

weekly worker



Launch of Jeremy Corbyn's Your Party is a study in control freakery. Carla Roberts examines the four founding documents

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SIR KEIR'S ULTRAS



LETTERS



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

Keen SWP

At the end of August Adnan Hussain MP asked for a team to organise a Manchester-wide Your Party launch event.

In a public meeting volunteers put their names forward. Ten SWP members joined the team, alongside 30 others from many groups and none. In our first meeting there was a query as to whether the SWP needed 10 members on the team and we were assured they were very keen to be involved.

However, unknown to the non-SWP members of the team, SWP national secretary Lewis Nielsen began securing speakers for a 'Greater Manchester launch', claiming he was acting on behalf of a broad-based group, and secured Zarah Sultana (which the event team was still in the process of doing). The entire delegation of SWP members in the event team refused to engage or respond to any direct messages.

Of course, the SWP has the right to organise what meetings they like. But to insist on joining a united front set up for a Manchester launch - only to go away and organise the exact same event, refuse to respond to any requests to engage or for clarification - can only be sectarianism of the most destructive order. It reinforces the perception of left factionalism and the reputation of the SWP's inability to work jointly with other organisations and individuals.

Lastly it seems a group putting this event together in Manchester, set up by Ameen Hadi, removed numerous people who had been invited to join when they asked what the group was for.

This is a formal complaint to the SWP, both nationally and in Manchester, which we hope will enable your organisation to seriously reconsider how you relate to the enthusiasm and vital broad base of Your Party in future.

(Signed by the initial signatories of the Launch Event Team, including leading members of Counterfire, the Communist Party of Britain, Revolutionary Socialism in the 21st Century and other YP supporters).

YP Supporters
Manchester

YP Sheffield

This emergency resolution was agreed by the 100 or so members who attended the all-Sheffield meeting of members and supporters of Your Party on October 20.

"1. This meeting notes:

(a) The four founding documents were released as drafts on the evening of Friday October 17, less than 40 hours before the first regional assembly in Norwich, leaving insufficient time to review and scrutinise the documents in a meaningful way.

(b) The draft founding documents contain many contentious issues that members should be able to discuss properly and collectively vote on amendments: for example, a proposed ban on members of left groups, no guaranteed funding for branches and a leadership structure that replicates that of the Labour Party.

2. This meeting further notes that there are serious problems with the democratic process, when it comes to dealing with the draft founding documents:

(a) The promised online portal, where members were supposed to be able to submit amendments and comments, is not in use and it is unclear if it will open before the launch conference.

(b) At the first regional assembly in Norwich, participants only got to discuss *sections* of the documents and they were told not to take votes. Further, it is far from clear if, how and by whom the thousands and thousands of pages of notes collected at these assemblies will be processed or 'composited'.

(c) This means that probably only those people chosen by sortition lottery (and those appointed) to attend the launch conference can move concrete amendments to the documents - but even that is not yet confirmed.

3. This meeting believes:

(a) An online vote of all members following the founding conference is no substitute for a meaningful, democratic process.

(b) All these problems amount to a serious democratic deficit, leaving the vast majority of members unable to intervene meaningfully in the shaping of the draft founding documents and, therefore, Your Party.

(c) Only truly democratic parties can meaningfully fight to democratise the society we live in or, indeed, form the basis of a future democratic socialist society.

4. This meeting will write to Your Party HQ and publicise the following:

(a) Proto-branches should be encouraged to hold meetings to discuss and vote on amendments to the draft founding documents.

(b) Regional assemblies must be allowed to hear amendments and motions, and vote on the draft founding documents.

(c) Amendments coming from proto-branches and regional assemblies must be heard at the launch conference; delegates must be invited to present them.

(d) In the founding conference and during the online OMOV [One member, one vote] ratification process, there should be an option to vote on each point separately, as well as the option to reject each document and request a truly democratic process to redraft them, with meaningful input from the members and branches.

(e) All conferences of Your Party must put the members and democracy first. Branches should be able to move motions and amendments and elect delegates. There should be no automatic representation for anybody who has not been democratically elected as a delegate."

Tina Becker

Sheffield

Free speech?

The London venue most famous for championing free speech has refused to screen a film about Palestine for fear of "adverse reaction".

In its refusal, the Conway Hall, which calls itself "a hub for free speech", told Platform Films, producers of the documentary film, *Censoring Palestine*: "We have considered your request for a film screening at our venue and, as a charity with a small team, we would be unable to handle any adverse reaction that might come as a result of Conway Hall hosting this event."

As the film's producer, I believe this shows that, despite the much-trumpeted Trump ceasefire, attempts to suppress the truth about the Gaza genocide go on. The Conway Hall - London's most revered venue for political events and meetings - is running scared of showing our film. In effect, a film about censorship has been censored! The film, which stars Ken Loach, Roger Waters and Alexei Sayle, provides a detailed account of the way our mainstream media has constantly hidden and distorted events in Palestine.

I don't blame the Conway Hall for refusing to screen it - I blame the atmosphere of intimidation and

fear the government has stoked up over the subject of the genocide. Worst of all has been Keir Starmer's spectacular and disgraceful abuse of the terrorism laws to outlaw protest in this country. Hundreds of innocent people have been arrested for daring to peacefully protest about the genocide, and the government is now openly encouraging the phoney 'anti-Semitic' witch-hunt which our film documents.

The most recent example of this is Keir Starmer's decision to ask Labour's Lord John Mann to review anti-Semitism in the NHS as part of a wider "crackdown" in the UK. The message is clearer than ever before - do anything critical of Israel and you risk being labelled 'anti-Semitic'. It's just like McCarthyism, but with people being accused of hating Jews rather than of being communists.

Conway Hall's refusal to screen the film is bad news for freedom of speech in Britain. If even this historic venue, famed for its independence, is afraid of showing a film about censorship, what chance have we got to hear the truth in the mainstream media? The government is trying to throttle free speech at its source. We cannot allow this to happen.

I am appealing to any venue that is willing and able to show the film. *Censoring Palestine* is available for screening at public events, by local groups and independent cinemas. For more information email norm6344@gmail.com.

Norman Thomas
Platform Films

No Ukraine split

Only in the *Weekly Worker* is it possible to have weeks of discussion with long texts with assumptions about something that did not happen and would not have happened!

Members of the SAP (Socialist and Anti-capitalist Project), the Dutch section of the Fourth International, did not split from the Socialists/RSP because of the resolution on Ukraine - we were no longer part of the RSP at that time or even when they were starting to talk about a resolution on Ukraine. Leaving the Socialists had nothing to do with Ukraine. Despite the enormous importance and consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP, formerly De Socialisten) has never taken a clear and public stance on this conflict.

We joined the Socialists on a personal basis and left in the same way. Some did so as early as 2023, a year after the Socialists were launched. Others left after the congress in January 2024, when more members with experience in social movements and political organisations departed. In all cases, the war in Ukraine played no role.

The main reasons why we, and other independent socialist activists, left the Socialists were a total lack of confidence in 'Macnairism' as a way of bringing the working class to power, and the lack of political discussion connected to the reality of the situation of the left, the labour movement and social movements. As one non-SAP member noted, "The Socialists are living in a parallel reality".

Outside the RSP, we will be able to make a much greater contribution to the struggle for socialism.

John Cozijn
Netherlands

Dave Arrowsmith

It is with utmost sorrow and feelings of loss that I have to announce the death of another of my lifelong comrades and friends, Dave Arrowsmith.

He was one of the original group of very young people who, back in the early 60s on Tyneside, formed the central team of anarchism in the

city. We were soon to discover our generation was just the latest link in a chain extending back to the 1700s and maybe beyond.

Anarchism was thoroughly working class back then and manifested itself in a variety of forms - from free-verse poets, folk singers, actors, jazz instrumentalists and, of course, shop stewards and union militants.

That's not to say we were lost in the grey ranks of the Communist Party or tired, dogmatic gospels of Militant or the thuggery of the Socialist Labour League. God, no, we were the very essence of youth culture: the wild party's scene, sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll - well, blues. We didn't so much mobilise the youth: we were the youth - passionate hatred of the bomb, wars, armies and bourgeois politics. I reflect some of this in my *Geordies - wa mental* (the first part of my autobiography), where Dave's 16th birthday party has special mention, as well it might, seeing as it represents something of a riot in itself.

We had formed the Tyneside Syndicalist Workers Federation in 1964, when that movement was still vibrant, along with *Solidarity* (the anarcho-Marxist journal) and the Committee of 100. Although we briefly left the milieu for Trotskyism, we were both back in what we perceived as the real McCoy of politics by 1984 in time for the cataclysmic miners' strike.

So goodbye, old comrade. Jeanette, his comrade and wife of a lifetime since early teenage, and his kids and loving family will miss him and his endless humour forever. You never let us down, comrade - always keeping me on my toes by checking the conclusions I had reached. I'll miss you greatly.

David Douglass
South Shields

Dictatorship again

Tony Clark writes the same letter every time. For anyone who has been following the *Weekly Worker* for a while, the context should be clear, so let's cut to the chase. Clark provides nothing but floating, half-remembered quotes and factoids. Everyone should be criticised, but that criticism should be rigorous, so that we actually learn something from it.

First, let's look at his factoid. Clark claims Marx borrowed the phrase, 'dictatorship of the proletariat', from Auguste Blanqui without understanding its meaning. This is simply incorrect: the phrase is nowhere to be found in the works of Blanqui or any of his followers.

As Hal Draper demonstrates in detail, "Incidentally, the ascription of the term, 'dictatorship of the proletariat', to Blanqui is a myth, industriously copied from book to book by Marxologists eager to prove that Marx was a putschist 'Blanquist', but in fact all authorities on Blanqui's life and works have (sometimes regretfully) announced that the term is not to be found there. More important, the concept of political power exercised by the democratic masses is basically alien to the Blanquist idea of educational dictatorship" ('The "dictatorship of the proletariat" in Marx and Engels', as reproduced on the Marxist Internet Archive).

Fortunately, the paragraph right after also provides us with a sense of how the word 'dictatorship' has been used in the political literature of the time: "By the 19th century political language had long included references to the 'dictatorship' of the most democratic assemblies, of popular mass movements, or even of the people in general. All Marx did at the time was apply this old political term to the political power of a class."

Now, let's look at the floating, half-remembered quote. The definition of 'dictatorship' as "rule untrammelled by law" does not in fact belong to Lenin. It is hard to know what exactly Clark is thinking about, because he has neither any citations nor anything resembling any form of academic discipline. He might be thinking of something from Lenin's pamphlet, *Renegade Kautsky*, responding to Kautsky's *The dictatorship of the proletariat*. The definition of 'dictatorship' as something resembling "rule untrammelled by law" comes from Kautsky's polemical pamphlet against the concept of 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' (it's worth pointing out that the letter by Clark is almost a point-by-point copy of Kautsky's pamphlet). Whilst Lenin *rejects* this being the *definition* of 'dictatorship', he rhetorically concedes to Kautsky, to make a point that every state is a sort of dictatorship (regardless of there being "people accountable to elected bodies", which is completely irrelevant to the whole thing, as we will get to).

So Lenin writes, following Kautsky's assertion, that "Dictatorship is rule based directly upon force and unrestricted by any laws." He continues with the point that who *rules* is not restricted by any laws and is based directly upon violence, and that the category of 'dictatorship' is used to make an analysis of the nature of *state power*, and what category or grouping of people hold that power, based on how the state is structured.

So Lenin's point is that the foundational structures of a state predate the laws they create, and involve power being held by some group or another. For example, he argues (as did Marx and Engels) that the existing parliamentary republics are not really democratic for the proletariat, that the interests of the vast majority of people generally remain unrepresented, that these remain only as passive, symbolic participants in politics. He also argues that this is because of the ways in which the existing parliamentary republics are structured.

Instead, he argues that one needs a form of power based on the democratic participation of the vast majority of the population. A form of power wherein the standing army and the police are abolished, wherein judges are elected, wherein bureaucrats (appointed functionaries) are replaced by functionaries elected and recallable, wherein politics revolves around the participation of people in democratic assemblies (councils) and temporary delegation of power, based on imperative mandates and the right to recall. As every communist and consistent democrat should know.

Clark might be correct in that this doesn't involve "accountability to elected bodies", even though he inserts that part from nowhere. It involves not accountability *to* the elected bodies, but rather a rigorous and real accountability *of* the elected bodies *to* the people. It is a form of law that prioritises not dictates from above - from alienated, "elected bodies" - but rather rule from below, as Lenin describes very clearly in his April 1917 *Pravda* article, 'The dual power'.

People use the term, 'dictatorship', because it describes what a state is properly, and it makes clear why consistent democrats need to be opposed to the existing state of affairs, and work to build a political order where politics are actually *dictated* by a majority of the people and not a privileged minority.

Ömer Hanifi Yüzgeç
email

FOOTBALL

Sir Keir Starmer's ultras

Why is the British government and the entire political class doing PR for Israeli football hooligans? It is just the perverse consequence of subordination to American interests, argues **Paul Demarty**

The furore over the West Midlands police ban on Maccabi Tel Aviv football fans, ahead of the club's Europa League fixture against Aston Villa on November 6, has been quite bewildering.

This is, on the face of it, a pretty routine police action. The travelling supporters of this club contain a substantial contingent of violent, racist hooligans. At a match in Amsterdam last year, these louts provoked a near-riot by indiscriminately assaulting Muslims and vaguely 'Muslim-looking' people, with the end result that the Israeli state stepped in to evacuate them. The attempt to spin this as an "anti-Jewish pogrom" failed the test of common sense, failed to sway public opinion - and evidently failed to fool the continent's coppers. The local constabulary had banned travelling support on the advice of Europol, the EU policing agency, which seems to be quite united in its professional opinion that these fans are not worth the bother.

In the abstract, leftwingers ought to be wary, at least, of this ban. We do not favour the arbitrary power of the police to suppress free assembly in the name of public order. It is asinine to say that such powers *will* be used against us: they *are* being used against us. Freedom of association and assembly goes for everyone, including racist football hooligans, or it goes for no-one. That said, at issue here is not direct ideological suppression, but the 'spontaneous ideology' of the cop: public order is only protected by deliberate action of this sort, and everyone is basically a thug until proven otherwise. The cops' fear of disorder is quite genuine and, in this case, clearly well founded.

United front

The real story, then, is the spontaneous united front that formed among the political and media elite that this was a disastrous move. Sir Keir Starmer immediately denounced it as the "wrong decision". Liberal Democrat leader Ed Davey decried the lunacy of banning travelling fans for their own protection (apparently unaware that it was not the MTA fans' safety that was at issue). Robert Jenrick, still at his perpetual job of positioning himself for the fall of Kemi Badenoch, weighed in, complaining that a little saucy chanting at Villa home games was never a problem, when he was attending them as a lad. Of course, at that time, English football violence got so bad that this country's clubs were entirely banned from European competition - a fate that has not befallen Israel yet.

Things took an even more farcical turn on October 19, when it emerged that these poor, innocent "Jewish fans" had caused such calamitous disorder in Tel Aviv that a Maccabi match against local rivals was called off. Surely, by the logic of the insinuations against West Midlands Police, the Tel Aviv coppers were guilty of grotesque "anti-Semitism" against their own neighbours. This unfortunate coincidence has, naturally, been passed over in silence by the great and the good in this country - never mind the uncomfortable fact that even *within Israel* Maccabi is historically and presently associated with the extreme right.

The Villa/Maccabi affair is a particularly degraded instance of a



Maccabi fans are ultra fanatics

general tendency in the politics of the imperial countries - for Israeli violence to come almost pre-packaged as acts of self-defence. The real issue is the *actual* violence: the two-year onslaught on the Gaza Strip, currently under a 'ceasefire' that has been repeatedly and continuously violated by Israeli forces, plainly in the interests of collapsing the deal and getting back to good old-fashioned mass murder. Rest assured that *somehow* Hamas will be to blame in the eyes of the British establishment: there is no extremity of bloodshed denied to the IDF in the name of "protecting themselves".

So it is, on a smaller scale, with the Maccabi fans, whose conduct is perfectly familiar to British society from the antics of the Inter-City Firm, the Chelsea Headhunters and whichever other football hooligan gang in their 80s and 90s prime. Indeed, such people are now prominent political figures - Stephen Yaxley-Lennon began his adulthood as a Luton Town casual, and adopted the *nom de guerre* "Tommy Robinson" from a particularly legendary predecessor. The overlap of football violence and far-right ideology has been the basis of most of Yaxley-Lennon/Robinson's political outfits ever since (and he has announced his intention to attend the Villa match as a Maccabi fan). Despite this familiarity, our rulers and betters *choose* not to see it: in the case of the last fanbase, as I remember, to *actually* cause serious violent disorder in Europe.

One context for all this is the increasing pressure on cultural institutions, including sports, to exclude Israel. Within football itself, Israel's membership of the UEFA European football federation has

come into question once again, although a vote on the matter has, for now, been successfully avoided by UEFA tops - above all the federation's Machiavellian chairman, Aleksander Ceferin. (Somewhat more successful have been attempts by pro-Palestine protestors to disrupt the activities of the Israel-Premier Tech cycling team, which has been excluded from the Giro dell'Emilia race.)

Europe map

One interesting question arising is: what the hell is Israel doing competing in *European* football? The last time anyone looked at a map, this country was not in Europe - though perhaps its relentless expansionism will one day take its borders through Turkey into the Balkans. The mere fact that the Israeli league features teams from settlements on illegally occupied land ought to exclude it from UEFA, according to its rules, if mere accidents of geography do not do the job.

There are two questions here - why does UEFA put up with this, and why are the Israelis so insistent on taking their place in European football? So far as the footballing authorities are concerned, it is not terribly complicated. These people are cartoonishly corrupt bureaucrats: so long as the opinions of the major political powers are made clear to them, they will obey. (The 2015 dawn raids on FIFA officials in Zurich - essentially an American act of revenge for awarding the World Cup hosting rights to Qatar - will not be forgotten quickly by canny operators like Ceferin and FIFA's Gianni Infantino.)

On the Israeli side, part of the reason is, of course, that membership of the Asian football confederation would

be awkward, given that the major powerbrokers there are largely the Gulf states, which would quite possibly be forced by internal pressure to boycott the Zionist state's participation. Yet there is also the matter of Israel's self-conception as the last redoubt of the west against 'Asiatic barbarism'. For the same reason, Israeli society places a bizarrely high premium on participation in the Eurovision Song Contest - also under threat until the recent pseudo-ceasefire.

To an extent, this is not wholly senseless. After all, Israel is in origin a settler-colony founded by a European 'surplus population'; the scale of its violence against the Palestinians, the plain need of the Israeli state to be rid of them, is more or less globally unique *today*, but rather typical of this species of colonialism. Much the same treatment was meted out by British colonists to the native peoples of North America and the antipodes at different times. It is, in a certain sense, 'normal' for western countries to be implicated in such bloodletting, all the while maintaining the appearance of an elevated civilisation among friends.

War

In the meantime - especially under the new Donald Trump regime, but also before - the commitment of the United States to its once-beloved rules-based international liberal order is rapidly atrophying. The US plainly fancies a move to hot war against China in the not too distant future, and no paper tiger of the United Nations type will stop it. It is easy to show (and international non-governmental organisations and even institutions like the International Criminal Court have shown) that Israel has acted in

flagrant defiance of the norms of this order. Yet it is of dubious value, when this order is plainly being abandoned by the only force that could still give it teeth: the USA.

That is the other relevant context here. With the drift of the world towards great-power war, high principles lose their ideological force, to be replaced with brutish tribal loyalties. In the rightwing commentary on the Maccabi affair, it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that, for some, the possibility of blood on the streets of Birmingham is really *part of the appeal* of overturning the police ban. England's second city, along with London, looms large in the far-right imagination as an exemplary case of the supposed 'Islamisation' of Britain, and has done so at least as far back as the 'Operation Trojan Horse' scandal of 2014 (a probably confected story of an attempt to 'Islamise' education at a Birmingham school). If the police won't knock some sense into the Muslims, perhaps this travelling band of knuckle-draggers will ...

Global politics

The particular targets of this country's often surreally otiose political repression follow from its thorough subordination to the US. Unquestioning support for Israel has come to serve as a litmus test for servility to the world hegemon. Without the grace and favour of our senior 'partner', we have no economy, and no military to speak of. Therefore this 'special relationship' must not be abandoned, no matter what disasters we are brought to by honouring it - from Iraq and Afghanistan to complicity in the attempted extermination of the Palestinians of the Gaza Strip.

And thus, also, the topsy-turvy moral logic of the recent discourse: the transformation of hardened football hooligans into doe-eyed innocent victims of racism, the use of this scandal as *yet another* impulse towards the suppression of the Palestinian movement, while far-right violence continues to rise in frequency and severity.

This does leave the question of getting *our* political bearings. On the narrow issue of the ban, we must say again that we are not in favour of the police having sweeping powers to obstruct social life - even the social life of racist louts. We are not, of course, in favour of standing professional police forces *at all*, but, so long as these continue to exist, their operations should be subordinated to local democratic institutions (and real ones, not the ridiculous 'Police and Crime Commissioners' that have been imposed on, among other places, the West Midlands).

As I write, the ban is still in place and Maccabi has announced that it will not accept any ticket allocation from Aston Villa even if the ban is overturned. Maybe, Tommy Robinson's casuals will attempt to substitute themselves for Maccabi. We very much hope Villa fans will do what they've been told not to do: display pro-Palestine political slogans and messages.

Meanwhile, in Israel the Maccabi vs Hapoel derby has been called off just before kick-off. Israeli police officials blamed rioting and the "risk to life" •

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YOUR PARTY

A study in control freakery

The four founding documents need at the very least serious revision. However, there are no official channels whereby members and branches can exert an influence, let alone take control, says **Carla Roberts**

Finally, on the evening of Friday October 17, the four draft 'founding documents' of Your Party were published - weeks late and just hours before they were being discussed at the first regional assembly in Norwich. This first assembly has shed a further light on the massive problems:

■ Around 150-200 attended, despite the assembly covering three counties and a hall which could hold 500.

■ It was chaired and run by Sean Halsall and Artin Giles from Your Party HQ, rather than local members.

■ Participants were arbitrarily allocated to small working groups of around 10 people - with each group discussing parts of the documents. At an online facilitator training last week, Giles explained that from now on, the constitution and standing orders would be split into 11 sections - "And we don't want to allow people to choose which bits they can discuss; otherwise everybody wants to speak about how the leadership is elected."

■ The facilitators in each of the small groups took pages and pages of 'notes', which will now go to HQ, "where a group of volunteers will go through them", as Giles explained. He could not, however, explain how those volunteers would decide what is a good suggestion, what is a bad one - or, indeed, which one will make it into the next draft (there will be two more versions). It does not take a genius to guess that all those comments and amendments that HQ does not approve of are highly unlikely to make it to the launch conference.

■ Only 30 minutes were allocated for 'feedback' from the groups at the end of the assembly, with no voting. There was considerable disquiet, we hear, with a number of attendees raising objections to the process from the floor. But, as Larry O'Hara speculates in his amusing report,¹ Norwich was probably chosen as the location of the first assembly, because "organised left groups are thin on the ground. Thus, if you wanted the first assembly to take place without great dissension, and much less debate, the ideal place." No concrete amendments were moved.

■ However, in the facilitator training, Giles explained that, "although we are not going to allow voting in the assemblies, if it turns out in the feedback session that there is a clear consensus on a subject - for example, on the ban on other parties - then this can be communicated and will be added". He mentioned the formulation on "the ban on other parties" at least three times. Perhaps there is, as we have speculated, disagreement at the top on this.

■ It is still entirely unclear if participants at the launch conference on November 29-30 will be able to move *any* amendments or if they are merely able to say 'yes' or 'no' to whatever HQ puts in the final draft.

■ As if sortition (ie, lottery) was not undemocratic enough, it now transpires that certain loyalists like Alan Gibbons in Liverpool do not have to go through the process at all: they have been handpicked by Corbyn's right-hand woman, Karie Murphy, to attend conference. Corbyn will be another special VIP and no doubt there will be dozens more.

■ All these issues amount to a huge democratic deficit, which is compounded by the added problem that the promised online portal - where individual members were supposed to be able to submit amendments and alternative proposals - is not in use and we hear is very unlikely to go live



The last thing we need is a Mandarin bureaucracy

before the launch conference. Artin Giles could not give a date, but said: "I hope it will be soon."

Team Corbyn blames Team Sultana for the latter problem. She and the directors of MOU Ltd (Andrew Feinstein, Beth Winter and Jamie Driscoll) are allegedly 'withholding' the membership data and the money collected when Zarah Sultana, fed up with the dithering, unilaterally launched a membership scheme on September 18. Team Sultana, on the other hand, understandably demands certain legal guarantees that mean they cannot be held liable for penalties potentially running into millions of pounds - the consequence of Team Corbyn reporting them to the Information Commissioner's Office.

In any case, clearly the portal *should* be opened and there are tons of possible technical solutions to overcome the problem of the membership data not being merged. The whole portal arrangement was only ever a sorry excuse for *real* democratic participation of members and was probably going to come with the Momentum-style requirement that any amendment would have to be supported by hundreds or even thousands of members in order to go to conference.

But the fact that even that is not working turns a serious democratic deficit into what can only be described as an absolute shit show: there is now literally *no method* for members to at least try and ensure a particular amendment makes it to conference.

Draft statement

The content of the four documents is broadly what could be expected - maybe a touch worse. Take the very

short draft political statement.² We expected it to be mainly empty waffle, focusing on equality, peace, justice and all things nice, along the lines of the platitudes that Jeremy Corbyn usually comes out with (garnished perhaps with a vague reference to 'socialism', whatever may be meant by that). And the statement certainly contains all those things.

But there are also some serious *additional* political problems. We read, for example, that "Billionaires and corporations are now in control of our country. Your Party aims at its democratic and socialist transformation: by redistributing that power and wealth to all."

We kind of get how you could - *theoretically* - reduce the billionaires to millionaires and then distribute their wealth to the rest of the country. It is pretty obvious though what would happen: most, if not all, of the 156 billionaires currently residing in Britain would not wait for that particular Corbyn legislation to go through, but take their billions elsewhere.³ This tax-financed version of national state socialism would soon collapse.

Then there is this: "Its [Your Party's] task is to build a mass party for the many that represents and is rooted in the *broadest possible social coalition, with the working class at its heart*" (all emphasis in quotations from YP documents has been added).

We suspect this cross-class formulation is a reflection of the class composition of the Independent Alliance of MPs. Zarah Sultana remains frozen out and Corbyn seems to have decided to subordinate himself to the four petty bourgeois MPs (small business owners and

landlords all). This is also reflected in the draft constitution's long passages on 'local assemblies'. Sounds all very democratic and the type of thing Roger Hallam might come up with - but look closer and you see worrying suggestions that these should be able to initiate and *decide* on the party's policy, as well as on its candidates (more below). Incidentally, we hear that Hallam has taken a step back from Your Party. He is apparently concerned that it is discrediting things like sortition (in our view, it is mainly sortition that is discrediting itself!).

Of course, socialists and communists should try to win over the petty bourgeoisie. It exists between the working class and the bourgeoisie and can seriously harm revolutionary forces, if we do not manage to get them on the side of the working class. That does not, however, mean that we should *subordinate* ourselves to this class. And Your Party seems to be on the way to doing exactly that.

This populist waffle needs to be replaced by a clear commitment to socialism - and an explanation of what it actually is and how it can be achieved. Unless there is such a clear formulation, it will soon become indistinguishable politically from the pro-capitalist, petty bourgeois Green Party. If you are not bothered about fighting against capitalism as a system and you do not think that the working class is the only class that can lead the fight for the revolutionary break with the system, then you might as well join the Greens. If anything, they look a lot more snazzy and media-savvy, thanks to Zack Polanski.

The Green Party also looks a lot more democratic than the stitch-ups emanating at the top of Your Party,

by the way. Thousands of clearly fed-up YP supporters have already made that choice: Green Party membership now stands at 126,000 - up by 80% since Polanski was elected leader last month.⁴ Needless to say, in our view the Greens are very much part of the problem, not the solution.

Mistrust

The draft constitution,⁵ the draft standing orders⁶ and the document, 'Organisational strategy',⁷ have to be read as one, as most of the details of the constitution have confusingly been shoved into the standing orders. They come with a few pre-written sets of 'options' that members may choose. This is mostly about dumb stuff like whether local meetings should be run in a 'hybrid format' - though there is also the option to choose between a delegate structure and 'sortition' for future conferences. We will soon produce a voting guide on all of these, as well as a set of concrete amendments - not that there is currently the democratic space to actually move any of them.

All documents are characterised by a deep mistrust of the membership. The draft constitution, according to the proposal, can only be changed by "a two-thirds majority of delegates at conference" - this should serve as a warning to all those naive loyalists who argue we should just 'get the party started' and then repair anything wrong afterwards. It will be almost impossible to do so! There should be no such barrier to the will of the membership - a simple majority should suffice.

This culminates in proposals for a strong bonapartist Leader (with a capital 'L' just as in the Labour Party)

and, of course, the proposed ban on left groups (more on both below). But it also affects the attitude towards branches.

No mention is made of the many proto-branches that have sprung up across the country, in which thousands are already actively involved. Yes, there are problems in some of them - but that is very much all down to the refusal of HQ to coherently collect and share membership data. Even requests to forward notifications of local meetings to all those who have signed up locally have been rejected (well, remained unanswered, like anything being sent via official channels). Naturally enough, it has fallen to the organised left to take the lead - and that comes with its own set of problems. In some areas, eg, Cambridge and south London, there are three rival groups. In Manchester, the Socialist Workers Party has been behaving appallingly. In other areas it is Counterfire that is the main problem. That is to be expected: that is what sects do. But it is an entirely avoidable situation.

This general mistrust towards the membership is expressed in the proposal that branches “shall be established in a process overseen by the central executive committee or its appointed representative”. What would the role of that CEC police be, we wonder? To keep the left out? Or to make sure that everything is done ‘democratically’ - the implication obviously being that local members would not be doing that if left to their own devices. A terrible attitude.

Branches have to be “linked to Westminster parliamentary constituencies” and ward groups may only be established when a “a particular threshold is met”. This makes sense if your overriding aim is to contest elections. But if you want to build a real party of the working class then this does not necessarily make sense at all. There might be big workplaces where we should set up a branch. Or areas where the division along constituency lines is inappropriate. It obviously should be up to the branches themselves to decide. That would be real grassroots democracy.

Workplaces

Branches should also receive a fixed percentage of the membership fee of those living locally (30%-50%) and then decide autonomously and by a simple majority on what to campaign. But, no, the constitution only states that: “All branches shall undertake workplace engagement and party organising activities in the community, as well as regular canvassing, and shall be appropriately resourced to do so.”

Well, what happens if a local branch decides to also do something else? Run a film club, for example? Or decide to financially support a particular strike or campaign? No, that is not a proposal for a “member-led” organisation: it is in fact stifling local initiative and democracy. If there was a way to move amendments, the need for firm financial support for branches would certainly be one of the most needed ones.

Then there is the rule that that “local parties should be encouraged to discuss national policy formation for conference, with a view to forming consensus”. Consensus is the worst possible method for decision-making. It silences minorities, because they ‘hold up’ proceedings. No, we need a culture of open debate, where different ideas are openly discussed - and with clear, sharp formulations, which can then be voted on, showing minority and majority positions. Consensus leads to political fudges and a very strong bureaucracy, which usually manages to get ‘consensus’ on their particular viewpoints.

The constitution also explains that “the new left party will adopt a two-

pronged system for local parties - one based on meetings and organisation of full party members; the second based on open, publicly facing democratic assemblies”.

Further on in the document, we learn, very much bit by bit, that branches are, in fact, *required* to build those assemblies: “A component of party meetings *must* be a focus on the running of a local assemblies.” And: “Local party officers and members *must* be involved in the coordination and running of local assemblies. Local assemblies must serve their local communities. Community members must be invited to local assemblies, and must be invited at least 14 days before any such local assembly meeting occurs.”

In another section we read that “all branches shall undertake the necessary work to run regular public-facing, local community assemblies. These assemblies shall be democratic and contribute to community activity and *party policy development*”.

Hold on: the entire “community” is supposed to get involved in the development of the policies of Your Party? Not just that. In a long, painful and convoluted section, which distinguishes between “policy initiation”, “policy development process” and “policy approval”, both for “local policy” and “national policy”, it is clear that HQ is hoping that members will want to tick the options that state, “the local assembly will have the final say on whether to *accept or reject* the local policy proposal” and that even “*national policy* to be sent to conference by a local party is discussed and voted on democratically at the local party assemblies”.

What a ludicrous and dangerous idea. Who exactly is “the community”? Presumably it means literally everybody who happens to live locally, including members and supporters of the Tories, Labour and Reform. It gets worse.

This is the entire, full section on the important issue of ‘mandatory reselections’ of sitting MPs: “Incumbent, publicly elected party members shall be subject to cyclical primary contests, to be held by the local party before the relevant scheduled public election.” No further explanations or options: you can only “accept or reject”.

But how *concretely* can members get rid of a sitting MP or councillor? What is meant by “primary contests”, for example? Sounds very much like the US primaries system. And are the local assemblies included in “the local party”? We suspect so. This paragraph is extremely vague and, we presume, that is very much by intention. The six MPs - who have written, or at least approved, this formulation - might not be too keen on rules which mean that local members can replace them.

Socialists should definitely try to replace this paragraph with a clear commitment to mandatory open reselection, as, for example, they did in the Labour Party. Needless to say, we do not campaign for something like the undemocratic ‘trigger ballot’. A simple majority of local party members (and nobody else) should be able to decide if it wants to keep the incumbent candidate or replace them with somebody else. The same goes, of course, for deciding local or national party policy.

The way to interact with the ‘local community’ is not to hand the power to decide policy or candidates to forces outside the organisation - but to win them over to become members of the party.

Labour mark two

The proposed structure for the leadership is almost a carbon copy of the Labour Party’s national executive committee. The central executive committee is to be made up of:

■ The leader, elected by online OMOV (one member, one vote), who will stay in the post for “no more than 21 months”. There is no mention of a co-leadership team - another indication that Sultana is frozen out. Not that we support that idea - we argue for a *collective* leadership.

■ 16 ordinary members, elected “bi-annually” (we suspect they do not mean every six months, but ‘biennially’ - ie, every two years) and also by online OMOV.

■ four public office holder representatives (two of them MPs).

■ two “devolved nation representatives” (one each for Scotland and Wales).

■ Up to five “reserved seats for organised sections” (“social groups such as the LGBTQ+ community, the disabled community, minority ethnic communities, etc”).

In other words, out of the 28 people on the leadership, only 17 are elected by the members - 60%. Clearly, in a member-led organisation it would be 100%. And this body would be elected at conference, by delegates who are themselves democratically elected. More problematic still are the automatic seats for the ‘public office holders’ and the five reps from ‘organised sections’.

Then there is this: “The CEC shall elect national officers, including chair, deputy chair, secretary, treasurer, political officer and spokesperson, who shall, alongside the leader, make up the Officers’ Group.” This is a proposal to create a Mandarin bureaucracy. It will *really* run the organisation ... and pursue its own professional, careerist, interests. We suspect Karie Murphy fancies herself for the job of general secretary.

Real recallability

Any truly democratic party puts accountability of its leadership at the heart of its structures - and that must include clear rules on how members can get rid of leaders and representatives. As we discussed, the draft constitution contains nothing about how to replace the national leadership - a massive problem. It basically means that people would stay in the post for two years, no matter what. Unacceptable.

The standing orders mention recallability twice - for “local party officers” and for “candidates for public office”. In both scenarios, a staggering “40% of members in good standing within the relevant party unit” need to sign a “dedicated recall petition”, which will then “trigger a vote”, which presumably would have to be won by simple majority (which is elsewhere stated as the standard method).

40% of all local members, that is! It is very hard to get that kind of turnout in most organisations or unions. No, clearly it should be up to a simple majority in a branch meeting to call for such a vote - and then call a dedicated meeting where the issue is discussed and the officer, councillor or MP can account for themselves.

Not surprisingly, the standing orders do not mention anything either about the principled socialist demand of a workers’ wage for workers’ representatives. MPs currently enjoy a healthy annual wage of £93,904 - with plenty of benefits and perks on top. With that kind of income (and with all the other attractions that come with being an MP), it is only a matter of time before they lose touch with those they are supposed to represent. We demand a cap on their income set at the level of a skilled workers’ wage, requiring them to pay the balance to the party.

In the trade unions and in our socialist parties, the workers’ wage remains an important principle that ensures our MPs do not want the

job in order to enrich themselves, but to serve the party. Needless to say, it should also apply to any staff employed by the party - they should get a flat party wage.

Our MPs and councillors must also be required to fight for the party’s programme. That sounds like an obvious point, but one that is harder to enforce than it sounds. It is incredibly easy and incredibly common for elected representatives to be pulled into the orbit of the capitalist lobbyists and the schmoozers of the upper classes.

Censorship

Last, but not least, the most problematic section: “Members may not hold membership in any other national political party, except if specified by the CEC.”

As an aside, this is almost exactly the same ‘demand’ put forward by Mish Rahman’s so-called Democratic Bloc.⁸ He too wants the leadership to decide which groups are ‘acceptable’ and which ones are not. He has since clarified that, in his view, it is only Green Party members that should be allowed to hold “dual membership”. He opposes left groups joining and has called them “infiltrators”.⁹ No, socialists should treat Rahman and his ilk with not a little suspicion. He is only posing left now because he lost his place in the inner circle when Karie Murphy closed down the OG (we did not recall him arguing for democracy, when he was a member of that group). We hear that the Democratic Socialists will not continue their ‘network’ with Rahman’s campaign, which was formed at the recent ‘World Transformed’ conference. Good. It is clear that the chief reason for his engagement was the hope to use the left to get enough support to be elected onto the CEC. He is a careerist - and a very opportunistic one at that.

There is still confusion about exactly which groups are to be classified as a “national political party”. Is this really about Greens or Labour Party members? Or is this about left organisations like the SWP, SPEW, the CPGB etc? No doubt, the lack of clarity is on purpose. It can be interpreted any way the leadership likes.

What *is* clear is that this *does not* refer to local mini-parties like the ‘Liverpool Community Independents Party’ of ex-Momentum honcho Alan Gibbons, or Pamela Fitzpatrick’s Harrow-based ‘Arise’ - these are considered “provisional associate branches already registered with the electoral commission”, who are going to “affiliate politically to the party” (quite possibly with special powers for people like Gibbons - the kind of bureaucratic loyalist HQ relies on to run local areas with a very firm hand).

However, there is no lack of clarity when it comes to the next point: “Members may not affiliate with or participate in organisations undermining Your Party values.” That is hugely problematic, especially as there are no defined ‘values’ to speak of. What about a communist who argues publicly against a cross-class alliance, for example - would that undermine “Your Party values”? Again, this is very open to interpretation and reminds us of the various ways in which the bureaucracy in the Labour Party hunted down good socialists. Then, it was social media posts critical of Israel that were enough to get you booted. What will count as ‘unacceptable’ in Your Party? A post critical of the empty political statement, perhaps? Criticisms of Karie Murphy?

This assumption is not taken out of thin air, as the next point proves: “Members must accordingly respect the confidentiality of internal party matters.” The leadership has certainly shown that it is no fan of transparency

and openness, hiding all proceedings firmly behind closed doors. We still do not know - officially - who actually runs Your Party. It is thanks to the sterling efforts of Archie Woodrow, Max Shanly and, of course, the *Weekly Worker* that we even know that it is Karie Murphy who is pulling the strings on behalf of Jeremy Corbyn and his wife, Laura Alvarez, who plays an (often neglected) massive role in this mis-leadership. We have tried to redress this total lack of transparency by publishing little snippets of information, secret reports, whispered information and, yes, sometimes rumours. The best way the party leadership could avoid this is obvious: not by draconian rules (which can be sidestepped, though not without difficulty), but by operating openly and transparently, in front of the membership. Otherwise, leaks will naturally continue to spring.

This whole section is made even more problematic by the fact that there is no mention of a disciplinary process - let alone a fair or transparent one. Again, it looks like HQ has learnt some very negative lessons from the witch-hunt in the Labour Party, despite the fact that it was this that brought down Jeremy Corbyn. There is no attempt to establish a more democratic party culture - quite the opposite. The lack of *any* proposals on how members could defend themselves against accusations of rule-breaking means that this constitution is even *worse* than the Labour Party rulebook - at least that one has *some* rules! Clearly there should be an amendment that sets up a separate, elected body that deals with any disciplinary cases and which has natural justice, clear timelines and easy appeals procedures at the heart of it.

Political platforms

Last and perhaps most importantly: Neither document makes any mention of the right of members to get together to form temporary or permanent political platforms or factions. Even Die Linke in Germany manages that, as do the Democratic Socialists of America. The reality is that members *will* get together with co-thinkers. That is normal. It encourages members to get actively involved in the party, to express their ideas and to organise collectively with others on a political basis (rather than just go canvassing, etc).

We want political tendencies to be able to operate openly and honestly. Much better if we know that somebody is talking up this or that event by Stand up to Racism because they are a member of the ‘Socialist Workers Platform’. Otherwise, SWP members will be there anyway, but they will be *forced* to present themselves dishonestly as ‘just a trade unionist’, etc.

Naturally, platforms and factions sometimes pose a challenge to the leadership. Which is why they are not mentioned - it is another reflection of the unelected leadership’s mistrust and fear of the members. Considering how undemocratically they have behaved over the last two years, and judging by the reports from disgruntled members and branches up and down the country, they are probably right to do so ●

Notes

1. borderland.co.uk/assemble-dissemble-the-your-party-norwich-assembly-19-10-25-by-larry-ohara-21-10-25.
 2. www.yourparty.uk/political-statement.
 3. *Sunday Times* ‘Rich List’.
 4. greennparty.org.uk/2025/10/19/green-party-membership-surges-past-conservatives-making-the-greens-third-largest-political-party-in-the-uk.
 5. www.yourparty.uk/constitution.
 6. www.yourparty.uk/standing-orders.
 7. www.yourparty.uk/organisational-strategy.
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 9. ‘Another fine mess’ *Weekly Worker*
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LEFT

Down memory lane

Some are extraordinarily reluctant to face up to the global dynamics ushered in by the 1989-91 collapse. China cannot be substituted for the USSR. Neither can we revive the Spirit of '45 nor the promises of Keynesianism. **Mike Macnair** explores the perspectives of the CPB's EC and the SWP's CC

By coincidence, two important left documents have become available to us at the same time: first, the draft resolution for the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain's upcoming congress (due November 14-16), 'Capitalism's general crisis and the gleam of socialism - build the united front [BUF] against war and austerity!'; secondly, the first pre-conference discussion bulletin (PCDB1) for the Socialist Workers Party's conference due in the new year - including the central committee's general perspectives document, 'Seizing the key link [SKL]: revolutionary politics in the new age of catastrophe'.

Also in PCDB1 are important CC subsidiary documents on perspectives and tasks: 'Urgent new tasks in the fight against racism, the far right and fascism', 'Revolutionaries and Your Party' and 'Party democracy: what we should defend; what we should reconsider' (this last argues in essence that "we should defend" 95% of current SWP practice, and "we should reconsider" 5%).

The CPB is Britain's most influential far-left group: both because the *Morning Star* paper itself is a daily, and because the political ideas of the CPB's programme, *Britain's road to socialism*, are widely held in dilute form among the Labour, ex-Labour and trade union left. (This is partly because the *BRS* and the CPB's 'official communist' organisational conceptions are adapted to the interests of the labour bureaucracy as a social stratum in holding the membership in subordination.) The SWP is Britain's largest far-left group, with around 2,500 paying members, around twice the size of the CPB (1,270), of the Socialist Party in England and Wales and its recently enlarged splinter-competitor, the Revolutionary Communist Party (mark IV), formerly *Socialist Appeal*.¹

At the end of the day, neither the CPB nor the SWP is decisively stronger than either group's competitors on the left. But both organisations *hold themselves out as* "the" party: the CPB claims it is "the independent Marxist-Leninist party of the labour movement" (BUF lines 643-744; emphasis added; shortened version at line 977); for the SWP, "a revolutionary socialist party that is able to offer leadership within struggles, make the links and offer a way out of the crisis" (SKL, p5).

For both organisations, the perspective concludes with an individual recruitment drive (BUF, lines 936-63; SKL, p9); there is no suggestion of changed relations with the rest of the organised far left. Rather, both are committed to trying to obtain privileged relations for their own small party apparatus with this or that group of 'official left' labour bureaucrats (BUF, lines 541-42, 582-85, 735-39; SKL p7, section 'Mobilising the anti-racist majority', etc).

A third common feature, directly connected to this last one, is that both the CPB and the SWP are partisans of the people's front policy adopted by the 7th Congress of Comintern in 1935. Both curiously *name* this policy the "united front". Thus BUF in its title, and in the section, 'Build the united front!'



The SWP has an awful lot in common with the popular frontism of 'official communism'

(lines 540-89), where the People's Assembly (popular by name if not by nature) is characterised as part of the 'united front', in the hope for Your Party to "form the core of a wider alliance of left and progressive forces" (line 736), and in the projected alliance with gender-critical feminists, conceptualised as a "powerful women's movement", which is "needed alongside a labour movement ... building a united front in practice ..." (lines 901-02). And thus also SKL in the section, 'Mobilising the anti-racist majority'; the line is also reflected in the whole approach of the SWP's 'Urgent new tasks in the fight against racism, the far right and fascism'.

The CPB is a British inheritor of the tradition of the 7th Congress. What is surprising then is the *non-use* in BUF of the expression 'popular' or 'people's' front, and the recharacterisation of such a formation as "united front". The SWP is in origin a Trotskyist group, descended from a movement that defended the *united class front* of workers' parties and organisations (without any suspension of political criticism), proposed by the executive committee of Comintern in 1922 as an alternative to the 'Cartel des Gauches' electoral alliance of the *left* in France, and extended by the 4th Congress of Comintern in the same year. The SWP went over to the 7th Congress conception with the 'Anti-Nazi League' from 1977, in seeking *merely* the broadest possible alliance against 'Nazism', but has never admitted to the shift, instead characterising single-issue campaigns

including bourgeois politicians, of a type that predated the appearance of the workers' movement, as 'united fronts'. It looks as though the SWP usage has infected the CPB.

The fourth common element is that both sets of perspectives in different ways express politics of nostalgia - in this sense like Labour, the Tories, the Lib Dems and Reform. The CPB and the SWP are extraordinarily reluctant to face up to the global dynamics in which the period that began in 1945 is, increasingly clearly, coming to an end; and to the *degree* of decline of Britain as a productive economy and the implications of that. The routes of the two leaderships to these results and to their similar political conclusions are, however, significantly different.

CPB details

The CPB's draft proposes to commit the incoming EC to produce a new edition of *Britain's road to socialism* (lines 943-45). The character of the present document plainly foreshadows such a draft: it is, in effect, a programmatic text, albeit one (like previous editions of the *BRS*) over-tied to *conjunctural* analyses. This makes it much more wide-ranging than the SWP document, and I do not propose to go through all the detail, but merely discuss the broad framework. I have already referred to the commitment to a people's front 'trinity' approach, with the 'gender-critical feminists' seen as the 'official leadership' of the women's movement in the section, 'Sex and gender' (lines 825-903). The third element of the CPUSA-style 'trinity',² the question

of racism, is posed in the same way, but at less length.

The central feature of the argument of BUF is that it is a wager on the proposition that nothing fundamental changed with the fall of the USSR, the 'Soviet bloc' in eastern Europe in 1989-91 and the break-up of Yugoslavia, starting at the same period. And no lessons have to be learned from the fact that the Soviet *leadership* collapsed its own system. Rather, merely, the People's Republic of China and the Communist Party of China replace the USSR and the CPSU as the leadership of the international communist movement. And, while *capitalism* is in "all-round general crisis" (line 59), "China's economy - with its socialist state power, central planning and extensive public ownership - is likely to grow twice or three times faster than those of G7 countries" (lines 35-36).

The place of the 'anti-imperialist camp' of Soviet allies among nationalist regimes in 1949-89 is taken by the Brics+, which "offers developing economies an alternative to western imperialist domination and dependency" (lines 41-42). This point is developed further in the third section, 'Militarism and war or solidarity and peace?' (lines 147-237), which similarly promotes diplomatic alignment with China as the sign of a progressive role.

'Proxy war in Ukraine' (lines 239-73) starts badly, but broadly correctly assesses the war. 'Genocide in the Middle East' (lines 275-333) reflects the left's common understanding of the development and

has the strength of noting left illusions in Iran and the 'axis of resistance' (lines 318-21), and that US policy is driven by its global geopolitical control needs (lines 325-27).

'Cold War on China' (lines 335-71) again displays illusions in Chinese foreign policy and in Brics+. It is also mistaken to analogise the current US policy of aggressive encirclement of China, which is analogous to the British policy of aggressive encirclement of Germany in 1900-14, to the 1947-91 Cold War. The fundamental reason is that, however much the *Morning Star*/CPB may *want* to think of China as the new USSR, on the one hand, China, with its billionaires, stock markets and weak welfare system, has nothing like the scale of the global ideological appeal of the USSR; and because of this, on the other hand, the USA's policy is not one of 'containment', as it was in 1948-76, with accompanying concessions to the working class in the 'west' and to nationalists in the 'south'. On the contrary, the USA continues to press both directly and through the International Monetary Fund for 'rollback' of all the concessions made to the working class since 1917, and for more radical subordination of other countries to US interests. In this context, the *operative* alternative offered by the section, 'Britain's rearmament programme' (lines 373-423) is the promotion of pacifism (part of the general people's front perspective).

BUF's second section is on the ecological issues, especially climate. Again, "People's China, while still developing its economy, is showing

the way forward with its active pursuit of an ‘ecological civilisation’ ...” (lines 129-30); but what is needed in Britain is a “Green New Deal” (lines 123, 125) - an idea that displays common left illusions in the Roosevelt administration’s policies in the 1930s, which were on the road to World War II. The section’s ‘action programme’ bullet-points (lines 134-45) consist of a combination of trivialities (eg, improvements to household waste recycling) and hand-waving (eg “massive investment in non-nuclear green energy technology ...”).

BUF moves into British politics with the section, ‘State-monopoly capitalism in Britain’ (lines 425-93). The subhead recalls the Cold War era concept of ‘Stamokap’ (state monopoly capitalism) as a stage beyond imperialism. Beyond this, however, the section *starts* with the correct observation that:

More so than ever, British capitalism is predominantly a rentier economy, dominated by financial services, generating income from credit and speculation and acting as a conduit for international capital flows. The City is a financial laundromat, washing dirty money from around the world. The banks provide very little credit domestically for small businesses and productive industry, while US private equity is buying up assets for quick profits across the British economy.

Almost five decades of neoliberal economic policy and deindustrialisation have smashed Britain’s productive capacity ... (lines 426-32).

This is not a Stamokap analysis. What follows it is *neither* a Stamokap analysis, *nor* an attempt to make sense of the British economy on the basis of the recognition of its dominance by financial sector skimming from global profits.³ On the contrary, it is a descriptive account of social inequality in Britain, accompanied by a broadly left-Keynesian prescription: tax the rich, borrow more to invest. Like all Keynesian analyses, this is characterised by methodological nationalism: the belief that the national economy can be characterised and managed as a closed economy.⁴

This left-Keynesian economic analysis is then ‘cashed’ in the form of ‘A leftwing programme for Britain’ (lines 495-538). This is, as the draft says, “part of a wider Alternative Economic and Political Strategy (the AEPS)”, that is, a revamped version of the old Communist Party’s and CP-influenced Labour left’s ‘Alternative Economic Strategy’ of the 1970s.⁵ It is, in substance, a programme for a mitigated form of ‘socialism in one country’ - which takes no account of the dependence of the UK on imports for 46% of the food consumed here (leave aside other commodities).

It is also almost purely an *economic* programme: the only *democratic* bullet point is the last: “Repeal repressive laws against rights to organise and protest and take measures to break up monopoly ownership and control over the press, broadcasting and online media.” Democratic questions are deferred to “Britain’s democratic, political and institutional crisis” (lines 591-655), which suggest a series of very limited reforms (more limited than those of the Blair government!).

The democratic demands in BUF are, then, not part of the tasks of the “united front” (lines 540-89). This is to have “the trade union movement at its core”. The CPB’s EC recognises that

... this united front cannot be built by trade unions alone, weakened as they have been by deindustrialisation, anti-union

laws ... Workers need to rebuild strong, militant trade unions rooted in the workplace, combining industrial with political struggle and building leadership at all levels, including more collaborative approaches by unions and trades councils to recruit and organise workers in non-union workplaces.

But the *means* of this policy are to be merely the work of the CPB in building trade union broad-left formations and promoting their coordination “inspired by the successes of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, which brought together workplace militants and left officials from the late 1960s into the early 1980s to defeat wage controls and anti-union laws”. This is merely empty nostalgia for the 1960s-70s: the LCDTU was a high point of a shop stewards’ movement that had been built in the first place *against* ‘left officials’ in the 1940s. The changed structure of employment, as well as the anti-union laws, mean that to construct a new means of rebuilding trade unionism will need new means of mobilising *creativity* at the base - which implies a struggle for political democracy and against bureaucratic managerialism within the movement. On this, BUF is simply silent.

Nostalgia for the 1960s-70s, then, is dominant in the global analysis, which sees China merely substituting for the USSR; in the analysis of Britain, which mentions but takes no operative account of Britain’s radical de-productivisation and dependence on finance; in the policy of prescriptions that follow from this (a rerun of the 1970s AES); and in the concept of the united front - imagined as rebuilding the old 1960s-70s broad lefts and the LCDTU without going through the sort of process that created the *basis* for these movements.

SWP’s method

The SWP CC’s perspectives document is considerably shorter and simpler: 6,018 words to the CPB EC’s 12,148, and sharply focussed on the far-right threat and the anti-racist movement, ‘Your Party’, and building the SWP. It should be apparent that this is also *politically weaker* than the CPB EC’s draft with all the faults of that text.

The starting point is a question of method - and a misleading Lenin narrative, which all Cliffites assert - not just the SWP, but also people in Counterfire, RS21, and so on:

The Russian revolutionary socialist, Vladimir Lenin, argued that the “whole art of politics” lies in seizing the key link in the chain. A political organisation has to assess the link that “most of all guarantees its possessor the possession of the whole chain”.

So what are the key priorities at this given moment? It is the political crisis that (1) fuels Reform UK in the polls and the fascists on the streets; (2) produces the possibility of a mass left reformist organisation, Your Party, of hundreds of thousands; (3) underlines the necessity of building a revolutionary socialist party that is able to fight for leadership within struggles, make the links, and offer a way out of the crisis (p5).

The question of method that this poses is fundamental to the SWP’s general orientation. And it relies on a reading of Lenin to give political authority to this method.

The background to this endlessly repeated trope is to be found in the 1975 first volume of Tony Cliff’s biography of Lenin:

Lenin teaches us that in the complicated chain of political action one must always identify

the central link at the moment in question, in order to seize it and give direction to the whole chain.

“Every question ‘runs in a vicious circle’ because political life as a whole is an endless chain consisting of an infinite number of links. The whole art of politics lies in finding and taking as firm a grip as we can of the link that is least likely to be struck from our hands, the one that is most important at the given moment, the one that most of all guarantees its possessor the possession of the whole chain.”

He [Lenin] often returned to this metaphor and in practice always obeyed the rule that it illustrated; during the most critical periods he was able to set aside all the secondary factors and grasp the most central one. He brushed aside anything that could directly or indirectly divert him from the main issue.⁶

John Sullivan remarked that “Cliff is an admirer of Lenin, but it’s a Lenin viewed from a distinctive angle. His four-volume life of Lenin reads like a biography of John the Baptist written by Jesus Christ.”⁷

The passage quoted by Cliff is from *What is to be done?* Lenin is polemicising against L Nadezhdin, who had argued against *Iskra* that “To speak now of an organisation held together by an all-Russia newspaper means propagating armchair ideas and armchair work” and represents a manifestation of ‘bookishness’, etc: hence that it was necessary first to build strong local organisations around “activities that are more concrete” (strikes, street actions, and so on) before posing the question of a national paper. Nadezhdin had argued that starting with a paper was a “vicious circle”; hence the form of Lenin’s response.⁸

The point that the link to be seized is the one “that is least likely to be struck from our hands” is precisely to emphasise that the overseas propaganda paper is something the party project can *control*. But the Cliffites’ use of the tag is precisely to support a variant on Nadezhdin’s objections to *Iskra* as “too bookish” ... Did Lenin “often return to this metaphor”, as Cliff argues? The availability of the translated *Collected works* online at Marxists Internet Archive enables us to test this claim by searching. The answer is, in fact - twice: once in 1918 and once in 1921 (quoting himself in 1918). Both of these uses are concerned with the tasks of the Soviet *government* and with the contrast between the tasks of demolition of the old order and those of construction of the new.⁹

Cliff’s, and the Cliffites’, use of the tag is a lot closer to Solomon Lozovsky’s article praising Vyacheslav Molotov on the occasion of his 50th birthday in 1940:

Lenin has said that the art of politics consists in being able at each given moment to grasp the key link whereby to disentangle the whole chain.

To single out the main thing, the essential thing, from a multiplicity of facts and events, to direct attention to the thing that matters most is a faculty which Lenin had and Stalin has to perfection. This faculty of separating the primary from the secondary, grasping the main idea, directing attention to the main point, leaving out unessentials VM Molotov acquired from Lenin, under whose leadership he worked for many years, a faculty he has acquired from Comrade Stalin under whose leadership he works from day to day.¹⁰

Trotsky commented on more than one occasion that the Stalinist bureaucratic regime operated by zigzag movement

from left to right after the fact. A good example is in *The revolution betrayed*:

The historians of the Soviet Union cannot fail to conclude that the policy of the ruling bureaucracy upon great questions has been a series of contradictory zigzags. The attempt to explain or justify them “by changing circumstances” obviously won’t hold water. To guide means at least in some degree to exercise foresight. The Stalin faction have not in the slightest degree foreseen the inevitable results of the development; they have been caught napping every time. They have reacted with mere administrative reflexes. The theory of each successive turn has been created after the fact, and with small regard for what they were teaching yesterday.¹¹

Lozovsky in the passage quoted is *praising* this character of zigzag evolution of theories after the fact. Cliff’s version of Lenin was doing the same thing.

Nostalgia

Back to the SWP’s perspectives. The introductory political analysis, ‘An age of catastrophe’ (p1), is extremely superficial. The war drive and the campaign for rearmament almost (not quite) go missing. This present situation is then asserted to be a “very protracted crisis” on the basis of a quotation from Gramsci’s *Prison notebooks* (always a questionable authority, given the obscurity of Gramsci’s writing under prison censorship). Labour is in difficulties because it lacks economic room for manoeuvre (true enough). “The British state faces a serious crisis of legitimacy over its support for Israel.” This is seriously overstated. We could speak of a “serious crisis of legitimacy” if millions, rather than hundreds of thousands, were on the street; or if rank-and-file police officers were refusing to arrest protestors, and so on.

From this superficial discussion we plunge into ‘The far right threat in Britain’ (pp5-6), ‘Debates in the anti-fascist movement’ (pp6-7) and ‘Mobilising the anti-fascist majority’ (p7). Here (and also in the document, ‘Urgent new tasks in the fight against racism, the far right and fascism’) we are still, in Trotsky’s terms, in the ‘zig’ stage of the bureaucratic zigzag. Reality *ought to have* caught up with the SWP leadership - but hasn’t. And its response, for the moment, is to dig the hole deeper. Counter-mobilisation against the far right has been decreasingly effective. The liberal slogan, ‘Refugees welcome here’, has negligible political purchase. The response of the SWP CC is to concede *nothing* to critics beyond very limited anti-Zionist statements from Stand Up To Racism (while still clinging to unity with Zionists).

Like the CPB EC, the SWP CC imagines that there is a mass of trade unionists out there ready to be mobilised (in this case for confronting the far right), if only the leaderships would agree to mobilise:

Second, the trade union movement with six million members has the power to turn out hundreds of thousands. But why hasn’t it mobilised its big battalions? Many union leaders shy away from talking about immigration, fearing it would cause a row with their own members. But there should be an argument in the unions about racism (p7).

Missing here is the very limited ability of trade unions to mobilise their memberships for *any* purpose. The SWP CC obviously will not celebrate the LCDTU and the role of the old Communist Party in that organisation.

But in this passage it is, like the CPB EC, nostalgic for the glory days of the 1960s-70s.

But, in addition, the absolute dominance of the ‘confront the racists’ project in the perspectives is in itself a form of nostalgia. The Cliff group in the early 1960s was a smallish group of the same anti-anti-imperialist character as today’s ‘Atlanticists for Western Loyatism’ (Alliance for Workers’ Liberty!) operating in the Labour youth wing alongside other Trotskyists. They ‘jumped on board’ the wave of unofficial strikes and shop-stewardism and grew substantially; all the more so when they launched a unity offensive towards the rest of the left after Enoch Powell’s 1968 ‘Rivers of blood’ speech. But their trade union ‘rank and file groups’ were never as strong as the LCDTU and did not even radically outpace the Socialist Labour League’s All Trade Union Alliance. The 1974 Labour government’s ‘reforms’ radically undermined shop-stewardism and unofficial action.

Cliff’s first response was the launch of the SWP as a party and an attempt to do electoral work, which failed to marginalise far-left competitors.

Then, by good luck, Rock Against Racism - organised without party approval by rank-and-file SWPers - gave the SWP the leverage to organise the Anti-Nazi League people’s front (1977) with the old Communist Party, various Labour and trade union lefts, and other liberal ‘celebs’. This was the glory days, and the SWP has engaged in repeated attempts to recreate the phenomenon - as with the ANL, under its tight organisational control. It is nostalgia for this past that shapes the SWP CC’s perspectives draft.

Time to rethink, comrades. You are looking backwards rather than forwards in formulating your perspectives ●

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Notes

1. The Revolutionary Communist Party (mark I) was a Trotskyist organisation existing in 1944-49, which gave birth to all the later major Trotskyist organisations (Gerry Healy’s ‘Club’-Socialist Labour League-Workers Revolutionary Party, Tony Cliff’s *Socialist Review*-International Socialists-SWP, and Ted Grant’s Revolutionary Socialist League-*Militant*, leading to Peter Taaffe’s SPEW, and Ted Grant’s *Socialist Appeal* - now Alan Woods and Rob Sewell’s RCP). RCP Mark II was an ex-Trotskyist group existing in 1978-97, originating in a split from the Cliffite International Socialists, and descending into the rightwing ‘provocateur’ group, *Spiked*. RCP Mark III is the RCPB(ML), the former Maoist Communist Party of England (Marxist-Leninist), renamed in 1979 at the same time as its turn from Maoism to pro-Albanian Hoxha-ism). SWP PCDB I also contains a polemic by “John C (Colchester)”, arguing that the RCP (mark IV) radically overstates its membership numbers (not a practice unknown to the SWP) and has in fact around 800. This is still around a third of the SWP’s 2,500 dues-paying membership.
2. On the ‘trinity’ and popular-frontism, compare (among many other articles from different perspectives) M Macnair, ‘Intersectionalism, the highest stage of western Stalinism?’ (ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:4e207cae-a7bb-4327-a0b9-2e0ba8332b95).
3. Compare M Macnair, ‘Class composition in a nutshell’ (part 2) *Weekly Worker* August 28 2025 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1550/class-composition-in-a-snapshot).
4. Compare M Macnair, ‘Keynesianism: nationalist ideology’ *Critique* Vol 41 (2013).
5. The history of the AES is conveniently summarised from a ‘centre-left’ point of view by J Callaghan in ‘Rise and fall of the alternative economic strategy: from internationalisation of capital to “globalisation”’ *Contemporary British History* Vol 14 (2000).
6. www.marxists.org/archive/cliff/works/1975/lenin1/chap14.htm.
7. www.marxists.org/history/etol/critiques/sullivan/fourth1.html.
8. www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/v.htm.
9. ‘The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government’ (www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1918/mar/x03.htm); ‘The importance of gold now and after the complete victory of socialism’ (www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1921/nov/05.htm).
10. ‘A Bolshevik statesman’ (www.marxists.org/archive/lozovsky/1940/05/x01.htm).
11. www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1936/revbet/ch05.htm.

CLIMATE

Bleach new reality

We are on the brink of catastrophic climate tipping points, like the bleaching of coral reefs and Amazon forest dieback, writes **Eddie Ford**. Meanwhile, the political class puts economic growth front and centre

In what should act as yet another very loud wake-up call, but will very likely be ignored by a criminally irresponsible political class, Exeter University has published a new study showing that warm-water coral reefs are dying off at a *qualitative* level.

This coincides with the preparations being made for COP30 in Belém, Brazil, November 11-21.¹ The US will not be sending any official representatives, of course, as Donald Trump recently told the United Nations in a long, rambling speech that climate change is “the greatest con job ever perpetrated on the world” - and one of his first acts in office was to pull out of the Paris Agreement, like he did in his first term. In March the US withdrew from the Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETP) - a multilateral initiative launched at COP26 in Glasgow in 2021, under which developed countries help coal-dependent, so-called developing nations transition to renewable energy.

Anyway, with global warming set to breach the 1.5°C limit set by Paris, a United Nations report saying in October last year that the world is on track for 3.1°C of global warming by 2100 - with others making even more dire predictions - the Exeter study (by 160 scientists at 87 institutions in 23 countries) finds that warm-water coral reefs, on which nearly a billion people and a quarter of all marine life depend, are passing a tipping point, though this is questioned by some scientists, as one would expect. Massive bleaching events are now taking place that affect almost 85% of reefs - the worst on record² - and, unless global warming is reversed, extensive reefs will be lost.

This means that the planet's most vibrant underwater gardens, from the Great Barrier Reef in Australia to Florida's Sombrero Reef, are being annihilated by human-caused global warming. Two of these global coral bleaching events have occurred in the last decade and during this time the Great Barrier Reef alone has bleached six times. These repeat events are now occurring too close together for reefs to recover, triggering the mass death of corals we are now witnessing and threatening the myriad creatures that rely on them.

The thermal tipping point of reefs is estimated to be 1.2°C, which we have passed already (the temperature rise stands today at about 1.4°C), so even if you imagine an incredible scenario, whereby warming stabilises at around 1.5°C, warm-water coral reefs now have a 99% probability of tipping over into death. The coral restoration efforts often touted by the media are utterly meaningless (despite the fact that they can be made to look great on TV), if our emissions continue to rise - which they will unfortunately.

Dominoes

Even though no-one likes to be a prophet of doom, there is no ignoring actual facts - they will not go away. The new study points out that corals are merely the canary in a coal mine and in this bleak new reality we are on the brink of other, more catastrophic tipping points - though naturally the report argues that countries must minimise temperature overshoot to avoid crossing even more tipping



Coral: died off

points, as every fraction of a degree *matters*, because it can potentially worsen or lessen the climate crisis.³

According to professor Tim Lenton, co-author of the study, the next Earth system ‘domino’ set to topple could be the collapse of part of the West Antarctic or Greenland ice sheet. Inevitably, the melting of the permafrost will release carbon dioxide which has been locked away for millennia, heating the planet further. In turn, this makes it more likely that other tipping points will then occur and the resulting sea level rise will become largely locked in - threatening to engulf dozens of cities and coastal communities with incalculable consequences.

The report also finds that a temperature rise that would trigger the widespread dieback of the Amazon rainforest is lower than previously thought, especially after two years of intense drought, driven by the warming El Niño weather phenomenon and deforestation. Thus the need for urgent action, as over a hundred million people depend on the Amazon (Belém is often called the ‘gateway to the Amazon’). Nevertheless, the summit has been used as justification for building a new highway cutting through the rainforest and thus an exercise in stupendous hypocrisy.⁴

Perhaps the most severe tipping point is the ocean current, known as the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC), or the Gulf Stream, as this regulates the temperature of Europe and North America and helps to stabilise almost half of the other known tipping points. If climate change causes it to collapse, then both continents would face extreme climate shifts beyond anything our societies have ever seen, possibly leading to the plunging of north-western Europe into a “little ice age” that could see temperatures dip to as low as minus 30°C in Britain, which would experience three frozen months a year. Of course, much harsher winters in north-west Europe would disrupt the West African and Indian monsoons, and hence decrease agricultural yields in much of the world - posing a major threat to global food security. Having said that, the exact point at which this tipping point will be triggered is hotly contested, with some estimates suggesting the collapse of the AMOC

is already in progress; others predict that it will only falter at much higher temperatures.

Positive

Showing mindboggling levels of complacency that makes you think of the last days of Rome, current policy as a rule does not even take tipping points into account - essentially because they present distinct governmental challenges, requiring both governance innovations and drastic reforms of existing institutions.

As explained by a scientist from Oslo University, preventing tipping points “requires ‘frontloaded’ mitigation pathways that minimise peak global temperature, the duration of the overshoot period above 1.5°C, and the return time to below 1.5°C”. Thus “sustainable carbon dioxide removal approaches need to be rapidly scaled up to achieve this”. In other words, it needs more extreme or revolutionary measures to reach ‘net zero’, not less, but the ascending right worldwide wants to do the exact opposite.

However, Tim Lenton remains an optimist despite everything, arguing that in the two years since the first Global Tipping Points report, “there has been a radical global acceleration in some areas, including the uptake of solar power and electric vehicles”, but “we need to do more and move faster to seize positive tipping point opportunities” if we want a “thriving, sustainable future”. This is problematic, it goes without saying. EVs mean the continued existence of the *car economy* and indeed, if the green capitalists get their way, the *expansion* of that economy, which means continuing rising temperatures and general pollution - and further acceleration towards those tipping points that we are allegedly striving to avoid. We need to reorganise the entire economy from top to bottom by getting away from production for the sake of production.

But positive tipping points identified by Lenton and the report, apart from EVs, include solar PV [photovoltaic - light to electricity] and wind power globally, improved efficiency of battery storage and the increased introduction of heat pumps - transitions that “can still be accelerated”. We read

that “coordinated policy action” at “super-leverage points” can “unleash positive tipping cascades” across the various interacting sectors (eg, power, transport and heating), “bringing forward tipping in all”. Once replaced, the report says correctly, polluting technologies are “unlikely to return because the new options are cheaper and better” - also making the valid point that “social attitudes are also tipping” as it is clear that concern about climate change is growing globally, and “even small numbers of people can tip the majority”. The report study also argues that “more positive tipping points” are approaching in sectors including goods transport, believing that COP30’s host nation, Brazil, has great potential for producing green steel, green hydrogen and green ammonia⁵ - helping to “kickstart” these crucial technologies worldwide.

In this way, at least according to the Exeter report, positive tipping points can “rapidly restore nature and biodiversity” with ecosystem restoration tipping “degraded systems back to health”, while shifts to more sustainable patterns of consumption and production “can lead to tipping points in food and fibre supply chains that end deforestation and ecosystem conversion” - which can only mean that “we need to identify and trigger many more positive tipping points” and “better indicators are needed to understand tipping potential”. To this end, we discover the COP30 presidency has launched a *Global Mutirão* (‘collective effort’) to encourage climate action worldwide.

Degreening

Using satellites, we can actually see the *degreening* of the world. Another study that includes scientists from the Universities of Beijing and Pennsylvania shows starkly that the world’s oceans are losing their greenness, as our planet’s capacity to absorb carbon dioxide weakens.⁶ The change in the palette of the seas is caused by a decline of phytoplankton, the tiny marine creatures that are responsible for nearly half of the biosphere’s productivity, and the findings are based on a groundbreaking study of daily chlorophyll concentrations

in low- to mid-latitude oceans from 2001 to 2023. Chlorophyll is a green pigment vital for photosynthesis, of course - the process by which plants, algae and phytoplankton convert sunlight, water and carbon dioxide into oxygen and glucose. It is one of the foundation blocks of life on Earth.

Using deep-learning algorithms, the new paper found a significant decline of greenness (about 0.35 micrograms per cubic metre each year) over the more than two decades of the study - a trend that was twice as high in coastal regions and more than four times greater near river estuaries. The paper essentially associates this with a reduction in the ecological functioning of the ocean, finding a 0.088% annual decrease in carbon sequestration capacity, equivalent to 32 million tons (the decline in surface phytoplankton’s carbon sequestration capacity has profound implications for the carbon cycle), and the new paper makes the obvious point: the change was very probably caused by climate change.

Heating

The heating of the upper strata of ocean near the surface has widened the temperature difference with the colder depths, which is thought to be blocking the vertical transport of the nutrients on which the phytoplankton depend. Fundamentally, this confirms theories about the impact of global heating on *ocean stratification*, contradicting several previous studies that suggested algal blooms were increasing in the oceans - indicating a lowering of marine productivity that constitutes yet another threat to humanity and reinforces the need for more careful management of agricultural fertilisation, sewage discharge, deforestation and water pollution.

Yet the right wing tells us that net zero is economic suicide, and what we really need is ‘Drill, baby, drill’. The Tories under Kemi Badenoch have joined Reform in pledging to scrap the UK’s climate change legislation, which was introduced by the last Labour government and strengthened under Theresa May, saying that reaching net zero target by 2050 is “impossible” for the UK to meet.⁷ Instead, Badenoch has promised to “maximise” extraction of oil and gas from the North Sea - which is laughably presented as “cheap and reliable” energy, along with nuclear power.

You cannot help but think that it is only a matter of time before environment secretary Ed Miliband is given the boot (it being widely rumoured that he was under heavy pressure to go during the last government reshuffle) and Keir Starmer joins in the rightwing chorus of warning against economic suicide.

Meanwhile, human civilisation rushes towards climate catastrophe ●

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Notes

1. news.exeter.ac.uk/research/new-reality-as-world-reaches-first-climate-tipping-point.
2. noaa.gov/news-release/noaa-confirms-4th-global-coral-bleaching-event.
3. global-tipping-points.org.
4. bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9vy191rgn1o.
5. bbc.co.uk/news/business-68230697.
6. theguardian.com/environment/2025/oct/17/worlds-oceans-losing-their-greenness-through-global-heating-study-finds.
7. bbc.co.uk/news/articles/czrp2k3m3deo.

OBITUARY

This son of York

Jack Conrad remembers an old India hand, a former WRP member, a printer, a layout artist and a dedicated communist partisan. Phil Railston (Kent), September 2 1942-October 17 2025

How to describe him? Cantankerous, offbeat, self-deprecating, wry, dedicated, sceptical, loyal, talented, hard-working, hard-drinking. Many other descriptions come to mind. He was a complex personality.

We first came across Phil in the aftermath of the 1984-85 miners' Great Strike. Our faction, the Leninists of the CPGB, began Sunday seminars in London (ongoing as Online Communist Forum). From a founding core of just four comrades, we had painfully built a useful little circle: leading members of the Young Communist League, experienced CPGB cadre ... and a good few amongst the Miners' Support Committees.

It was Reg Weston who introduced Phil. Comrade Reg had been member of the 'official' CPGB dating back to the early 1930s - having been in the Labour Party, he was recruited by none other than R Palme Dutt. Comrade Reg went on to become a subeditor on the *Daily Worker*. Both comrades were local activists in north Kent (hence the cadre name). Reg lived in Higham, Phil in Rochester (on a house boat).

Cross class

So who was Phil Railston? Born in wartime York, his parents formed what might be called a cross-class alliance. His father was a clerk on the London and North Eastern Railway. His mother established, owned and ran a successful bakery, employing a good handful of workers. Both were true-blue Tories and smoked like chimneys. Even though he was underage, young Phil would join dad for a drink at the local Conservative and Unionist Club. Here he acquired a taste for good beer - in York that still means Sam, not John Smiths. Phil also became class-conscious.

It was not only the everyday snobbery, social climbing and bigotry of the Conservative Club. His parents lived in a posh(ish) estate, walled off from the council house hoi polloi. Phil began to sympathise with those at the bottom. Something reinforced by attending a minor public school as a day boy.

He shined neither in sports nor academically. Being dyslexic constituted a huge handicap, which simply got you marked down as 'thick' (that despite dyslexia being a recognised condition since the late 19th century). It is not that Phil developed a chip on the shoulder. But he knew that the world was not fair and could be extraordinarily cruel.

Though hardly excelling academically, he secured a place at Hull. Purportedly the student union had the country's longest bar - a source of infinitely greater pride for our Phil than the fact that Philip Larkin ran the university library. You can guess where he spent most of his free time.

Having graduated, Phil went on to qualify as a social worker. Though trying to navigate the tortuous medical, educational and bureaucratic obstacles facing drug addicts, alcoholics, former prisoners, young kids just shown the door by their orphanage, victims of domestic abuse, the physically infirm and the mentally ill, he knew perfectly well that he could provide



In his natural habitat

no more than a sticking plaster. Nonetheless, he always did his best. Without a privileged background he felt that he could easily have been one of his own clients.

Rainy season

When Phil's parents died, he came into money. Enough to live off the interest. Especially if, as he did, he travelled abroad and lived cheaply. In those days it was possible to go overland all the way through Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and south-east Asia ... indeed he went all the way to Australia via Indonesia (Bali struck in particular). He worked on farms in Australia.

However, Phil spent most of his time in India. He went everywhere. The deserts of Rajasthan, the mountains of Zaskar, the lakes of Kashmir, the verdant backwaters of Kerala. The former Portuguese colony of Goa was a favourite haunt: beaches, bars and wild-growing ganja. Unlike many westerners, Phil thought nothing of staying throughout the monsoon: landslides are common, streets turn into rushing rivers and masses of poisonous snakes emerge from flooded burrows seeking dry ground. Sipping on cashew or coconut feni, Phil would be in his element. For visa renewal reasons he had to leave India every six months. That meant Nepal, Sri Lanka ... and a return ticket.

What brought Phil back to Blighty was the miners' Great

Strike. Knowing no better, he joined the Workers Revolutionary Party. Up at the crack of dawn he would pick up bundles of its colour daily, *The News Line*, from the local railway station (a lot of the finance came from the Libyan Jamahiriya and other Arab countries). Activity was intense and unremitting. There had, after all, been an uninterrupted revolutionary situation since 1973! Not that WRP members were allowed to join the Miners' Support Committees. That would see them mixing with the rest of the left. Intolerable for the WRP's sectarian leadership.

Phil attended schools at the famous Red House in Derbyshire. Gerry Healy was a headline speaker. Phil did not know quite what to make of the founder-leader. Healy would begin his lectures on dialectical materialism by touching upon this or that problem facing the WRP ... that made a certain sense. But then he would turn to his blackboard, where he would proceed to excitedly chalk boxes, circles and lines which denoted "being", "non-being", "becoming", "cause", "effect", "transformation", "absolute essence", then "positive semblance" - all logically ending in the "sensuous stage of the cognitive process" (G Healy *Studies in dialectical materialism* London 1982, p45). As one abstract category developed into another, most of the audience would get hopelessly lost. Some thought it was genius at work,

others Hegelised pseudo-Marxist gobbledegook ... not that you could say it was Hegelised pseudo-Marxist gobbledegook out loud.

But the latent strains in the WRP were about to explode. The miners had been defeated, exhausted members drifted away in droves and sales of *News Line* plummeted ... meanwhile the WRP denied any defeat and insisted that revolution was still just around the corner (echoed by Alan Woods and today's Revolutionary Communist Party).

Phil could tell that something was seriously amiss. Little groups of core leaders huddled together, along with their closest confidants. Shella Torrence and Richard Price, Gerry Healy and Corin and Venessa Redgrave, Tony Banda and Cliff Slaughter, etc. Then - bang - October 1985. Healy was expelled. For a brief moment there were two versions of *News Line*. One with a red price star, the other with a white price star, each carrying on as if it were business as usual. Soon Healy was charged with the sexual abuse of at least 26 female comrades. The WRP splits proceeded to split and split again till they were mere dust.

For a short while Phil was a member of Richard Price's group. But not for long ... he got to know Reg Weston and then our CPGB faction. From then on it was Phil Kent and no looking back.

Our ranks

He fought against the poll tax. Going to prison ... for days at a time. There he met all kinds of people, including a convicted murderer. Phil thought he was a nice bloke.

He stood in solidarity with the Timex strikers in Dundee. The company sacked 340, mainly female, workers, because of their refusal to take a savage pay cut. Down in London, Phil was arrested and put on trial for conspiracy. Supposedly he had intended to torch one of the company's offices. Actually the idea was to paint slogans. Along with another CPGB member and two CPGB supporters, that could have meant eight years each. The supporters wobbled and could easily have caved. However, our legal team, advised by Anne McShane, put up an unashamedly political defence ... the jury found them not guilty. Vindication.

Phil attended our schools in Corfu, Crete, Andros, Bulgaria and Catalonia. He also joined our newly established print shop. Mastering the somewhat quirky workings of our aged Komori proved well within his grasp. However, as we slowly ran the Komori into the ground, it became ever more difficult to operate. One of my enduring memories is of Phil standing atop of the machine furiously pulling plugs and pouring ink and water ... all the while loudly swearing and cursing at the damned thing.

It needed a radical - and expensive - overhaul. Quality, which was never good, got worse and worse. Myself and Phil were amongst those who urged a planned transition to getting the *Weekly Worker* printed commercially - that despite the increased costs. We were in a minority (there were those who wanted to abandon print altogether). When the Komori finally conked out, the two of us were quietly glad.

Initially, costs went sky-high. But soon, as we could have done in the first place, we negotiated a good deal. Moreover, readers came up with the extra money ... and the quality greatly improved. A win-win result.

Next, Phil turned his hand to layout. I must admit my undying admiration at the speed with which he took to it. A duck unto water. Except, of course, he had never done anything like it before ... and, Christ, he was getting old.

Night shifts

At first layout meant working a 12-14 hour night shift alongside myself, Peter Manson and maybe one of his trainees ... we would then sleep over or return to the office in the late afternoon to join in with collating, franking and bagging the paper ready for delivery from Mount Pleasant. Taxing. After that it was fish and chips and most of our little team headed off to the pub, usually the Pembury, for a well-deserved pint or three (and with him a Dictador rum finisher).

We did more than drink. Besides talking politics, the paper and relevant technical problems, we worked on my books. Phil created the maps included in *Fantastic reality*. We also clocked, nodded at and privately made gentle fun of the occasional other lefty drinkers ... John Rees, Lindsey German, Martin Smith, Peter Taaffe, Clare Doyle.

The Covid lockdown saw us go over to editing and layout online. Something we have stuck with. Still taxing ... but much less so. But Phil was slowly losing it. He would get into a silly huff over nothing ... true, not for more than five minutes. We found a replacement ... but only just in the nick of time. Frankly, we have always operated on a wing and a prayer ... which means that, like Icarus, we could still easily come crashing down to earth.

Not that Phil ever gave up. He continued to collate and bag the paper ready for mailing ... and go for a well-deserved pint - but now usually two, not three (and no Dictador).

Over the last year or so Phil lived in a care home. Comrades visited him and he instantly recognised them. He could effortlessly chat on about York, Hull, India, the WRP, Reg Weston, the CPGB and the *Weekly Worker* ... it was the present that eluded him.

Throughout later life his comrade landlady, Gaby Rubin, provided unstinting support. In return Phil would take her weird, half-crazy rescue dogs for long walks ... including to our offices. Toby would chew wires, run circles and fart. Cookie was no less amusing and loveable.

Every CPGB comrade who knew Phil will have their own particular anecdote. Everyone liked him. The same goes for everyone I know who came across him. Not that Phil was a Zelig. He would argue his corner with determination ... including with me. When he thought I was wrong, he said so - and in no uncertain terms.

Phil was a fine communist and a fine human being. Long may he be remembered ●

OUR HISTORY

About being subsidised

American socialists debated how to finance their press. With the spam and adverts clogging left websites and podcasts, this has some considerable contemporary relevance. Then there are the state hand-outs to the *Morning Star*. Much better to rely on loyal readers. This article comes from the August 3 1913 edition of *The New York Call*

A newspaper is one of those things which sell at the cost of the labor power embodied in them - but with a difference.

You pay two cents for a copy of *The Call* [at the time, one of the three papers of the Socialist Party of the USA]. Small as it is, only six pages, it costs more than that to put it in the hands of the newsdealers. The actual cost of the white paper is nearly a cent, even for such a modest publication as this. The mechanical work, the ink, the transportation, and so on, raise the price above two cents by the time it reaches the dealer.

If this is so with such a small publication, what must be the case with the big one-cent dailies that run fourteen, sixteen and even thirty-two pages? They must sell for far less than the paper on which they are printed. They do. You can take any one of the New York papers selling for one cent or two cents, and as far as actual cost of material is concerned you have more than your penny represents.

As they make money in spite of the fact that they sell for less than it costs to produce them, there must be a reason. If a paper has 100,000 circulation and loses a small fraction of a cent on each issue, it stands to reason that the more it increases its circulation the more it loses. Yet all papers are after circulation. They want to increase the number of copies sold. This is not because they have an altruistic desire to spread their opinions, but because on circulation, even if gained at the result of a loss, depends all the success they can hope to make. Circulation is the life of a paper. But circulation means a loss unless there is a compensating factor.

There always is. If Andrew Carnegie really wished to die poor he could start a couple of daily papers that refused both advertising and subsidies. In a surprisingly short time he would see the bottom of his cash box and could face the world without a cent.

A newspaper has to come out every day. In that respect the demands are remorseless. The cost does not decrease when business is bad, but it does increase when business is particularly good.

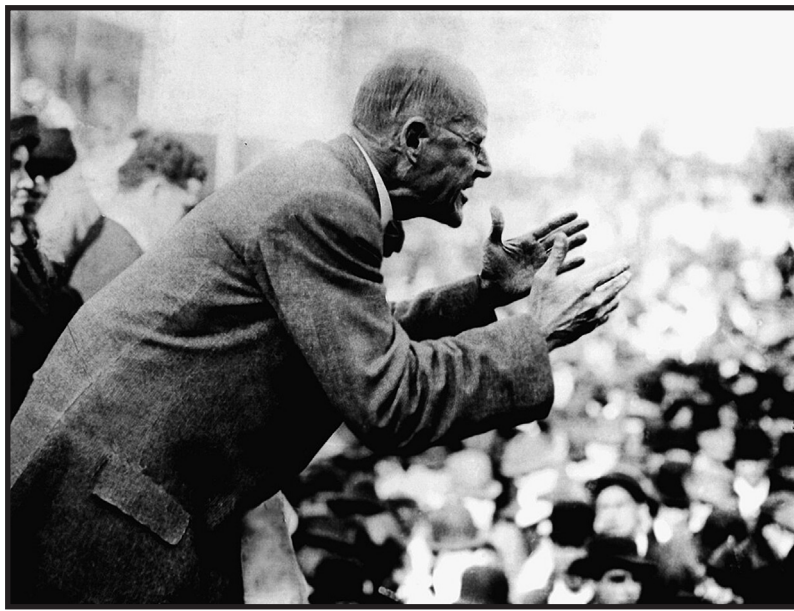
Fixed charges

There is a general idea that at any time you can fire the editorial department and get the paper out with a pair of scissors. It may be that there is some temporary truth to the idea. You can do that for a while. But there are certain things that you cannot get around. You cannot avoid printers' and paper bills.

Take, for instance, a copy of the *Times* or the *World*. The paper in each of them costs more than a cent, the price you pay. There is in them some very wonderful mechanical work. On its straight set the *Times* is exceptional. The photo engraving in the *World* costs many hundreds of dollars. There is work that goes into both of the papers that can hardly be estimated as to cost, but which is enormous. Yet the papers themselves sell for less than the cost of the material on which they are printed.

Here apparently we have a complete upsetting of the rule that commodities, on the whole, sell at their value. These apparently sell for less than their value.

It is worth while finding out why and how, and looking over the question so as to discover what is the reason for it.



Eugene V Debs: socialist presidential candidate in 1918

A newspaper is a necessity. It costs a great deal of money to produce. It gives, in mere physical value, something more than the price that is paid for it. A nickel in real value cannot be furnished for a cent unless there is some allurements, and unless the result seems to be over the penny in value.

As almost every paper is sold for less than the cost of production there must be some factor or factors governing the putting forth of this particular commodity. Those who make the venture are usually men of comparatively small means. Week after week they meet bills and incur expenses that, coming regularly as they do, are almost staggering.

How is it done?

The plain fact is that every paper is subsidized. Its work is bought and paid for in advance. It is not only a means of publicity but it is also a means of forwarding ideas. If a newspaper attempted to depend upon its sales and on the money derived from its sales, it would die of starvation in a short time.

This is true of socialist publications as well as others. We might as well face the subject and consider it for what it is worth.

The Call is a subsidized paper.

When you read the pledge fund, when you go over the list and consider the contributions that are there given, when you think over the annual affair at which over a thousand dollars will be turned into *The Call*, then you get some idea of the source of its subsidy. All of this is open and apparent. It is frank and above board. *The Call* is subsidized by the working class for a well defined and definite end. If it does not achieve that end, that is, if it is not a worthy means of publicity for the working class, then it has dismally failed.

The support and the encouragement given *The Call* show that it has not failed. In every great emergency its friends have rallied to it and have given work and money. They have also given what is of greater value, and that is encouragement. Probably around no publication in this country has there been an equal amount of enthusiastic loyalty and unswerving faith.

From the day it was issued *The Call* has been in difficulties. It has never had any money.

The editor can make no venture, for he is tied down to a certain number of dollars which it is safe to spend. The business manager lives from day to day, and works always in the hope that

the day following will be better than the day previous. For these reasons there can be no ventures, no branching out, no breaking into new fields, and none of that daring which is called enterprise.

Advertising

There are three morning papers here in this city which have not as good a following as *The Call*, which as advertising propositions in the cold business sense of the word are inferior. They are the *Telegraph*, *Press* and *Tribune*. Despite this fact these papers command advertising and are supported by it. There have been rumors as to the amounts of money Frank A Munsey has lost on the press. As a newspaper manager he is a good telegraph operator. Munsey had a paper before, the *Evening News*, a thing that was looked upon as a good paying proposition. He was probably the only man who could have murdered it. He did. He has the *Press* now, and though it really does not amount to a hoot, it commands a certain amount of advertising.

The Tribune is a far better paper, and in Boardman Robinson, who does the cartoons, it has a feature that almost any publication with sense could covet. Editorially it is extinct. In a year there has not been a word in its editorial columns that was worth anything to the people of this country. In news it has been outdistanced. It doesn't know news, and it does not dare publish news when it sees it. The features of its Sunday edition are sometimes fair. But even its most conscientious reader can go over and over its columns and find that there is nothing.

These two papers live. They get advertising. On legitimate advertising they could not live. So there must be something else.

Well, it is this: like *The Call* they are subsidized, only in a different way. They are kept going for the opinion they create, the same as *The Call* is.

The Munsey publication is still Bull Moose [nick name of the Progressive Party founded by former President Theodore Roosevelt]. *The Tribune* is Republican. But neither has a real cause for existence. They exist and there must be a reason for their existence.

There is no disputing the point that newspapers are sold for less than their cost of production. Neither is there any dispute that some newspapers are highly valuable properties. For the time being they "make" lots of money.

In some instances the subsidy is direct. In some instances it takes the form of advertising.

The Call, which is a far better advertising medium than the *Tribune*, the *Press* or even the *American* - even on the basis of circulation - can do very little in the way of commanding advertising. Frankly, we are not wanted. It is not that our following would be unwelcome in the stores. By no means. But our ideas do not suit those who have the giving out of advertising.

An advertiser always has two things in view. One is the selling of goods; the other is the propagation of an idea. If his idea does not get over he wants nothing to do with a publication. For that reason, he always looks to a "class" publication, one that he thinks will meet his ideas and his needs. There is the *Evening Post*, for example. As a newspaper it is inferior to *The Call*. As far as circulation goes we do not think it equals *The Call*. But it is supposed to have a reading public that buys. Consequently, it gets out a fine looking, dull sheet and it commands a lot of advertising. In going over the advertising of the *Evening Post*, the *Press* and the *Tribune*, the wonder grows on us as to the extent to which these papers are and must be subsidized.

On their own merits, and on the commercial advertising, there are few papers that could live for a week. They would lose money so fast they would be ruined.

Abnormal condition

Probably as good a staff as there is in the city is that on the *Sun*. It works well together, and it has some really fine writers. What the *Sun*, a two-cent paper, receives in the way of subscriptions and newsstand purchases could never pay for the staff.

It, like *The Call*, is subsidized.

Fighting fund

Optimism and faith

Clearly my optimism and faith in our readers and supporters is completely justified. While last week we were clearly way behind the going rate when it came to raising the £2,750 we need each and every month, this week it's quite the opposite!

No less than £974 came our way over the last seven days, taking the *Weekly Worker* fighting fund running total up to £2,028. Brilliant work, comrades!

Thanks in particular to comrades WC, PM and SK for their fantastic *three-figure* contributions. In addition we had MM (£75), TR (£40), DL (£30), GB (£25), GD (£24), DR and RN (£20 each), and JL (£10). All these came in the shape of standing orders or bank transfers. In addition, KS and TS both clicked on our PayPal button to donate £50 each, while comrades Hassan and JH both handed a fiver to one of our team!

Finally, comrade IB travelled from up north down to London to help solve a particular technical problem relating to *Weekly Worker* production. Not only did

Business interests, great and small, pay for all other papers excepting ourselves.

We are the only ones who acknowledge the source of our income, and we do that through the lists, regularly published, of contributors to the sustaining fund.

Each copy of the *Times* and the *World* costs about 3 cents to put into the hands of the newsdealers. The newsdealers pay less than a cent for each of them. There have been copies of the *Sunday Times* that cost close on to 10 cents to produce. They sold to the newsdealers for a little over 3 cents. The *World*, within a few weeks, is able to pay \$10,000 for the Connolly expose of Cohalan [a big 1911 corruption scandal] and \$10,000 for the Mulhall letters. It can do so because it is subsidized. *The Times* is able to pay tens of thousands of dollars for its Marconi service. It is subsidized. Some weeks what it gets on the returns for its papers would barely cover its wireless tolls.

In view of the real existing conditions in this country, why should there be any hesitation in supporting *The Call* or any other socialist paper? You must subsidize them, otherwise they cannot exist. The banking houses and the business firms of this country subsidize other papers, and for their own benefit. They know the value of these papers in forwarding their own ideas and they accordingly utilize them. But they have to pay for them just the same.

If socialist papers are needed they must be subsidized in the same way. Why hesitate? For each issue there must be a certain amount put down. Otherwise it cannot appear. Such a subsidy is honourable, and we welcome it and glory in it, and we publish the list of contributors ●

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
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ECONOMY

Gold goes sky high

Under classical capitalism, gold served as the universal commodity. But those days have long gone. So what lies behind the surge in the price of gold? **Michael Roberts** investigates

Earlier this month the price of gold hit \$4,000 per troy ounce. This is an historic high (at least in nominal dollars). But even that high looks set to be surpassed, with investment bank Goldman Sachs forecasting \$4,900 per ounce by the year end. And the gold price in other major currencies has also been rising.

What is behind this unprecedented rally? And does it matter? Before answering those questions let us remind ourselves of the role of gold in capitalist economies. They are monetary economies. Capitalists employ workers to produce goods and services for sale on a market for a profit. But goods and services are not exchanged for each other in a so-called barter system. Instead, historically, different commodities were chosen to be universally accepted as money - as a means of exchange, a unit of account in transactions and as a store of value.

Gold eventually became that universal commodity: ie, the money commodity. It was ideal, because it was not perishable, but malleable into coinage for exchange or ingots for hoarding - and accepted everywhere. As Marx put it, "The truth of the proposition that, 'although gold and silver are not by nature money, money is by nature gold and silver', is shown by the fitness of the physical properties of these metals for the functions of money."¹

Gold was the main money commodity even before the capitalist system of production became dominant in the major economies. But it soon dominated the monetary and exchange system in capitalism, having become the trusted measure of value. However, as capitalism expanded production to new heights, there was not enough gold or gold



New York gold vault

coinage to support the expanding flow of transactions. It became necessary to create 'fiat currencies': ie, coinage or paper notes (or now mainly bank deposits) issued by banks or governments that could be created without limit to meet the growth in the production of goods and services.

Governments now controlled the supply of money (not the demand) and thus they could 'force' people to accept the national currency unit in place of gold. To avoid fiat currencies getting out of line with gold as the

universal value, national currencies were usually tied to gold at a fixed price - a so-called 'gold standard'. Traders could then have confidence in the value of the national currency, while international transactions involving the export and import of goods and services were still settled for any imbalances by gold itself.

In the 20th century, capitalism became dominant globally and fiat currencies mainly replaced gold as the means of exchange - even in international transactions and in the store of value held by companies, banks and governments. Foreign exchange reserves were now mainly in the dominant national fiat currency, the US dollar, with gold relegated to a minor role. The end of gold as the major form of money or even as the ultimate standard of value came with the decision of the US government in the 1970s to no longer exchange dollars for a fixed amount of gold. The gold standard was ended and replaced by the dollar 'standard'.²

Gold was still held in national government reserves, but it mainly became not so much 'money', but a financial asset, like company shares or bonds. It became speculative 'fictitious capital' for investors to buy or sell to make capital gains - more money out of money. But gold never lost its historic role in the memes of capitalists: namely as the universal commodity, or money that is acceptable for all. So in periods when the value of fiat currencies appeared to be 'debased', hoarders turn back to gold. Gold became the financial asset to hold if the dominant fiat currency globally - namely the US dollar - started to weaken. It was going back to the relic of the barbaric past.

There have been several upward bursts in the gold price (as measured in the main fiat currency, the dollar). If economies look like heading into a slump; if inflation in economies rises sharply; if there is a risk of a financial crash - all these crises in capitalist production would mean a debasement of the national currency and, internationally, of the dollar. Thus gold becomes an attractive alternative to the government currency. If

companies, individuals and other governments can no longer trust that the dollar will hold its purchasing power for goods and services, they start to sell dollars for gold.

This time the gold price has risen so quickly because of a number of factors. First, inflation returned with a vengeance after the pandemic slump. Accelerating inflation meant that the real return (interest) on holding fiat currencies fell, even though central banks hiked up their policy interest rates. Gold does not earn interest, but with the real return on 'cash' staying low, gold became more attractive as a financial asset.

Then Donald Trump arrived. Trump's tariff tantrums created huge uncertainty about global trade and, in particular, what will happen in the US economy. And it was not clear what the Trump administration's intentions were: did they want the US dollar to stay strong to keep import prices stable or weaken in order to boost US exports?³ So gold became even more attractive. The US dollar's value against other currencies dropped by over 10% in the first six months of the Trump presidency.

But another reason for the gold rally is that it is seen as a hedge against Trump's tariff measures that so many central banks in the so-called 'emerging economies' (the global south), facing rising US tariffs, decided to increase their gold reserves, as the dollar became less necessary in international trade.

Financial speculation gains its own momentum. Just as with the rocketing rise in the dollar price of cryptocurrencies like bitcoin, gold is another form of fictitious capital investment. FOMO - fear of missing out - is the classic characteristic of financial speculation, and gold, along with bitcoin (the US stock market is now again at record highs), are in the forefront of FOMO.⁴

Where does all this end? First, it ends if the US dollar does not continue to fall (and actually, since July, the dollar index against other currencies has stabilised at a level that is close to its historic average). Second, it ends this time if the world economy goes into a slump. That would kill inflation and so boost the dollar. In slumps, the gold price can rise as an asset to hold (hoard) in crises, waiting for better times. But in its current boom, gold is increasingly driven by speculative demand.

Such speculation will collapse in a slump, and so will stock, bitcoin and gold prices ●

Michael Roberts blogs at thenextrecession.wordpress.com

Notes

1. K Marx *Capital* Vol 2, chapter 2: www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch02.htm.
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Online Communist Forum



10.18.2025

**WE SAY
NO KINGS**

Sunday October 26 5pm
The 'No kings' protests and the growing threat of autocracy in the USA
Speaker from Marxist Unity Group

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

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

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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Survival is a kind of victory

As Hamas moves to reassert control in Gaza, where does the Trump 'peace deal' leave it? There can be no question that it has been severely weakened militarily, but now it has gained a reprieve, argues **Yassamine Mather**



"They create desolation and call it peace" (Publius Cornelius Tacitus 56-120 CE)

For many Gazans, exhausted by two years of devastating conflict that has claimed at least 70,000 lives, there are good reasons to celebrate the ceasefire - however short it might be - and the release of 2,000 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. However, this does not mean we are witnessing a Hamas victory. Far from it.

After nearly two decades of unchallenged rule in Gaza, Hamas finds itself in a difficult position. Following the ceasefire with Israel on October 10, the group has shown little sign of surrendering what power it has left, let alone disarming. It is attempting to reassert control - Hamas fighters, at times masked, have been seen beating and executing those who cooperated with the IDF, looters and members of armed criminal gangs. But all this hides a bitter reality. Having lost a good portion of its military and political leadership, as well as fighters, and under pressure from regional allies and paymasters, Hamas had little choice but to accept the Trump 'peace deal'.

Within Gaza attitudes to Hamas vary. Aid worker Hanya Aljamal, writing on social media, argues that despite its brutality, Hamas is still preferable to criminal gangs. Meanwhile, Dr Ahmad Yousef, a former Hamas advisor, who has at times been critical of the group, told the BBC that a firm hand is necessary until international forces arrive to stabilise Gaza. On the other hand, both supporters and opponents of Hamas agree that, under the current 'peace deal', even if the group does not give up all its weapons, its hold on power will be considerably reduced.

Despite surviving militarily and politically, we can say that the current

peace proposal represents a strategic setback for Hamas. The demand that it disarms and accepts a monitored, demilitarised Gaza cuts directly into the core of the organisation's self-definition. Since its founding in 1987, Hamas has portrayed itself primarily as an armed resistance movement - one that claims legitimacy through its military struggle against Israel. Its political authority, internal cohesion and grassroots support are deeply tied to this image of resistance. To relinquish its weapons would not only end its military capacity, but undermine the ideological foundations on which its identity and influence rest.

Moreover, a 'demilitarised' Gaza overseen by international monitors would drastically reduce Hamas's ability to control Gaza's aid distribution network, legal system, border crossings and patronage networks. 'Demilitarisation' would transfer much of that control to external actors - possibly the UN, Arab states or a multinational body.

The creation of a transitional administration, envisioned as a technocratic and internationally supervised authority, creates many challenges for Hamas. Under this framework, Hamas's role would be marginalised to being a mere local political faction operating within rules set by external powers. Even if it were allowed some participation, its activities would be subject to international supervision: it will have little freedom to act independently or pursue policies that conflict with the broader objectives of the Trump 'peace deal'.

In other words, the entire thing represents a fundamental threat to Hamas's identity and survival as both a militant organisation and a governing

force. Then there are the war captives. The group clearly faced extraordinary difficulties keeping those who still lived alive and fed. Hamas reportedly came to the view that "its continued holding of hostages had become a liability for it rather than leverage".¹ In other words, the international diplomatic cost, the pressure on Hamas and the reputational impact were mounting, making the release of Israeli hostages more necessary.

Hamas rightly points out that the delay in returning the bodies of dead Israelis is because those guarding the bodies were killed during the last months of heavy bombing. As for the living Israelis released over the last few weeks, they seemed to be in relatively good health, given two years in captivity. By contrast, the Palestinians freed from Israeli jails and holding pens looked undernourished, many clearly suffering from the aftereffects of physical and mental torture (most of the 2,000 who were released were called 'prisoners' by Israel, but some, including many teenagers, were detained with no charge, while others were reaching the end of their sentences).

According to a report in *The Guardian*, an official from Gaza health ministry told the paper: "At least 135 mutilated bodies of Palestinians returned by Israel to Gaza had been held in a notorious detention centre already facing allegations of torture and unlawful deaths in custody."²

Leave aside the goal of a greater Israel and annexation. The publicly declared war aims of Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition government have been threefold:

- Returning the war captives to Israel.
- Neutralising Hamas politically and militarily - dismantling its command

structure, tunnel networks, weapons stockpiles and leadership hierarchy.

- Ensure Hamas no longer poses a threat to Israel.

Even though these objectives are now partially translated into Trump's 'peace' framework, the colonial logic remains the same. The plan entrenches Palestinian oppression and increases Israel's strategic leverage. Moreover, Hamas is now cornered militarily and politically, while Israel enjoys robust US, European and regional Arab support (particularly from Egypt, Jordan and Gulf states seeking stability). This alignment ensures Israel's long-term upper hand in any post-war settlement.

Even if, as should be expected, Hamas survives, it does so under sustained pressure on multiple fronts:

- Militarily, its infrastructure is degraded, its leadership decimated and its logistics severely disrupted.
- Diplomatically and financially, it is ever more reliant on intermediaries, not least Qatar.

Domestically, it is quite possible that its standing in Gaza is much diminished - not least because of the huge human cost of the war. On the West Bank, on the other hand, it is quite possible that its popularity has grown.

Hamas's refusal to fully disarm might appear like an act of defiance, but in reality it underscores weakness. It cannot fight indefinitely, yet it also cannot accept total surrender without forfeiting its ideological legitimacy. This dynamic produces a form of 'defeat by negotiation' - a process where Hamas loses autonomy and legitimacy without being decisively crushed on the battlefield.

In effect, Hamas remains alive, but is severely constrained - its military

power degraded and its political ambitions increasingly quixotic.

The ceasefire provides Hamas with a temporary pause, but no victory. The organisation can use this respite to rebuild its networks, restore a degree of civil governance functions and reassert its social influence.

Symbolically, Hamas can claim it survived a campaign aimed at its annihilation. Survival itself becomes a narrative of endurance, allowing it to project resilience to its followers and the broader Arab world. Yet survival without sovereignty or strategic initiative is hollow - a reprieve, nothing more.

October 21 saw Israel's 120-seat Knesset vote 25:24 to give preliminary approval to a far-right sponsored bill to extend sovereignty over the entire West Bank. That despite opposition from Netanyahu and his Likud Party - he wants to do nothing to upset the Americans. Most Likud KMs abstained or stayed away.

However, the general view is that the vote is performative. A push-back against American arm twisting Israel into accepting its Gaza deal.

Either way, the bill will now go to the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee. There would, of course, need to be three more Knesset votes before it passes into law.

That is doubtful. What is clear, though, is Israel's wish to colonise the whole of the Promised Land ... and that means getting rid of the People of the Land •

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