

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



# weekly **worker**

**Christians, the meaning of Christmas  
and the Palestinian revolutionary  
executed by the Roman occupiers**

- Letters and debate
- Farage's racism
- Tory-Reform merger
- Zohran Mamdani

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Towards a mass Communist Party

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## Your Party: personalities and platforms





# LETTERS



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

## Open letter

Dear Jeremy, Given the success of the campaign in the Labour Party (2015-19) to undermine the left by weaponising anti-Semitism, it came as no surprise when, on November 2 2025, while you were being interviewed by Samantha Simmonds of BBC Politics London, you were challenged on this issue. Instead of countering her framing, questioning the application of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance 'definition' or challenging the good faith of the media, yet again you gave the impression of accepting the premise that there had been an 'anti-Semitism problem' on the Labour left.

We, and many other activists and members, were expelled under your leadership as part of the 'anti-Semitism' witch-hunt, despite having fought fascism and racism all our lives. In fact we were expelled because we were, and remain, anti-Zionists. We received no support from you as leader. Quite the contrary.

In Labour's leaked report it stated, on page 306: Jeremy Corbyn himself and members of his staff team requested ... that particular anti-Semitism cases be dealt with. In 2017 LOTO staff chased for action on high-profile anti-Semitism cases Ken Livingstone, Tony Greenstein, Jackie Walker and Marc Wadsworth, stressing that these cases were of great concern to Jewish stakeholders and that resolving them was essential to "rebuilding trust between the Labour Party and the Jewish community".

We find it astounding that you still don't seem to understand, a decade after you were elected leader of the Labour Party, how and for what purpose, with the support of the majority of Labour MPs, factions like Labour Together and the Israeli embassy-funded Jewish Labour Movement, 'anti-Semitism' was weaponised. As activists and Labour Party members, we were collateral damage. You and the pro-Palestinian left, were always their principal target, yet you never seemed to quite grasp this.

At no point in the recent interview did you challenge the assumptions of the journalist. Your response was to claim innocence on your own part. Nor did you question the findings of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, or raise the fact that the EHRC commissioner who conducted the 'investigation', Alasdair Henderson, was someone on the far right, who 'liked' tweets of fascist philosopher Roger Scruton and Islamophobe Douglas Murray of the Henry Jackson Society.

The whole EHRC investigation was shoddy. Chris Williamson secured the removal, after threatening legal action, of all references to himself. The alleged harassment consisted of two members, Pam Bromley and Ken Livingstone, exercising their right to freedom of speech to deny that there was an 'anti-Semitism problem' in the Labour Party. You didn't even repeat your previous criticism of the EHRC as being "part of the government machine".

Nor did you challenge the interviewer's premise that Labour had been swamped by anti-Semitism. Today Zionists, including the JLM, accuse all opponents of the Gaza holocaust of anti-Semitism. It is now clear to most people that Israel's standard response to accusations of war crimes is to cry 'anti-Semitism'. This is not the time to be defensive. This is *the* time to press our message home: that allegations of anti-Semitism were, and are, being weaponised for political purposes.

We are disturbed that you repeated

the mantra of the Labour right that 'one anti-Semite is one too many'. Leaving aside the fact that what they meant by 'anti-Semite' was 'anti-Zionist', this is the wrong way to fight racism. It is noticeable that Labour's right never said the same about one Islamophobe being one too many, as most of them would have been expelled!

If Your Party should succeed in challenging the establishment, accusations of 'anti-Semitism' will again be one of the primary weapons that will be used to attack us. Rather than face down such accusations, as we have seen people like Zarah Sultana, Zack Polanski and Andrew Feinstein do so effectively, it is clear, Jeremy, that you will be unable to defend the movement.

We need a leadership team that can effectively challenge our opponents: that is able to take pride in anti-racism, with the understanding that *Zionism* is a form of racism. This is why we oppose you becoming sole leader of Your Party.

In solidarity

**Jackie Walker**

**Tony Greenstein**

email

## OMOV good points

It has been widely reported that the established socialist groups largely got what they wanted in the votes on the YP constitution (collective leadership, dual membership, etc). It appears to have been much less reported that you lost most of the votes, when it came to the standing orders (I say 'you', as I have not been affiliated with a socialist group prior to YP, unless you count Labour in 2017). In particular, proposing and voting on motions will take place online with a 'one member, one vote' (OMOV) format, rather than being carried out by conference delegates.

I share some of your fears that this allows people who are not engaged with their local branch or with the conference to vote without a full understanding of the impact of their decisions, and this makes it easier for the leadership to push their own agenda. I also recognise that this changes the nature of the relationship of trust between the branch and its delegates. However, I think we can see this structure as an opportunity to think harder about how we achieve full inclusion in our branches in the digital age.

(1) The OMOV system completely changes how the pre-conference planning in the branches will be conducted - instead of trying to decide how we want our delegates to vote, we can have a less directed exchange of views, in which we try to explain our points of view to one another, and then each of us can vote as we see fit.

(2) OMOV also encourages us to engage more effectively and consistently with members who cannot attend branch meetings. We will talk to them after the planning meeting in order to share the outcomes, so that they can be better informed when they cast their vote; and we will be more motivated to include them throughout the year (as we should be doing anyway), so that they will be more likely to take these outcomes into consideration.

(3) Finally, OMOV changes the role of the delegates. We still need to trust them to represent us with their speeches, but now they will hold the responsibility of reflecting the conference back to the branch members. In particular, if a speech on the conference floor raises a point which the branch didn't discuss at the planning meeting, the delegate will be responsible for conveying this to the branch members (many of whom may not have had time to watch the conference themselves), in case it

affects their votes.

So arguably, we need to trust the delegates even more than we did previously, that they can report neutrally on the conference and trust us to form our own opinions. I hope we can all commit to forming a culture in YP where this is possible.

**Patrick Ramsey**

Nottinghamshire

## Organise in YP

Your Party lives - broken, relatively incoherent, primed for a new spat of civil war and with a name that is an insult to the English language. It is nonetheless alive. A bar perhaps a bit too low, but in the weeks building up to the November 29-30 conference it appeared the petulant backroom knife fight may well have strangled any hope for this to be the vehicle for socialism in our lifetime.

Corbyn's aloofness, genuine Bennite democratism and aversion to confrontation meant that the half-departed independent alliance, with Zarah Sultana, Karie Murphy and her orbiters, tore each other to shreds thrice over. They bled the party of tens of thousands of cadre, plus an unquantifiable level of goodwill among the electorate, and were piling it on with renewed vigour, with only days left for the congress. The unnamed (apart from the potentially over-personalised Murphy) steering committee moved to crush a proposed on-the-floor intervention for a new steering group, launching an arbitrary purge of the entire Socialist Workers Party and leading figures in Counterfire.

Sultana's boycott of the first day, the removal of the ability to make points of order and a series of chairs who, when not actively censoring the broadcast, failed in performing the simplest tasks assigned to them - all that meant that the mood going to the second day was defeatist at best. The Socialist Unity Platform fringe event that night focused almost entirely on preventative measures to forestall single leadership and a wholesale ban on the left.

Thankfully, key missteps by the Murphy-Corbyn group prevented that. Firstly, the entire scorched earth policy, which has crippled the party electorally in the short-to-medium term, has, on the one hand, massively strengthened the Greens as the torch bearers of social democracy, making a repeat of Momentum pointless, and, on the other, turned off all but the class-orientated left, massively empowering the groups they have attempted to sideline from the start. This is likely how they came to the conclusion that a purge had become a necessity.

Second, the confused structure of the event, an in-person Zoom call, with speakers chosen by gesturing at the floor (probably the first and hopefully last of its kind), was so half-thought-out that the steering committee clearly failed to predict that keeping the votes open for a handful of hours would disproportionately represent the in-person crowd over the presumably doing-something-else online attendees. While the voting times were lengthened as the weekend progressed, which was likely unnecessary in the case of the incredibly unpopular dual membership amendment, this allowed collective leadership to scrape by. Once this was realised, amendments were open for double the time and the much derided name and standing orders for a full 48 hours.

The editorial line of this paper is that this remains something of a loss, and I would argue that this mistakes defeat for what is as yet a non-decisive victory. The fight, yes, will continue into the central executive committee (CEC) elections, where the question

of dual membership will be decided. The SWP remains purged, and the regionalisation of the CEC empowers the secret leadership, given that many of the left's strongest fighters are based in the urban heartland, but I think, ultimately, it is still ours to lose.

First, it's hard to imagine they have anywhere near the talent of the Sultana bloc, especially if Claudia Webbe's chairing seems anything to judge by. Thanks to Karie Murphy, plenty of successful socialist independents are aligned with us, including the entire former MOU Operations Ltd, all of whom were selected on the basis of their ability and prestige within the left.

Furthermore, the Zoomocracy makes it practically impossible to build any momentum for fresh candidates. There is no established party media, there will presumably be no mass rallies, and the general media won't report on it except to ridicule. All campaigning will be fought and won on social media and in the proto-branches. We already have the loyalty of the majority of those same proto-branches. Many of the candidates that it will be in our interest to support will be the established independent socialists, with their own resources to call upon and established names within the wider left. We will have Sultana's formidable social media machine and mailing lists, as well as the organised left's existing media ecosystem, mailing lists, social media and - most crucially - their ability to vote in blocs. Here the SUP can be a weapon far more than it was at conference.

On the other side, outside of Collective, the Peace and Justice Project, the independent MPs and Corbyn's social media, they don't really have anything to endorse and mobilise with. Not to mention it's not in Corbyn's nature - he made no outright voting recommendations at conference and seems unlikely to openly use his position for CEC endorsements/condemnations. Therefore, short of using the official party channels and/or treating candidates as they did the amendments, I don't see them possibly being able to win a majority. For that, a much wider purge would be required prior to the establishment of a CEC that has formally been given the sole right to oversee one.

Additionally, the intricacies of conference organisation are one thing - far more opaque and easier to abuse, compared to an open purge of candidates, which would certainly invoke a backlash from the broader membership. Given their unwillingness to rig the elections outright on the days of conference, it seems likely they won't go that far. Assuming this, the correlation of forces is in our favour. We wanted a democracy from below, but, as is so often the case, we are forced to contend for that from above.

That can be done. All we have to do is organise around an agreed list of candidates and we can build the party we need.

**Harry O'Donoghue**

email

## Sultana hope

I've watched Jack Conrad's report-back on the Your Party conference and read what the *Weekly Worker* has written, but there is still the generally unanswered question: 'What should we do now?'

The reports by the organised left that I have seen about the conference are inaccurate. It was a defeat. Yes, for example, dual carding is theoretically possible - the YP CEC will have to agree any other parties allowed (seems unlikely) - but the main problem was that the widely supported alternative to have no dual-party ban was not even allowed on the agenda, despite many branches submitting amendments in support of this. Repeatedly YPHQ lost

the motion, but then rode roughshod after such (or had already done so).

In east London, I have seen comments by Socialist Alternative, the SWP and more talking about 'great victories'. When I questioned this, I was told: 'This is the only game in town. We must build Your Party.' So now these comrades talk about the CEC elections as the next great opportunity - as though YPHQ will allow such to be conducted fairly. One of the first things I expect them to do is expel as many of us Trots whose names they know. And who is running the party and what damage can they do until these election results?

Moving a motion from the floor suspending the agenda was agreed by the Socialist Unity Platform. The unannounced attempt to move this at conference sounds half-cocked. They should have known the platform would close them down. A megaphone addressing the attendees (rather than the platform) may have garnered enough people standing to enable a vote from the floor to be taken - but now water under the bridge.

The great instability is the position of Zarah Sultana: she is clearly still dissatisfied - and was on LBC after the conference criticising HQ for still carving her out. I can't see her hanging around in YP. I was thinking of stopping my Your Party activity after the conference, as YPHQ are continuing to do what they wish, despite facing what will doubtless be the strongest assembling of the opposition to them in Liverpool. Yet I have decided to hang around, solely in the hope that Zarah Sultana leads a split to a left party soonish. I am not going to waste time, as comrades did in the dead end of Respect, the Socialist Labour Party or Momentum, if such a split does not look likely.

**Southpawpunch**

East London

## No friend

Brighton and Hove Albion Football Club have excluded *Guardian* journalists from attending matches because of the paper's reporting on allegations concerning the club's owner.

The reporting also involves a long-standing associate of Nigel Farage and a key figure in Reform UK, George Cottrell. This isn't just another lurid story in the world of political fixers and billionaires, nor is it part of a 'smear campaign' against Farage's latest outfit: it's a window into how concentrated wealth, political influence and the gambling industry infests football.

Tony Bloom, Brighton's billionaire owner, is named alongside Cottrell in connection with a gambling syndicate. Bloom is known in the gambling industry by the nickname, 'The Lizard', and used 'whales' (or frontmen) to assist in gambling enterprises to make his fortune. Starlizard Betting Syndicate makes about £600 million each year in winnings via bets, which are sometimes placed on the accounts of frontmen, including "footballers, sportsmen and businessmen".

Unlike the high-profile cases of footballers being banned from playing for involvement in betting, these reports give people a glimpse into the gambling industry's colossal power, and proximity to the game and to politics, and should set alarm bells ringing for anyone who believes football and politics should be insulated from corrupting financial interests. Whether every claim in the court filings against Cottrell, Bloom and Starlizard is proven or not, the fact that such relationships can be plausibly alleged shows how deeply intertwined money, speculation and power have become in the game.

Football fans, by their very nature,



will often feel that referees, including video assistant VARs, and all the way up to the game’s governing bodies, are biased against them, or even corrupt. Everton were twice punished for breaking the Premier League’s Profitability and Sustainability Rule (PSR), while Manchester City’s 115 charges went unpunished - a case in point. We should, however, expect that matches are contested fairly and that owners, staff and insiders are not simultaneously using the sport as a private casino. But, when club owners or their associates are linked to industrial-scale betting syndicates, the risk of conflicts of interest becomes structural, not incidental.

Although players and staff are supposed to be governed by betting rules, it seems that ‘whale’ company betting introduces ambiguity into those rules, freeing them to enter the betting world inhabited by the wealthy owners, those who shape broadcasting deals and, it appears, those who shape regulation and legislation in the case of Farage and Reform. Those betting rules in football no longer appear to be fit for purpose and have created an underground system, enabling profit to the already wealthy at the cost of the integrity of the sport.

This story must be understood in a wider context. Football has, for decades, been embedded in a commercial relationship with gambling companies. Shirt sponsorships, stadium advertising, TV advertising, in-play betting apps and ‘data partner’ deals have normalised the presence of gambling at almost every level of the game. Even clubs that present themselves as ‘community first’ organisations have become advertising vehicles for an industry that profits from addiction, debt and despair.

Syndicates like Starlizard represent the hyper-financialised end of this process: gambling not as casual recreation, but as algorithmic, data-driven extraction, with insider knowledge and power. That is the inevitable destination of a sport surrendered to the market.

There is also a blatant double standard in who gets punished by the rules as they stand. Players such as Sandro Tonali and Ivan Toney were (rightly) sanctioned for breaching betting rules, their careers publicly scrutinised and reputations tarnished. But their cases expose a deeper structural hypocrisy. Footballers are easy targets for enforcement, while the wider ecosystem that enables mass betting on football - including ‘whale’ intermediaries, ‘shell companies’, data syndicates and sophisticated proxy operations - remains largely untouched.

It is widely understood in the gambling world that wealthy clients often operate through corporate fronts, private brokers and third-party accounts to place vast sums out of public view. The result is a two-tier system: players become examples, while the truly powerful - owners, financiers and political fixers tied into the professional gambling infrastructure - are insulated by money, lawyers and anonymity. That is not integrity: it is class-based selective enforcement.

Reform UK presents itself as a voice for ‘ordinary people’ against the ‘elites’. But the presence of figures like Cottrell - and the party’s proximity to opaque wealth, high-risk financial operators and billionaire-linked gambling networks - tells a very different story. It highlights why Reform feels comfortable offering membership to the party’s “inner circle” for £10,000 a year!

A movement genuinely rooted in the lives of working class supporters would be fighting to lower ticket prices, protect local clubs, rein in the

power of owners and attempt to break the stranglehold of ‘the market’ and the gambling industry on the game. Instead, what we see is alignment with a world in which football is just another speculative market and fans are merely consumers to be monetised. You cannot stand with the match-going fan, while moving in circles that profit from turning their club into a data point in a global betting portfolio.

If we are serious about protecting football, the response must be structural, not cosmetic. As a first step, new rules should include a total ban on owners and their proxies engaging in betting, including through ‘whale’ companies. There must be an end to gambling sponsorship in football, which provides the powerful and wealthy lobbyists with access to our clubs. We should demand full transparency over ownership, with full lists of investments made individually or through proxy businesses - full transparency over political donations by football clubs - plus funding of youth and community sport paid for by a levy on gambling companies. All of which should be overseen by real fan representation on the clubs’ boards. These are not radical demands. They are common-sense protections for a national game that has been slowly stripped away from the communities that built it.

Whether the allegations against Bloom, Cotterill and Starlizard prove true or not, the pattern is unmistakable: football is being swallowed by the same forces that dominate all aspects of our lives, such as housing, energy and politics - wealth concentration, deregulation, speculation, capitalism. The real scandal is not simply who placed which bet: it is the system and those with power that make such entanglements commonplace.

And a political party entwined in that system - or even comfortable around it - is not a party for the average football fan. It is part of the problem.

Carl Collins  
email

## Agreement

I am in agreement with Daniel Lazare’s point (Letters, November 27) about my article on the US economy (‘Capitalism’s structural rot’, November 20).

I have myself been saying since my first book in 2019 (*Socialism or extinction*) that interest rates are probably going to start trending back upwards because of the historical bottleneck on profitable investment opportunities, given just how automated production is becoming. I, of course, agree that central banks can’t print indefinitely in order to lower rates indefinitely, although they might be able to pull off negative nominal rates to some extent - for how long and how deeply I do not know - while the state takes on responsibility for innovation that capital cannot afford (while the profits are privatised).

The central bank will certainly try, and if it doesn’t the government will make it try. But it is ultimately damned either way, because so is capitalism. A massive write-off of financial assets is the only possible alternative, as Daniel says, and is partly what I meant, when I said that the capitalist state will have to bail out a smaller proportion of the private sector than it has done during the past two crises. That might allow what remains to enjoy lower rates for a while. But in all likelihood it won’t.

Ted Reese  
email

## Cranks together

Tony Greenstein writes that David Miller has appeared as a guest on the podcast of alt-right US cluckwit Stew Peters (‘Wood for the trees’, November 27). That places Miller

alongside dregs and smegs like Nick Fuentes and Germar Rudolf.

The site’s blurb for the latter is: “Germar Rudolf tells all after leaving prison for exposing the holohoax! Germar Rudolf joins Stew to discuss his being imprisoned by Jewish supremacists for exposing the fake holocaust!” ‘Yes, exactly - that’s the coolly rational anti-racist venue for me,’ decided Miller apparently.

The sad news of his accelerating spiral into uncritical anti-Semitism prompted me, for the first time in an age, to have a look at the website of another figure blown through the looking glass by mangled forms of anti-Zionism: Ian Donovan. I’ll admit I hadn’t thought of him for years - but then, who has? It’s no great shock to discover that one of Ian Donovan’s great crusades now (alongside defending holocaust denier Paul Eisen of *Deir Yassin remembered*) is the exculpation of a fellow named ... David Miller.

Cranks of a blether crank together.

Joachim Ohl  
email

## Targeting migrants

The German media disproportionately reports on violent crimes committed by foreigners, particularly those from predominantly Muslim countries, compared to actual police statistics, leading to a distorted public perception.

The key findings concern:

■ Overrepresentation: foreign suspects are overrepresented in German media reports on violent crime by a factor of roughly three compared to their actual proportion (34.3%) in police crime statistics.

■ Focus on Muslim countries: suspects from predominantly Muslim countries are four times overrepresented in media reports (TV: 70.3%, print: 70.1%), compared to police statistics (15.8%).

■ Disparity in coverage: the text contrasts the extensive media coverage, including a ‘special focal point’ of a 2025 Munich car attack by a suspect of Afghan origin with the significantly reduced coverage of a similar, later incident, where the suspect was a German with no migration background.

■ Media patterns: when TV reports on violent crimes mention the suspect’s origin, 94.6% concern non-German suspects. For print media, this figure is 90.8%. This pattern of distortion is statistically significant across both public and private broadcasters and major newspapers, with some progressive and reactionary newspapers even exclusively mentioning non-German suspects when origin is cited.

■ Impact: this systematic overrepresentation is argued in order to fuel xenophobia and racism, create a false perception of migrants as a threat, and benefit far-right political groups like the AfD, which use this fear for political gain despite police statistics not supporting the ‘foreign crime’ narrative.

■ Racism: the text concludes by asserting that referring to entire groups (‘the Arabs’, ‘the Turks’, ‘the Muslims’) rather than individuals when reporting on crime is a form of racism, as ethnic or religious affiliation has never been shown to be a decisive factor in crime rates.

From what is dished up by the - often corporate - media, it appears as if crime and migration are inextricably linked. But this link might not reflect reality. A recent study examined exactly this connection and found something rather interesting. It showed that Germany’s leading media do report on violent crimes committed by foreigners - but they do so far more often than the actual share of such crimes in Germany’s police statistics would justify. For example:

■ One quarter of TV reports on violent

offenders mention the origin of the suspects. Of these reports, 94.6% concern foreign suspects - the highest value measured since the long-term analysis began in 2007.

■ One third of print reports on violent crimes mention the origin of the suspects. Of these, 90.8% refer to foreign suspects. Yet, according to Germany’s latest police crime statistics, the proportion of foreign suspects - that is, people merely suspected of committing a crime - amounts to 34.3%. In other words, foreign suspects are overrepresented in Germany’s media by roughly a factor of three.

Almost three quarters of the foreign suspects mentioned in media reports come from predominantly Muslim countries (TV: 70.3%; print: 70.1%). This is significantly more than the police statistics show for these countries (15.8%). Suspects from Muslim countries are thus more than four times overrepresented in Germany’s leading media.

On February 13 2025, a 24-year-old man drove a car into a demonstration organised by a trade union at Munich’s Stiglmaierplatz, killing a 37-year-old engineer and her two-year-old daughter. The suspect was of Afghan origin. Roughly 1,000 reports appeared on this case. Germany’s leading public broadcaster - the ARD - even aired a “special focal point” that evening.

Less than three weeks later, something similar happened: a man drove into a crowd, killing two people. Soon after, the identity photo of the alleged suspect began circulating on social media - supposedly a migrant. It was misinformation, as the police clarified: the arrested suspect was a 40-year-old German with no migration background. Almost immediately, media interest waned. There were only half as many reports - 50% fewer than in the first case. Both acts of violence differed in only one notable aspect: the nationality of the suspect. This is neither an isolated nor an exceptional case: it is media reality in Germany. In TV coverage of violent crimes, reports almost exclusively focus on foreign suspects.

One in four reports on domestic violent crimes from the evening news and tabloid magazines of Germany’s eight highest-reach national TV broadcasters mention the suspects’ origins (25.4%). When that origin is stated, 94.6% of suspects are non-German; only 5.4% are German. Yet, according to police statistics, foreigners make up just a third (34.3%) of violent crime suspects.

This pattern of distortion comes at the expense of non-Germans - and it is statistically significant. Worse still, the proportions hardly differ between public broadcasters (95.7%) and private TV formats (92.9%). When Germany’s ‘high-reach’ national daily newspapers report on crimes and mention the suspect’s origin, in an astonishing 90.8% of all such cases the suspects are non-German. Meanwhile, a second pattern emerges across both television and print media. Whenever a suspect’s origin is mentioned, 70.3% (TV) and 70.1% (print) of those suspects come from Muslim countries. Yet, according to official police crime statistics, only 15.8% of suspects originate from such countries. Once again: people from Muslim countries are portrayed as perpetrators about four times more often than the data warrants. In other words, Muslim migrants aren’t more criminal - they’re simply presented as if they were.

The findings are based on ‘high-reach’ nationwide television channels, which account for a combined market share of 55% among 14- to 49-year-olds. At the same time, Germany’s main newspapers still reach a considerable

audience. Overall, foreign suspects are overrepresented by a factor of three in German media, and suspects from Muslim countries by a factor of four. In other words, Germans hear or see four times more about suspects - not even convicts - when these suspects are non-German.

And yet, perceptions shape reality. If Germans feel that foreigners are somehow dangerous, that fear itself becomes real. This plays into what is known as the ‘politics of fear’. The interest symbiosis between Germany’s media and the far right is creating a perception that Germans might only feel safe again when they see fewer foreigners - whether those foreigners are dangerous criminals (rare) or simply fathers returning home from work (common).

Stoking xenophobia and racism are statements like the infamous and widely condemned *Stadtbild* remark by Germany’s chancellor, Friedrich Merz, implying that deporting people would somehow “improve the cityscape”. Echoing the racist ideology of the neo-fascist AfD, Merz also claimed that “his daughters can finally go to the disco in the evening without a daddy taxi!” Yet neither Merz’s insinuations nor the alarmist tone of much German media are based on facts.

The facts are these: leading German media report on violent crimes committed by foreigners far more often than their actual share in police statistics would justify. Worse still, mere suspects - not convicted criminals - from Muslim countries are portrayed particularly unfairly, overrepresented by a factor of four. In Germany’s police statistics, only about a quarter of all alleged crimes are attributed to ‘criminal Arabs’. Yet Germans are bombarded with headlines about foreign crime. In one notorious example, *Bild* blared: “Shock figures: 100,000 crimes committed by Afghans!”

Such headlines - and countless others like them - are broadcast to Germans almost daily. This happens not out of ignorance, but in defiance of what is known. Even Germany’s so-called ‘quality media’ participate. They too, it seems, have been influenced by the AfD’s rightwing framing of ‘foreign crime’.

Online, the problem is amplified: clickbait thrives at the expense of migrants. Yet racism in German media does not stop there. To refer to entire groups - ‘the Arabs’, ‘the Turks’, ‘the Muslims’ - rather than individuals when reporting on crime is nothing short of racism.

While there are explanations for why certain social strata, age groups or genders - mostly men - may exhibit higher crime rates, ethnic or religious affiliation has never been shown to be a decisive factor. But, for much of Germany’s media, it seems to be. The usual suspects are always the same. Playing one group off against another may serve rightwing populists - but it poisons Germany’s social cohesion.

After years of systematic overrepresentation of non-Germans in crime reporting, parts of the German public have been led to believe that migrants pose a threat. At the same time, Germans from migrant families feel - rightly - unfairly treated and criminalised. The winner is not German society, not truth, not fact - but the ultra-right, neo-Nazis, and the AfD. These groups pose as protectors of the German people against ‘dangerous foreigners’ - a threat that, according to police statistics, simply does not exist.

Germany is not threatened by ‘foreign crime’, just as it was never threatened by the ‘Jewish world conspiracy’ that Hitler claimed.

Thomas Klikauer  
Germany



**FAR RIGHT**

# Return of gutter racism

Nigel Farage will no doubt survive accusations of boyhood racism. This highlights the drift of politics to the right, argues **Paul Demarty** - and the total failure of liberal anti-racism

**U**K politics has been oddly dominated by the news that Nigel Farage might be a bit of a racist - or at least, might have been, in his days of boarding at Dulwich College. It is also rumoured that the pope is a Catholic; and in northern Ontario a woodsman swears he saw a bear relieving itself, while out on a walk. It truly is a crazy time to be alive.

We cannot know for certain the truth of allegations against him from dozens of Old Alleynians, but for a major leader of the far right in this country - indeed even of the far *Tory* right - to have never used a slur would be an honest-to-god, man-bites-dog surprise! Add in the frankly bestial culture of such schools - certainly in Farage's day - and there can be no real doubt on the matter.

The first such allegation was made by Michael Crick back in 2013, who discovered a letter from a teacher describing the young Nigel as a "racist" and "neo-fascist". This is old news, made new again by the recent successes of Farage's Reform UK outfit. Further, similar stories surfaced in 2019 and 2021, in *The Independent* and then in Crick's biography of Farage.

It is *The Guardian* which has been doing the digging for the current wave of allegations, which they began publishing in October. These include, among other things, the relentless use of the slurs, 'Yid', 'wog' and 'Paki' (the stories from various sources are quite consistent in details of this sort), and the production of a charming song called 'Gas them all', to the tune of George Formby's 'Bless them all'. According to one former pupil, Jean-Pierre Lihou, the chorus went like this: "Gas 'em all, gas 'em all, into the chambers they crawl. We'll gas all the Paks, and we'll gas all the Yids, we'll gas all the coons and all their fucking kids." He was apparently particularly cruel to Peter Ettedgui, now a film producer and director, who is Jewish.

## Replies

The story is now more about Farage's replies to these allegations - and moreover a new wave of rightwing whining about the "bias" of the media, usually from their bully pulpits in the very same media. When *The Guardian* contacted Reform for comment, it received a very robustly worded letter from a barrister, calling the allegations "wholly untrue". The same barrister replied threatening action if allegations of racism were published, when the paper contacted Farage directly.

Yet that has not always been the manner of his replies. In 2013, his explanation to Crick was that he said some "ridiculous things" to this teacher that "upset them". Racist things? "Not necessarily racist things. It depends how you define it." When an anonymous letter to *The Independent* - now known to be from Lihou - mentioned his apparent love of Oswald Mosley in 2019, Farage retorted that he had no time for Mosley, an advocate of a United States of Europe.

That slightly evasive reframing of the story has also been in evidence in recent weeks. "Have I ever been part of an extremist organisation or engaged in direct, unpleasant, personal abuse, genuine abuse, on that basis? No," he told BBC Wales in November. But that wasn't the question. As he was pressed by the BBC and ITV later on, he decided to go on the attack, reminding



**Horrible as a boy, horrible as a man**

these organisations that they put out plenty of racist content in the 60s and 70s, and demanding an apology from them. (I daresay one has already been made long ago, but perhaps not.) As I write, *The Guardian's* lawyers are still waiting for his promised letter before action.

The interesting questions are, in any case, not directly related to the matter of whether Nigel Farage was an odious little shit of a teenager - or a racist odious little shit of a teenager. (As a former teenage boy myself, I am quite sure that we all have deeply regrettable memories of our adolescence, and I am happy to forgive, as I would hope to be forgiven.) It is rather a matter of the role Farage plays in politics now - indeed has played since he assumed leadership of the UK Independence Party, and broadened its foundational euroscepticism to an assault on all immigrants, especially the Muslim religious minority.

In this respect, Farage - while a canny and talented politician, whose individual gifts have no doubt played a part in the recent victories of his political trend - must be placed in the context of a broader political regression: a shift from an officially endorsed ideology of cosmopolitan liberal inclusion to one of national chauvinism and broader political reaction. The cosmopolitan liberals are in abeyance at present, but have not wholly disappeared; and so there has been such a violent reaction to these allegations - and a violent counterreaction to the reaction.

## One-eyed

Thus a slightly hysterical op-ed in the *Telegraph* - rather typical of that paper's opinion pages these days - by Camilla Tominey. "To be clear," she writes, "I sympathise with the Jewish students from Dulwich College, who feel aggrieved by comments they say were made nearly half a century ago." (Apparently no such sympathy is forthcoming for the black and Asian students so aggrieved.) Yet the real issue is the "hypocrisy" of the liberal media, by which she means Farage's idiotic gotcha about *The black and white minstrel show* and the like, which she somehow succeeds in making more idiotic:

Many of the moralising Boomers and Gen Xers now lining up to condemn Mr Farage happily watched these programmes at the time and thought nothing of it. They were the same schoolchildren who mocked disabilities with Joey Deacon jokes, used homophobic

slurs, laughed at men in drag, and recited the offensive original version of 'Eeny, meeny, miny, moe'. Selective moral outrage is not principled: it is opportunistic.

I have a hunch that this is true of exactly none of the actual journalists and broadcasters who raked this particular muck (they are all far too young to fit her description), so an account is demanded of *their* motivation. We can suppose her account is the same as the one she imputes to Labour for delaying several mayoral elections: "they are doing what socialists always do when the walls close in: chipping away at democratic principles, muting the voice of ordinary people, and attempting to 'manage' public sentiment instead of confronting it honestly."

The trouble with this view is that it is comically one-eyed. The Tories introduced American-style voter ID laws in an open attempt to reduce turnout among their opponents' voters, and have repeatedly used outrageous calumnies against Labour leaders with far less basis in reality than - apparently - those made against Farage, in order to depoliticise politics and scare voters into line. In America, the second Trump administration has been a single continuous attempt to suborn the media, the academy, the legal profession and anyone else deemed guilty of *lèse-majesté*. Both US parties are presently engaged in tit-for-tat gerrymandering in the states they control. This is not 'socialism', however defined, but just the default setting of politics at the present time in western 'democracies'.

Tominey is right, of course, that this is *bad*. It really does amount to a series of attempts to avoid honest confrontation with the public will, which after all would mean giving us a meaningful set of political choices to sort between. If we discard all the character assassination, the fight between Labour and Reform at the present time seems almost laughably trivial. Starmer and Shabana Mahmood promise to harass migrants for breaking the rules, like a pair of overpromoted traffic-wardens; Farage proposes to do so for the sheer joy of it, as one might expect from somebody who (allegedly) used to sing cheerfully about gassing 'Yids' and 'coons'.

## Anti-racist failures

Tominey also has half a point in her claim that anti-racism, specifically, has seen heavy use in the policing of political boundaries. The combination of tough rhetoric on migration with

specific allegations of deep racism was already common in the 2000s, when it was Nick Griffin's British National Party that was to be quarantined, and Farage's UK Independence Party still remained more or less a party of retired colonels, slightly too loopy for the Tories.

Yet that too has been used against the left, most obviously in the weaponisation of factitious claims of anti-Semitism against the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership. In those, happier, times the Tories, the Farage-curious *Guardianista* liberals and many prominent leftwingers could unite in an anti-racist crusade. (Corbyn himself, in throwing people under the bus, was a cowardly accomplice.) More recently, successive British governments have concocted further factitious claims of anti-Semitism, so as to continue assisting an act of genocide without embarrassment.

## Media manipulation

The ease with which such campaigns for political hygiene can be manipulated by the bourgeois media-political complex ought to make us wary of merely adopting wholesale essentially subjectivist, liberal versions of anti-racism. There is also the small matter, of course, that it plainly does not work. After a period of decades, in which allegations of this sort, in such numbers, would certainly have immediately terminated a mainstream political career, Farage feels comfortable just brushing it off. That is one indication among many that the worst sort of shameless gutter racism is now socially acceptable once more.

By now, therefore, the energy expended in recent years on ever-more abstruse 'inclusive language' and the fight against workplace 'microaggressions' really ought to

strike all honest observers as a total waste. Liberal anti-racism succeeding in building an ideological edifice in the cultural institutions and workplaces of bourgeois professionals; Trump and Farage huffed and puffed, and blew the house down.

We are still in the period of transition, which I think accounts for the rather schizophrenic quality of political discourse at present. At one moment, Farage brushes off accusations of racism as silly; the next, he wails about being victimised (in the silliest instance, claiming that Sir Keir Starmer's Labour conference speech put his life in danger). Gestures of defiance are replaced at a moment's notice with oceans of tears. None of our politicians can make up their minds whether they are in the boxing ring or on the fainting couch.

An effective response to all this is hardly impossible, but brings us back to the basics, familiar to regular readers of this paper. We need political internationalism, to fight for higher values than the British national interest; we need concrete organs of solidarity between native and migrant workers, including organised self-defence; we need unashamedly partisan media platforms that can plausibly contest the corruption and cynicism of the capitalist media and expose the dissimulations of mainstream politicians of all stripes.

To have all of these things at once, working in concert, we need the basic sinews of organisation provided by a disciplined, *democratic* party. A top down rainbow coalition as envisaged by the Your Party powers-that-be, will not do it - and nor will yet another anti-racist front campaign of the Socialist Workers Party stamp •

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## CONSERVATIVES

# Tectonic shifts on right

Though denied, it seems quite possible that Nigel Farage will strike some sort of deal with the Tories, either before or after the next election. Some even talk of a merger, reports **Eddie Ford**

**S**hortly before Labour got its “loveless landslide” in the July 2024 general election it had become obvious that our prior expectation, that Reform support would eventually bleed into the Tory Party as election day approached, had been disproved. Quite the reverse was happening, with Tory support bleeding steadily into Reform UK!

At the time, as life itself was teaching us a lesson, we raised the possibility of the Tories and Reform merging and renaming - maybe something like the ‘Conservative and Reform Party’, or the ‘Conservative, Reform and Unionist Party’, though we did wonder whether such a name would last long, as its usefulness could surely have only a limited shelf-life. But, as we noted, the entire history of the Tories has been one of *splits and mergers* - beginning as a faction inside the Whigs and eventually leading to the Conservative Party, as we know it today, having incorporated all sorts of disparate and varying elements. Hence we never thought that the Tory Party - as some foolishly thought - would do the ‘sensible’ thing by moving to the centre, for the relatively simple reason that the ‘centre’ is moving ever more to the right: therefore the right is moving further rightwards, with the ‘left’ also going rightwards under a remorseless gravitation pull.

When we first mooted the idea, it might have sounded like pure speculation (if not an exercise in counterfactual thinking) - especially the thought of a post-election Nigel Farage being able to establish a “bridgehead” in parliament to the 2029 general election, where he will actually make a serious bid to become *prime minister*. But now that does not sound too fanciful, with every poll consistently showing Reform



**Kemi and Keir: Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dumb**

comfortably ahead of the other parties. Find Out Now gives it a *17-point* lead over Labour and 11 points more than the Tories. As a consequence, the chatter about him becoming prime minister, or Reform winning the next election, becomes ever louder.

### Inevitable

Then last week we had the report in the *Financial Times* about Farage telling donors that he expects a deal, or even merger, between Reform and the Tories ahead of the next general election, as he does not believe he can sweep to power alone because of the ‘first past the post’ electoral

system, which *historically* has always favoured the established parties.

According to the story, one donor informed the *FT* that Farage told him that such a deal could *only be done on his terms*, due to the fact that the Reform leader felt “betrayed” after the pact he made with the Tories at the 2019 election. His Brexit Party, which subsequently gave birth to Reform, had agreed not to field parliamentary candidates in Tory-held constituencies, assuring Boris Johnson of a big win against Labour. Another associate who met with Farage in recent months, we read in the *FT*, recounted that Farage described a pact or merger as “inevitable”, but added that it might take some time - also saying that Reform “held more power”, so will get to dictate the agenda.

Naturally, Farage has denied the story, saying that “sometimes people hear what they want to”, but predicted that, after next May’s devolved elections in Scotland and Wales and local polls in England, the Conservatives will no longer be an alternative governing party. Farage claims that he “would never do a deal with a party” that he does not trust, just a “reverse takeover” - something that he has been talking about since before the 2024 election. Since then Reform has accepted more than 21 current and former Tory MPs. Danny Kruger became the first sitting Tory to defect to Reform in September, not to mention former Boris Johnson heart-throb, Nadine Dorries; and one of the latest defections came a few weeks ago in the shape of former deputy Conservative chair, Jonathan Gullis. Of course, no MPs from any other party have made the journey to Reform, clearly highlighting the ideological overlap between the Conservatives and Reform.

But it is worthwhile noting what Farage also said about the Tories: that “a deal with them *as they are* would cost us votes” (my emphasis). Now, those three little words have been forensically examined by the commentariat, implying as they do various hidden meanings - so there is always the danger that you can read too much into them. But, on the other hand, Farage is presumably looking forward to a post-Kemi Badenoch Tory Party, which you can only say is reasonable

- very few expect her to last long, even though she has sought to distance the party from its final years in power. In particular, she has admitted her party “got it wrong” on immigration after the so-called ‘Boriswave’ that saw almost a million legal migrants arrive in the UK within a year. Trying to move into Reform territory, she has also pledged to “shrink” the size of the state, abolish stamp duty and tear up Britain’s legally binding 2050 net zero target, which was signed into law by Theresa May.

Yet, for all her efforts to make the right political sounds, Badenoch appears to have ruled out the idea of joining forces with Farage, notably saying earlier this year that she is “the custodian of an institution that has existed for nigh on 200 years”, thus cannot “just treat it like it’s a toy and have pacts and mergers”.

Seemingly dismissing Badenoch as a potential partner, the name of Robert Jenrick, the shadow justice secretary, is increasingly heard within Reform circles - he is definitely vile enough to get the attention of bigoted rightwing voters. You can glean from reading the rightwing press that Jenrick is among those who believe a deal is inevitable, and a leaked recording from April has him vowing to “unite the right” before the next election. Indeed, in an interesting reversal of what you might assume, a Jenrick ally has been widely quoted as saying that, on some issues, “Rob is to the right” of Farage, and remarks that the Reform leader is “proceeding cautiously, because he wants to be seen as more moderate”.

### Jenrick

Jenrick is also behaving cautiously, though whether he wants to be seen as “more moderate” is highly debatable, declaring to journalists that it “wasn’t very long ago that I was running to be leader of the Conservative Party, so I’m not going anywhere” - which you can interpret any way you like. But, whatever the exact nature of the relationship between Tories like Jenrick and Reform, Conservative Party sources have suggested that any discussions about a pact would have to remain private, or take place *after* the election - one shadow cabinet minister arguing that Reform would not want to talk about it beforehand, “because so many people still don’t like Tories”.

Having said that, Conservative donors for the most part continue to stick with the Tories - the oldest and most successful party in modern history - with Kemi Badenoch seen as “improving” her performance in recent months. According to Electoral Commission data, the Tories secured £6.3 million in donations in the first half of the year, three times the £2.1 million raised by Reform, which has been reliant on a small pool of rich donors.

Since then, of course, we have had the £9 million donation from Christopher Harborne, the Bangkok-based tech capitalist who has global business interests, not least in cryptocurrencies. This single donation - the largest ever by a *living* individual - means that Reform has raised more in donations than the Tories, Labour and the Liberal Democrats *combined*.

Anyway, showing the difficulty of striking a deal between the two parties (and perhaps indicating that timing is everything), although Reform is “miles ahead in the polls” - to use the words of Anthony Wells from YouGov - a significant number of Tory voters were not inclined to back Nigel Farage,

even if there was a straightforward choice between Reform and Labour. This can only mean, in the view of Wells, that there are “some Tories that really don’t like Reform, so there will be some leakage from right to left” - not just from left to right, relatively speaking. YouGov estimates that about a *quarter* of the Conservative voting base would actually be willing to back Labour if it kept Farage out of No10, while three quarters would be content to vote Reform (a quarter of them “enthusiastically”).

However, on balance, it seems the case made by the *FT*’s Stephen Bush is essentially correct when he writes that “talk of a Reform-Conservative pact is no longer far-fetched” and, yes, “a deal would involve a lot of losers on the Tory side, but by the next election the party might just be desperate enough”, with or without Badenoch or Jenrick. This means, argues Bush, that the Tories, with their 119 seats to Reform’s five, “would have to accept that they were unlikely to have first dibs on any seat they do not currently hold”, and “there is no doubt that Farage would be the senior partner”.

### Panic

By all accounts, this is exactly the sort of general election strategy envisaged by Morgan McSweeney, Sir Keir’s chief of staff. That is, you should make Reform the main enemy, not the Tories, as that would panic a sizeable enough slice of the electorate to vote Labour against the right-populist threat. In that way, Labour can consolidate its base and attract undecided voters. Or, to put it another way, as does the *New Statesman*: Sir Keir “needs an enemy within” just like Margaret Thatcher, an initially unpopular prime minister who “drew strength from her foes” - like the Argentine junta, the NUM, the Soviet Union and the IRA.

Of course, this approach by McSweeney carries the unavoidable implication that Your Party could easily be squeezed in a straight fight between Labour and the far-right bloc - you can easily hear those voices already whispering that you need to choose between the lesser of two evils. Do you really want Nigel Farage to be ensconced inside No10? Under those conditions, so the argument might go, the ‘ultra-left’ would be strengthening the populist right (if not ‘fascism’!) by *not* voting for Labour. A point that Sir Keir too would undoubtedly make to secure the soft-left and liberal-left vote.

Last week, we continue to read, YouGov ran an unprompted open-ended question, to which less than 1% of respondents answered that they intended to vote for Your Party. From this, YouGov concludes that, with such “a low level of support”, it would be appropriate to continue to include them in the “other” category - those not among the main contending parties. But, as you might expect from a professional body, YouGov will continue to “monitor” this situation and “revisit” it, should the level of support for YP significantly rise.

In other words, if Your Party starts to appear in YouGov and other polls, then we will know that we are really getting somewhere! ●

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### Notes

1. [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/12/05/farage-smears-election-manipulation-left-campaign](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/12/05/farage-smears-election-manipulation-left-campaign)

## Fighting fund

# Step on the gas

**A**s I reported last week, this month we really need not only to achieve our fighting fund target of £2,750, but also to make up a good part of the November £545 deficit.

Well, at the moment, with, as I write, 10 days out of the 31 for December already gone, we have at least gone past the first £1,000 barrier. Thanks go first of all to comrade PP, for providing us with a couple of months’ worth of envelopes to send out copies of the *Weekly Worker* to our subscribers each week, at a cost of £148. We’ll take that, comrade!

Then there were a number of standing orders and bank transfers - thank you, comrades CG and DV (£30 each), RG (£25), and SM, PM and AM, who all contributed a tenner. Five other comrades played their part by clicking on the PayPal button on our website: thanks very much ST (£20), AB (£11), MH (£10), plus NL and GP (a fiver each).

All that comes to £314 - not exactly a huge amount for a whole week, but, thanks to the excellent start over the first three days of December, our running total now stands at £1,012. But now we need to step on the gas and make sure

we receive at least three grand this month to help make up for November’s shortfall.

Can you help? There are all sorts of ways to do that. You could send us a cheque, make a bank transfer or donate via PayPal. See the details below and click on the link if you need more information.

As new subscriber KC commented, “What a great job you’re doing. Keep up the good work!” Thanks, comrade, but, of course, we rely on the help of our readers and supporters to do that! Please don’t let us down.

Remember, remember, this is the penultimate issue for 2025 ... and because of the latest wave of flu we’ve had to feature Christmas early. We’ve had writers knocked out of action ... temporarily, obviously.

Anyway, we are back next week, on the 18th, and then we take our well-deserved holiday break ●

**Robbie Rix**

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## CHRISTMAS

# The meaning of Christmas

A money-making opportunity for sure, but there is politics too. The far right in particular have taken up Christianity with a vengeance. Then there is Jesus, the real, historical Jesus, the revolutionary Palestinian executed by the Roman occupiers. Jack Conrad investigates

Christmas is the peak retail in the UK. Roughly 30% of personal expenditure happens over the festive season.<sup>1</sup> Despite squeezed incomes, stubborn inflation and continued worries about the future, consumers are expected to spend a record £91.12 billion over Christmas (mainly on food and drink, presents and holidays). Up by some 3.2% on last year - though for the first time since 2023 sales volumes are predicted to fall by 0.3%. The explanation for the minor shrinkage is straightforward: while some 9.8% of UK consumers say they are “considerably better off” in 2025, 12.6% say there are “significantly worse off” and the remaining 64.3% consider themselves either “about the same” or “slightly worse off”.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, the wealthiest splash out on trifles such as Harrods crackers (£700), Loro Piana cashmere baubles (£1,800 for half-a-dozen), a turkey lunch at the Ritz (£650 per head) and, for the little darlings, a private Santa grotto (from £5,000). And for those with money to burn, what about a Martin Chiffers’ Christmas pudding, made from rare Iranian Ajwa dates, Marma almonds, 200-year-old Duret cognac, Perez Barquero Solera 1905 sherry, and 1834 Whitaker Marsala wine? All with silver thruppence coins, and, for extra luck, a gold Henry VI Salut d’Or (£23,000).<sup>3</sup>

The average Christmas spend *per person* therefore works out at £1,371.44 (note, for the statistically challenged, that does not mean the average *person’s* spend - that is expected to be £219.08 in 2025). Spending on cosmetics is set to rise by 6% - the biggest *growth* category, reflecting a shift to influencer-driven online purchases. However, as might easily be predicted, it is the iPhone 17, Nintendo Switch 2, the Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra and other such expensive electronic gizmos that remains the biggest category.

Because it is such a money-spinner, Christmas begins early. For retailers, especially in the Anglosphere, the season starts in earnest with the onset of October. They send out catalogues and emails. Adverts and marketing strategies are finalised. The Christmas lights get switched on in mid-November and sales steadily rise till that final orgy of bargain-hunting: the winter sales.

Christmas is also peak charity. Christian Aid, Oxfam, Unicef, Crisis, the Red Cross, Shelter, etc make an almost military push to secure donations, a good portion of which goes to pay for the costs of the staff needed (chief executive salaries of £175k+ being an industry norm<sup>4</sup>).

Those who want to “rediscover the true meaning of Christmas” respond in their millions. After all, ’tis the season of “peace and goodwill to all men”.<sup>5</sup> According to the Charities Aid Foundation, some 40% of the adult population are more likely to make a donation in December ... with a monthly £2.03 average increasing to £2.41. That little uptick does, however, when totalled, add up to millions of pounds.

Christmas Eve is peak church too. Turnout for C of E services is around two million - far ahead of the 693,000 Sunday average and even Easter.<sup>6</sup> While not quite being on a par in *religious terms* with Easter, Christmas comes a close second.



Peak retail

Jesus rising from the dead being rated over having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

## Census and state

True, as revealed by the 2021 census, the number of self-proclaimed Christians has fallen to less than half the population in England and Wales. Heading the list of other religions there were Muslims on 6.5% (up from 4.9% in 2011). We, the godless, have, though, risen to 37.2% - 22 million up from the 14.8% in 2011. Figures which not only caused much rightwing handwringing, but a determined Christian nationalist pushback. The country has lost its identity, they say, and is falling to the forces of ‘wokism’, ‘Cultural Marxism’, whatever that is, and ‘invading’ hordes of Muslims.

The playbook comes straight from the US Republican right, and there is plenty of finance available. Indeed the Trump administration has been egging on the far right in Europe, not least in Britain, where because of a shared language there are particularly close business, cultural and personal connections.

Perhaps the New Conservatives headed the pushback - till, that is, they went down to an eviscerating defeat with the 2024 general election. The baton being taken up in no uncertain terms by Reform UK and the likes of Danny Kruger and James Orr. Both evangelical Christians.

Kruger, the MP for East Wiltshire who defected from the Tories in September, believes a Christian revival is essential if the country’s moral decline is to be reversed. He wants to replace the prevailing liberal ‘social contract’ with a ‘new social covenant’, based on family, community and nation.<sup>7</sup> Instead of individualism and the free market there is The Order, based on tradition, hierarchy,

community and transcendent truths. Kruger converted to Christianity in his 20s after reading CS Lewis (no, not *The chronicles of Narnia*).

Orr is a Cambridge academic, a theologian and a philosopher, who upholds the anti-liberal, anti-democratic teachings of Roger Scruton. He has close links with US vice-president JD Vance, who describes him as his “British sherpa”.<sup>8</sup> In the name of Christianity Orr opposes abortion under all circumstances and calls asylum-seekers “invaders”.<sup>9</sup> In October 2025 he was appointed a senior advisor to Nigel Farage.

Another devout Christian is Paul Marshall, hedge fund owner of GB News, *unHerd* and the *Spectator*, who is also said to “own the right”.<sup>10</sup> Though not formally a Reform member, his TV station provides an unequalled platform for Nigel Farage (along with fat payments worth hundreds of thousands of pounds). Four nights a week Farage gets to present his hour-long show, where he talks directly to potential voters. So the evening after Keir Starmer’s speech to Labour’s party conference, Nigel Farage was there with his rebuttal. The day of Kemi Badenoch’s speech, Farage was able to take her on. Marshall, says Andrew Graystone, “seems to believe that he has been blessed by god and called to use his enormous wealth to change the culture of the UK”.<sup>11</sup>

Then there is Tommy Robinson. Well, at least since his last prison stretch - locked up for contempt of court - a Christian convert. This gives a religious halo to his pathological attacks on Muslims. In this iteration Robinson has urged followers to attend a ‘United for Christ this Christmas’ open-air carol concert - a seasonal event that promises to “reclaim and celebrate our heritage, culture and Christian identity”.

His 150,000-strong Unite the Kingdom rally in September featured, of course, not only huge numbers of Union and Cross of St George flags. There were plenty of wooden crosses too and even a sermon delivered by Ukip-supporting bishop Ceirion Dewar of (his own) Confessing Anglican Church. He prayed for god to save us ... after all, as he put it, “We are a nation under attack”.

Robinson’s embrace of Christianity came via Rikki Doolan and the prison pastor. He was seen leaving HMP Woodhall wearing a cross. Robinson then announced that for the first time in 10 years he would be attending a Sunday church service. And, after returning from his visit to Israel, he expressed his regret that he had not been baptised in the river Jordan while he was there. Robinson even claimed to have had a close encounter with the Holy Spirit.

Here Robinson is joining a growing number on the far right taking up the Jesus banner. Paul Golding’s Britain First and Nick Tenconi’s Ukip both stress their Christian values and defence of Judeo-Christian traditions.

Robinson’s carol event is, of course, promoted as a purely celebratory occasion: “This event is not about politics ... it is about Jesus Christ - fully and completely.” Robinson insists. But the last time I attended a carol service it did not feature 13 speakers.

Robinson’s transformation into a Christian crusader has, not surprisingly, been dismissed as an exercise in ‘strategic rebranding’. Clearly the case. But, even if it is sincere, does it really matter? There are plenty of genuinely bigoted, racist and deeply reactionary Christians (as well as liberal and socialist Christians).

Either way, Robinson remains Robinson. Between scripture readings and planned testimonies

runs a consistent thread of grievance. “We shouldn’t have to put this on,” Robinson complains. “There should be a massive Christmas event put on by our government.”<sup>12</sup>

When I read this, I must admit that I laughed out loud. The Church of England, the state church, puts on thousands of events over Christmas (there are 16,000 C of E churches in the UK). And, of course, despite the welcome rise in atheism, the irrefutable fact of the matter is that the UK remains *constitutionally* Christian.

## State and religion

Charles Windsor is head of the Church of England - a Catholic-Protestant state hybrid. Bishops sit, by right, in the upper house of parliament - there are the lords temporal *and* the lords spiritual. Every Christmas, state personifications, not least the (feudal) green king, do pulpit readings, say prayers begging for the forgiveness of their sins and loudly sing hymns and carols, ancient and modern.

Who knows what Sir Keir will be doing this Christmas? Again it will be mildly interesting to see. He is, after all, a self-declared atheist, while his wife, Lady Victoria, is Jewish. Anyway, we shall certainly have official Britain parading its commitment to the ‘Christmas spirit’ and Charles III reiterating his “particular relationship” with and “commitment to the Church of England”.<sup>13</sup>

This reference to the sovereign’s “particular relationship” regarding the C of E relates, of course, to his role as “Supreme Governor of the Church of England” - a title dating back to the 16th century reformation and Henry VIII, which is meant to confer special responsibilities upon the monarch to supervise those who run the state church, both in terms of its “administration and its pastoral care”.<sup>14</sup> Like every other House of Windsor monarch - from George V to Elizabeth II - Charles III is committed to the 39 articles of faith, in word, if not deed - he is, after all, a divorcee and an admitted adulterer.

Not that Charles III suffered the fate of Edward VIII. He wanted to marry the twice-divorced Wallis Simpson. Both Stanley Baldwin’s Tory government and the Church of England were implacably opposed. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Lang, declared that he would find it impossible to administer the coronation oath on Edward, unless he accepted the indissolubility of marriage. In his own words, Lang said that he - that is, the king - pursued personal happiness “in a manner inconsistent with the Christian principles of marriage”.<sup>15</sup> The uncrowned Edward VIII abdicated in December 1936.

Clearly, Justin Welby, now former Archbishop of Canterbury, suffered no such scruples. However, there are, of course, good reasons to believe that establishment objections to Edward Windsor owed rather more to his openly proclaimed sympathies for Nazi Germany than religious doctrine over marriage vows. In the mid-1930s, with both countries gearing up for war, he was talked about by Adolf Hitler himself as England’s potential collaborator king.<sup>16</sup>

## Jesus tradition

The traditional Christmas nativity - meaning ‘birth’, from the Latin *nativitas* - relies on the New Testament. Accordingly, Mary and



Joseph, the ‘parents’ of Jesus, are pictured travelling from their native Nazareth, in the northern province of Galilee, to Judea and Bethlehem (the royal seat of the semi-mythical king David). The New Testament gets them making this arduous journey because of an entirely fictitious Roman census - a census that requires people to go to their place of birth. An impractical and entirely ridiculous notion.

We also have the parents of Jesus not being able to find a room at the inn, the stable and the manger, adoring shepherds, the three wise men, the magi, following a wondrous star, travelling from the east bearing gifts for the new-born King of the Jews, Herod ordering the slaughter of all first-born male children under two, and an angel urging Joseph to flee to Egypt with his wife and baby. All unmistakable fabrication.

However, the Hebrew prophet, Micah, had written of the coming messiah (the redeemer, the liberator) being born in Bethlehem. Though the New Testament Jesus is supposed to have been conceived by the Holy Spirit, not Joseph, two of the testaments, Matthew and Luke, trace his family tree back from Joseph to David, and finally to the first man, Adam himself. In other words, Jesus and his party propagandists were claiming that he was of royal blood - the legitimate king of Israel. Unlike the upstart Herodians. Not that this is made explicit by the New Testament redactors. No, on the contrary, Jesus, the apocalyptic revolutionary, the leader of a popular revolt, is stripped of his Jewish identity, his real history and made into a Greek-style man-god. The kingdom of this Jesus is not here on earth, but in the misty realms of heaven.

During the 1st and 2nd centuries Palestine was a hotbed of revolutionary activity in the Roman empire. The aristocratic Jewish writer, Flavius Josephus, mentions numerous urban and rural uprisings. Riots erupted in Jerusalem with almost every great festival. In the countryside guerrilla foci found themselves gaining enough adherents to allow regular military units to be formed. Their leaders sometimes had themselves crowned king on the messianic model. Among them was Simon, a former slave of Herod and Athronges, who was once a shepherd. However, the most successful liberation fighter was Judas, whose father, Ezechias, was a well-known “bandit” who was executed in 47 BCE. Josephus fumes that Judas “tried to stir the natives to revolt” by encouraging them not to pay taxes to the Romans. Judas “was a rabbi” (teacher), says Josephus, “with a sect of his own, and was quite unlike the others”.<sup>17</sup> His message was republican, not monarchist: “The people should have no master except god”.

What Josephus calls the fourth philosophy had many names, including ‘sicarii’ and ‘zealot’. Its various components and factions dominated popular politics throughout the 66-70 Jewish revolution and the final heroic stand at the desert fortress of Masada in 74 - rather than surrender to the Romans, the 960 rebels preferred mass suicide. Despite being a member of the establishment, and someone seeking to ingratiate himself with the Romans, Josephus has to admit that these “bandits” and “false prophets” inspired the masses “to bold deeds”. Their “madness infected the entire people”, he writes sorrowfully.

Set against this nationalist-religious background, the New Testament Jesus is a very strange person, to say the least. Nowhere does he challenge or even question Roman occupation of Judea and indirect rule of Galilee (at the time of Jesus it was ruled by a pro-Roman Jewish satrap - Herod Antipas). Instead he appears to positively love the Roman tyrant.

There is, for example, the centurion of Capernaum. Jesus not only cures his servant with one of his miracles. He marvels at the centurion’s religious conviction: “Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.”<sup>18</sup> Jesus even urges the Jewish masses to dutifully pay Roman taxes: “Render unto Caesar ...”<sup>19</sup> Something akin to Tommy Sheridan telling the people of Glasgow the necessity of paying the poll tax under Margaret Thatcher. And yet, incongruously, Jesus manages to gain an enthusiastic mass following among the rural and urban poor.

This writer takes it, note, that Jesus was an actual living, breathing, feeling human being - despite the fact that we have no genuine, authentic, contemporary accounts of him. The New Testament was finalised long after his death by redactors who obviously had little knowledge of early 1st century Judaism. Then there are the passages in the *Jewish antiquities* (supposedly written by Josephus) glorifying him: ie, calling him the “Christ” - universally regarded by serious-minded scholars as crude forgeries.

Jesus for real

Of course, there have been countless claims by this, that or the other two-a-penny pundit to have discovered the *real* Jesus. Mostly, however, it amounts to “looking back” through some two thousand years of Christian darkness and finding their own conservative, liberal or leftwing reflection staring back at them from the “bottom of a deep well”.<sup>20</sup>

We can, though, using historical materialism to provide a reliable framework, and a lot of textual deduction and inference, reveal a *probable* Jesus. As a first step, what is demonstrably untrue can safely be put aside; what chimes with the events, the class struggles and the ideological outlook of his fourth-philosophy contemporaries and immediate successors can be retained, albeit with due caution.

Hence, the probable Jesus would not have disowned his family ... four of his brothers are listed amongst his core disciples in the gospels. Nor would the probable Jesus have preached collaboration with the Romans: he would, on the contrary, have urged people to resist them and withhold their taxes. Exactly the crime that the “chief priests and officers” charged him with before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate: “We have found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar.”<sup>21</sup> Certainly Jesus would not have said, “Do not resist one who is evil.”<sup>22</sup> The idea is a monstrosity, fit only for despairing appeasers. Jewish scripture is packed full of worthy men and women, above all prophets, fighting what they saw as evil - not least foreign oppressors.

After the execution of John the Baptist, Jesus reveals himself to be not simply a prophetic ‘preparer of the way’, but the messiah. An extraordinary claim, but one fully within the Jewish thought-world. In biblical tradition there had been prophet-rulers (Moses and Samuel). Jesus was claiming to be the messiah-king: ie, the final king. In Jesus the spiritual and secular would be joined. A bold idea, which must have “aroused tremendous enthusiasm in his followers, and great hope in the country generally”.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps this explains why, after he died on a Roman cross, the Jesus party refused to believe he was really dead. His claimed status put him on a par with Elijah: he would return at the appointed hour to lead the Jewish people to victory.

New Testament (re)writers are at pains to play down or deny Jesus’s assumed royal title. Claiming to be King of the Jews was to openly rebel against Rome. Instead they concentrate on terms like ‘messiah’,

which they present as being other-worldly. The Jews, including the 12 leading disciples, are shown as not understanding this concept, though it existed in many of their sacred texts, which they had, surely, studied and fully internalised.

Evidently, Jesus showed no interest in military strategy or tactics. Rome would be beaten without recourse either to conventional or guerrilla war. Nevertheless, though Jesus did not organise his followers into military units, at least five of his inner circle clearly came from the ranks of the revolutionary ‘bandits’ and proudly retained their guerrilla nicknames (ie, Peter Barjonah - ‘outlaw’, Simon - the zealot; James and John - ‘sons of thunder’, and Judas Iscariot - the ‘dagger man’).

This is hardly surprising. Jesus was no pacifist: “I come not to send peace, but a sword!”<sup>24</sup> However, liberation would not depend on rousing the masses to stage a general uprising, but supernatural intervention. There would be a cosmic battle, where a tiny army of the righteous triumph against overwhelmingly superior forces. According to scripture, Gideon fought and won against the Midianites with only 300 men - he told the other 20,000 men in his army to “return home”.<sup>25</sup> Jesus promised something along those lines ... but even more fantastic.

Following the last supper, a highly charged prelude to the ‘last days’, his disciples inform him that they only have two swords. Jesus calmly replies: “It is enough.”<sup>26</sup> He appears convinced that Yahweh will send him “12 legions of angels” to fight the Romans.<sup>27</sup>

The aims of Jesus and the guerrilla fighters were broadly compatible. Where they differed was the *degree* that their strategy relied on heavenly intervention. Either way, the zealots were unlikely to have actively opposed Jesus. He might have been a factional rival, but he was no enemy. His mass movement would at the very least have been seen as a tremendous opportunity to spread *their* word.

After the final apocalyptic victory over the Romans, Jesus fervently believed he would preside over god’s new order - a communism where the poor inherit the earth and the rich get their just deserts:

[B]lessed be you poor, for yours is the kingdom of god .... But woe unto you that are rich ... Woe unto you that are full now, for you shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.<sup>28</sup>

Of course, Jesus failed - like the other 1st and 2nd century Jewish revolutionaries. However, unlike them, though, he never faded in memory. Leadership of his party passed first to his brother, James the Just, then his cousin, Simeon. But it was Paul who was the real founder of Christianity. His entirely new, Hellenistic Jesus religion became, hundreds of years later under Constantine, the official state cult of the Roman empire.

Happy birthday

My book, *Fantastic reality*, deals with what happened after Jesus died and I am not going to repeat the argument here. Suffice to say, what we need to appreciate for our current purpose is that not only is the biblical account of Jesus full of reinvention: so too is Christmas ... but on steroids.

Take December 25 and *anno Domini* 1. It is quite possible that Jesus was born that day. The odds are 365:1 (ie, 0.0027%). In fact the odds are considerably greater than that, though, because we have no idea about which year he was born in. Many scholars reckon between 6 and 4 BCE.

Clearly there was a wish amongst early Christians - that is, the followers of Paul - to give Jesus a birth date

which could be celebrated. Around 200 CE Clement of Alexandria writes:

There are those who have determined not only the year of our Lord’s birth, but also the day; and they say that it took place in the 28th year of Augustus, and in the 25th day of [the Egyptian month] Pachon [May 20] ... Further, others say that he was born on the 24th or 25th of Pharmuthi [April 20 or 21].<sup>29</sup>

Either way, the western church fixed on December 25 in the early 4th century. The first recorded Christmas celebration was in Rome in 336.<sup>30</sup> Not because of the recovery of a lost collective memory or through exhaustive research: rather because the church needed a date.

Why December 25? From the earliest times, northern peoples marked the winter solstice – called, in Old English, Gēola or Yule, in Old French, Noël or Naël. The longest night of the year is December 21 - a sacred moment of death and rebirth. The sun reaches its lowest point in the sky, but, heralding spring, begins to rise again.

The Romans, famously, had their Saturnalia, when masters waited on their domestic slaves, gifts were exchanged, along with much drinking, feasting and fornication. Beginning on December 17, the festival culminated on December 23. Some eastern churches, sticking as they do to this or that version of the old Julian calendar, celebrate Christmas on January 6 or 7 (the birth of Jesus being connected to the Epiphany: that is, the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, when god was supposed to have revealed himself in his only begotten son).

It is the same with many other Christian festivals, Easter included. The new colonised the old. But it is perfectly understandable. After all, we all need a break from the normal routine, we need special days to bring us together, we all need to party. The labour movement adopted May 1 - May Day - as its special day in 1904, partially because it was the long established day to celebrate fertility and the beginning of summer; but mainly because we simply required a day to display international solidarity, our strength and readiness to assume state power.

The Christian church too. Except that its archbishops, bishops, abbots and deacons were incorporated first into the Roman state, then the feudal system, as privileged, but junior partners. That said, our labour and social democratic parties, parliamentary representatives and trade union general secretaries have, in large measure, been thoroughly incorporated, once again as junior partners - part of the system’s *managed* decline.

So from its earliest history the Christian church has been bound up with paganism. Nowadays, of course, the pagan winter solstice has not only been Christianised: it has been thoroughly commercialised too. Christmas therefore combines pagan, Christian and capitalist elements. Mistletoe, holly, ivy and other evergreens have their origins in the deep past. They symbolise life, sex and renewal. Church services and nativity plays are a Christian overlay. Christmas cards; Christmas trees with lights, baubles and expensive presents; Christmas class reconciliation and shmultzery - all that comes via 19th century capitalism. Prince Albert, Charles Dickens and the Oxford movement each made their own particular contribution to the transformation of Christmas from a raucous community celebration into a children, family and home-centred occasion.

Father Christmas just about sums it up. With antecedents in the

Norse god, Odin, via Saint Nicholas (ie, Santa Claus), the modern Father Christmas, as he is known in England, with his jovial ho-ho-ho personality, black shiny boots, white fur-trimmed red suit, his sleigh and reindeer - he is a 19th century reinvention (cemented in the popular imagination by Coca-Cola adverts beginning in 1931<sup>31</sup>).

It is hardly surprising that many *Bible*-centred Christians consider Christmas a pagan abomination. What does a jolly fat man riding on a sleigh, loaded with toys and pulled along by flying reindeer have to do with the birth of their “son of god”? The answer is: absolutely nothing. Congregations are urged to avoid the temptations of “man-made traditions and holidays”. Instead keep to the feast days and celebrations “observed by Jesus Christ, the apostles and the early Church”.<sup>32</sup>

To state the obvious, all feast days and celebrations - including the ones observed by Jesus ben Joseph, his brother, James, and his nephew, Simeon - were made by human beings for human beings, and often date back to the earliest of times. As for me, traditional Christmas pudding - with lashings of cream, not custard - that and traditional Christmas ale - are irresistible temptations ●

Notes

1. www.bankofengland.co.uk/explainers/how-much-do-we-spend-at-christmas.
2. www.vouchercodes.co.uk/savings-guides/celebrates-reports/shopping-for-christmas-2025-the-christmas-period.
3. To get an idea of how the other half lives, pick up a weekend edition of the *Financial Times* and, in particular, its *HTS!* supplement (till 2022 brazenly titled *How to spend it*).
4. www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/average-ceo-pay-at-large-charities-rises-to-175-000-survey-shows.html.
5. Luke ii:14.
6. Figure of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day totalled 1,961,000; Easter 938,000 (www.christiantoday.com/article/church.of.england.enjoys.strong.turnout.at.christmas.and.easter.but.attendance.remains.below.pre.pandemic.levels/142429.htm).
7. D Kruger *Covenant: the new politics of home, neighbourhood and nation* London 2023.
8. *Daily Mail* March 30 2025.
9. *The Independent* October 20 2025.
10. *The New World* October 15 2025.
11. A Graystone ‘The Marshall plan’ *Prospect* March 27 2024.
12. M Scholl ‘Christ in the crossfire: Tommy Robinson and the battle for Christmas’ *Searchlight* December 9 2025.
13. *Christianity* September 14 2022.
14. www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance.
15. I Bradley *God save the queen: the spiritual heart of the monarchy* New York NY 2012, p177.
16. See A Morton *17 carnations: the Windsors, the Nazis and the cover-up* London 2015.
17. G.A Williamson (trans) *Josephus: the Jewish war* Harmondsworth 1981, p133.
18. Matthew v:10.
19. Luke xx:25.
20. This “deep well” metaphor is adapted from George Tyrell, a Catholic convert from Anglicanism, who argued in favour of “scientific inquiry”, when it came to Jesus (G Tyrell *Christianity at the crossroads* London 1910, pp43,44). There are, sadly, many examples of Jesus as self-reflection, including in these pages. Advocating his “impossibilist” call for an Israeli-Palestinian workers’ state, Daniel Lazare called for us to emulate “the internationalist Jesus”: “‘What would Jesus do?’ should be our slogan - not in a direct sense, needless to say, but dialectically, so that his yearning for international moral solidarity becomes our own” (D Lazare, ‘An international socialist?’ *Weekly Worker* December 14 2023: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1471/an-international-socialist).
21. Luke xxiii:2.
22. Matthew v:39.
23. H Maccoby *Revolution in Judea* London 1973, p163.
24. Matthew x,34.
25. Judges vii,2.
26. Luke xxii:38.
27. Matthew xxvi: 53.
28. Luke vi,20-25.
29. W Wilson (trans) *The writings of Clement of Alexandria* Vol 1, Edinburgh 1867, p445.
30. See A McGowan, ‘How December 25 became Christmas’ *Bible Review* December 2002.
31. theferret.scot/fact-check-coca-cola-red-santa-claus-christmas.
32. www.ucg.org/beyond-today/beyond-today-magazine/was-jesus-born-on-christmas-day.



## YOUR PARTY

# Personalities and platforms

Your Party launch conference might not have been allowed to discuss amendments that sought to enshrine the right of members to form platforms and factions - but there are plenty of them already operating, and most of them openly. **Carla Roberts** takes a look

**A**rchie Woodrow has written extensively both on the process leading up to the founding of Your Party<sup>1</sup> and about those controlling the proceedings<sup>2</sup> - both articles are well worth reading, although, as comrades will know, the tectonic plates at the top of Your Party have been shifting rather rapidly in the last few months, with alliances forming, then falling apart, while other working arrangements were set up, before those were smashed to pieces too.

Six months ago, an overview such as this would have looked quite different and would have included people like Pamela Fitzpatrick, Salma Yaqoob, Jamie Driscoll, Mark Serwotka and Andrew Feinstein, for example. But that all changed when the secret Organising Group of around 30 people voted in favour a co-leadership structure, with both Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana leading the 'founding process' of the new party - very much against the wishes of Team Corbyn.

■ **Karie Murphy:** It was Karie Murphy who closed down the OG after that vote, handing over the 'founding process' to the six MPs of the Independent Alliance instead. In reality, they never did lead anything, which has become clear enough from the frustrated resignation statements by Adnan Hussein and Iqbal Mohamed. Sultana was pushed out pretty quickly too, leaving Team Corbyn firmly in charge.

Murphy was Jeremy Corbyn's chief of staff when he was leader of the Labour Party and is the partner of Len McCluskey, former general secretary of Unite the Union. She makes no secret of her hatred of the "Marxist sects", as she calls them, and will have played a key role in convincing Corbyn to try and ban them from Your Party.

The *New Statesman* reports that "Murphy plans to leave the project in the new year, once the party's central executive committee is in place".<sup>3</sup> Murphy has taken much blame, when it comes to the tight bureaucratic control and the total lack of democracy in YP - and no doubt, she could teach TED classes on the subject, having been trained in the Labour Party for decades. But clearly she has been acting on behalf of Corbyn. Her departure could signal a much-needed 'fresh start', but would be unlikely to change the culture of manipulation and bureaucracy at HQ.

■ **Amy Jackson:** If Murphy really departs, she might well hand things over to her close ally, Amy Jackson - one of the handful of people who have been running the show behind the scenes in the last few months (another key player is Artin Giles, but he is less talented). She was formerly Unite political director under McCluskey, political secretary to Corbyn, and currently works as chief of staff for Lutfur Rahman. She has less of a toxic image than Murphy, though, by all accounts, she is no less shrewd and has been rumoured to be going for the position of first YP general secretary.

■ **Laura Alvarez:** Corbyn's wife has been playing an increasingly large role in the leadership faction. She is, we hear, mostly concerned about the "legacy" of Corbyn - and therefore argued strongly against a co-leadership. In the run-up to the launch conference, she somehow managed to bag herself the title of 'YP international director', sending out



**James Giles (Democratic Bloc) and Zarah Sultana**

invites to *some* groups to set up stalls in the hall.

## Team Zarah

Sultana's chief advisor and - some jest - "manager", is husband Craig Lloyd, who works full-time as research and policy officer for the Fire Brigades Union. He was seconded to Momentum throughout 2011 and was listed as 'staff' in the FBU minutes<sup>4</sup> - and it does show.

Although Sultana seems to have sharply moved to the left in recent months (we will have to see how much of that sticks), she continues to cling to some extremely undemocratic, Momentum-style forms of organisation. Yes, she supported 'collective leadership' at conference, but we would be very naive to imagine that she did so out of some late-discovered principle - after all, 'collective leadership' stops Corbyn from becoming The Leader too. She is a rising star, no doubt, but she will be very aware that this is still the Corbyn Party. A straight leadership contest between the two could have ended disastrously for her. Going for collective leadership was an astute move.

She continues to push for online 'one member, one vote' voting (OMOV) and seems to support US-style 'open primaries' to find a set of leftwing candidates she might support in the forthcoming elections to the Central Executive Committee (CEC).

Socialists reject such primaries, because they quickly turn into 'beauty contests', with those with the biggest social media presence and the most well-known names winning out. We would favour a (much) more democratic, transparent and politically principled version of the Grassroots Centre-Left Alliance in Labour - with left organisations and platforms

getting together to calmly discuss and agree on a set of candidates who commit themselves to a joint platform of principled policies. Such a slate - agreed and then actively supported by a large number of groups and platforms within YP - actually has a chance of winning at least a few seats. Of course, Sultana would probably feature on such a list - but we should be very careful not to follow her blindly or treat her as the next messiah.

As a smart politician, Sultana surrounds herself with various circles of 'advisors' and keeps close contact with people like Salma Yaqoob, Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi (Jewish Voice for Liberation) and Max Shanly of the DSYP, from the days when Shanly and Sultana were both leading members of Young Labour.

More recently, she has also grown close to James Giles, a supporter of the Democratic Bloc and a councillor in Kingston, who chaired her pre-conference rally. She demonstratively sat next to him on the second day of conference, after he was initially denied access to the launch conference on Saturday, because of a "private matter" around his (unknown) role in the "data misuse" of MOU Limited.

This arose when Sultana unilaterally launched a membership portal on September 18 - in this, we understand, she acted on the urging *only* of her husband. All other friends, advisors and colleagues argued quite rightly *against* such a move, including the then MOU directors Andrew Feinstein, Jamie Driscoll and Beth Winter. All three seem to have taken 'time off' from actively supporting Sultana after this move, with Driscoll leaving YP altogether to concentrate on his dead-end 'party', Majority UK.

We hear that HQ was *planning* on expelling Sultana over this episode, but after her triumphant performance

at conference, they might well have decided to put a pin on that move. However, there is still a chance they might bar her as a candidate in the CEC elections, using a section in the 'interim membership rules' they published on the eve of conference: "Members must declare that they have no pending or past legal issues (criminal, civil or regulatory) that could cause reputational or financial harm to the Party."<sup>5</sup> She certainly has a bunch of "legal issues", thanks to Team Corbyn shopping her to the Information Commissioner's Office.

## Democratic Bloc

The Democratic Bloc claims 750 "members" - because it counts everybody who has ever signed up to its set of demands. In reality, it has about a dozen activists. It does excellent social media and publicity work and manages to put its glossy leaflets on most seats at most of the important YP events.

Funnily enough, most of its demands won at conference. This is *not* down to the DB being oh so popular (it is not). No, it has to do with the simple fact that many of its leading members were involved in the secretive Organising Group before Karie Murphy closed it down. They are now reinventing themselves as 'democrats' - though were very quiet on the issue when they were part of the inner circle. They knew exactly what kind of 'options' conference would be presented with and so just took the slightly less crap options and ran with those:

■ They argued against branch delegates and demanded that conferences should be run *entirely* via online OMOV voting. They've got their wish.

■ They proposed that all positions on the CEC too should be elected via

OMOV. Another wish that came true.

■ The constitution's witch-hunting rule requiring left organisations to apply for 'dual membership' was, as Max Shanly has pointed out, almost identical to what DB had initially proposed: "It is literally lifted direct from your own proposals! It's on your website!!!"<sup>6</sup> If anything, it is even worse than what the YP constitution now states, because DB demanded that 'approved parties' also have to "share their books with the new party's NPC - so that we can understand the size of their membership, their finances, their GDPR compliance and their disciplinary procedures."<sup>7</sup>

The Democratic Bloc has recently tweaked its position on that question a bit and now only opposes members of parties who stand against YP. But in a public Zoom meeting on October 14, its leader, Mish Rahman, was very open that he wants dual membership only for Green Party members, because he wants to "prevent entryism". He will be no ally of the left, should he get onto the CEC (and there is absolutely no doubt that he will stand). This is what this whole campaign is about - to build themselves an electoral vehicle akin to Momentum.

Rahman has with him various other careerists, including the above-mentioned, very ambitious young councillor, James Giles, who used to be campaign manager for George Galloway's Workers Party of Britain before he was hired in 2024 by the independent MP, Ayoub Khan, to become his chief of staff, and was then employed as advisor by the other MPs of Corbyn's Independent Alliance. This is no opposition platform: it is a platform of people who are preparing to get (back) into the inner circle.

Like a few others in DB (for example Mick Moore), Rahman sat on the leadership of Momentum - *after* the Lansman coup. As vice-chair, he implemented the Lansman constitution, which, we should remember, was put in place via an OMOV coup, and abolished all democratic structures. It also barred from Momentum membership anybody who was expelled from Labour as part of the anti-Semitism smear campaign against Corbyn and his supporters.

As a member of Labour's NEC, Rahman kept his mouth firmly shut about the witch-hunt in the Labour Party, only making mealy-mouthed statements against the second wave of exclusions. He left Labour and Momentum just a few months ago, and voluntarily so - clearly, the bureaucracy saw no reason to get rid of him.

DB's departure from the Socialist Unity Platform over the above tweet by comrade Shanly is no great loss - quite the opposite. It had played the role of leading the rightwing in the SUP. In order to make it seem like *it* was the main democratic opposition, it stopped SUP initiatives from going forward and, crucially, led the campaign against SUP presenting an emergency motion in Liverpool, which was calling for a reconstituted conference and the election of an emergency leadership. DB was not the only group worried about an active rebellion being seen as "wrecking the process", but it was certainly the best at convincing others that SUP should stick to playing by the rules.

DB supporters are big proponents of decision-making by 'consensus' and have indeed forced this through



in, for example, the discussions around the hurriedly produced ‘unity’ discussions at this year’s The World Transformed. The ‘consensus’ method meant they were able to *veto* a proposal to demand that conferences should be made up of delegates only. We hear they are trying similar tricks in the scramble over Zarah Sultana’s ‘open primaries’.

We reject decision-making by consensus: it is well known for being one of the best ways to shut up minorities (or even, as in this case, majorities) and to enshrine existing leadership structures. Unless it is obvious that everybody agrees, socialists decide matters by simple majority votes, which is absolutely necessary for transparent decision-making.

DSYP

Democratic Socialists in Your Party really took off after Max Shanly merged his loose campaign for a ‘Party Republic’ into the organisation in mid-2025. Its politics are a breath of fresh air, taking inspiration from the Marxist Unity Group in the Democratic Socialists of America (who in turn have taken inspiration from the CPGB and in particular Mike Macnair’s book, *Revolutionary strategy*).

DSYP fights for the “party republic, in which all are equal”, because “democracy is when the governed govern themselves”, as comrade Shanly has put it.<sup>8</sup> The document *Points of unity*, produced as part of the merger, defines socialism not just in the usual economistic terms, but also as follows: “We strive for a total restructuring of society, recognising that the interests of our class can only be secured on a global scale and through the closest cooperation between workers of all countries.” It defines itself as anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist.

It fights for YP to become a “multi-tendency party”: “From radical social democrats leftwards, with all members having the right to organise into open factions, be they temporary or permanent, at all levels of the party.” Ideally, of course, we fight for a united Communist Party, but in the here and now, the fight for open platforms and tendencies is obviously correct.

Unlike most of the left, it also recognises the importance of fighting for free speech: “Members must have the right to freedom of information, association, discussion, dissent and the freedom to critique the party’s programme and organise to change it, provided they also accept fighting for it as the democratically determined expression of the party’s goals.”

However, these very worthy aims are not always fought for in, shall we say, the most coherent manner possible. For a start, DSYP still suffers from a ‘movementist’ refusal to implement proper membership and leadership structures - a hangover from before the merger. The 700 or so people who have signed up to its aims have to be ‘onboarded’ first, before they can become more active - ie, they have to sit through a Zoom meeting, in which they are being told about the aims of the organisation. Depending on your age and political experience, you may find this quite interesting or laughably patronising. You then become a ‘local organiser’ and are added to a very large and busy WhatsApp community.

In order to get *properly* involved in the running of the organisation, you then have to ask (or be asked) to join the higher echelons of the ‘national organisers’, which gets you onto a Discord server, where you can then join one of the various working groups. There are over 100 national organisers, though only 30 or so show up to the weekly meetings.

The DSYP executive committee plays mainly the role of admin. Max

Shanly, for example, is without a doubt the intellectual leader - but is not a member of the EC. This structure often leads to entirely avoidable clashes and dual power situations. The recent expansion of the EC and the correct attempt to make it into a political leadership has not alleviated the problem, but exacerbated it. Clearly, these convoluted structures have to change if the group is to become more serious.

The internal structure leads to a very busy internal life and you could easily attend a meeting every night of the week. Burn-out is rife in the organisation. The comrades have spent extraordinary amounts of time and effort drafting, amending and re-amending a whole set of (very long) alternatives to the four YP founding documents, taking large parts of it out to submit as amendments to conference.

This has made them on occasion a bit rigid and inflexible: for example, when their demands varied - sometimes very slightly - from SUP’s ‘Sheffield Demands’. There was, for example, an argument that the group should support SUP’s demand for elected representatives only being paid the “average wage of a *skilled* worker” rather than the DSYP’s aim of “the median wage of a worker”. In the end, DSYP submitted its own amendment on the issue, which, in a real democratic conference, could have become a problem, with potentially neither version gathering enough support to go through. As it turns out, both amendments were ruled out of order by Team Corbyn anyway, because HQ disagrees with both versions.

When it came to voting on the four founding documents, the EC at first correctly issued a call to vote against the constitution - but then Zarah Sultana’s husband, Craig Lloyd, shared the bizarre and obviously fake story, according to which Corbyn had asked his supporters to vote *against* the constitution. The EC got spooked and changed its advice mid-election to vote in *favour*. We understand that a majority on the EC has now changed its view again, but will not say so publicly, unfortunately. That is a shame. We all make mistakes, but we can only learn from them if we are able to admit to them.

This episode highlighted a particular danger for the DSYP - the leading comrades are quite young and inexperienced and, perhaps understandably, are a bit too easily flattered by the attention that, for example, Zarah Sultana has given them. It would be a shame if they end up playing the role of her entourage. She clearly has ambitions that are not necessarily compatible with the ‘party republic’.

SWP

The largest of a myriad of what we would call “confessional sects” is the Socialist Workers Party - the members are expected to follow the line put out by the leadership, no questions asked. The SWP allows temporary factions for three months before its annual conference - only then are you allowed to try and change the organisation’s position, and only in the internal ‘pre-conference bulletin’. It has about 1,500 more or less active members.

It is much despised on the left - and not just for its attempt to cover up the rape allegations against its then leading member, Martin Smith (the ‘comrade Delta’ affair). This is no doubt why Team Corbyn expelled some of its members first - to test what happens if you cut the weakest link on the left.

The origins of the SWP (and many Trotskyist groups) lie in faction fights and expulsions from its forerunner in the 1970s, the International Socialists. In contrast to the much smaller

Socialist Party in England and Wales, it has been incapable of developing genuinely mass working class leaders. It has the reputation of converting the bulk of its recruits, whatever their particular talents or potentials, into paper-selling dolts. The membership is prodded from one campaign to another, from one priority to the next - currently it is Together Against the Far Right (uniting its Stand Up to Racism with Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Trades Union Congress, Show Racism the Red Card, Friends of the Earth and many more).

The membership is further disenfranchised by the fact that the SWP leadership has made it a ‘point of principle’ in the past that the organisation does not have a programme. But a programme for a Marxist party is not an optional extra: it is the means by which we test our day-to-day practice against our overall strategic aims, our fundamental political principles. The SWP line has performed some pretty spectacular somersaults over the years, yet there is no political compass in the organisation, no collective means of gauging how far the leadership has strayed off course.

In addition to running and controlling Stand Up to Racism, the SWP has thrown its weight entirely uncritically behind trans activists - probably in the hope of rebuilding its reputation with younger generations. It very much relies on the influx of such young members, because it has perhaps the highest membership turnover on the British left.

Counterfire

Counterfire was born after the Respect popular front between the SWP, George Galloway and the Muslim Association of Britain (a British offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood) descended into acrimony in 2007. For good reason, John Rees got the blame. He then found himself toppled as SWP top dog and walked, along with Lindsey German, Chris Nineham, Michael Lavalette and their allies to set up Counterfire in 2010. It has spent much of its time in existence trying to recapture the glory days of the anti-war movement that Rees and German put together in the early 2000s, with little success. It replicates many of the SWP’s political problems - but on a smaller and much looser level. We are guessing it has about 300 members - they are quite well organised in some parts of the country and entirely invisible in others.

On a couple of issues, they have taken the opposite side to their former comrades - for example, they are very much on the side of the ‘gender critics’ and very friendly with Mark Serwotka. They are also keen to distance themselves from Zarah Sultana’s attempt to sideline “socially conservative views” - with Rees seemingly replaying some of the dynamics in Respect, when SWP members subordinated one principle after another to what they thought their Muslim allies wanted to hear.

In general, they are more willing to talk to the rest of the left than either the SWP or SPEW are, and there is talk that they might support a set of candidates in the CEC elections on the basis of ‘neither Corbyn nor Sultana’, which could do quite well.

SPEW

The most harmless of the Trotskyist groups in Britain and somewhat struggling to keep up is the Socialist Party in England and Wales. In Your Party, it continues to push, increasingly bizarrely, for a federal structure with special privileges for “the trade unions” - ie, the union bureaucracy. A Labour Party mark two! Unsurprisingly, hardly anybody supports this outlook: its much touted-campaign, ‘Time

for trade unions to take the lead in forming a new working class party’, managed to gather barely over 2,000 signatories.

It has about 400 or so members and the glory days are long behind it. Its forerunner, the Militant Tendency, originated in the primeval swamp of British Trotskyism in the 1930s, associated with the South African, Ted Grant. For 40 years, Militant and its forerunner, the Revolutionary Socialist League, existed inside the Labour Party as ‘deep entryists’. It progressively dropped its revolutionary politics and became Labourised. By 1990 it was rubbishing the idea that it stood for revolution. Socialism would come through “an enabling bill in parliament”, which would nationalise “the top 200 monopolies”.<sup>9</sup> Political issues such as the fight for women’s and gay rights or the national question in the UK were dismissed as “diversions” and a narrow ‘workerist’ approach to politics systematically cultivated.

Throughout the “red 90s” SPEW in its various manifestations suffered loss after loss - just about its whole Scottish section around Tommy Sheridan (which went on to form the core of the Scottish Socialist Party, now merely a left nationalist rump), most of its organisation in Liverpool, its section in Pakistan, etc. There were numerous walkouts and expulsions.

It walked out of the Socialist Alliance in 2001, when it could not manage to win a federal structure with veto rights for itself. Since then it has been clinging on to its front organisation, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (Tusc), which, since the departure of the RMT union, looks increasingly sad and pointless. We hear that Jeremy Corbyn has promised to spare Tusc from the witch-hunt, as long as it uses that particular hat.

Some of the rest

■ Platform for a Democratic Party: Initiated by Ken Loach, Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi, Ben Sellers and a couple of other people, it advances many entirely supportable aims (a delegate-based conference, etc<sup>10</sup>). It is not a membership organisation and therefore a bit slow-moving, with its statements on occasion feeling rather out of date. In the negotiations with the Socialist Unity Platform, it started out on the left, supporting calls to at least try to overturn the agenda of the launch conference. But, like many other groups, it got cold feet and ended up warning of being “seen as wreckers”. its alternative political statement could be summed up with the tame slogan, “Defend the welfare state” (as Ken Loach has done).<sup>11</sup>

■ Revolutionary Communist Party: Fiona Lali’s lot. A group that is known for how ‘nice’ their members are - they will take all your leaflets and are happy to chat, which is very unusual on the Trotskyist left. Until last year the RCP was known as Socialist Appeal, whose main area of work was entryism in the Labour Party.

The RCP has gone from auto-Labourism to auto-*anti*-Labourism. Just like with the old Militant in the 1980s, the dramatic change in its political perspective is not down to any change in political reality - but the fact that it was kicked out of the Labour Party. The RCP reinvented itself with its enviable poster campaign, ‘Are you a communist?’ - but without going through the trouble of having a sustained debate or a conference vote (that happened *post facto*).

It was a PR campaign mainly, garnished with some rather bizarre proclamations to keep the troops happy: “Given the accumulated anger in society, a Starmer government will face an avalanche of struggle, and will become one of the most hated governments in recent history ...

Class war will be on the order of the day ... Our relatively untested party will, within the next five or 10 years, be hurled into the turmoil of the British revolution.”<sup>12</sup> Better keep your boots on!

It has not managed to grow beyond 1,000 members and has probably lost quite a few of them since. While Fiona Lali was invited to sit in on the secretive Organising Group, the comrades have now turned their back on YP - no doubt in order to preserve their own fragile organisation.

■ Revolutionary Socialism in the 21st Century (RS21): A split from the SWP after the ‘Comrade Delta’ scandal. It tries to avoid the sect structure of its mothership - but has gone entirely the opposite way: it has developed a swamp culture, where disagreements are not discussed and just fester, no doubt to avoid the fragile organisation imploding. Instead of arguing these things out, the leadership often decides not to take a position on disputed issues, including involvement in Your Party. In practice, this means it has played no discernible role in YP, because a large minority does not want to get involved. Those who have gotten involved have submerged themselves entirely into the DSYP.

■ Organising for Popular Power (O4PP): The only reason this tiny group has achieved any kind of ‘prominence’ is because the DSYP and Democratic Bloc invited it to their joint talks at the 2025 gathering of The World Transformed, which produced a hurriedly put-together mish-mash of a statement, which is mostly nonsense: it commits the groups to a “socialist *horizon*”, wants to “*weaken* imperialism”, while sowing illusions that the climate catastrophe could be overcome by combining “standing in elections” with “mass mobilisations on the streets”.

Like many groups before them, O4PP emphasises “base building” in working class communities. In an interview with *Prometheus*, it openly admits: “We’re not primarily interested in fighting for perfect positions or questions of policy ... but the key goal will always be the advancement of practical organising work that builds class power and moves us towards socialism.”<sup>13</sup>

In practice, this means the group tends to tack right. Don’t argue for what you know is *needed*: only for what you think is *possible* (definitely not the overthrow of capitalism!).

■ Eco-Socialist Horizons: Two men and a dog (though it might have run away), both members of DSYP and again part of the TWT talks.

■ Trans Liberation Group: Does what it says on the tin. Most of its dozen or so members are also involved in the DSYP and were part of the TWT talks. It convinced a majority in the DSYP to fight for quotas, when it comes to leadership elections.

■ Nothing About Us: An attempt to cohere people with disabilities in YP ●

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## USA

# Zohran set to scab

He does not want to upset the Democratic Party establishment or anger the ruling class. **Parker McQueeney** reports on the manoeuvrings of New York City's mayor-elect

In Germany's November 1918 revolution, the working class occupied Berlin's police headquarters, transferred the arms to themselves and put up as police chief Emil Eichorn, an Independent Social Democrat official.

A century later, New York mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani, who stood for the Democratic Party, has not yet taken up residence in Gracie Mansion, but his mayoralty has already created scandals within the Democratic Socialists of America, of which he is a member.

His promise to keep on as police commissioner the hardcore Zionist billionaire, Jessica Tisch, was designed to quell the fears of New York's capitalist class. Meanwhile, her brother, Benjamin Tisch, gave a speech to fellow plutocrats calling Mamdani an anti-Semite and "enemy of the Jewish people".<sup>1</sup>

Mamdani's decision to retain Jessica Tisch as top cop conjures up photographs of general Augusto Pinochet standing innocently behind Salvador Allende in Chile before the 1973 military coup that overthrew the elected Marxist president.

The DSA's 'road to power' in New York City was a campaign laser-focused on economic affordability demands - not the working class actually taking power, as they briefly did in Germany in 1918. New York's DSA chapter is by far the largest in the country and is at the moment dominated by the right. However, its small leftwing minority have signed a joint-letter calling on Mamdani to drop Tisch. Naturally, though, this has been met by sneering condescension from of the NYC leadership.<sup>2</sup>

Mamdani was seen by comrades as a different breed than other 'democratic socialist' figures that the DSA has associated with, who have achieved political recognition nationally. Mainly, he was an active participant both in the chapter - even backing the Bread and Roses '1234' plan for tightened electoral discipline at last year's chapter convention. That as a leading member of the DSA fraction in New York State's legislative lower chamber. It was correctly seen as a big deal when he actually participated in a recent electoral endorsement forum, which had to turn away people at the door of the large Manhattan church where it was held.

The way some comrades described it, he waltzed in like the world spirit on horseback to speak against the chapter endorsing New York City councilman and former DSA member Chi Ossé. Ossé was seeking to challenge US House of Representatives minority leader and arch-Zionist Democrat Hakeem Jeffries for New York's 8th Congressional District. After all, Representatives Rashida Tlaib and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez do not run for delegate to DSA's national conventions or participate in the debates: they are happy to come around to give a radical-sounding speech every now and again. They see the DSA as a constituent part of their electoral coalition, not a democratic political party they are accountable to and serve under.

So it went underremarked that comrade Mamdani's arguments against the endorsement were in fact opportunist ones: he was concerned that taking on the Democrat establishment's leadership and angering the ruling class (who might



Donald Trump and Zohran Mandani: art of the deal

otherwise concede on bus fares) would jeopardise his ability to deliver on his campaign items.

## US democracy

There were good reasons for opposing the endorsement too - the chapter's left and right were both internally divided over the question. By all indications, comrade Chi is a bit of a fair-weather friend - he only recently rejoined the DSA, presumably after deciding he owed the international proletariat the duty of running for Congress.<sup>3</sup> Comrades on both the right and left also wanted to save chapter strength for seats that were actually winnable, and two of them in particular.

Before discussing these cases, let us briefly review the sham of representative democracy in the US. When our lovely Thermidorian constitution<sup>4</sup> went into effect in 1789, the lower branch of the bicameral US legislature had one representative per 33,000 people. This was supposed to be the democratic branch of government, balanced out by the 'monarchy' of the presidential executive and the 'aristocracy' of the judiciary (not to mention the Senate, which has always elegantly malapportioned representation upward to gentlemen reactionaries). In 1929, the number of representatives in the House was permanently set at 435, with each Congressperson representing something like a quarter-million citizens (now counting black people as full human beings instead of '3/5ths', as it was in the antebellum).

Even a century ago, that was quite a bit less representative than Britain's parliament is now, which currently has constituencies representing 73,000 Windsor subjects. With America's population growth over the last hundred years, Congresspeople have around three quarters of a million constituents now. Not only does that make deputies less connected to their

constituents, but it requires bigger and more difficult campaigns for a large number of votes, especially in a 'first past the post' system. Bigger campaigns means raising more money, which obviously gives capitalists a severe advantage. (We will set aside the role of the bourgeois media in all this.)

The average cost of House races is something like \$2 million, but in 2024 candidates in Virginia's 7th Congressional district raised a total of \$25 million. In Texas a whopping total of \$200 million was spent to ultimately send the Evangelical Christian, Republican and notorious pervert, Ted Cruz, back to the Senate. This is a very lucrative game to get in if you are a consultant for one of the two cabals American voters are allowed to choose from at the ballot box. As a design for an oligarchy that presents itself as democratic, the system looks flawless.

## Herculean task

But, for a socialist organisation, winning a political voice on the national stage is a Herculean task. It requires the collective effort and organisation of a historically large section of the working class.

The DSA members elected to Congress since 2018 were more the results of happy accidents. The DSA endorsed and participated in their campaigns, and was more than happy to take credit when an upset win occurred. But these people were not elected with the expectation that they would act as tribunes of the people, or treat the DSA as the political party they answer to.

That type of electoral programme had to be built up painstakingly from the ground over the last several years, from the municipal to the state level. The reality is there are only a handful of Congressional districts in the country where the DSA can make

a real intervention - several of them being in New York.

The blue ribbon prize for NYC DSA is NY-7 - demonstrably the most leftwing Congressional district in the country, and recently given the moniker, "commie corridor". The area has since 1993 been represented by Democrat Nydia Velazquez, who voted with Joe Biden 100% of the time in the 117th Congress. Velazquez announced her retirement the day before voting closed on the NY-8 DSA endorsement vote - it is hard not to see that as a carrot for the DSA, handed out by the Congressional Democratic leadership, in order to sway the vote to prevent a high-profile challenge to House minority leader Hakeem Jeffries.

The stick followed a day later, with the passage of House Concurrent Resolution 58, entitled "Denouncing the horrors of socialism" - introduced by Republicans and passed with 86 Democrat votes, including Jeffries. The DSA is looking likely to put forward for the seat Claire Valdez, a State Assemblywoman who is a former chair of the NYC DSA. She is seen as a reliable DSA loyalist, in a way that DSA Congresspeople have not yet been - for now anyway.

The other opportunity is NY-10. It is currently represented by Dan Goldman, a militantly Zionist Democrat, whose net worth hovers around a quarter of a billion dollars, and who won his election in a crowded primary with only around a quarter of the votes. That certainly is an attractive seat for the DSA to pick off. The campaign would be a serious referendum on Zionism in the city - even more so than the mayoral election. But it is also one of the few places where the DSA can run a competitive race. The NYC DSA voted to endorse Alexa Aviles, a DSA city councillor, to take on Goldman. The endorsement vote seemed

uncontroversial.

However, the liberal Zionist city comptroller, Brad Lander, has also been eyeing the seat. Lander was a mayoral candidate who became an ally of Mamdani, with a base in the city's progressive middle class, and the two cross-endorsed each other for top two in the ranked-choice primary election. They developed a buddy-cop shtick. You can see where this might be going. Indeed, *Politico* is now reporting that Lander is set to launch his campaign any day now, with Zohran's endorsement.

## Pinochet

Mayor Mamdani having a 'Pinochet' holding a knife to his back is one thing. Skulls will be cracked by Officer Tisch, but they could be cracked by anybody. Surely there will be twists and turns and all sorts of compromises with the ruling class throughout the Mamdani administration of New York City. But using his platform to move against the DSA's democratic process, when there is a candidate of the working class chosen by the DSA who he is supposedly loyal to, is tantamount to scabbing. It is an unforgivable transgression of basic class solidarity that jeopardises the entire socialist electoral programme, in order to fill a backroom deal made with a liberal Democrat (who wanted the job of deputy mayor before he was offered a seat in Congress!).

Not that we should be merely oriented towards elections. However, politics starts in the millions. The US working class does not have a voice on the national political stage that can constantly indict the imperialist oligarchy, the slaver constitution and the ruling class as a whole. Building a bench of socialists in Congress - a caucus separate from the Democrats, even if elected under their ballot line - is an imperative. In theory, these comrades could agitate, from a position of constitutional disloyalism, on a much wider scale. In theory also, they could be accountable to our party through methods of genuine democratic centralism.

But - in part because of mayor-elect Mamdani's recent actions - it looks like we are still a long way off from this.<sup>5</sup> ●

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3. To his credit, Ossé accepted the vote and pledged to remain in the organisation: (x.com/ossechi/status/1992433754229604592?s=46).
4. See my letter in *Cosmonaut*: [cosmonautmag.com/2023/02/letter-response-to-dan-lazare](https://cosmonautmag.com/2023/02/letter-response-to-dan-lazare).
5. With some back-of-the-napkin math, it seems like Reichstag members represented around 100,000 citizens of the German empire after the addition of Alsace-Lorraine, around the time when the SPD had its first batch of several deputies elected. In 1906 (the first election after the formation of the SFIO, when it won 54 seats in the Chamber of Deputies) constituencies in France accounted for around 69,000 people. China has a unicameral National People's Congress of 2,977 deputies representing 1.4 billion citizens, and is more representative than the US House, with constituencies under half a million, though it is indirectly elected, and is a rubber-stamp, non-standing body. India's Lok Sabha is more unrepresentative than the US House, with constituencies of around 2.7 million. Pakistan's lower house is very slightly more representative than the US house. Indonesia's is more representative than the US, at around 490,000 people in a constituency. Of the top five most populous countries, only India has a lower house with larger constituencies than the US.



## ECONOMY

# Silicon mountain

Mainstream economists remain divided on whether AI will deliver in the same way that railways did in the 19th century, or the internet did in the late 20th century, but one thing is certain, writes **Michael Roberts**: the bubble will burst

**T**he artificial intelligence bubble continues. The Magnificent Seven of tech media continue to drive the US stock market, along with the AI companies. The 10 largest US companies by stock market value, holding over 40% of the total market cap, according to the S&P 500 index, have continued to shift upward in price - well above any increase in earnings (profits) recorded.

Recent earnings from major US 'hyperscalers' (AI development companies) show that revenue growth remains strong, but free cash flow is being sucked up by accelerating capital expenditure. So these firms are turning to leasing and new debt to sustain the AI development race. The AI investing companies now represent 75% of S&P 500 returns, 80% of earnings growth and nearly 90% of capital-spending growth in the last year. Global AI infrastructure investment is near \$400 billion in 2025 and, by 2030, cumulative spending could exceed \$5-7 trillion. Roughly 60% of this investment will go on semiconductors and computing hardware - an unprecedented level of investment in a new technology just starting commercial use.

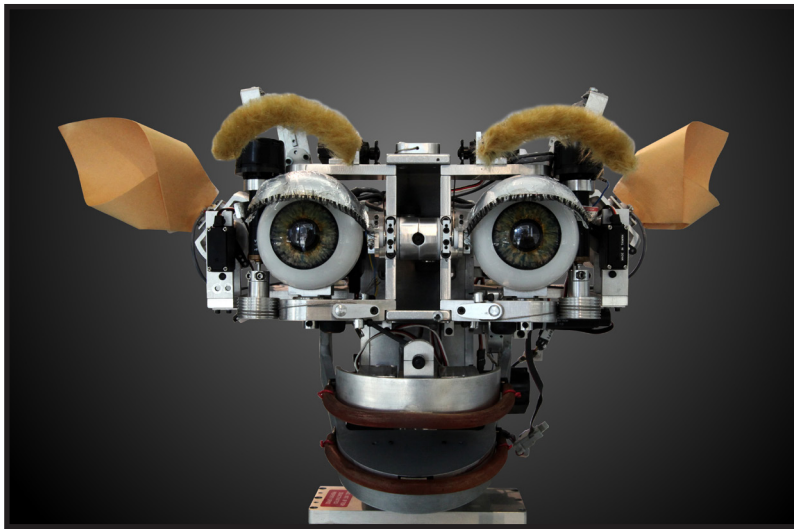
It is not entirely true that infotech investment is the total driver of US economic activity. A lot of the equipment going into data centres is imported, so that means there are offsetting negative contributions to gross domestic product. Even so, the 'silicon mountain' continues to erupt upwards.

The AI bubble - and that is what it is - has startling similarities with the so-called 'railway mania' in Britain in the 1840s and later in the US in the 1870s. Then railways were also seen as a powerful new technology that could transform transport and travel, and so boost productivity. This led to massive speculation in railway shares, as company after company launched a new rail line across Britain during the 1840s - and later, in the 1870s, right across the US, culminating in the transcontinental rail connection.

### Fraud

In the UK, the mania reached its zenith in 1846, when 263 acts of parliament for setting up new railway companies were passed, with the proposed routes totalling 9,500 miles (15,300 kilometres). About a third of the railways authorised were never built - the companies either collapsed because of poor financial planning, were bought out by larger competitors before they could build their line, or turned out to be fraudulent enterprises to channel investors' money into other businesses.

Between the 1860s and the 1900s, the transcontinental rail tracks transformed America. They helped populate the west and, as in Britain, developed a new form of capitalist enterprise: joint stock companies (ie, publicly owned and financed corporations). Rail helped turn the US into a coast-to-coast dual-ocean superpower and revolutionised modern finance. As historian Richard White wrote in his history of the transcontinentals, entitled *Railroaded*, "they created modernity as much by their failure as their success", by leaving behind "a legacy of bankruptcies, two depressions, environmental harm,



**Kismet: robot head made in 1990s at MIT**

financial crises and social upheaval".

So far, the AI investment boom has not yet reached the size of that 19th century railway investment, which eventually hit 6% of US GDP - as compared to 1.2% of GDP invested in AI data centres and 4% of GDP in overall information processing so far. But it is getting there.

In the 'railway mania', eventually the stock market bubble burst. In the US, the trigger for the panic of 1873 was the failure of Jay Cooke & Co, America's premier banking house. Cooke had made his name as the chief financier of the Union army. He agreed to fund the Northern Pacific Railway's project to connect the Oregon coast with the existing northeastern rail network. But the first transcontinental line had already been completed and concerns about overcapacity, along with increasing distrust of railroad securities, drove down Northern Pacific bond prices. Cooke's firm went bust in September 1873, precipitating a stock market panic and eventually a worldwide depression that extended into the 1890s.

Marx commented at the time that the huge concentration of stock market investment in US rail companies "gave in one word an impetus never before suspected to the concentration of capital and also to the accelerated and immensely enlarged cosmopolitan activity of loanable capital, thus embracing the whole world in a network of financial swindling and mutual indebtedness, the capitalistic form of 'international brotherhood'". When the rail company stocks fell, the rest of the market also fell and an economic slump ensued.

In Britain, the railway bubble burst around 1847. Marx only analysed that bubble some 20 years later in *Capital*, volume 3. There he called it the "great railway swindle" to emphasise that the claims made by the railway companies for huge profits to be made were deliberately overstated. Investors naively poured capital into schemes that were significantly less profitable than they expected and promoters and directors had promised. The railway mania of the 1840s took place when the average rate of profit on British capital was falling - and it continued to do so through the 1840s. As Marx noted, "in the railway swindle from summer 1844, railway investors apparently expected much higher than the average profit rate". Those hopes were dashed by 1847.

It is the same issue now. If the

returns on massive AI investments turn out to be lower than expected and claimed, that will cause a serious stock market correction. In other words, the mechanism by which an AI bust could cause a recession is not through suddenly lower growth, but through a failure to obtain expected returns on investments.

### Optimism

For now, optimism remains among the tech sector. Mark Zuckerberg recently predicted that half of Meta's code would be written by AI within a year. But so far most companies are seeing little, if any, benefit from their initial investments. A widely cited study from MIT found that so far, 95% of generative AI projects produce no return in productivity growth or profits. To justify the required investment, annual data-centre revenues would need to rise from \$20 billion today to about \$2 trillion. Existing revenues will fall short by \$800 billion, according to Bain & Company. Even with expected efficiency gains, that gap illustrates how far current valuations depend on unproven revenue streams. It will have to be filled by borrowing and raising debt and equity.

Increasingly, investment in AI assets is being financed by loans and borrowing by the AI companies, while the stock investors also borrow more to leverage up their financial bets on AI. OpenAI's data centre partners are on course to amass almost \$100 billion in borrowing for investment. So far, SoftBank, Oracle and CoreWeave have borrowed at least \$30 billion to invest, and a group of banks is in talks to lend another \$38 billion to Oracle and data centre builder Vantage to fund further sites for OpenAI. Investment group Blue Owl Capital and computing infrastructure companies such as Crusoe also rely on deals with OpenAI to service about \$28 billion they have in loans. Lenders and bond holders are starting to get worried and taking out increased default insurance on Oracle, in case it is not able to service its debt.

Gita Gopinath, former chief economist at the International Monetary Fund, has calculated that an AI stock market crash equivalent to that which ended the dot-com boom would erase some \$20 trillion in American household wealth and another \$5 trillion abroad - enough to strangle consumer spending and

induce a global recession. But the argument goes that, even if there is financial bust and an ensuing slump, the best companies will survive and the huge productivity gains from the application of AI in all sectors of the economy will eventually deliver a step-change in the growth of the productivity of labour.

Output will rise because AI will replace human labour, reducing costs for companies and boosting profitability. After all, even though the 1873 panic led to a market collapse in railway stocks and a deep recession, in the end the US had a legacy of a rail network across the continent. Similarly in Britain, after the slump of the late 1840s, the subsequent long boom of the 1850s rested partly on the 6,000-mile rail network, which then formed the backbone of the country's transportation system and helped Britain maintain its global hegemony.

### Global hegemony

Will AI do the same for US capitalism, currently facing increasing rivalry to its global hegemony? Possibly not - after all, the Magnificent Seven may be riding high in the stock markets, but their technological advantage is seriously under threat. Last year, China delivered DeepSeek, a much cheaper, but nearly just as good, Large Language Model (LLM) as OpenAI's ChatGPT. And this year there have been new launches of Chinese LLMs that perform as well and cost a fraction of the investment made by the US companies.

Mainstream economists remain divided on whether AI will deliver in the same way that railways did in the 19th century, or the internet did in the late 20th century. Stanford University economist Eric Brynjolfsson predicts that AI will follow a 'J-curve', in which initially there is a slow, even negative effect on productivity as companies invest heavily in the technology, before they finally reap the rewards. And then the boom comes. The J-curve can be seen in US manufacturing productivity growth, which fell in the mid-1980s and then, after the recession of 1991, accelerated sharply until the mid-2000s.

But Daron Acemoglu - an economist at MIT and 2024 Nobel Prize winner - argues the productivity gains from generative AI will be far less and take far longer than AI optimists think. Moreover, AI companies are too narrowly focused on ChatGPT and other AI products that have little relevance to most business sectors. Others point out that despite smart phones and social media and apps such as Slack and Uber, past digital technologies have done little to grow the economy.

Next year should reveal who is right ●

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## What we fight for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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# weekly Worker

## Don't trust Nobel Prize winners

# Casting aside the veil

Women are openly flouting laws imposing the hijab. The regime is split on how to respond. Yasmine Mather argues that the fight for women's liberation must be linked to anti-imperialism and the working class struggle

In contemporary Iran, a gradual but significant social shift is taking place, with women playing an important role. Across universities, sports environments and everyday public spaces, many women continue to test and push the limits set by the religious state. Their actions reflect a complex dynamic, in which intellectual aspiration, physical determination and forms of civil disobedience intersect. As in previous decades, the conflict shows the deep fractures within Iranian society and the state.

One could argue that a major factor in achieving this change is education. In universities across Iran, women are not just participants, but are increasingly becoming a significant force. Today, they constitute about 60% of all university entrants - a staggering figure that signifies an important demographic shift in higher education. Their ambition extends into the most demanding academic subjects, with women making up a remarkable 70% of graduates in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields (the proportion is less than 37% in the US and just under 40% in UK). Literacy is approximately 99% for young women.

As women gain education and confidence, they develop forms of social power that challenge existing structures. Today, Iranian women work in engineering, medicine and technology, yet they remain subject to restrictive social rules that limit their autonomy. The tension between their modern professional lives and the expectations imposed by the state has become a significant factor behind current forms of resistance.

## Defiance

In early December, almost 2,000 women took part in a marathon on Kish Island, and many of them ran without the mandatory hijab. It was a public act of collective defiance - and the state, powerless to stop the marathon, reacted by detaining two of the main organisers after the event had taken place.

Meanwhile, female singing in public is officially prohibited, yet a woman singer, Parastoo Ahmadi, live-streamed a concert, where she performed without a hijab and with an all-male band - breaking two major taboos simultaneously. She was arrested, then released on bail. The official national musicians' association publicly condemned her, but the video of her singing has gone viral.

Beyond these headline-grabbing incidents, everyday resistance has become normal, especially in cities like Tehran. Many women - especially 'generation Z' - walk through streets, sit in cafes and travel on the metro without headscarves. This ongoing civil disobedience, which began after the 2022 protests following Mahsa Amini's death, has already forced the state to rethink how it responds - with general pressure and targeted punishment.

Confronted by a decentralised



Taekwondo medalists: Spain, UK, Iran and Egypt

cultural movement, the Iranian regime has shifted from targeting individual women to applying indirect pressure. A key new tactic is the punitive targeting of businesses. Often cafes and restaurants that serve unveiled women are raided and sealed by the 'morality police', with owners facing fines of \$3,000 or more - a significant sum, given Iran's strained economy.

At the same time, a major political split has emerged inside the regime. Reformist president Masoud Pezeshkian has openly refused to approve a harsh new 'Chastity and hijab' bill, saying that "people have the right to choose". He has also warned that strict enforcement would trigger widespread anger. But hardliners in the judiciary, led by chief justice Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, have ordered security forces to hunt down and suppress what they call "organised groups promoting immorality and not wearing the veil". This clash at the top has created a chaotic and uneven pattern of enforcement across the country.

Iran's current struggle over women's dresswear is part of a long history of state-imposed rules: during the Pahlavi era in the late 1930s, Reza Shah banned the veil in public as part of his top-down 'modernisation' programme. Many people deeply resented this forced unveiling. By contrast, after coming to power in 1979, the religious forces in charge of the newly created Islamic Republic moved to enforce the hijab and, once they had consolidated their authority, made head-covering for women compulsory. The official regulations set out fines - and lashes - for women accused of showing their hair.

Over the past three years, however, the legal situation has become less clear. Successive governments have increasingly turned a blind eye to women's dress choices. In 2024, hardline institutions approved a new hijab law, imposing heavy fines and possible jail sentences, but the Supreme National Security Council suspended it, fearing it would trigger new protests. As a result, Iran is now in a legal limbo: the old law remains in place, yet its enforcement

is inconsistent, because officials are divided and concerned about a public backlash.

In addition to external pressures, Iran is confronting a deep and widening internal contradiction. On one side are millions of educated and determined women, seeking basic personal freedoms. On the other side is a divided state, trying to defend a central element of its ideology - the mandatory hijab - through indirect and economically punitive measures rather than open confrontation.

This tension is happening amid broader uncertainty, intensified by the threat of conflict and the possibility of airstrikes by Israel or the United States. In this environment, the dispute over the hijab has become a key faultline in the wider struggle over Iran's political direction - between a state attempting to maintain its vision of 'Islamic purity' and a new generation asserting its demands for autonomy, dignity and choice.

## Human rights

The Kish all-female run happened on December 10 - UN Human Rights Day, which marks the 1948 adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Every year around this day a plethora of Iranian human rights activists, including our two Nobel peace prize winners (Shirin Ebadi - she won the Peace Prize in 2003; and Narges Mohammadi, who won it in 2023), voice their concern for human rights and present solutions for 'regime change' in Iran.

What these individuals fail to acknowledge is that their calls for foreign intervention - whether by the US, Israel or the United Nations - do not protect the Iranian people from the Islamic Republic's human-rights abuses. Instead, such appeals risk opening the door to even more severe violations, accompanied by the humiliation of foreign domination or the devastation of prolonged internal conflict. For decades, even before the Trump era, the west's human-rights discourse was shaped by a liberal-bourgeois framework that limited its scope. In the last few years, however - especially since

the beginning of the genocide in Gaza and Trump's brazen promotion of far-right policies - the idea that western powers genuinely support human rights has become impossible to take seriously.

2003 Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi has openly called for US military intervention (mirroring the Venezuelan laureate, who has been doing exactly the same thing). Her fellow Nobel winner, Narges Mohammadi, calls for a transition to a secular democracy through a UN-supervised referendum. Yet this approach relies on the same international system that has repeatedly backed coups, sanctions and wars - often against democratic movements themselves.

This global system is not a neutral defender of rights. It serves the interests of powerful imperialist states - most notably the US, which has imposed devastating sanctions on Iran and has waged wars across the region. Appeals to this system for 'solidarity' overlook its role in creating instability and supporting authoritarian governments.

During the past year, under Donald Trump's administration, even the pretence of defending liberal human rights has largely disappeared, as the president and his cabinet openly promote far-right nationalism. In a recent speech, Trump described Europe as a "decaying civilisation" and warned of "civilisational erasure" - rhetoric drawn from white-nationalist narratives that portray migration (implicitly from non-white regions) as an existential threat. He frames migration, sparked by war and the exploitation of the global south, as a symptom of European "weakness", echoing racialised stereotypes and reinforcing language used to justify exclusion, border militarisation and xenophobic nationalism. While not always explicitly racist, this language clearly draws on racialised and civilisational themes. In such circumstances, it is difficult to sustain any illusions about a US-dominated world order.

International law, of course, has always been applied selectively. The

UN Security Council is paralysed by veto powers; major states disregard the International Court of Justice; drone strikes and covert operations violate sovereignty with impunity. Calling for UN-led solutions often seems detached from the realities of how this system operates.

Many prominent - and lesser-known - Iranian human-rights activists have remained silent on the genocide in Gaza. Some depend on funding tied to US Republican or Democrat pro-Zionist networks; others are wary of jeopardising future support. Mohammadi's essay in *Time* does not connect Iran's internal repression to its regional role or to the ongoing genocide in Gaza. The conflict between Iran and Israel is not symmetrical: it unfolds within a settler-colonial context backed by western powers. The Islamic Republic exploits the Palestinian cause for domestic legitimacy, while liberal discourse often treats the two issues as unrelated. An anti-imperialist perspective must place this context at the centre.

## Rhetoric

Mohammadi appears unwilling or unable to recognise how the Islamic Republic uses anti-Zionist and anti-western rhetoric to obscure its own repression. The state supports regional militias, while suppressing leftists, secular opponents and student movements at home. This is not anti-imperialism, but reactionary geopolitics.

Her call for help from the "international community" is the most politically loaded element of her *Time* essay. In practice, this phrase usually refers to western governments and institutions that prioritise strategic interests - oil, security and regional influence - over democracy or human rights. These same actors routinely overlook abuses by their allies, while deploying human-rights language to justify sanctions and interventions that harm ordinary people. Some on the Iranian left have become cheerleaders for our 'human right activists', forgetting that a genuinely radical position rejects the false choice between the Islamic Republic and western imperialism. Of course, we must support the Iranian people's struggle against repression and a system built on gender apartheid and state violence. However, we must also stand with Palestinians resisting genocide and with all peoples opposing imperialist domination.

Such solidarity cannot depend on appeals to the existing international order. It must be rooted in a revolutionary struggle from below - the understanding that real liberation comes from dismantling the global structures of imperialism, capitalism and state violence that sustain oppression - in Iran, Israel and the USA alike.

The objective is not to reform a broken world system, but to transcend it ●