a major point of contention inside the country. Officially the decision was announced by deputy foreign minister Abbas Araghchi, who stated Iran cannot engage with nations that have attacked and continue to threaten and sanction its people. This stance is consistent with Iran's long-standing foreign policy - particularly its refusal to participate in conferences involving Israel, which it views as a continuation of initiatives like the Abraham Accords, aimed at 'normalising' Arab-Israeli relations.

During Trump's Knesset speech (during which two leftwing members, Ofer Kassif and Ayman Odeih of the 'official communist' Hadash party, were dragged out, having displayed a banner calling for the recognition of Palestine) he said: "It would be great if we could make a peace deal with [Iran]".² He added that the "hand of friendship and cooperation is open" when Tehran is ready.³

Supporters of Iran attending Sharm El-Sheikh argue it was a missed "golden diplomatic opportunity", while others pointed to historical precedents of engaging with adversaries. There is, in fact, a clear pattern: Iran has consistently been absent from or excluded from major peace conferences involving Israel (such as those in Madrid, Oslo and Annapolis). Therefore, Iran's 'no' to the Sharm El-Sheikh was to be expected.

All this comes a few days after Vladimir Putin stated that Moscow had "received messages from Israel" that it is "not seeking military confrontation" over the nuclear crisis, and wanted to "avoid miscalculation by Iran". According to Putin, Israel asked Russia to "convey reassuring messages ... that it is interested in continuing the discussion and reducing tensions, without being dragged into confrontation".⁴

Iran's foreign minister confirmed receiving the "calming messages". However, we only have this claim from Putin and Russian sources - no confirmation from Israeli sources (eg, Israeli government spokespeople) affirming that they had indeed asked Russia to convey such a message. Russia could be trying to look like the go-between or 'peacekeeper' here, boosting its influence in the region.

All this means the embattled Iranian people feel slightly less threatened than a few weeks ago. However, given all the uncertainties around the Palestine 'peace deal', the possibility of another war in the region remains as high as ever ●

Notes

1. www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/after-two-years-gaza-genocide-west-moral-pretence-shattered.
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PEACE PRIZE

Keeping Donald happy

In the name of peace she threatens to bring war. María Machado stands in a long and shameful line. Once again, the Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded for services rendered to imperialism, writes **Eddie Ford**

Not for the first time (and almost certainly not for the last), the Nobel Peace Prize has collapsed into self-parody. This year's winner, María Corina Machado, the Margaret Thatcher-admiring 'Iron Lady' and leader of the opposition in Venezuela, has dedicated her prize to that well-known peacenik, Donald J Trump, "for his decisive support of our cause".

Trump, of course, recently renamed the US Department of Defence as the *Department of War* - though you could argue that this at least has the virtue of honesty. He called Machado, saying he was "happy" for her, as she "deserved" the accolade. In fact, she, Machado, *denies* Israel's Gaza genocide, boasts of her close friendship with Benjamin Netanyahu, and in 2020 her party, Vente Venezuela, actually formalised a pact with Likud "to forge an alliance between our two parties to cooperate on issues related to strategy, geopolitics and security, among others, in order to create an operational partnership".

Naturally, past social media statements have resurfaced, where she claims that "the struggle of Venezuela is the struggle of Israel" and calls the Zionist state a "genuine ally of freedom". The 'peace-loving' Machado wrote a letter in 2018 to Argentine and Israeli leaders requesting "intervention" to remove Nicholas Maduro from power. As a 'champion of western civilisation' she took part, along with Likud, as an "observer member" of Patriots for Europe, in the 'Make Europe Great Again' rally in February hosted by Santiago Abascal of Spain's Vox - it was famously addressed by JD Vance. A festival of ultra-nationalism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and the far right.¹

In 2023, Machado announced her candidacy for the 2024 Venezuelan presidential election, but she was blocked from running by the 'socialist' president, Nicolás Maduro. Therefore she supported the alternative candidacy of Edmundo González. According to the mainstream narrative, the results showed González to be the clear winner, but the Maduro regime declared victory anyway! Under the fraught circumstances of 2024 the truth is impossible to know.

The fact of the matter is that Venezuela has been the target of imperialist plots, sanctions, coup attempts and even a fake 'parallel' government over the last 25 years. Initiated by the career military officer, Hugo Chávez, the Bolivarian experiment saw a far-reaching programme of nationalisation, wealth redistribution and popular power at a local level. Venezuela purportedly has the world's largest reserves of oil. So, when oil prices were high, the country was in receipt of huge revenues.

Undoubtedly, to begin with, Chávez and the United Socialist Party enjoyed enormous popularity, especially in the shanty towns and amongst the rural poor. Essentially Chávez acted as a bonaparte, presiding over a plebeian-military regime. However, the economy has been effectively wrecked. Some put this down to falling oil prices, corruption and sheer incompetence. Undoubtedly, all factors. But in reality the blame lies squarely with the unremitting sabotage campaign conducted by imperialism - first and foremost, of course, the US. This is what has brought Venezuela to the brink of collapse. Hardly ideal conditions for fair elections, free



María Machado: warmonger and stooge

speech and basic democratic rights.

Either way, it is clear that Donald Trump sees Venezuela as ripe for regime change from above: to be achieved by armed provocation, full-scale invasion or a colour revolution led by Machado. Her Peace Prize must be seen in this context.

According to the Norwegian Nobel Committee - a five-member *political* committee appointed by the Norwegian parliament and therefore chosen on a different basis to those that decide the awards for chemistry, physics, physiology/medicine and literature - Machado was chosen "for her tireless work promoting democratic rights for the people of Venezuela and for her struggle to achieve a just and peaceful transition from dictatorship to democracy".

By your friends

Machado had praised the "visionary" Trump after he deployed the US navy to the Caribbean in August with the stated goal of combatting the narco-gangs.² Furthermore, Machado has voiced her support for Trump's claim that a Venezuelan group, the Tren de Aragua, has launched an "invasion" of the US!³ The US president and top officials such as Stephen Miller have used that absurd claim as justification for its campaign against Venezuelan migrants - scores of whom have since been deported to the CECOT high-security prison in El Salvador. A living nightmare.

Another Nobel Peace Prize winner (in 2009), Barack Obama, congratulated Machado and said that the award should remind Americans of the "responsibility to constantly preserve and defend our own hard-won democratic traditions" - which

seems grotesque, given her far-right friends and obvious authoritarian hankerings, not to mention the former US president's warmongering track record.

Clinging to the same liberal illusions about the progressive nature of the prize, *The Guardian* tried to pretend that the Nobel Prize committee's announcement - "when authoritarians seize power, it is crucial to recognise courageous defenders of freedom who rise and resist" - was some sort of subtle criticism of Trump's use of the military in US cities and relentless pressure on political enemies at home. In reality, it was quite clear from the context that this was a reference to Maduro's actions in the Venezuelan presidential elections.⁴

In fact, you can quite reasonably argue that María Corina Machado is acting as a stand-in or proxy for Trump, on the basis that the committee did not want to upset Donald or get sanctions slapped on Norway. There was a genuine degree of nervousness in Oslo about the possible consequences of not awarding the prize to Trump, especially after he called the Norwegian finance minister and former head of Nato, Jens Stoltenberg, to discuss the whole issue. Norway has also been under pressure from some US senators close to Trump after its giant sovereign wealth fund pulled out of Caterpillar, the American building equipment company, because it is complicit in Israeli crimes. Its D9 bulldozers have been weaponised. You can see them on your screens demolishing Palestinian homes, schools, villages and civilian infrastructure.

So the Nobel Committee held out the hope that maybe next year Trump could win the Peace Prize, once

the Middle East 'deal' is actually in operation - which admittedly seems dubious - or if the US president somehow pulls something out of the hat over the Ukraine war. Perhaps the committee will decide to swallow Trump's obvious nonsense about ending "seven wars" without even a "mention of the word 'ceasefire'". In the meantime the Trump administration says a Nobel Peace Prize is "well past time" for the US "peacemaker-in-chief".⁵

Deserving it

There has been much liberal chat about how Donald Trump is not 'deserving' of a Nobel Peace Prize, but when you look at other recipients, why not?⁶ OK, Hitler's nomination was meant to be a satirical joke by a Swedish legislator, Erik Brandt, in response to the nomination of Neville Chamberlain and his role in the Munich Agreement - but it was taken seriously by some, and sparked outrage and protests in Sweden and elsewhere.

Yet was Henry Kissinger 'deserving' of such a reward, even though he was actually a war criminal? Well, he got one in 1973 during the Vietnam war. Or was Jimmy Carter in 2002 essentially any different, and somehow 'deserved' the prize, unlike Kissinger? Or how about the odious Menachem Begin, "for jointly having negotiated peace" between Egypt and Israel in 1978? As the leader of the Zionist paramilitary group, Irgun, he clearly laid down the ideological blueprint for Benjamin Netanyahu's genocidal assault on the Gazan people.

Then you have Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres in 1994, "for their efforts to create peace" in the Middle East, which must classify as

a genuinely sick joke. Or John Hume and David Trimble, for propping up the sectarian statelet in the Six Counties - or the obvious puppets of the so-called Women for Peace, Betty Williams and Mairead Maguire, who were consciously used to undermine the armed struggle conducted by the Provisional IRA. Plus Mikhail Gorbachev, for crying out loud, "for the leading role he played in the radical changes in east-west relations".

Examining the history of the Nobel Peace Prize, it is impossible to come to anything other than the conclusion that the award is given every year for 'services rendered to imperialism' - whether pre-World War II it was a declining British imperialism, represented by the likes of Sir Austin Chamberlain (1925) and Arthur Henderson (1934), or a rival American imperialism with figures such as Theodore Roosevelt (1906) and Woodrow Wilson (1919). Or post-World War II and the hegemony of the US, whose ideals were deemed compatible with liberal bourgeois perspectives and are therefore currently espoused by most western states.

Yes, there was Nelson Mandela, but it is important to understand that he was not awarded the Peace Prize while he was in prison serving a life sentence for 'terrorist offences' (ie, the anti-apartheid struggle), but after he was released in 1993. A former member of the central committee of the South African Communist Party, Mandela was once considered a dangerous foe. But his undeniable popularity with the masses made him useful as an asset to imperialism, with its interest in overseeing a smooth, managed, peaceful transition from apartheid and white rule to a more stable capitalist regime. In other words, Mandela was jointly awarded the prize alongside FW de Klerk, the obnoxious final apartheid president, as part of the process of ensuring that his post-apartheid government pursued neoliberal economic policies - an economic model which led to the enrichment of a small black elite, while dismally failing to address the extreme poverty of the black masses.

But what about Mordechai Vanunu, who was nominated on a number of occasions? An Israeli who was kidnapped by Mossad, he spent 18 years in prison, including more than 11 in solitary confinement. But he never made it onto the final list, as he did not fit the agenda set by the committee. He was, after all, a nuclear technician who became an authentic peace advocate. Driven by revulsion of weapons of mass destruction, he exposed details of Israel's nuclear weapons programme to the British media in 1988 - something that neither America nor Israel wanted to highlight.

There have been, and still are, those fighting for genuine peace and justice in opposition to imperialism and oppression - people not like Machado. ●

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Notes

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YOUR PARTY

Another fine mess

At the top there is secrecy and there is bungling. Comrades need to get organised on a serious and principled basis, says **Carla Roberts**. Chasing unity for unity's sake can only but result in fudge and confusion

Everything is hunky-dory at the top - at least according to Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana, speaking jointly at a number of events over the last week. They have made up, apparently, and are "moving forward together", holding hands.

Anybody who has been paying any attention, however, will know that this is a blatant lie. Not necessarily a malicious one - on a personal level, the two might indeed be getting on better. But then it is not them who are running Your Party. Behind the scenes, it is the unelected, unaccountable bureaucrat, Karie Murphy, who for some reason has been appointed by Corbyn to run the ship (because she did such a fine job when he was leader of the Labour Party?). And, boy, is she messing things up again! The lack of transparency and democracy in Your Party is bad enough. But, coupled with the sheer incompetence at HQ, things have been rapidly descending into a right old mess.

Let us take a look at what has been happening.

■ As I write on Wednesday, we hear that the four 'founding documents' are just about to drop - only a few days before they are to be discussed at the much-postponed first regional assemblies¹ (which were announced only a couple of days before that - often to the surprise of the local proto-branches, who in some cases were still trying to find venues). We will look at the documents in more detail in the future, of course.

■ Those assemblies were supposed to bring *all* members and supporters in Your Party together to discuss and amend. Alas, there are huge areas without an assembly in sight.

■ They are also extremely underfunded. Initially planned as holding "2,000 people each" and with money being no object, they have shrunk dramatically and are now organised mostly in venues that hold a few hundred. How can members who live nowhere near any of the venues have any input into amending the documents? Yes, supposedly there will be an online portal for amendments too, but clearly, one person proposing a change will in all likelihood be ignored - much harder to do that when 500 people in an assembly demand the same thing.

■ The assemblies are supposed to be "deliberative" and non-voting - but we are hearing from many areas that comrades are planning to see by a 'show of hands' which options/amendments are the most popular. This is in fact what Andrew Feinstein suggested in a public meeting in Hastings² - and that comrades should communicate the outcome in emails to both Sultana and Corbyn. Clearly, he does not trust the process - or that emails sent to the official address will trigger much of a response.

■ Money seems to be a real problem. Although the application at the electoral commission states that the party is worth £800,000, this seems to be referring to the money held by MOU Ltd - the company set up by Andrew Feinstein, Jamie Driscoll and former MP Beth Winter to collect all the cash from the membership portal that Zarah Sultana launched on July 18. But, when Jeremy Corbyn publicly accused her of "misuse of data/breach of data protection laws", this resulted in an investigation by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). It first appeared as if that was the reason that the accounts and database remained



Jeremy Corbyn: does he know what he is doing?

frozen and inaccessible. But in a video of a meeting on September 30, Andrew Feinstein explains that, in fact, MOU is withholding the money³ ("safeguarding it until legal frameworks are in place") - because, so we hear, Team Corbyn wants them to hand over all the cash, but retain the liabilities for the legal problems they now find themselves in, thanks to being reported to the ICO. Possible fines run into millions of pounds. What a mess!

■ Then there is the delay in publishing the founding documents (which were supposed to come out in September). Are there political differences that explain the delay? What are they? Should we not be told? Perhaps it is about the ill-thought out ban on dual membership, which has already been changed three times? Or perhaps things have simply ground to a halt with the departure of James Schneider, who was drafting most of the documents, but was so fed up with the incompetence at the centre that he resigned a couple of weeks ago (though we hear he is already sneaking back in). Not that we have been told any of this by YP HQ. Apart from a few bland emails, there is no transparency, no openness. It is all rumours, leaks, whispered conversations and the odd article.

Like Momentum?

For example, we hear that there will be only two ways in which 'amendments' to the documents will make it through to conference: firstly, if the person(s) who drafted the documents accepts them (we expect that the vast majority will *not* be accepted); secondly, if those rejected amendments or alternative proposals are supported by a set number of members on the online membership portal. If this is indeed the plan, we are guessing that number will be in the hundreds, if not thousands.

Jon Lansman instituted a similar system when he was running Momentum - it is still in the constitution and clearly, those running Your Party have learned a lesson or two from Momentum in terms of how to stifle the membership. Somewhat perversely listed under the paragraph title, 'Direct democracy', we read that "procedures for petitions" and "constitutional amendments" in Momentum require the support of at least "5% of members or 1,000 members"! And, if there is no majority on the leadership in support of such

a proposal, it then needs "a petition signed by 10% of the membership" in order to "trigger a vote among all members".⁴ To our knowledge, this has never happened and unsurprisingly so. Expect similar horrors in Your Party's *draft constitution*.

In any case, this clearly demands that the radical left get together urgently to discuss a set of amendments that we can jointly push forward - it would be an absolute tragedy if different groups opposing the bureaucratic rules propose different formulations. In all likelihood, they would *all* be ruled out because they do not have enough support. We have been arguing for such a campaign in the Democratic Socialists, so far with limited success (more on this below).

There is also still a total lack of clarity on how the launch conference will actually be run. In a recent article in *The Guardian*, for example, Corbyn casually writes that "members will be chosen at random to *debate* our founding documents. Then, every member will get the final say online through 'one member, one vote'".⁵ So, no voting in Liverpool? The website, however, states: "A representative selection of members will then *vote* on these documents, and amendments, at our founding conference in November. And to ensure everyone has a say, the final decision will be up to members in a 'one member, one vote' [OMOV] system."⁶

Voting, no voting - it almost does not matter. After all, we hear that conference participants will only be there for a few hours, with the two-day conference divided up into four chunks, with four separate sets of 'delegates'. And anything conference votes on could then be overturned by an online OMOV vote! Who at home will really follow 16 hours or so of conference proceedings? The majority will just vote on the documents in front of them - and, if our Jeremy chimes in to support this or that version, how do we think the online vote will go?

In other words, going to conference sounds like an absolute massive waste of time. Of course, *Weekly Worker* supporters will try to get 'sortitioned', and distribute the paper and a voting guide outside the venue in any case (get in touch if you want to help out: email editor@weeklyworker.co.uk). But in terms of democracy, this is a total stitch-up and Corbyn should hang his head in shame for supporting such a farce - all in the name of democracy, of course. He states:

When highly centralised political parties answer to nobody but themselves, you get policies that nobody asked for. When political parties are democratically accountable to their members, you get policies that the British people want and need. I'll go further: undemocratic parties produce undemocratic societies, where a small section of society owns the resources we all need to survive. Democratic parties produce democratic societies, where wealth and resources are owned by us all.

Quite, Jeremy. This undemocratic launch conference *cannot* actually produce a democratic party. Perhaps those pushing back from below might be able to turn things around, but it is getting increasingly difficult (more on some of the new initiatives below).

Posing left

One person who is certainly pushing back is Zarah Sultana - good on her. Despite the public hand-holding with Corbyn, she has been entirely sidelined. Her unilateral launching of a membership scheme sealed her fate: Murphy was finally allowed to get rid of her. We hear that there are now "six or seven people in the exec team", all under the tight control of Murphy, partner of Len McCluskey (former Unite general secretary).

Sultana has been moving left with lightning speed - she seems to understand that there is no point coming out with left platitudes about peace and justice - Zack Polanski more than covers that ground now (Green Party membership has soared to 100,000 incidentally, way more than the rumoured 40,000 who have joined Your Party).

Speaking alongside Jeremy Corbyn in Liverpool, Zarah started by giving a shout out to Audrey White and the Merseyside Pensioners Alliance - clearly positioning herself with the 'left of the left' in the city. The 'official' YP connection in Liverpool is via Alan Gibbons, who runs the Liverpool Community Independents in the same way as he did Momentum: very badly and very undemocratically. Gibbons, as former Constituency Labour Party secretary of Liverpool Walton, refused to speak out (or even allow the tabling of motions) in support of the Wavertree Four, who were expelled on fake anti-Semitism charges. When he was the leading member of Momentum's

national constitutional group, he only criticised the suspensions of those who were victims of the 'second wave' of the witch-hunt, after Corbyn's defeat. Despite promising to make Momentum more democratic, he continued to enforce Jon Lansman's constitution, according to which anybody expelled from Labour could not be a member of Momentum. So, when it was his turn to be expelled from Labour, he had to, of course, leave Momentum too!

He is now on the *de facto* leadership of Your Party and has let it slip that he will be a "sortitioned delegate" at the YP launch conference in November. That's handy - no need for 'celebrities' like him to put themselves through the trouble of sortition! We suspect there will be plenty of others, including, of course, Jeremy Corbyn himself.

Sultana's speech in Liverpool was way to the left of anything she has put forward so far and it is worth quoting her at some length, because she is clearly positioning herself as part of the radical left of Your Party (and because this has not been published verbatim anywhere else, as far as we can see):

We are here for a fundamental transformation of society, the means of production controlled by workers. And another very simple idea, the working class controlling the wealth that they produce. It's called socialism. And let's be clear, working class people aren't turned off by class politics. They live class politics every single day ... So I say, let's embrace class war because it's about time we won.

And nationalising a few industries isn't enough. We need democratic control of the economy by workers. Because capitalism isn't just a few bad bosses or greedy companies. It's a system geared and built for private profit, not social need. And, as long as this system remains, it will continue to reproduce inequality and exploitation. It is only socialism that can lay the foundation for genuine equality, solidarity and freedom ...

And let me say clearly, from Liverpool to London, our movement will be proudly anti-Zionist ... We will keep boycotting, divesting and speaking until Palestine is free and until every single person who enabled this genocide is held accountable for their crimes. Because a day of reckoning will come for those who have enabled genocide. Blood is on their hands and we will not rest until Keir Starmer, David Lammy and the rest are in the dock at The Hague. We must sever all diplomatic ties and relations with the apartheid genocidal state of Israel. That means every ambassador expelled. That means every embassy shut down. Because Israel must be treated the same way apartheid South Africa was treated: as a pariah state. We cannot have normal relations with genocide. Full stop.

And Your Party must be unashamedly anti-imperialist. We know that Nato isn't about peace or security. It is an imperialist war machine that profits from death and destruction. You cannot greenwash Nato. And look at its record - Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Libya; endless wars have made the world less safe.

That’s why we must argue for the immediate withdrawal from Nato.⁷

OMOV illusions

In an article for *Tribune*, Sultana concentrates on the democratic structures of Your Party.⁸ Yes, she still harbours illusions that “‘One member, one vote’ must be the bedrock of party democracy, used to decide policy, conference decisions and leadership.” As we have argued before, OMOV is naturally the most democratic decision-making method for local meetings. But it turns into its *opposite* when used at a national conference - as it will be in November. Reduced to an online vote, it will empower the undemocratic leadership, who can easily manipulate proceedings and the vote.

But she also makes many good points in her article. Most importantly, she argues against the proposed ban on dual membership. She quite rightly explains that this is obviously *not* aimed at members of the Green Party or the Labour Party, as quite a few naive souls seem to think (see below). It is clearly aimed at the organised left:

And we must be open. The rule banning Your Party members from joining other parties should be scrapped. The left has been in the wilderness for years, kept alive by smaller parties, independents and local campaigns. Those who saw what needed to be done and refused to wait for permission are exactly the people we need with us. Shutting them out would be a grave mistake. We cannot allow a Labour-style witch-hunt on the eve of conference. For socialists to unite, we must let *all* socialists become members and take part in the conference.

Quite right.

She has been accused by Corbyn loyalists of wanting to cuddle up to the Socialist Workers Party and perhaps she *does* hope they might support her in any leadership battles. That is, of course, Sultana’s weakness: she believes in the *Führerprinzip* - the principle of the strong leader (or two). No doubt, things would be better in YP if she was leader and not the eternal compromiser and ditherer, Corbyn. But communists reject bonapartist leaders for a number of reasons. We want *collective* leadership, where the members of a steering committee are accountable to each other, as well as the wider membership. We must avoid making her - or anybody else - into another messiah. Jeremy Corbyn is the reason Your Party exists, yes - but he is also the reason why it is in such dire straits. Nobody should be able to hold an entire organisation to ransom like that. If there has to be a ‘leader’ because the electoral commission demands it, let’s pick somebody from within the new collective leadership body - but make sure they do not have any special powers.

Democratic Socialists

Unsurprisingly, there are also a number of campaigns and factions that have started to organise within Your Party, though Zultana is keeping away from all of them. At the annual The World Transformed (TWT) event, which took place from October 10-12 in Manchester, a ‘unity statement’ was produced, signed by “seven Your Party groupings” who now apparently form a “network”. Most of them are pretty marginal groups and in the vicinity of Revolutionary Socialism in the 21st Century (RS21) and the Democratic Socialists in Your Party⁹ of Max Shanley and Archie Woodrow. The latter is generally a very useful campaign, focusing on the need for democracy and socialism - a number of *Weekly Worker* supporters are actively involved with it.

The statement, ‘For a member-led

socialist party: united proposal from Your Party groups’,¹⁰ has made quite a splash and it contains many good phrases. We particularly like demands for a “‘workers’ wage: elected officials and party staff should take a salary no higher than the median wage in the area they live. The remaining money should go either to Your Party or to local class struggle organising.” “Anti-capitalism” is good too (though we are somewhat bemused by the phrase, “socialist horizon”, instead of, you know, ‘socialism’). We also agree with demands for “mandatory reselection” and for a “sovereign conference: decisions made at conference are binding, the parliamentary or council whip should be used to ensure MPs and councillors vote in line with conference decisions”.

A supporter of the *Weekly Worker* was in attendance online at one of the two 60-minute-long meetings taking place during TWT, but we did not sign up to the statement. Why not? For a start, online participation really is no substitute for ‘being there’ - another reason we oppose ‘online democracy’: we could not properly engage. The whole process was also very rushed, as the organisers wanted a TWT assembly to adopt their statement immediately. No proper invites went out to the many other groups and organisations who are working for democracy and socialism in Your Party. A mistake - and one that is compounded by the fact that the list of supporting organisations is now ‘closed’, it seems: “We have started a network for our groups and will coordinate to do everything we can to see these demands win. You can join any of the organisations involved in this to coordinate for proto-branches, regional assemblies, conference, to get these demands put in place.”

We should say in all fairness that it is disputed within Democratic Socialists that those representing them at TWT even had the authority to form such a “network”. Without wanting to sound patronising, it does show that the organisation is led by enthusiastic, but mostly young and therefore somewhat inexperienced, comrades. Max Shanly has argued that the text should simply be “ignored”, while others declare it is “a castle made of sand”. We agree - though it is worth looking at it in more detail, because it does highlight some of the problems that arise when you chase unity for unity’s sake.

For a start, there was no real discussion on any of the points ‘agreed’ (by the undemocratic consensus method) and most of them remain at the level of platitudes. Branches should be “well funded”, we read - who would disagree with that? No percentage is mentioned, so it is entirely abstract. Or point 10: “Base-building (meaning bringing new people into class struggle and movements) should be a core part of Your Party strategy.” Karie Murphy could sign that.

And what on earth is meant by the demand to “*weaken* British militarism, Nato, Zionism and all cogs of the British imperialist machine” (our emphasis)? Cut the military budget in half? Slowly leave Nato? Or maybe replace it with a ‘European defence alliance’, as suggested by Zack Polanski? How do you “weaken” Zionism? No, Nato needs to be abolished, Zionism needs to be fought, relentlessly and with everything we have, and real socialists support Karl Liebknecht’s famous phrase, “Not a man and not a penny for this system”, when it comes to funding the army and the system responsible for our oppression. Other subjects like the climate catastrophe are entirely missing.

Worst of all, when there *were* differences, they were glossed over. Some issues were simply dropped, because there was no time to discuss them. Others fudged. For example,

there was a proposal to explain that the group is in favour of a democratic, “delegate-based conference”. Quite right. But some in the room actually thought that sortition (ie, lottery) is much better. Rather than see what the majority in the room thought, the formulation was quickly fudged to “a genuinely democratic and sovereign conference”.

It is obviously *not* “genuinely democratic” to choose conference participants by lottery: those people are entirely unaccountable to their branches. Sortition atomises and demobilises the members and does not build vibrant branches or collectivity. The driver for sortition is not worries about democracy - it is actually ‘anti-sectarian sectarianism’, as most supporters of this method will (sooner or later) admit: a method to keep the organised left groups like the SWP from hogging delegates or positions on a committee. This is entirely counterproductive and throws out the baby with the bathwater. Not only is sortition undemocratic - it makes the leadership even more powerful.

Democratic Bloc

Another, hugely important issue that is missing in the statement is the proposed ban on dual membership. This will clearly be one of the key issues we will have to fight over. It is an attempt to keep out the organised left, with Karie Murphy in particular harbouring great hostility against “the Marxist sects”. We understand that the issue was raised on the Saturday at TWT, but in such a confused way that it was simply dropped.

It appears it was the centrist Democratic Bloc of former Labour NEC member Mish Rahman who raised the issue: they do want dual membership - but only for Green Party members. The representatives of the other groups then quickly opposed that because they want a “unitary party with open factions” - thereby completely missing what is actually at stake with the proposed ban. That happens when you try to rush unity.

In its snazzy campaign literature, the Democratic Bloc actually campaigns *in favour of the ban*. Dual membership should only be allowed for “approved democratic parties” and “all these parties should be democratic, open and share their books with the new party’s NPC - so that we can understand the size of their membership, their finances, their GDPR compliance and their disciplinary procedures”.¹¹ Groups like the SWP, the RCP - or the CPGB, for that matter - are unlikely to want to open their books to be judged by bureaucrats like Karie Murphy, Alan Gibbons or Mish Rahman, who would then no doubt find reasons to oppose them making it onto the ‘approved list’. Rahman confirmed in a public Zoom meeting of the Democratic Bloc on October 14 that he wants dual membership only for Greens, because he wants to “prevent entryism”.

For those who do not remember him, on the NEC, Mish Rahman kept his mouth firmly shut, when it came to the witch-hunt in the Labour Party, only making mealy-mouthed statements against the second wave of exclusions. He left the Labour Party and Momentum just a few months ago - clearly, the bureaucracy saw no reason to get rid of him. He was a loyal vice-chair of Momentum, served on its national constitutional committee and, just like Alan Gibbons, implemented the Lansman constitution, which, we should remember, was put in place via an OMOV coup and which abolished all democratic structures in Momentum.

It also turns out that he was actually a member of the secretive Your Party organising group of 30 or so people - until it was disbanded, when Sultana launched her membership scheme. Not that Rahman admitted to it: it

was Andrew Feinstein who ‘outed’ him in the Zoom call on October 14. We wonder how seriously Mish Rahman was fighting for democracy and socialism, when he was part of the inner circle? He certainly did not do so publicly.

The Democratic Bloc quite rightly opposes sortition to select conference participants - but, instead of empowering branches by electing their own delegates, they want conference to be run *entirely* via OMOV - which can only be achieved by atomised online voting (Zoomocracy). No need to get together in a big conference hall even.

They propose that the “leader(s), the deputy leader and Scottish and Welsh leaders”, as well as the “National Field Director, Regional Field Directors and National Campaign Coordinator” (and a 16-person-strong “National Political Committee”) are all elected via “OMOV” - ie, in an online vote of all members. This would become a mere beauty contest, in which known names will win out. And how can such directly elected officers be effectively challenged, unless by another OMOV vote? And who would be able to call such a vote? This is *enshrining* an entirely unaccountable leadership. Much better to vote for a *collective* leadership team that decides among itself who will serve in which position, etc - people could be quickly replaced by the rest of the committee if they do not do their job properly.

Changes to the proposals of the Democratic Bloc are possible, we read, but only “through consensus decision-making”. Consensus is well known for being one of the best ways to shut minorities up and permanently embed the leadership - ‘You are stopping us from moving forward, so could you not just live with this or that formulation?’ No. Unless it is obvious that everybody agrees, socialists decide matters via democratic votes, ensuring that minorities can be heard properly.

In fact, the entire programme of the Democratic Bloc is pretty much indistinguishable from what Karie Murphy is trying to enforce. Launching this campaign *after* he was booted off the inner circle is obviously about Rahman seeking to build a little power base - this time as a ‘democrat’. He has with him various other careerists, including councillor James Giles from Kingston, who used to be campaign manager for George Galloway’s Workers Party of Britain before he was hired by the independent MP, Ayoub Khan, in 2024 to become his chief of staff, and then employed as advisor by the other MPs of Corbyn’s Independent Alliance (you know, the ones currently in charge of producing the YP founding documents). This is no opposition platform: it is a platform of people who want to get (back) in the inner circle.

Funnily enough, the Democratic Socialists oppose all those things and have generally much better policies.¹² So why are they so keen on building ‘unity’ with this outfit? This would be a very shaky unity indeed, probably all in the hope of becoming bigger and bigger - but to do what? How can you effectively fight for democracy, if you ally yourself with a campaign that wants to ban, marginalise and control the left? That wants atomising OMOV online voting rather than delegate-based democracy? What is the point? We suspect this unity will fall apart sooner rather than later.

The radical left in Your Party clearly *should* try to unite - but on the basis of principled politics, not by fudging and skipping over important political differences. When push comes to shove, such unprincipled unity will prove a hindrance, not a strength.

There are other networks and campaigns which we can discuss sometime. Meanwhile, it is worth highlighting a useful development,

that is the Your Party Connections network. Set up by Anwarul Khan, a member of Transform, clearly this is an attempt of that mini ‘party’ to stay, or become, relevant. He runs a tight, but relatively democratic, ship though and only a couple of people seem to be fellow members of Transform.

Open culture

The network has grown massively in the last few weeks. There are now 50 or so proto-branches represented and they meet weekly on Zoom - with the very good principle that nothing is secret. The AI-produced, very detailed minutes are published and shared openly. Everybody is free to quote everybody else. This culture of openness and transparency stands in stark contrast not just to what the YP leadership is doing, but also to how most of the left organises.

So far, it has been useful mainly in terms of information sharing. Local reps have kept each other in the loop about how they organise, motions they have agreed on, etc - and, needless to say, have shared their frustrations about the secrecy and incompetence at the top. This is healthy. Comrade Khan also managed to get Sean Halsall along to answer questions. He has recently been appointed to the thankless task of organising all the regional assemblies with three weeks’ notice. He replaces Josh Virasami, who was sacked after he launched the short-lived campaign, Our Party, which was trying to ‘save’ the launch conference. Clearly another careerist, who only discovered his love of democracy after he was booted out of the inner circle. He now runs the ‘Organising For Popular Power tendency’ in Your Party - one of the seven grouplets who signed the unity statement. Halsall incidentally tried to answer the many questions from the frustrated local reps as well as he could, but had to admit that he was not part of “the democratic process” (!) - and therefore had no idea how the regional assemblies were actually supposed to make concrete amendments.

The network might or might not make the transition from information sharing to the more crucial job of joint organising. The response to the four founding documents will accelerate this process. A number of meetings are planned to discuss them and to try and cohere joint amendments. A good development.

Not surprisingly though, the bigger the network is becoming, the more political differences emerge. There is a small, but very vocal, minority that is extremely loyal to the Corbyn leadership, no matter how undemocratically it behaves. They oppose the attempt to cohere joint amendments and have labelled comrades sharing petitions calling for democracy as “wreckers” and “sectarians”. They want a code of conduct and a ban on “uncomradely” behaviour, while arguing that groups like the SWP should be barred and the ban on dual membership implemented (a bit uncomradely, no?).

Hopefully, these conservative forces will soon be sidelined in the struggles to make the regional assemblies, the launch conference and the party as democratic as possible ●

Notes

1. www.yourparty.uk/assemblies.
2. www.youtube.com/watch?v=WV3C7j8F8iw (18 minutes in).
3. www.youtube.com/watch?v=WV3C7j8F8iw (13minutes).
4. peoplesmomentum.com/about/constitution.
5. www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/oct/13/your-party-conference-jeremy-corbyn-members.
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8. tribunemag.co.uk/2025/10/socialism-or-barbarism.
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UKRAINE

Notes on the war

Donald Trump threatens to supply Tomahawk missiles - a clear escalation, when it comes to war in the rear, says **Jack Conrad**. Meanwhile, on the front line the stalemate continues and the rainy season has arrived



Drone warfare: more killed in action

This winter is set to be a real trial for Ukraine, not least its civilian population. Russia has considerably upped its air war against Ukraine's energy infrastructure. Thousands of drone and missiles have been targeted on power stations, electricity grid sub-stations and storage facilities. While a good percentage are intercepted, enough get through to cause considerable damage.

In a country where winter temperatures regularly stay below zero - and in the east and north-east they can go down to as much as -20°C - demand on what is already a strained power grid will be substantial. Even during the summer months shops and restaurants regularly have to resort to diesel generators. So the expectation is that this winter will see prolonged power cuts, perhaps lasting days ... for the infirm, the elderly and the sick, killer conditions.

The fear is that with insufficient air-defences Ukraine will gradually be ground down to the point where its fighting capacity and civilian morale collapses and it is forced to surrender. Unlikely, in my opinion. After all, Ukrainian nationalism has deep roots, which will not be destroyed, no matter how many drones and missiles Moscow launches. And, of course, behind Ukraine stands Nato, the EU and, albeit now at one remove, the US global hegemon. Nonetheless energy supply is what the Brookings Institute calls a "key battleground in the war with Russia".¹

Not that the weakness of Ukraine's energy sector should be exaggerated. During Soviet times it was deliberately grown oversized to help cope with the system's inefficiency, low productivity and chronic shortages. Before the Russian invasion around 50% of its energy requirements were met by four nuclear power plants. With the air war and Donbass coal and Russian gas and oil cut off, or greatly diminished, that has risen to some 70% - one of the highest levels in the world, ahead even of France's with its 65%.

Fears of triggering a nuclear disaster has meant that so far those NPPs have largely been left untouched - though not their substations and electricity switch yards, which feed power into the grid. Since the beginning of the war electricity generation in Ukraine has dropped by around a third - a figure

in no small measure accounted for by the loss of the Zaporizhzhia NPP to the Russian army (Zaporizhzhia, Europe's largest NPP, is now in 'cold shutdown').

Moreover, there has been a drive towards decentralisation and diversification: solar panels, wind turbines, small gas modular turbines, old coal plants recommissioned, etc. That and massive electricity imports from the EU saved Ukraine from a winter shutdown in 2024-25. Using the ENSO-E system, 4.4 million MWh were transmitted from Europe - a 5.5-fold increase from the previous year.² After one or two more attacks Volodymyr Zelensky says it will probably be the same this winter.³

Ukrainian swarms

Meanwhile, Ukraine is conducting its own energy war. On October 11 Ukraine's security service, the SBU, reported that its elite Alpha unit's long-range drones had successfully hit the Bashneft-UNPZ oil refinery in Ufa, some 870 miles from Ukraine. The plant is one of the biggest refineries in Russia, supplying fuel and lubricants to the army. At least 16 of the country's 38 oil refineries have been struck so far, some repeatedly. Domestic petrol prices have, as a result, risen and diesel exports have been cut. Estimates are that Russia has suffered a "20% loss of fuel production capacity".⁴

Ukrainian officials boast of turning out more and better drones and missiles. Reportedly, Ukraine's Fire Point and Liutyi long-range drones are being used in swarm attacks - sometimes up to 300 in a single operation. Ukrainian-produced Neptune and Flamingo missiles have also been used to hit Russian targets.

But, no surprise: according to the *FT*, it has been the US which has been providing the vital intelligence since midsummer on "long-range energy infrastructure targets".⁵ When it comes to Ukraine's allies, it alone has the necessary global satellite network and America wants Russia to "feel the pain". Not only are targets located: the timing, the best route, the altitude needed to evade Russian air defences are provided by US intelligence and technical personnel. Kyiv's drone force is, therefore, rightly described as the "instrument" for Washington to undermine Russia's economy and

push Putin towards negotiating a settlement.⁶

The Alaska summit with Putin left Trump frustrated, disappointed and threatening crippling sanctions. Well, talk of crippling sanctions remains talk, but Donald Trump is seriously considering beefing up Ukraine's air defences and supplying it with Tomahawk missiles (Zelensky is due in Washington this Friday). Trump describes Tomahawks as "very offensive".⁷ It is easy to see why.

Tomahawks are long-range cruise missiles with a range of 1,550 miles (that puts Moscow within reach). Launched from air, sea or ground, they fly fast, manoeuvring and hugging the contours; they are hard to detect and even harder to shoot down. Thanks to military-grade GPS and prestored data, they can also hit targets with very considerable accuracy. That would enable Ukraine to take out hardened or buried sites, such as command-and-control centres and missile silos. Costing around £1 million apiece, the presumption will be that America's Nato allies will foot the bill.

To be a game changer, however, Tomahawks would have to be supplied in large numbers. A token battery or two and coordinated package launches would overwhelm air defences and allow for a propaganda spectacular, but little more. We have seen it with Storm Shadow - the British-French-Italian jointly manufactured cruise missile. Potent weapons, deliveries have, though, been at a drip-feed level. Therefore they could not, despite the hype, turn the tide of what is a war of attrition that will ultimately be decided by GDP, arms production capabilities, manpower resources ... and popular morale.

Nonetheless, given European missiles, American satellites and military and technical personnel, claims that Nato is conducting a proxy war against Russia are more than well founded. While the 'western community' disputes Russia's sovereignty over Crimea, Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporozhiya and Kherson, it accepts Russia's sovereignty over the rest of its territory. Therefore, Russia has a right to treat attacks on its sovereign territory differently from attacks on territory over which its sovereignty is disputed. Under circumstances where Nato weapons

navigate through sovereign Russian airspace, using guidance signals beamed by US military satellites, to strike a target in sovereign Russian territory, this could indeed be deemed an act of war against Russia, according to international law. US-Nato are co-belligerents.

Russia finds itself facing a dilemma. Any expectation of America abandoning Ukraine under Trump has proved illusory. Europe is ramping up war spending and seems prepared to pay for US arms deliveries. China insists on maintaining its distance. Meanwhile, Russia's economic and financial situation has markedly deteriorated. All such factors spur Russia on and compel it to take greater risks. Hence the MiG 31s over Estonia and drones over Poland, Romania and Finland: part *warning against* phasing into World War III, part *phasing into* World War III. Russia seems to be testing both political will and the limits of Nato's air defences. A dangerous game. On September 21 Trump warned that the US will "help" Poland and the Baltic States if Russia "keeps accelerating".⁸

Front line

One reason why the war in the rear has assumed such importance is that the war on the front continues to be stalemated. There was, true, the much vaunted Russian summer offensive. In the early months of 2025 there was widespread commentary to the effect that Ukraine stood on the edge of defeat and that Russian victory was all but inevitable. Resistance to conscription in Ukraine, army desertions, superior Russian numbers were all cited as clinchers.

However, with the arrival of autumn, it is all too clear that Russia's summer offensive failed according to almost every metric. The Russian army, of course, successfully regained the Kursk enclave during the winter of 2024-25.⁹ Since then, however, it has proved incapable of securing the aimed for "security buffer zone" deep inside Ukraine's Sumy oblast, let alone capturing the regional capital. Kharkiv in the north-east certainly remains firmly in Ukrainian hands. Crucially, key strategic objectives such as Pokrovsk remain untaken. Indeed Russian troops find themselves pinned down in various villages,

having been forced into a series of battlefield retreats.

Over the three months of its summer offensive Russia captured some 0.3% of Ukrainian territory. At that pace it would take another 90 years to secure the whole country. And the slivers of land have been gained at a huge cost. Ukraine's general staff *claim* roughly 32,000 to 48,000 Russian casualties per month between January and July 2025 - that is, of course, 'killed in action' and 'wounded in action'. The estimate for August was 29,000 and up to the middle of September 13,000.¹⁰ Obviously neither Russia nor Ukraine publish their own casualty figures. Even if they did, there would be no reason to trust them ... and that certainly goes for *enemy* losses.

Either way, the claims provide some sort of snapshot. In this case a *declining* rate of casualties. Perhaps a surprising phenomenon, but one credibly explained by the hawkish Institute for the Study of War: Russia's high command has abandoned human wave tactics and turned to unmanned ground vehicles (UMVs) ... and small infantry units which operate with some considerable degree of autonomy.¹¹ Their task is to find and exploit weaknesses and holes in Ukraine's undermanned defence lines. Having advanced they try to establish a holdable position in the expectation of additional units joining them and readying for the next move.

Nonetheless, the death toll is staggering. In the name of 'glory to Ukraine' on the one side and 'all glory to Russia' on the other, some 1.2 million already lie dead.¹² Interestingly, in this ghoulish respect, the ISW puts what it considers an "abnormally high" KIA to WIA ratio down to the 'kill zones' established by the ubiquity of drone warfare over the frontline. Instead of the usual 1:3 ratio, it is more like 1:1.¹³ Failure to provide enough medics and soldiers with training in first aid and triage might also be a factor. But the main cause of the high ratio is almost certainly drones. Injured soldiers make easy targets and commanders are unwilling to risk the loss of further men in rescue missions. In other words, movement on the battlefield is severely restricted.

It is still possible that Russia could still make frontline gains. Pokrovsk, Myrnohrad and Siversk are vulnerable

to a determined assault. But a strategic advance on either side is highly unlikely. The rainy season, the *rasputitsa*, has now begun in earnest.

This makes *offensive* land warfare extraordinarily difficult. The ground, including the unpaved roads and dirt tracks - which Ukrainian forces used to evacuate their Kursk enclave - turns to mud. Infantry slips, slides and quickly becomes exhausted. Lorries - vital for supplying the front line with rations, munitions, fuel and reinforcements - get bogged down too. Wheels uselessly spin, axles sink into the sticky mire. Nor can tanks easily move. It almost goes without saying that the *rasputitsa* is well known in military circles to confer a great defensive advantage. Common nicknames are ‘General Mud’ or ‘Marshal Mud’.

Life in the trenches becomes hellish - read Erich Remarque’s *All quiet on the western front* (1928). Cold, filthy, rat-infested, water-clogged, poorly supplied and mentally draining. Such is the cess of war. And now there are the drones constantly buzzing overhead - inventively, Ukrainian troops have resorted to using shotguns as a “last resort”.¹⁴ The pellets are effective against low-flying drones. Along with trench warfare and anti-drone nets, shotguns are an example of what David Edgerton calls the ‘shock of the old’.¹⁵

Shock of new

Especially with drones, there is, though, the shock of the new. Russia continues to develop its drone technology, recently fibre optic, first-person view (FPV) repeater drones have been deployed. They significantly increase the range of frontline drones from about 15-18 miles to 30-40 miles. The kill zone is thereby stretched back to the rear and Ukraine’s logistical operations become ever more hazardous. Lorry convoys, storage depots and transport hubs are all being hit. And, as with other fibre-optic drones, FPVs are resistant to Ukrainian electronic warfare (EW). Jamming stations cannot stop them.

Only with the winter freeze does full-scale offensive fighting become feasible once again. Tanks, howitzers, armoured personnel carriers, infantry and, crucially, lorries can move swiftly over solidly frozen ground and this allows for attack and manoeuvre. However, while the rain lasts, we should not expect any significant Russian breakthrough - unless, that is, Ukrainian morale completely collapses and its troops go AWOL from their bunkers and trenches (by any serious account, not something to be expected, especially if Trump supplies Tomahawks and finally embraces Zelensky’s ‘victory plan’). Nonetheless, it is clear that Ukraine is still on the back foot and the momentum lies, just about, with Russia.

We might, conceivably, expect a renewed Russian offensive towards the end of 2025. Reports suggest that Russia is creating a strategic reserve - made possible because of the decreased casualty rate and the increased recruitment rate. This indicates that Putin is content with the current, albeit painfully slow, advances on the battlefield, and expects, at some point, a Ukrainian collapse. There is also the possibility of direct conflict with Nato forces.

Putin’s generals doubtless hanker after giving him Pokrovsk as a new year’s gift. If captured, it would be the most important settlement to fall into Russian hands since Bakhmut in 2023 (which, at the time, the pro-Kremlin, Z left heralded as the beginning of Ukraine’s end). Due to its strategic location Pokrovsk would supposedly open the way to Dnipro and Zaporizhzhia. Russia’s generals will certainly have detailed plans

for taking the whole of the Donetsk oblast and then a concerted Russian push towards Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second city, in the north-east - that and/or Odessa in the south-west. Taking Odessa would all but landlock Ukraine and give Russia effective control over the entire northern Black Sea coastline.

However, what can be achieved on the battlefield is a lot harder than what can be achieved on paper. At the present rate of Russian advance, getting to Kharkiv or Odessa would take not a few short months of winter fighting, but years upon years. Meantime, even ruling out large-scale deliveries of Tomahawks and direct Nato involvement in intercepting Russian drones and missiles, the economic and social strains within Russia grow and grow in what is a war of attrition. Frankly, a Russian collapse is just as likely as a Ukrainian collapse ... though neither scenario should be expected in the short term.

Imperialism

Writing in this paper, comrade Jaques de Fouw, a member of the Revolutionary Socialist Party in the Netherlands, takes it for granted that we in the CPGB consider the Ukraine-Russia war as an “an inter-imperialist conflict between Russia and the west”.¹⁶ The RSP left majority might well take this *mistaken* position, I don’t know. But I do know that the RSP rightwing Mandelite minority, Socialistische Alternatieve Politiek, does not. Indeed they staged a split from the RSP on the basis of defending Ukraine’s “right to self-determination” (thereby lining up with Nato and their own ruling class in the Netherlands).

Comrade de Fouw takes the view that this SAP Mandelite spit was some sort of tragedy (rather than a blessing). His reasoning is strange. Very strange. He blames not the Mandelites for their unprincipled, pro-imperialist stance: no, it is those in the RSP who tabled *and won* their anti-imperialist motion that triggered the Mandelite split.

The comrade argues that to move any such motion is not determined by the class struggle and the need to draw sharp lines of demarcation against our *main* enemy (which is at home). No, instead of that urgent *political necessity*, he insists on unanimity and absolute certainty:

[C]an it be said that all communists have been able to see, without a shadow of a doubt, that the war in Ukraine is an inter-imperialist war? Has there been definitive, thorough statistical proof of the imperialist nature of Russia, by Lenin’s definitions and others? And has this information been shown to all communists, especially those in our own organisations, in a comprehensive manner? Has it been shown, in a comprehensive manner, irrefutably, that support for Ukraine by the west is a proxy for imperialist goals? Has the nature of the Ukrainian state been demonstrated well enough? Do the people in our organisations even know what Lenin wrote on imperialism? I do not think so.

Well, we prefer straightforward democracy. Members of left organisations, trade unions, cooperatives, etc should be able to vote on issues big and small as a matter of routine. What they vote for need not be, and seldom is, based on irrefutable, beyond-dispute facts. Eg, the Norman invasion of England happened in 1066, the earth orbits the sun, there are a hundred pennies to the pound. Political opinions, assessments and requirements will do. Insisting on absolute certainty is, in fact, to turn one’s back on elementary democracy and perhaps serves as an excuse for appeasement and conciliation.

Have we, that is the CPGB,

“irrefutably” shown that “support for Ukraine by the west is a proxy for imperialist goals”? No, but over very many articles, not least my own ‘Notes on the war’, we have *comprehensively* proved that proposition beyond any reasonable doubt (one of the good principles of English jurisprudence).

What about Russia being imperialist? Again, I think we have proved beyond any reasonable doubt that it is *not* an imperialist power (of course, it wants to join the imperialist club, but at the moment it cannot manage anything more than a subordinate alliance with China).

Let us, not least for the benefit of comrade de Fouw, revisit our argument.

If one wants to define imperialism as nothing more than intervening in another country and expanding territory, then, yes, no problem, Russia is imperialist. Athens and its Delian League, the Roman republic and Tudor England were by the same measure imperialist too. Imperialism, stating the obvious, existed well before capitalism took command over the state. But Marxism has done us the great service of locating *modern* imperialism in the context of a capitalism dominated by finance, giant monopolies and a system of global domination and exploitation with a definite, but never fixed, pecking order.

Hence in the 17th century England successfully challenged the Dutch for global hegemony, Britain saw off the French challenge in the 19th century and the German in the 20th century, but finally succumbed to the US in the 1940s.

True, the more sophisticated tell us that monopolies are the *essence* of imperialism and Russia, irrefutably, has its share of monopolies: eg, Gazprom, Rosneft, Lukoil and Sberbank. That, however, would make countries such as India, Brazil, South Africa and even Ukraine imperialist too. After all, each has its own batch of home-grown monopolies (ie, oligopolies, to use standard bourgeois economic jargon).

Without in any way treating Lenin’s *Imperialism* as a bible - it contains some clearly mistaken arguments - it is definitely worth citing in this context. For Lenin, imperialism is not only about monopoly and finance capital: it is the scale, proportion and dominance of overseas interest payments, dividends, rent and such. Hence Lenin emphasises *parasitism* and the fact that in Britain the “income of the rentiers is five times greater than the income obtained from the foreign trade”. This, he declares, is “the *essence* of imperialism and imperialist parasitism”.¹⁷

America, it should be added, pulls off exactly the same trick - and then one. Possessing uniquely powerful armed forces and with the dollar serving as the world’s reserve currency, the US government can run a \$1.97 trillion deficit through recourse to the simple device of what used to be called the printing press. Other countries thereby pay for Uncle Sam’s profligacy.

Moreover, what Ellen Meiksins Wood calls the “new imperialism” no longer involves territorial expansion and colonial possessions.¹⁸ Leave aside Trump’s ‘manifest destiny’ claims on Canada, Greenland and the Panama Canal zone, old-style colonialism does not belong in the American century - as the British and French found to their cost with the 1956 Suez crisis. Undoubtedly there is Israel, a US-backed ongoing colonial project ... and a few surviving genuine micro-colonies; mostly tax havens, which, especially in the case of Britain, serve as a means for the City of London to skim off profits from high-level state and business corruption, criminal operations such as the drugs trade and perfectly legal tax-avoidance dodges.

No, the essence of post-World War II imperialism is unequal exchange, the export of capital, and a global pecking order which sees the US exploiting other, more or less independent, states through a system of capital, which is now “structured in a complex relation of domination and subordination”.¹⁹

What Russia’s so-called oligarchs typically exported - ‘so-called’ because they do not rule - was money, not capital: ie, self-expanding value. Their wealth - well, till they were sanctioned - generally took the form of swollen offshore bank accounts, top-end London, Paris and New York properties, English football clubs and luxury yachts.

China

China is, of course, another matter. It is no match for the US and its allies. Nonetheless, it is a full-spectrum rival and can perhaps be classified as fully imperialist, because it not only exports commodities, but also capital. In 2022 Chinese outbound direct investments amounted to \$2.75 trillion in 47,000 enterprises, which span 190 countries. This puts the People’s Republic amongst the “world’s top three”.²⁰ Clearly the drivers here are internal laws and dynamics. Post-Mao, wage labour has become ubiquitous, including in the state sector. China now counts second only to America in terms of its number of billionaires.²¹ Though the party-state dominates politically, capital accumulation imposes an economic logic. The result is, however, incredibly complex and needs proper - ie, a thorough-going scientific - investigation ... say something like Evgeny Preobrazhensky’s *New economics* (1926). Trite labels, lazy assumptions and prostituted apologetics are worse than useless.

Obviously, Russia does not parasitically exploit the world, or even its near abroad, in any meaningful way that can seriously be described as imperialist. Despite its 150 million population, it has a GDP that ranks far behind Japan, Germany, the UK and France. No, it is in the third league, down with countries like Brazil and Mexico.²² Even taking into account oil and gas, geographic size and nuclear weapons, Russia is most decidedly not a serious rival to the US.

By contrast, though it maintains no colonial bureaucracy, the US empire of the dollar, bases, alliances, institutions and treaties - the G7, World Bank and IMF, Nato, the Five Eyes and Aukus - robs and exploits the entire world with a callous ruthlessness unequalled in human history. US banks and corporations suck in wealth from other countries like a never quenched vampiric monster. Britain is the junior partner, which benefits through the City and plays the role of yapdog, when it comes to wars such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Gaza and Ukraine.

So Ukraine cannot be seen in isolation. Behind it there stands the unmatched might of the dominant US-led imperialist bloc. The US violently pulled Ukraine out of the Russian orbit with the 2014 Maidan coup and then, step by step, set it up as a pawn in the great game to dominate Halford Mackinder’s Eurasian ‘world island’. America would then, if it were successful, have the ability to reboot its domination of the entire globe - a scenario that both Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping will surely resist, using whatever means they have at their disposal.

Sympathising with ordinary Ukrainians who have been killed, injured, lost loved ones, fled abroad, etc, is perfectly natural. War is unimaginably cruel. But the Mandelite wish for Ukraine’s victory, support for its war aims (not least imposing Banderite rule over the Russian-speaking majority in Donbas and Crimea), demanding that Nato ‘Arm,

arm, arm Ukraine’ and calling ‘Putin, Putin, Putin, out, out, out’ is to act in the direct interests of US imperialism. In Russia it might well be the case that principled communists would say that they ‘prefer to see a Russian defeat than its victory’. But, to state the obvious, we are not in Russia.

September’s Brighton TUC congress, thoroughly discombobulated the social-imperialists. Why? It reversed its nakedly pro-imperialist 2022 position and, narrowly, voted for the University and College Union ‘wages, not weapons’ motion (ie, butter not guns).²³ Our Mandelites, in the form of Anticapitalist Resistance, along with the Matgamnaite Alliance for Workers’ Liberty and the much diminished Ukrainian Solidarity Campaign, continue, by contrast, to demand “full sanctions” against Russian “imperialist aggression” (ie, siege warfare), claim that the Putin regime is “attacking democracy globally” and that Ukraine should get all the “arms necessary to liberate the country, from wherever possible and without conditions”.²⁴

Here the internationalisation of ruling class ideology is unashamed and unmistakable. It is “Putin’s dictatorship” which is “linked to neo-fascist and authoritarian forces around the world”, not Zelensky and his Banderite Azov chums. It is Nato which is democratic and under threat. Despite that, moans the USC, “most western countries have been slow in providing arms”. Therefore the demand for supplying Ukraine with massively increased supplies of the most up-to-date fighter aircraft, tanks and missiles.

A recipe for yet more slaughter and, yes ... phasing into World War III. ●

Notes

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- 7. united24media.com/latest-news/tomahawks-have-already-beaten-russian-air-defenses-ukraine-warns-more-could-be-coming-12423.
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- 16. J de Fouw ‘Paved with good intentions’ *Weekly Worker* September 25: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1554/paved-with-good-intentions.
- 17. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 22, Moscow 1977, p277 (my emphasis).
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DISCUSSION



Putin presides over a reactionary FSB regime

Principle, splits and unity

Alex Green agrees that Nato's proxy war in Ukraine is a split issue. However, it is not only about opposing our own imperialism. The comrade believes that Russia is an imperialist power and he believes that the CPGB believes it too. He also raises the question of China and calls for serious study and debate. A good idea

Mike Macnair rightly defends the presentation of a motion in the Dutch Revolutionaire Socialistische Partij which drew a line: the war in Ukraine is inter-imperialist ('Probabilities, not certainties' *Weekly Worker* October 2).

This is an issue of principle. As his antagonist, Jacques de Fouw, said in the previous issue,

If you say that you agree with the 'inter-imperialist' position, it logically follows that the party should take part in protests, strikes and direct action against any efforts by our own government(s) to fuel their side of the war. However, if you agree with the 'self-determination' position, it follows that you ought to form a sort of national front with your national bourgeoisie, or some temporary alliance, in order to defend the Ukrainians and their state.¹

However, de Fouw objects to this decision, because it led to the Dutch Mandelites splitting from the RSP, as they refused to carry out the majority line: "With the RSP adopting the position of the inter-imperialist conflict by majority vote, it mandated all members to engage in ideological - but, more importantly, practical - political work on the basis of this position."

He draws the wrong conclusion. This split replicates the *necessary* division between internationalists and social-patriots in the old Second (Social Democratic) International, which led to the formation of the Third (Communist) International. The September 29 statement by Polish prime minister Donald Tusk that Nato is at war with Russia, and that the Ukraine war is "our war", underlines the immediacy of this position.

The communist split with social democracy was justified not by a violation of democracy by the reformists leading the old International, but by the impossibility of staying in the same party as the organisers and promoters of working class blood and

ruin under each competing national flag. Today, international unity requires opposition to the war effort of Russia and Belarus, on one side, and to each of the Nato members, including the Netherlands, on the other. The Ukrainian war, like the great war of 1914-18, is a reactionary war.

This division in the RSP raises the broader question: when is a split in the Marxist wing of the labour-socialist movement justified? This is a discussion worth expanding.

I take it as read that a broad party formed and led by left reformists (like Corbyn's and Sultana's Your Party) cannot be bound by a single programme: such a party will always end up with three or four main tendencies or factions - not least because it will contain open reformists and avowed revolutionaries, and non-Marxists as well as Marxists. I feel that Macnair's arguments are about how to organise among revolutionary Marxists (communists).

I agree with his basic thrust: that a Marxist political tendency should be defined by its principles and programme. That means, therefore, it should *not* be delimited by its analysis or its tactics: nor by its positions on theory and history, if they have no impact on its programme. If the point is to change the world, then the party should assemble the maximum active weight behind the changes needed (policies, actions). Differences of interpretation should enrich, but not divide, the Marxist forces. We do not want splits, if we can possibly help them.

It is obvious that any serious communist would want to part company with a pathological party which has become a criminal enterprise or a police front - or a morass of immorality like Gerry Healy's old Workers Revolutionary Party. The interesting cases, however, involve genuine shadings of view or outright counterpositions over political ideas and actions.

Hugo Oehler split from the Communist League of America (the Bolshevik-Leninists) because he

disagreed with the tactic of joining the Socialist Party in France in 1934: that was not a difference over programme. When his group refused to take bourgeois nationalist China's side in the war of resistance against invading imperialist Japan in 1937, the split was not just a fact, but was dictated by principle.

To split today over a question like the assessment of Kamenev's role in February-October 1917 in the writings of Lars T Lih would be lightminded. Maybe less obviously, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan or the Korean War (or indeed the defence of the long-gone Soviet workers' state) are no longer operational questions.

However, the provision of weapons and intelligence and staff operations by Nato imperialists to their Ukrainian ally and puppet, in the reactionary war following Russia's equally imperialist invasion of Ukraine, is an unavoidable issue today.

Like the threat of a widened conflict with Nato in the Baltic zone, or the Israeli/US bombing of Iran in April, this is a question where taking one side excludes taking the other side - or taking no side. Bolshevik deputies in the French national assembly would not be able to vote both with Macron and against him on sending missiles to Kyiv. Nor would a new generation of outlawed Russian Marxists be able to support the war effort, while opposing Putin's war budgets.

Bolsheviks

Marxists should not split lightly, or give up without a fight. The repeated attempts by the Fourth Internationalists around Trotsky to win the Spanish POUM away from its suicidal participation in the popular front electoral pact and Catalan government were unsuccessful, unlike Lenin's fight against 'Old Bolshevism' in April 1917, but similarly necessary.

1917 saw an unbridgeable and final split by the Bolsheviks from the Mensheviks. The latter supported continuing the predatory imperialist war, and were for anti-revolutionary class collaboration to support the

capitalist-landlord government ('agreementism'). 1917 also provides an example of principled fusion, over the same questions.

The Inter-District Organisation led by Trotsky joined with the Bolsheviks led by Lenin, on the basis of a common programme. This programme was laid out most completely and starkly in Lenin's three articles of April 1917, later twice reprinted (once in July, once in October 1918) as the mass-circulation pamphlet entitled 'Political parties in Russia and the tasks of the proletariat'.²

Lenin observed, a year after the establishment of Soviet power, that this brilliantly clear statement of Bolshevik tasks and positions had "held true in all ... stages of the revolution", including "during the October Revolution of 1917, and after it".

In it we read:

3) What is their attitude towards socialism?

A. (to the right of the CD) and B (CD). Decidedly hostile, since it threatens the profits of the capitalists and landowners.

C. (SD and SR). For socialism, but it is too early to think of it or to take any immediate practical steps for its realisation.

D. ("Bolsheviks"). For socialism. The Soviets must immediately take all possible practicable steps for its realisation.

Lenin's own footnote refers to two further questions: "20) Shall the peasants take all the landed estates immediately?" and "22) Shall the people take over the largest and most powerful capitalist monopolies, the banks, the syndicates of manufacturers, etc?" To which the Bolshevik answers are, of course, both in the affirmative.

In the statement, 'Political parties in Russia ...' Lenin treated the Russian revolution as the embodiment of the transformation of the imperialist war into civil war. It proceeded from the accomplished fact of dual power to say that the bourgeois democratic

tasks (land reform, national self-determination) could only be achieved by the proletariat, supported by the poor peasantry, seizing power. This meant replacing the bourgeois provisional government with the rule of the Soviets of Workers, Soldiers and Peasants Deputies: such a government would be forced to embark on a road of socialist measures, even to hold its position against imperialist intrigue and capitalist disruption.

Later in 1917, in the penultimate section of *State and revolution*, Lenin sums up the programme for Russia:

We, however, shall break with the opportunists; and the entire class-conscious proletariat will be with us in the fight - not to "shift the balance of forces", but to overthrow the bourgeoisie, to destroy bourgeois parliamentarism, for a democratic republic after the type of the Commune, or a republic of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, *for the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat* (my emphasis).

In early May 1917, Trotsky and Lenin conferred on Russian soil. From then, to and beyond the seizure of soviet power, the leaders worked in tandem on this, their common programme, and did not dwell on their old disputes. They had a single, joint, Herculean job.

My take on this amalgamation is that their 'theoretical' positions converged, and crystallised in a common programme. Macnair's assessment is that their positions on the nature of the revolution never converged, *but we both agree that they came together on a common programme*.

As events progressed, this critical lesson of programmatic unity was underscored. Lenin was obliged to stand with Trotsky, days after the Bolshevik-led insurrection, against 'Old Bolshevik' backsliding (strikebreaking). At this 11th hour, a faction arose in the Bolshevik leadership led by Kamenev and

Lunacharsky, which wanted to bring the Mensheviks and SRs into the leadership of the soviets, and even to remove Lenin and Trotsky from their leading positions, as a token of conciliatory good faith.

In that context Lenin argued for “no compromise: ie, for a homogeneous Bolshevik government”, and famously said of Trotsky: “As for conciliation [with the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionists], I cannot even speak about that seriously. Trotsky long ago said that unification is impossible. Trotsky understood this and from that time on there has been no better Bolshevik.”⁷³

Trotsky was sufficiently a politician to refrain from ever uttering the symmetrical observation: that from the April theses onwards, there was no better ‘Trotskyist’ than Lenin. But they stood together for the same socialist and democratic goals, by the same soviet methods, and by the rule of the same classes (the working class supported by the poor peasantry).

The Bolshevik programme omitted or deferred nothing important. What you saw was what you got. As Trotsky pointed out in 1934 (as if remonstrating with decades of ‘Trotskyists’ to come),

At a gathering of workers who are monarchists or Catholics, I would deal cautiously with the altar and the throne. But in the programme of my party and in all its policies, its relation to religion and monarchy must be formulated with absolute exactness. At a meeting of a reformist trade union, I, as a member of the union, might be compelled to leave much unsaid; but the party as a whole, in its papers, its public meetings, pamphlets and proclamations, is duty-bound to say everything.

Should police conditions compel the legal press to be cautious in its formulations, the party must have an illegal press besides. When Marxists demand that ‘things be spoken of as they are’, they have in mind not every isolated speech in some special situation or other, but the policy of the party as a whole. The party that for ‘tactical’ reasons hides its position is no revolutionary party, because it repels the advanced workers, because it adapts itself to the prejudices of the backward

workers. And the backward workers can be re-educated only through the advanced workers.

But even at a particular meeting, while using all the tact necessary in approaching a given group, one must not forget that among them there are workers on different levels and that, while it may be necessary to adapt oneself to the backward ones in the *method of exposition*, it is impermissible to adapt one’s *political position* to them.⁴

It was essential and comprehensive unity (already demonstrated in daily common revolutionary work) which formally brought together 75,000 Bolsheviks and 4,000 inter-district ‘Trotskyists’ in July-August 1917 at the party’s Sixth Congress, where they were also joined by a number of radicalised Menshevik internationalists. (The numbers tell the story of the preceding success of ‘Old Bolshevism’ in building an anti-opportunist socialist workers’ party. This party-building was a prerequisite - as Trotsky observed retrospectively in 1940 - for the success of the common programme.)

The *fusion* was only possible because of the highly principled *split* of the socialist proletarian forces from the Menshevik and SR “conciliators” over war, annexations, pay, workers’ control of production, and agricultural revolution (‘Bread, peace and land’). The Bolshevik Party was therefore able to set out, from the beginning in April 1917, with the aim of “proceed[ing] to construct the socialist order”, as Lenin put it in October 1917 - when all power finally fell to the soviets.

China

Returning to today, we should take care to single out for our programme critical planks that split us from the reformists who hold back the Marxist movement but are central to our goals. We need a programme that is as minimum (as narrow) as possible, to create the widest unity, while being as maximum (as deep) as necessary. The truth cannot be abridged: for example, a wealth tax is a desirable partial reform, but also a means for fooling the working people, if the need for expropriation of the bourgeoisie is not advanced.

A Marxist programme must be

internationally coherent. You can try to stay silent about the nature of the Chinese Communist Party leadership, while sharply condemning the British bourgeoisie from London or the American capitalists from New York. But in Beijing (or Brazil, Vietnam or Zambia) that will not work.

China is the defining question of the modern era, and one which determines where a fault line lies - as important as the one between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in 1917, or the one between Trotsky and Burnham in 1939-40. Is China challenging the hegemony of the US in a ‘cold’ inter-imperialist conflict, or is China some kind of socialist, non-capitalist or subordinate (oppressed) capitalist country? From this depends the Marxist position on China in a war.

Last month the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation met in Tianjin under Xi Jinping’s tutelage. The division of the world into two main blocs - one led by the United States, the other by China - could not have been clearer. These are both economic and military blocs. The hostility of the economically declining military hegemon to the challenge of China is patent. To remain agnostic on the class nature of China today (and its role as a great power) is like Lenin or Kautsky or Luxemburg not having a view on German imperialism in 1912, or us not having a view on Russia, imperialist or non-imperialist, today. It is to be disarmed in the face of reality.

In these regards the *Draft programme* of the CPGB⁵ is an odd document for an organisation claiming to be united around its programme. The word ‘Russia’ appears five times in 64 pages, and ‘China’ appears in none of them (the glancing references to Russia deal with the period of the revolution, over a century ago). This programme is out of time, and nationally narrow.

We have to look to the CPGB’s ‘Perspectives’ for 2025 to get a view on the People’s Republic of China:

17. When it comes to global hegemony, the US has only one serious rival and that is China: the world’s second largest economy and a proto-imperialist power... China alone is a full-spectrum challenger - economic, military, diplomatic, technological and ideological. Hence the well-financed propaganda... All carefully crafted to cover for the push to surround, strangle and subordinate China. *The left must adopt a clear defeatist line* in relation to the bellicose policy being pursued by the US and its allies, without in any way prettifying the Beijing regime.

....
19. While it is clear that China will not be a viable alternative hegemon any time soon, over the last three decades the country has seen massive, historically unprecedented, economic growth, especially since 2001 and WTO membership. Modern China’s revolutionary origins, state-controlled capitalist development, successful integration into the world market and Mao-Deng-Xi ‘official communism’ has made it something of a model [for some countries and parties] ... Surely there will be many more leftwing Sinophiles. *Marxists - ie, genuine communists - need to develop a concrete analysis of China in all its contradictory complexity, not content themselves with either bestowing trite labels or echoing the nonsense of ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’.* (my emphasis)⁶

This latter task of developing an analysis is critical.

I believe that the sentence

beginning “The left must adopt a clear defeatist line” expands to this: “The left in western imperialist countries must be for defeat of their own bourgeoisie in the preparation for, or in the event of, it waging war on China.” Does that mean that the Chinese workers should support their own rulers and bourgeoisie militarily in such an event, or should they also be defeatist? Is China ruled by its bourgeoisie, or by bureaucrats who are not capitalists? If China is not capitalist, what is it? And if it is capitalist, why is it not imperialist, but only ‘proto-imperialist’?

Open process

In every left group I come across there is uncertainty about these kinds of questions, usually sitting alongside a ‘democratically’ imposed set of majority answers. This implies that there would be great value in making concrete steps towards the “concrete analysis of China” projected in the perspectives. That would increase clarity and preparedness in a period of impending war, and would touch on questions that are frequently (and wrongly) passed over in silence, for fear of yet more splitting.

But these questions cannot be avoided in a true international Marxist party, because they bite sharpest in the areas of the world where the working class has grown in numbers and potential power. In my view we face the double task of constructing an independent workers’ movement in the Brics and global south (where the proletariat has grown) and reconstructing the movement in the ‘west’ (where globalisation and Blairism have eroded the working class and rolled back most of the gains even of the Second International). That is a formidable task, and cannot be approached without tackling this job of concrete analysis.

As well, for those who are coming to the Marxist movement for the first time (perhaps as the result of developments like Your Party), education and self-education on the questions of Russia, China and imperialist war is of great interest, and generally important.

So far as I can tell, the CPGB does not follow the degenerated post-Trotskyist definition of democratic centralism as a form of secret society, where the existence of debate and the various positions during a debate (and even after its conclusion) are kept from the world. Perhaps this makes you a suitable organising centre for an open process of education and debate, taking in all strands of Marxist thought and activism, on the subject of China? ●

Notes

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Sunday October 19 5pm
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What we fight for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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weekly worker

**Artificial
intelligence
finds a profitable
use in the arms
industry**

After the AI bubble

Despite the record high stock market ratings, there are more and more signs that the AI stock market boom is unsustainable. **Paul Demarty** assesses the chances of a major correction

Last month, OpenAI - the capped-profit company that kicked off the current artificial intelligence hype-cycle - had some big news (don't they always?).

They had signed a deal with Oracle to build five new enormous high-performance data centres (to add to one already in partial operation in Abilene, Texas) - a deal worth a cool \$300 billion (some of which is coming from SoftBank, an enormous Japanese tech investment fund). Champagne glasses clinked; much hot air circulated about world-changing innovation - all the usual. Various relevant stock prices jumped.

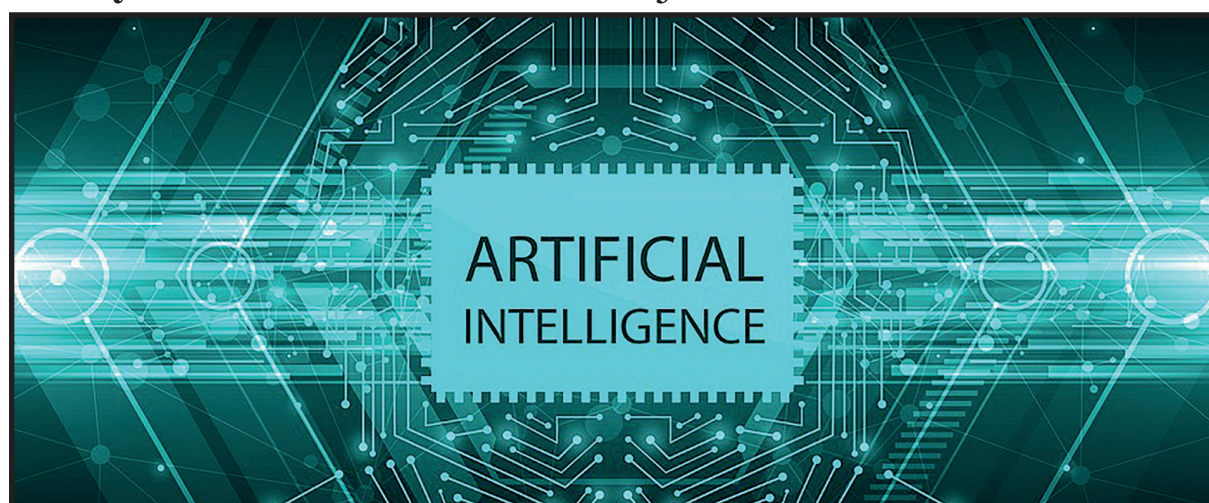
Yet on closer examination there is something a little odd about this deal. On its own, it is impossible to ignore a certain circularity. Oracle is a cloud computing heavyweight, among other things. It seems that this deal is, at least in part, a matter of giving OpenAI a load of money, which it will effectively give back in rents for cloud services, for which it is infamously voraciously hungry. This is a trick known as 'round-tripping'. But then we must also zoom out a little. Oracle and OpenAI will be filling their data centres with chips from second-tier manufacturer AMD AI Solutions; and this follows a peculiar deal between OpenAI and AMD, which sees OpenAI buying AMD shares at knockdown prices in return for purchasing a tonne of chips.

Ponzi

OpenAI has already entered into such quid-pro-quo investment arrangements with Microsoft, which is thought to be a likely buyer at some point in the future. Its rival, Anthropic - the maker of Claude - has similar deals with Amazon Web Services (AWS). It all smells a little incestuous. It would not quite be fair to bring up the legendary conman, Charles Ponzi, but, like his eponymous schemes, it seems a lot of the effervescence of tech stocks at the moment is tied up in just keeping the momentum going.

And effervescent they certainly are. The major stock indexes are in a wild bull-market at the moment, but this is being driven overwhelmingly by the performance of the big tech companies - in addition to those mentioned, we should certainly cite Nvidia, the manufacturer of, by common consent, the best silicon chips for AI workloads, whose market capitalisation has increased more than tenfold in the last three years (and which, we note, also bunged \$100 billion to OpenAI last month).

It is not necessarily a *bad* sign for there to be big-money deals of various sorts going on between participants in an industry. A steel mill buys ore from a mine; the mill is successful, and increases its orders from the mine; the mine expands production (and to do so, perhaps, it needs to buy steel). All of this is perfectly normal activity, in times of economic expansion at least, within what Marx called department



Unimaginable amounts of capital being ploughed in - so far with little or no profit

1 of the economy (commodities destined for further production, rather than direct consumption).

Yet the blunt truth is that the flagship AI products from companies like OpenAI do not make money. Indeed, that is an understatement: these companies *burn* money at an extraordinary rate. There is no clear path to profitability; in its place, there are endless starry-eyed promises of breakthroughs just around the corner, and the occasional spook story about artificial general intelligence. Investors are buying the story; but the sheer weight of anxiety currently leaking out of the investor class suggests they are increasingly impatient to see how that story ends.

The vast cost base of the AI companies is well-known, despite all the hype, but worth briefly describing here. When OpenAI launched ChatGPT, they went to market with a product that was built on a real breakthrough in AI-driven text transformation. It was described in a paper published by Google in 2017, called 'Attention is all you need': Google had been using these new techniques in their machine translation service to great effect, and they caused quite a stir in the AI world.

The trouble is that there have not really been any other comparable breakthroughs in this current wave of AI activity. Improvements in the models have been largely achieved by brute force: that is, training and running the models on ever vaster pools of compute, using ever larger corpses of training data.

These inputs each pose particular problems, and the one most relevant to cost is the need for data centres. These are big, fixed-capital investments at the best of times, and the specialised needs of AI software makes them more so. The electrical power needs of such installations are themselves vast and expensive (Oracle is racing to build a bunch of natural gas turbines in Abilene). With the launch of the apparently far more efficient Chinese DeepSeek model earlier this year, there was some hope that the need for such capital outlays would be reduced, but that does not seem to have transpired.

In return for such investment,

OpenAI, Anthropic and friends have delivered real, but modest, improvements in model performance. Crucially, they have not made much headway on the problems that bedevil these systems - most infamously their habit of just making stuff up a lot of the time. AI 'hallucinations' are the major obstacle to selling these large language models to the sort of large corporate customers who can really make all this economically viable. Replacing white-collar workers with computer systems - the only potential upside, really, of adopting AI - requires that those computer systems can work predictably and reliably. If you cannot use this stuff to make your core business more profitable, then what is the point?

Corporate America

This dynamic is visible precisely in the *concentration* of apparent economic growth in a small group of tech companies, while much of the rest of corporate America (never mind the rest of the world) stagnates, and job growth is essentially non-existent - to such an extent that Donald Trump has come up with the novel strategy of dealing with the problem by firing the people who come up with the statistics. In a gold rush, they say, sell shovels - Nvidia, AWS, Microsoft and co are shovel-pushers. There are other signs too, like a recent research report from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology - the very cradle of much of the original AI research decades ago - reporting that 95% of AI pilot projects run at US organisations had yielded no or negative return on investment.¹

Core use cases are suffering too. Take software engineering itself - which at its core consists of transforming a natural language 'prompt' (the requirements for the software) into a computer program, which is, at the end of the day, a piece of text written in a (restricted, special-purpose) language. This is the sort of thing Google was doing with its machine translation in the first place. Yet, even here, research cautions against wild claims of a revolution in technique: one study found that, while engineers *perceived* a productivity increase of about 20%, the tools in fact

seemed to slow them down by roughly that amount.²

So is this a bubble? It seems so. Indeed, it is arguably merely the extension of an earlier tech bubble, which saw a huge wave of start-ups through the 2010s benefiting from the low interest rates of the post-financial crash era and the advent of cloud computing, which massively reduced the capital outlay required to run an internet company. Although the marquee names of that era are 'social media' and 'gig economy' companies, the exemplary case here is probably cryptocurrencies - another supposedly world-changing technology that has never quite arrived, except as a class of dubious speculative assets and a means of exchange among drug dealers and ransomware gangs.

This earlier bubble, in software-as-a-service companies and consumer tech, popped in 2022, when central bank rates started to increase, reducing the availability of investment capital and suddenly bringing forward the date at which this class of company was expected to turn a profit. The splashy launch of ChatGPT, however, provided a fine opportunity for the venture capital set to induce a new wave of investment. They also read the political weather astutely, and cosied up to Donald Trump, who has repaid the favour by coming out firmly against AI regulation and turning his own hand to worthless novelty cryptocurrencies ('shitcoins', as they are known).

What happens if it pops for real? No doubt the stock prices of the core tech companies will take a beating, but they will probably survive - their core business models are, after all, profitable, and they likely have cash on hand. But the effect on the wider economy will likely be very negative, as the animal spirits of the investor class go into fight-or-flight mode.

Unemployment will rise, as it is already doing. A serious market correction will have severe knock-on effects for large institutional investment funds, and thus, ultimately, to pensions and other savings in the pockets of ordinary people. (If anyone is still under the illusion, by the way, that this will necessarily have a radicalising effect on the workers

so dispossessed, they should have a clear-eyed look at the political history of the imperialist countries since the last crash.)

Also at risk here, I would suggest, is the coherence of a certain ideology most characteristically associated with the neoliberal era: that the old days of mass industrial production are gone, and that the future is a 'knowledge economy', driven by endless revolutions in information technology. In truth, the signs of stagnation are everywhere. LLMs are not *revolutionising* anything except the sheer size of economic bubbles. Other consumer-grade AI/machine learning systems are finding novel applications, but at a reduced rate. Mass-market consumer tech - smartphones, personal computers and the like - is plainly stagnant, and afflicted by new anxieties about the unintended consequences of plugging everyone on earth permanently into the internet.

Panglossian

Yet that would be merely a step-change in a wider process, where the Panglossian techno-optimism of triumphant neoliberalism has steadily been displaced by something altogether colder: the rise of national and ethnic chauvinism, open militarism and associated symptoms, in the global north and south alike. The fundamental driver of this ideological shift is the reality that the world is moving into a fresh wave of great-power competition, and - inescapably, but for revolution - great-power war.

On *this* front, of course, the AI people may find reasons to be cheerful. The various corrupt gestures of the Trump administration towards the tech industry are driven by the perceived need to 'win' the battle over AI with China - whatever that is supposed to mean. Current and future generations of military equipment will benefit mightily from improvements in large-scale machine learning, computer vision, and many other things besides. The promised breakthroughs in medical science - protein folding and what have you - may well be susceptible to weaponisation. Why not? Because some long-dead idealist signed a treaty outlawing it?

So, if the great and the good of the tech industry, AI people included, want to keep on top of things, they will move their attention from chatbots to drone swarms, from AI therapists to missile defence. The passive institutional investors will, of course, follow.

For our part, we get to live through the process predicted by Marx: of the means of production being transformed ever more decisively into means of destruction.

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Notes

1. fortune.com/2025/08/18/mit-report-95-percent-generative-ai-pilots-at-companies-failing-cfo.
2. metr.org/blog/2025-07-10-early-2025-ai-experienced-os-dev-study.