

# weekly worker



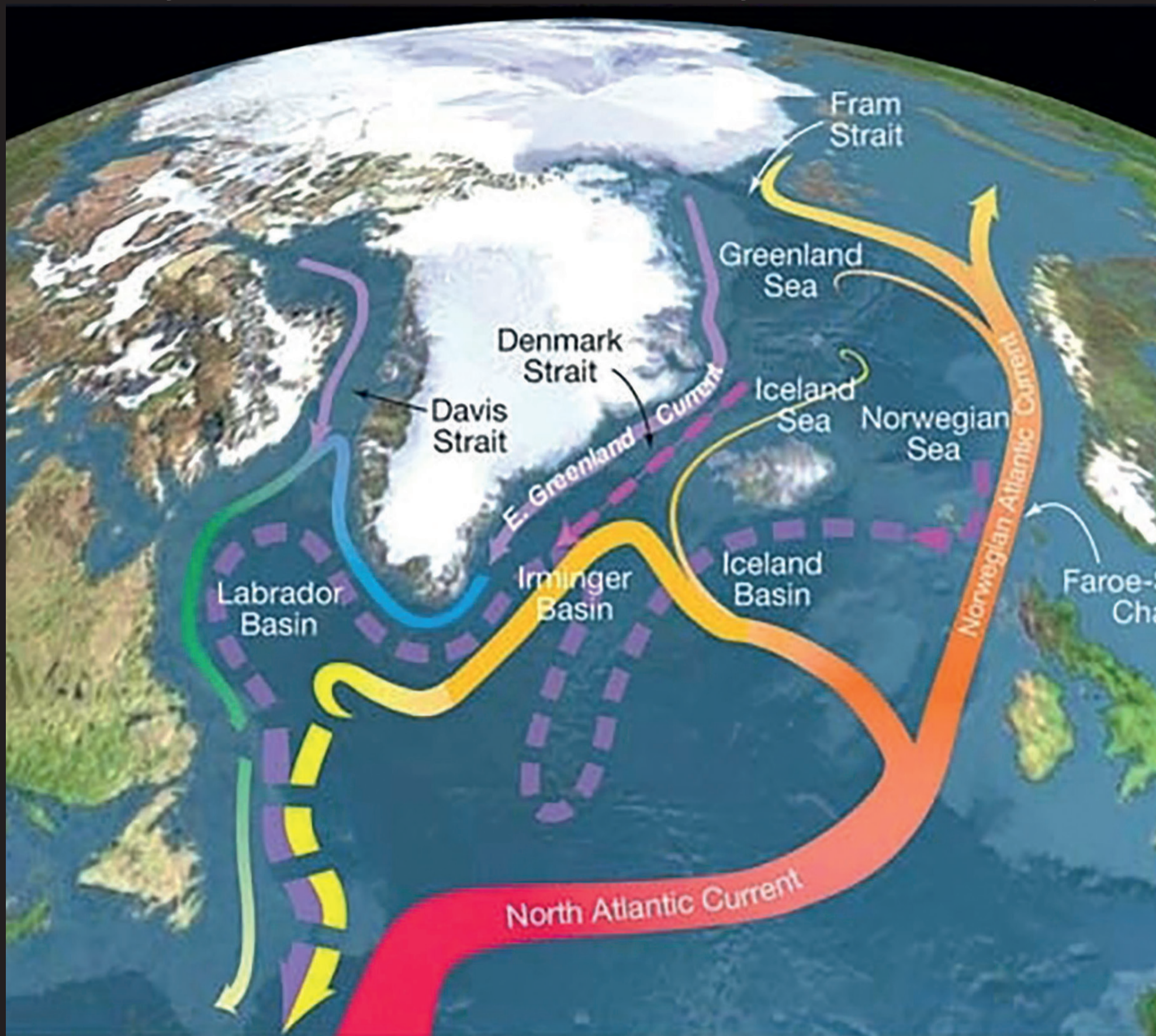
**After four years of Vladimir Putin's 'special military operation', Russia is bogged down in a draining war of attrition**

- Letters and debate
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Towards a mass Communist Party

£1/€1.10



**YET ANOTHER STUDY SHOWS THE EARTH'S CLIMATE SYSTEM RAPIDLY APPROACHING MULTIPLE TIPPING POINTS. SO WHAT IS TO BE DONE?**

# LETTERS



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

## Petty points

Further to Talal Hangari's letter (February 12) regarding the petty bourgeois character of the Green Party, most of us likely agree deep down that it is "doubtful that many of us have a clear idea of what the petty bourgeoisie is in the 21st century".

Obviously myriad factions of the petty bourgeoisie exist in this and other countries. Much of the traditional petty bourgeoisie is right-populist and much of the new, younger petty bourgeoisie is left-populist or left-liberal. That is partly because the latter's access to capital tends to be lower than in the past - small businesses tend to be much smaller these days - and partly because, due to technological, economic and political advances, they have grown up in a more culturally integrated era.

Class composition is, of course, very complicated. A household might easily contain a bourgeois owner with three or four dotting and loyal proletarian dependents, who would be lumpenised if he ran off with a new partner, for example.

I think the confusion Talal would like to see taken more seriously comes from a lack of appreciation for what we might call the 'semi-proletariat'. For one thing, the tax system increasingly encourages workers to go self-employed and form limited companies - as a byproduct of corporation tax cuts, implemented to counter capitalism's tendency to generate falling profit rates.

A lot of workers have one or more 'side hustles' these days. Almost anyone can advertise a part-time service to a wide audience - DJ-ing, Yoga classes, etc - or make their own custom merchandise online and start selling from their own Shopify account, for example.

Then there is the fact that more households than ever (at least in the UK and US) have direct investments in the stock market (plus indirectly through rehypothecation). Not because they are wealthier, thanks to imperialist superprofits - but because they are getting poorer and need to top up their wages and income to survive. They are effectively turning to gambling on a Ponzi scheme out of desperation. The capitalist state encourages this further by tinkering with the tax system to discourage saving, since capitalists are increasingly dependent on plundering public wealth.

The privatisation of housing, of course, turned many workers into equity holders. These sorts of developments have generated a kind of small capitalist mindset among large numbers of wage workers.

We workers do have a couple of things in common with the capitalist class. We're all in the business of making money. And we suffer from the worst example of cognitive dissonance - what we call the commodity fetish - and increasingly so, it seems, since humans adapt to their (increasingly privatised) environment; and do not generally wish to see the economy deteriorate. Everyone

seems to agree: we just need to grow the economy (make more commodities)!

How we achieve that is what is disputed. The Greens and Your Party believe that a more balanced public-private mixed economy will bring utility bills down, making commodities cheaper to produce and putting more money into the pockets of therefore higher-spending consumers. Win, win. This position may or may not be wholly determined by class character. Most pure wage workers would probably agree, because Marxism isn't widely taught and social democracy is the sigh of the oppressed.

The problem with the theory, of course, is that the remainder of the privately owned economy will continue to suffer from falling profit rates, as innovation advances and we make more commodities in less time. This pushes prices ever-closer to zero, which results in profit-making becoming increasingly difficult - compelling capitalists to repristate the rest of the economy.

All of which is to say, this isn't just a class struggle: it is a social struggle. We are trying to go from one historical *social* system to the next. We are faced with mass economic illiteracy, even among the brightest minds of the most advanced, scientifically brilliant workers. We are trying to rewire *billions* of brains from ones that take it as read that economies will always be money-based.

We really need to incorporate some kind of 'Marxist neuroscience' or behaviour-change science into our approach. As much as we need better class and political analysis, we also need better social and economic analysis. The present social-economic system is unsustainable, and nobody's class character or opportunism can change that fact.

**Ted Reese**  
Democratic Socialists of Your Party

## Unpack the crap

Once again, comrade Mike Macnair has written a quite demagogic letter about the Spartacist tendency ('Spart Cannonism', February 12). Like the previous one ('Spart leopard', August 28 2025), rather than a serious attempt at dealing with our arguments and perspectives, its goal is to use false analogies and distortions to cast a "dark shadow" over us.

This time, it concerns the merger of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation with the Spartacists in Australia - in particular, our comrades' proposals at the unity conference for a proletarian RCO. Their motion was for the RCO to aim to have 50% of its members in working class jobs. While the RCO did not adopt our proposal, Macnair still feels the need to pillory this as "crap" and a "political health warning". Let's unpack.

Comrade Macnair's argument is basically that since many before us degenerated while pushing for "turns to industry", any push to industrialise communists necessarily means political degeneration. This is what is called sophistry. Because "turns to industry" have been used in the past for opportunist goals does not mean that turning to industry is wrong. Furthermore, this evades the argument that acquiring weight in the proletariat

is precisely how communist parties were forged. Every single communist party that went from a sect to a national force did so by organising workers and leading decisive sections of the proletariat in struggle. Work in the working class is thus absolutely key to rebuilding communist parties.

Often, we hear that we must first focus on the left, or students, and later on go to the workers. But this is a false dichotomy. One of the biggest problems of the socialist movement today is that it is totally divorced from the working class. Most socialist groups today (at least in the west) are made up of students, petty bourgeois and retirees, and focus the bulk of their work on campuses. This is hugely deforming and impacts the politics of the movement - which becomes dominated by petty bourgeois layers. Meanwhile, many workers are turning to the far right as the only perceived fighting alternative to the status quo. So, while communists must work on campuses and among other left groups, one of the most important points to make in those areas is to turn to the working class, and fight the tendency to focus only among students and intellectuals.

Of course, Macnair is right when he notes that "proletarianising" is not a talisman against degeneration. We have never argued this. In fact, having more workers brings new problems and pressures on the party - which highlights the key role of having good leadership of the party. But having next to no workers is even worse. It means the isolation of the party from the class it seeks to represent, and encourages sectarianism and dilettantism.

Regarding the RCO, this is a group which - like most - is in its vast majority made up of young students and declassed intellectuals. In this case, it is quite important to consciously push some of them into working class jobs. Together with political education, patient and serious work in the working class is the best school to form disciplined, communist cadres. Furthermore, there is a real material question here: there is little prospect any more for youth to go to university and get comfortable petty bourgeois jobs. Most end up in debt with no job prospects. It is much better for young revolutionaries to become plumbers, electricians, welders, nurses or even teachers and get a decent job, in which they can be on the front line of rebuilding the trade union movement. I fear Macnair's view is tainted by a form of political post-traumatic stress disorder.

Another point linked to this is that, when we say "serious work in the working class", we do not mean cozying up to the union bureaucracy, or voting paper motions in deserted branch meetings. This is too often what passes for 'trade union work' among the left. What we mean is to really rebuild the unions, which are today completely hollowed out, by pushing and organising struggles for what workers need. Crucially, this must be done in constant struggle against the union bureaucracy.

The merger of the RCO and the Spartacist League of Australia is a massive win for the communist movement there and beyond. After years of talking about communist

unity in the pages of the *Weekly Worker*, this merger is actually the first real achievement of this perspective. So we are puzzled as to why comrade Macnair wrote a letter (again) essentially bashing the Sparts by digging up examples from 50 years ago. We would prefer that Macnair and the PCC respond seriously to our arguments. They might also want to reflect as to why the Spartacists have been virtually the only tendency that has seriously taken up the struggle for communist unity.

For those who want to know more, we recommend listening to the latest episode of our English-language podcast, *SpartTalk*, titled 'Australian communists merge' (February 13, wherever you get your podcasts), where SLA and RCO leaders lay out their views of this quite historic fusion.

**Vincent David**  
Spartacist League

## Vote GL?

While most groups on the left, including the Socialist Workers Party, have no problem calling on all of its members and supporters to vote for the Grassroots Left slate, some organisations seem to find it somewhat more difficult. Dave Nellist has written online that, after having been barred as a candidate, he supports the GL candidates for the West Midlands - Megan Clarke and Graham Jones. But an official editorial in *The Socialist* is a lot less clear on the matter and does not mention the word 'Grassroots Left' (or 'The Many', for that matter):

"We call on Your Party members to vote for candidates in their regions who support the call for the party to 'turn to the working class', to put the trade unions central, to make the most of the opportunities presented for an anti-cuts socialist stand in May's elections, and stand against exclusions of socialists. This approach is not wholly applicable for all the candidates for the national office holders. Neither Jeremy Corbyn nor Sarah Sultana, for example, see the need to orientate to the organised working class with a campaign aimed at the base of the trade unions."

In other words, neither slate agrees with SPEW's increasingly bizarre insistence that Your Party should become a federal party with special privileges for trade unions - ie, union bureaucrats. The implication of the editorial is to vote for GL, but it is very odd that the comrades cannot get themselves to say it out loud. Perhaps comrade Nellist was even breaking ranks by putting out his personal support for Jones and Clarke.

Then there is the truly perplexing statement from Revolutionary Socialism in the 21st Century, which pretty much sums up what is wrong with the organisation - it cannot give any clear leadership, on anything: "The polarisation in Your Party is now existential: a CEC controlled by Corbyn's camp will likely lead to the ostracisation of the radical left, while one controlled by Sultana's may lead to Corbyn's departure. The best outcome for these elections would be a balanced CEC, including the best of both slates and independents." (revsoc21.uk/2026/02/10/your-party-cec-elections.)

Come again? A "balanced CEC" would clearly be one of the *worst* possible outcomes of

the elections - the fighting over the direction of Your Party would continue, without being resolved either way. The vast majority of the members would soon get sick of it and leave. Yes, RS21 then goes on to call for a vote for GL, but the idea that "both wings" are "required to make it a success" has more than a hint of centrism about it. No, you don't need a right wing in a socialist party. In fact, you should try and get rid of it.

The statement also recommends that, "Your Party should not make the mistake of distancing itself from the Green surge." Again, this does not come with clarity on what it means in practice. The comrades do not even spell out if people in Gorton and Denton should vote for the Green candidate Hannah Spencer (this is implied by the half-sentence "a win for the Greens would be the best outcome under the circumstances"). Are the comrades arguing for dual membership? Maybe they are saying we shouldn't criticise the Greens? Do they think Your Party should aim for local or national coalition governments with the Green Party? We don't know. We suspect most RS21 members don't know either. What is often presented as a strength of RS21 is actually a profound programmatic weakness.

Yes, thousands (if not tens of thousands) among the 800,000 who signed up to 'express an interest' in forming a new socialist party have now joined the Green Party instead. This is mainly down to the Corbyn clique messing things up so much, as well as ex-Liberal Democrat Zack Polanski having spotted a gap in the market, which means he is currently posing left. But the Greens are not a semi-socialist party. This is a misconception we must fight, including arguing against dual membership with the Greens, as some GL supporters have done. We need exactly the *opposite* approach, explaining that the Green Party is not a working class party, that it does not want to overcome capitalism and that dual membership should be a logical impossibility - you cannot argue for and against capitalism at the same time.

**Matt Rubens**  
email

## Imperiali STV

Your comments on the use of the Imperiali quota in Single Transferable Vote elections are not entirely correct. The lower quota value of Imperiali (votes/seats+2) means that the surplus vote transfers from ballots for the leading candidates will be even greater than with the more common Droop or Hare quotas.

So it really is worth voting for more than two candidates. It will indeed favour slates including candidates who get a huge personal vote which then transfers to other candidates because fewer votes will get used up by the quota that elects the first candidate.

**Phil Pope**  
Bristol

## Change tactics

Firstly, I have just voted in the Your Party election. I found it strikingly easy to vote for candidates that most *Weekly Worker* readers could broadly support, even if the result will still be a diluted, compromised version of the socialist party we actually need. That, however, is hardly unusual.

Even the Bolsheviks had to fight their way through compromise, diplomacy and factional struggle at the outset.

For the first time in my 74 years, a vote made me feel politically included - as though I was voting for people who might genuinely represent my views. I never once felt that as a Labour Party member. That alone suggests something may finally be shifting on the left, even if I fully expect an eventual meltdown, once egos and internal contradictions collide.

Like most of your readers, I am appalled by the worldwide banning and suppression of pro-Palestinian organisations. This raises a broader tactical question: is one of the left's recurring weaknesses its tendency to organise around single-issue, easily isolated causes?

Until recently, international law - rooted in the Geneva Conventions - placed limits on acceptable behaviour in war. The deliberate targeting of civilians could not be openly defended. Since Trump helped tear up the post-war settlement, those limits have been quietly abandoned. Governments now either support or remain silent about atrocities that would previously have been indefensible. The left has not yet adjusted its tactics to this new reality.

The argument should be brutally simple: *any government that deliberately kills or injures civilians - including women and children - should be sanctioned*. No qualifications. No contextual evasions.

By focusing on the universal right not to be targeted as a civilian, the debate is shifted away from the emotive terrain that Zionists currently exploit. Strip the argument of religious claims, ethnic narratives, Hamas justifications and historical exceptionalism, and force a single question: *do you support the killing of women and children?*

I am not convinced that this question can be answered in the affirmative without openly implicating oneself in genocide - or in the negative without collapsing the current Zionist defence. At present, that defence relies heavily on the holocaust and on branding pro-Palestinian organisations as terrorist sympathisers. This strategy muddies the water and enables repression. It works precisely because the argument is framed as 'Palestine' rather than as the killing of civilians.

This is not an argument against pro-Palestinian organisations or their politics. It is a recognition that they are being successfully neutralised - which means tactics must change. Could any government plausibly ban a march carrying banners that simply ask, "Is it right to kill women and children?" The police already look absurd arresting people with pro-Palestinian placards. How would they look arresting pensioners carrying that question? No reference to Palestine would even be necessary. Everyone already knows where this is happening. The point is to force an answer that cannot be deflected.

Socialism is unambiguous on these questions. If the left is serious about confronting the right, it must relearn how to ask difficult questions rather than rely solely on adversarial declarations. This used to be a political skill. Many older politicians dismantled

their opponents with a single, well-aimed question. Prime Minister's Questions once meant exactly that - before politics degenerated into character assassination and media theatre.

**PE Williams**  
 email

## Lights out

On February 12 I attended a Your Party/The Many hustings in a village near Cambridge with Jeremy Corbyn, Jo Rust, Michael Mulquin and guest Ismail Uddin (The Many candidate for Yorkshire).

I asked the question on the Labour Party in regards to its bans and proscriptions and what Corbyn and anyone else on the panel thought about the banning of the Communist Party and the fact that MP Phil Piratin - who had helped organise rent strikes in 1938-39 and was elected in 1945 - was a CPGB member. I also pointed out that, in YP, Dave Nellist was kicked out.

I wanted to try and expose the hypocrisy in YP's exclusion of the rest of the left, but Shizuka Jane Pye (Kika), who was chairing, gave me only *one minute* to speak! I already knew it would be bad, but when someone warned me that Kika was the organiser and chair, I knew it would be terrible, so my expectations were low. Anyway, nobody answered my question or even addressed it.

Jo Rust, despite posing with comrades I know who are in Cambridge SWP (seen on an overhead projector of pictures of The Many and their slogans, such as 'For members, not sects', blah, blah, blah), said we can't work with people who don't support the "aims and aspirations of Your Party" and that YP needs to be a "broad church", working "with all parties". Uddin talked about abiding by the "decisions of conference" and getting "back on track" (so vacuous). Corbyn said opinions and views are fine, but "we're not a debating society" (he doesn't want to be scrutinised, in other words).

Comrade Inacio asked Corbyn again on 'dual membership', and Corbyn briefly responded about the vote at conference. There was a bit of back and forth between the two. Inacio kept pressing him on the fact that there had been no real choice to accept dual membership: it was either reject it or 'a maybe'. Corbyn said he believed in the need to be clear who would be allowed and it would be for the CEC to decide. Inacio said, "For everybody"? This sparked off the chair to say, "Would you allow Reform in?" There was lots of heckling about allowing *socialists* in - and counter-heckling to stop the "disruption". One Corbyn supporter even threatened to throw out any "disruptive" hecklers.

Anyway, the hustings only started after Corbyn arrived about 15 minutes late and then, as he took his seat, there was a power cut in the whole street. Thus, the lights went out for the whole of the hustings and only came back on when the meeting had finished - a neat metaphor for Corbynism/The Many.

**Julian Harris**  
 Cambridge

## YP duals

This is the Republic Your Party resolution adopted unanimously on February 12 on the expulsion of Rob Rooney, the South West region candidate for the YP central executive committee:

1. RYP notes the failure of the Grassroots Left (GL) to support our open letter to Jeremy Corbyn and Zara Sultana. This letter opposed, on principled democratic grounds, the exclusion of dual members from the CEC elections. GL did not support our petition demanding political accountability.
2. Had GL members and the organisations with dual members supported our petition, then a dialogue could have begun with either or both of the joint leaders. With strong support across the party, this might have had a democratic deterrent effect against further expulsions.
3. Despite the failure of GL to support our open letter and the petition, Republic YP opposes the expulsion of Rob Rooney in line with the principles of our open letter and petition.
4. We urge all democratically minded members of YP to sign the petition in support of Rob Rooney and the defence of YP democratic practice.

**Republic Your Party**  
 email

## More confusion

Eddie Ford's criticism of Alex Callinicos is typical Trotskyist ultra-left sectarianism ('Spreading panic and confusion', February 12).

Trotskyists have never understood that the class struggle of the proletariat consists of two distinct stages: the defensive and the offensive. Not understanding these two distinct stages of the class struggle, Trotskyism has traditionally condemned the popular front. For instance, during World War II, Trotskyism adopted the policy of revolutionary defeatism. This meant calling for the defeat of Britain by the Nazis. It would be interesting to know if Callinicos and the SWP retrospectively defend this Trotskyist policy.

What the left needs to understand is that, with the exception of the direct struggle for power, every struggle of the working class is a defensive struggle. Ultra-leftists don't understand this. They only have one view of the class struggle - as an offensive campaign.

The thing is that, when the working class and its political leadership are not engaged in a direct struggle for power, we need to unite the greatest number of people as possible against fascism. This is the meaning of the popular front, which the ultra-left sectarians of Trotskyism do not understand. It represents the defensive stage of the class struggle, not a direct struggle for power by the working class. It is the defence of bourgeois democracy against fascism.

The two main political forces in society are revolution and counterrevolution. At the present time, the far-right supporters of the counterrevolution are on the offensive.

When Ford says that something is changing in the US, but it's not mutating into fascism, he misses the point. What is changing in the US is that there is a process of political polarisation taking place, between left and right, revolution and counterrevolution. The same process is taking place in Britain, for instance. Fascism, the essence of which is the suppression of bourgeois democracy, can take different forms. It doesn't have to take the form of old-style fascism.

This polarisation process is important because it allows us to see who is on the side of revolution and who is on the side of counterrevolution, so that we can unite the maximum number of people against the latter in the defensive stage of the class struggle.

Please, Eddie, stop confusing a defensive stage of the class struggle with the struggle for power.

**Tony Clark**

For Democratic Socialism

## Frog apologist

Foreign secretary Yvette Cooper's startling claim over the weekend that the Russian state assassinated opposition leader Alexei Navalny with poison from an Ecuadorian dart frog clearly makes absolute sense.

Of course, it was a pure coincidence that the claim was made at the same time as the Munich Security Conference was taking place, on February 15, the anniversary of when Navalny last appeared in court, and when Russia needs to be further pressured at a very delicate point in the negotiations over Ukraine. Also a pure coincidence: the UK is about to announce a fast-tracking of massive increases in defence spending - actually spending on preparing for war with the Russian Federation, which Nato appears to be actively planning in the next couple of years or so.

Apparently, the said Ecuadorian dart frog can only produce the poison when feasting on small invertebrates natural to its habitat of subtropical or tropical lowland forests. So presumably the Russian state agencies travelled halfway across the world to an Ecuadorian forest to catch a poor frog and extracted its poison. Or perhaps they transplanted a section of the tropical forest to support a frog colony in Moscow. Another line fed to the media over the weekend claimed (inconsistently) that the Russians manufactured the poison in one of their own laboratories. So not from an Ecuadorian dart frog after all!

Cooper states she now "knows" the Russians have quantities of the poison in stock, presumably in some top-secret location. Well, we all know Cooper's sterling reputation for straight talking, and for honesty and integrity in all circumstances, but how can she possibly "know" this to be the case? If she "knows" the Russians have this poison in some top-secret laboratory, one must assume that the British have some sort of spy in there, who let them know (plus, of course, another agent who had access to Navalny's autopsy results).

Who Cooper has presumably thrown under the proverbial bus (as if there is a top-secret laboratory with this specific poison) it will probably take the Russian security services less than 20 minutes to work out exactly (if there is a scintilla of truth in any of this, of course!).

The 47-year-old Navalny was sentenced to 19 years in an Arctic penal colony effective from December 2023 for embezzlement and other charges. Russian penitentiaries and penal colonies are not exactly holiday camps. If the plan was to neutralise Navalny as a credible opponent, it would seem a far more effective strategy to have allowed him to simply serve out part or all his sentence. Indeed, that was the

very accusation made in the west when Navalny was convicted and sentenced.

If it was decided to bump him off, would you *really* choose to traipse halfway round the world to obtain some particularly exotic and unique frog poison to do it? Why? There would surely be a whole host of simpler and more local methods available - and a lot more convincing!

**Andrew Northall**  
 Kettering

## Hugo voter

As an ex-member of the Green Party, I was pleased to read Jack Conrad's article about the Gorton and Denton by-election, which will take place on Thursday, February 26 ('Not red on the inside', February 12).

Jack is correct to expose how the 800 Green Party councillors across Britain are complicit in voting for cuts in local authority budgets. He is also right when he describes the passive and not-so-passive support of SPEW, SWP, Counterfire, CPB, ACR and WPGb for the Green Party candidate in the coming parliamentary by-election.

However, I disagree with his conclusion that communists should call on the people of Gorton and Denton to vote for the Labour candidate to stop the election of a Reform MP. Jack seems to live in the Westminster bubble, divorced from the hatred that working class people in the rest of the country have for Starmer's Labour government.

Given that, according to Eddie Ford, Reform is not a fascist party in spite of its 270,000 working class members, and that we are not facing the prospect of a fascist government ('Spreading panic and confusion', February 12), I think it would be far better if Jack called for a vote for Hugo Wils, the candidate of the Communist League in the by-election. Such a call would be better than his call for a vote for a candidate of a failing government.

**John Smithee**  
 Cambridgeshire

## Poison pen

'Lefties' is a useful shorthand to discuss various ponces. Actually, they are not leftists, but revisionists: 'red libs', Trotskyists, anarchists and liberals - whose stupid games are fully endorsed by capitalism.

They are no longer Marxists. Why? Because they chose 'neo-Marxism' and the Frankfurt School agenda. These are revisionist philosophies which dumped class struggle, class war and economic socialism (all the core tenets of Marxist ideology). Marcuse, Fromm, Gramsci - all their intellectuals decided that the working class had to be dispensed with, because (the idea goes) we are not revolutionary, and never will be (shows how much *they* know).

We should therefore be replaced with a 'rainbow coalition' of black people, homosexuals, the disabled, bourgeois university graduates, highly positioned and well paid technical workers and professionals. All the people who constitute the current Labour Party!

These wokists still believe that they are leftists, still call themselves 'socialists'. But they are assuredly *not*: they are poison, pure and simple. Revisionist poison - our class and national enemies.

**Warwick Alderman**  
 email

## CLIMATE



Danger of runaway change

# Burn, baby, burn

Yet another study shows the climate system rapidly approaching multiple tipping points, writes **Eddie Ford**. Meanwhile the US president is criminally chucking more fuel onto the fire

**Y**et more confirmation, unfortunately, that human civilisation is on the brink can be found in a new study published last week by the journal, *One Earth*, saying that the global climate is “now departing from the stable conditions” that once sustained us.<sup>1</sup>

This assessment synthesised recent scientific findings on climate feedback loops and identified 16 tipping elements, including the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets, mountain glaciers, polar sea ice, sub-Arctic forests and permafrost, the Amazon rainforest and the Atlantic meridional overturning circulation (Amoc), or ‘North Sea drift’, which gives a country like the UK its famously moderate climate.

In fact, the world may be closer than previously thought to a “point of no return”, after which runaway global heating cannot be stopped, say the scientists on the study team at the Terrestrial Ecosystems Research Associates in the US.

Tipping may already be happening in Greenland and west Antarctica, with the Amazon rainforest appearing to be on the verge - especially as Amoc is already showing signs of weakening, which could increase the risk of Amazon dieback. In turn, carbon released by an Amazon dieback would further amplify global warming and interact with other feedback loops. In this way, continued global heating could lead to a cascade of further tipping points and feedback loops, the

study found, and runs the very real danger of locking the world into a new and hellish “hothouse Earth” climate far worse than the 2-3°C temperature rise the world is already on track to reach.<sup>2</sup>

This new climate would be very different to the generally benign conditions of the past 11,000 years. Indeed, it is likely that carbon dioxide levels will be the highest they have been in at least *two million years*, and global temperatures are very likely to be as warm, or warmer, than at any point in the last 125,000 years. As we have witnessed, at just 1.3°C of global heating, weather is already taking lives and destroying livelihoods across the globe. But 3-4°C will bring a far more dangerous qualitative shift, according to the scientists, whereby “the economy and society will cease to function as we know it.”

Naturally, it is difficult to predict when climate tipping points would be triggered - you could say it is radically indeterminate. But, once they are crossed, reversing course from a hothouse Earth is likely to be impossible, even if emissions were eventually slashed. Once the damage has been done, the metaphorical oil tanker cannot be turned around before it hits the rocks.

The group at Terrestrial Ecosystems said they were issuing this warning because climate change is “advancing faster” than many scientists predicted, requiring rapid and immediate cuts in the burning of fossil fuels. Politicians and the public are “largely unaware” of the risks posed by a point-of-no-return transition.

## Dominoes

At the same time as the article in *One Earth* was published, Donald Trump ignored its warnings and moved “the single largest deregulatory action in American history” by revoking the bedrock scientific determination that gave the US government some ability to regulate climate-heating pollution.<sup>3</sup>

The ‘endangerment finding’, which states that the buildup of greenhouse

gases in the atmosphere endangers public health and welfare, has since 2009 allowed the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to limit heat-trapping pollution from vehicles, power plants and other industrial sources. Trump’s criminally reckless action has been widely described as a gift to “billionaire polluters” and the most “aggressive” act of dismantling public health protections in the agency’s 55-year history, bringing hothouse Earth one step closer.

Essentially, his action removes the government’s ability to impose requirements to track, report and limit climate-heating pollution from cars and trucks, even though transportation is the *largest source* of climate pollution in the US. So far, it does not apply to regulations on stationary sources of emissions, such as power plants and fossil-fuel infrastructure, which are regulated under a separate section of the Clean Air Act, but it will open the door to end those standards too - which is almost bound to follow. Indeed, the US president has already proposed that emissions from power plants “do not contribute significantly to dangerous air pollution” and therefore should not be regulated - so, along with the “drill, baby, drill” ethos, we can now add ‘burn, baby, burn’.

But Trump does not appear to have the complete backing of ‘Big Oil’. The American Petroleum Institute, the top US oil lobby group representing nearly 600 corporations, said last month that it backed a repeal of the endangerment finding for vehicles, but not for stationary sources of pollution like power plants - that is too mad even for them.

Joseph Goffman, who helped write and implement the Clean Air Act and worked directly on the endangerment finding, expects that it will be like “a row of dominoes falling”, when it comes to EPA climate regulations. The state of California, for one, will taking the EPA to court over the rollback, as it will inevitably lead to more deadly wildfires, more extreme heat deaths, more climate-driven floods

and droughts, as the overwhelming scientific evidence about climate change is dismissed.

In a typical Trumpian press release, the EPA said that getting rid of the endangerment findings will save the US \$1.3 trillion, while the US president himself declared it “will save American consumers trillions of dollars” - a complete inversion of reality, it goes without saying. At the same time, the EPA has removed crucial climate-focused science and data from its webpages; and, over the past year, its administrator, Lee Zeldin, has launched an all-out assault on climate, air, water and chemical protections. We are confronted by the new robber barons.

But one analysis from the Environmental Defence Fund, for example, found that the full repeal of the endangerment finding, combined with Trump’s proposal to roll back motor vehicle standards, would result in as much as 18 billion more tons of planet-warming pollution by 2055 and impose up to \$4.7 trillion in additional expenses tied to harmful climate and air pollution by that time. The new rule will obviously have ruinous consequences for the working class - both in America and worldwide.

## Sanity

Nor will technologies like electric vehicles come to our rescue. In fact, they will actually do the opposite, logically only encouraging the burning of fossil fuels. Therefore, in a new study, published in the journal *Environmental Research*, researchers at Queen Mary University - not without controversy - say that the push towards EVs is fundamentally misguided as they are “delivering no proven carbon savings”. Hence the UK is “prioritising the wrong things”.<sup>4</sup> Instead, they say, the urgent focus needs to be on grid capacity, renewables and carbon-capture.

While communists can disagree with this or that aspect of the research, we can fundamentally agree that EVs are a false messiah. Described as a

## Fighting fund

## Essential role

**D**espite some very handy donations received over the last week, I’m afraid that we are well below the going rate, when it comes to the *Weekly Worker*’s monthly £2,750 fighting fund target.

Let’s start with the positive side though. Topping the list is comrade PB, with her brilliant £80 regular contribution, followed by MM with his £75, TR (£40), TW and GB (£25 each), OG (£24), plus MD, JL and AM, who each chipped in with £10. All of those payments came via bank transfer or standing order. Then there was the usual batch of PayPal donors - thanks to KS and PM (£50), AR, SO and GP (£5 each) and AH (£3).

All that adds up to £417 received over the last week, taking our running total up to £1,294. But that means we are slightly over a third of the way there with just under *two* thirds of February gone.

We need no less than another £1,456 in just 10 days!

But the last thing you can accuse me of is pessimism. I know how many of our supporters help us out towards the end of each month, and I’m hoping February will be no exception! But this is where you come in. Please do your bit to make sure we reach that much-needed target, so that the *Weekly Worker* can continue to play its essential role in providing the space to debate how a principled, powerful, democratic-centralist, Marxist party can be created.

Go to the web address below to see how you can play your part ●

**Robbie Rix**

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‘sanity check’, the scientists compared the UK’s 2030 net zero plan with “real-world data” from 2023. Since EVs increase demand for electricity during overcast or windless days, charging a new EV only results in more fossil fuels being burnt at power stations to provide the extra electricity.

In 2024, the government announced that it was bringing forward plans to decarbonise British electricity generation from 2035 to 2030, by encouraging the adoption of so-called ‘clean’ electrified technologies, and so on. But in the words of professor Alan Drew, co-author of the study, EVs and heat pumps “will be valuable later”, but for now “we must stop pretending they are reducing emissions when the data shows they aren’t”. Rather, the “real work right now is strengthening the grid, building renewables and addressing the enormous challenge storage for surplus electricity that renewables create.”

Now, most research into EV carbon savings calculates their energy consumption based on the total power mix in the UK grid, and in 2025 renewable energy made up 44% of the power supply on average. At the point of driving, recent research estimates that producing the energy to charge an EV creates 75% less CO<sub>2</sub> than the equivalent petrol or diesel fuel - so you might be tempted to think buying an EV would result in less fossil fuel being burned. But this is a false economy, so to speak, as buying a new EV simply adds one extra car’s worth of demand to the UK’s energy grid.

If there was plenty of surplus renewable energy to meet that demand, then you would make some emission savings by going electric. But, of course, in the UK that extra demand on the grid is met in part by burning more fossil fuels and, the more EVs you have, the more fossil fuel is burnt. You are not making any progress - just the illusion brought by marketing. Then you have what goes into an EV - plastic, chips, glass, silicon, metal, etc, etc. How exactly are they made? By burning more fossil fuels at a power station ...

Of course, the *Daily Mail* is trumpeting the Queen Mary research as part of its Trumpian anti-climate science agenda - net zero goes too far! But, of course, for communists it does not go far enough, as it assumes the existence of the ‘car economy’, and indeed an even *bigger* one, thanks to EVs. Then there is the ecologically damaging role played by the massive use of airplanes, international shipping, the dairy and beef industry, the US military, and so on. Rather, we need instead a totally different society with priorities based on human need, not production for the sake of production.

## Rift

Jim Skea, the chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, recently said that efforts to decouple climate action from net zero targets were misguided, as the outcome was “not a political choice” - it is dictated by basic physics and chemistry rather than ideology.<sup>6</sup> This, of course, is an incorrect formulation. Dealing with runaway climate change

requires not physics, but *system change*, based on *all* the sciences, plus an understanding of the “metabolic rift”, located, not least, by Karl Marx - the disruption in the relationship between human society and nature caused by capitalism.<sup>7</sup>

Net zero, as popularly understood, would logically be achieved if the amount of greenhouse gas removed from the atmosphere equalled that emitted - but the past three years have been the hottest on record. The next round of IPCC reports is due to begin publication next spring, but no US scientists working for federal agencies such as Nasa will be taking part - more criminal negligence from Trump.

Governments have yet to agree publication dates for several key reports expected over the coming years, and Saudi Arabia and China are among the countries that have pushed for later release dates - which would mean the findings are not available in time for the UN’s second so-called “global stocktake” in 2028. Fiddling while Rome burns.

The object of the exercise, of course, is to assess how far the world remains from limiting the global average temperature rise to “well below” 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and ideally to 1.5°C, as set out in the 2016 Paris Agreement.

But we all know the answer - the world is moving in the wrong direction *fast*. The European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change is now advising officials to prepare for a world 2.8°-3.3°C hotter than preindustrial levels by 2100, and recommends ‘stress-testing’ for even hotter scenarios. Facing civilisational collapse, the working class as a matter of necessity must organise into mass communist parties and prepare for power internationally. Protest politics have already met their limits and all national roads are self-defeating. Climate is truly global, which should be stating the obvious, but some behave otherwise. We also have to recognise the truth that, even if we establish a World Union of Socialist States within a reasonably short time - which at the moment seems more than unlikely - the Earth we will inherit will be much impoverished and some socialist measures may prove impossible to implement, or at least subject to delay or major rethink.

Without doubt, it will take many generations to restore the natural conditions which we humans, being part of nature, depend upon for our very existence ●

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## Notes

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Central London venue, near Great Portland Street tube station  
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communistuniversity.uk

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# Going beyond protest politics

On the one side, almost exclusively made up of the right and far right, there are those who blindly argue that global heating is not happening, or if it is, it is no big deal. On the other side, almost everyone else. So what is to be done? **Bill McGuire**, takes a look at Jack Conrad’s *The little red climate book*



Speaking at Communist University

Climate breakdown should not really have a political dimension. After all, no-one - whether on the left, the right or somewhere in between - will be immune to the devastating societal and economic consequences of global heating arising from human activities. The reality, of course, is that nothing could be more political than our collapsing climate. In fact, it is probably the biggest political football of all time, given that it holds within it the future of our civilisation - and quite possibly humanity itself.

One side, almost exclusively made up of the right and far right, denigrates global heating - either arguing blindly for it not happening at all or, if it is happening, asserting that we are not the cause or it is not that big a deal. On the other side is almost everyone else. This dichotomy is not hard to explain, bearing in mind that the dire straits we find ourselves in are a function of longstanding neoliberal policies.

The truth is that global heating and the climate breakdown it is driving are entirely the consequence of the free-market capitalism that has captured our world. A political/economic system predicated upon greed, short-term profit, exploitation and environmental destruction has brought about a climate and ecological crisis that is tearing our planet apart, and bringing about a catastrophic transformation that is already seeing the prehistorification of our world.

It is common in protests organised by Extinction Rebellion, Just Stop Oil and others to see placards demanding “system change, not climate change”. This goes right to the heart of the matter, arguing that capitalism is incapable of tackling the very crisis it has brought about. I would go further and suggest that it is highly unlikely that capitalism will survive the

climate emergency, the corollary being that something else is needed - both to limit its inevitably catastrophic consequences, and to rebuild a global community within a political system that promotes the stewardship of the planet rather than its destruction.

And this is where *The little red climate book* comes in. Published by the Communist Party of Great Britain, this pocket-sized volume packs a real punch, alongside a huge amount of information about the climate emergency. Inevitably, there is a political dimension - as there should be - but, even setting this aside, this is an excellent guide to global heating and the breakdown of our once stable climate that it is driving.

In barely more than 100 pages, the book manages to cram in a potted history of the climate across the 4.6 billion-year geological record - alongside a debate flagging why geoengineering is a dangerous distraction, and a discourse on the touchy topic of ‘overpopulation’. Of course, political discussion and philosophical thought are threaded through the entire narrative, and there is plenty of analysis of the relevance of Marxism to our predicament and its solution, along with interesting conversations about ‘greenism’ and its failings, and the pertinence of the writings of Hobbes, Rousseau, Pinker and others to the state we are in.

Central to the arguments made in this slim volume is the idea that protest is all well and good - and that groups such as Extinction Rebellion and Just Stop Oil have done their bit to highlight key issues, but now protest must be superseded by power. If we are to prevent the very worst that climate breakdown can bring, then an enlightened programme of action has to be enacted by a different form of government that works for the

people through the people.

The inevitable shattering of unfettered capitalism, as the toll of supercharged, extreme weather tears apart society and the economy, can only be a good thing, but it has to be replaced by something, or else the alternative will be unending dystopian anarchy and a wild-west free-for-all, that will once again favour the powerful and unscrupulous.

In the book’s appendix, in the form of extracts from the CPGB’s *Draft programme*, is a list of demands by which the climate crisis may be brought to heel - or at least ameliorated to some extent. What is striking is that the list - which included a rapid transition away from fossil fuels, swingeing taxes on polluters, and large-scale rewilding - chimes with the demands of pretty much everyone fighting for real, effective action on the climate and nature.

Most importantly, there is also an outline of what a capitalism-replacing system might and should look like - one that involves the “total reorganisation of society, and ... the ending of humanity’s strained, brutalised and crisis-ridden relationship with nature”. Certainly no-one with even an ounce of common sense or concern could or would argue with that ●

**Jack Conrad** *The little red climate book* London 2023. Available for free download - communistparty.co.uk, or hard copy - www.lulu.com/shop/jack-conrad/the-little-red-climate-book

**Bill McGuire** is professor emeritus of geophysical and climate hazards at University College London. His next book - *The fate of the world: a history and future of the climate crisis* - will be published by Harper North in May

## UKRAINE

# Notes on the war

Four years since the launch of the ‘special military operation’, Russia is predictably bogged down in a war of attrition. Exactly what the US wanted, says **Jack Conrad**. But now we have Trump, the trifecta and the shredding of the post-World War II order

**B**efore the ‘special military operation’ began, I remember talking at our Online Communist Forum, to the effect that Russia was unlikely to invade Ukraine. That despite repeated CIA warnings to the contrary. Why?

Firstly, because, in general, it is never a good idea to take the CIA on trust. Think Iraq and Saddam Hussein’s WMDs. Etc, etc.

Secondly, western reports of Russian troop formations told me in no uncertain terms that there were simply far too few of them to do the job. Even if it was to be limited to taking Kyiv and forcing Volodymyr Zelenskyy to either flee abroad or agree some grossly unequal treaty. Russia’s aim was certainly to put a block on Nato and EU membership and perhaps create a Novorussia that would landlock a disarmed and ‘de-Nazified’ rump Ukraine.

Thirdly, I thought that any Russian invasion of Ukrainian Ukraine - that is, the non-Russian oblasts - would trigger stiff, stubborn, fanatical resistance.

Fourthly, surely the US and Nato - as had been preplanned, certainly at least since 2014 and the Maidan coup - would pour in arms, provide substantial financial backing and whip up a propaganda storm designed to make Ukraine into a holy cause. People would thereby be fooled into voting for guns, not butter.

As events proved, I got things wrong. But I did so for the right reasons. Four years on, Moscow fully controls just one of the Ukrainian oblasts it officially annexed in September 2022: Luhansk. The other three - Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia - still remain partially in Ukrainian hands.

Moreover, note, the Ukraine war has now lasted longer than the Soviet Union’s Great Patriotic War. That titanic struggle began in June 1941 with the disastrous and, as far as Stalin was concerned, entirely unexpected Nazi invasion. Operation Barbarossa took the Wehrmacht to the gates of Moscow, Leningrad and Stalingrad, but ended with the Soviet Army taking Berlin and famously raising the red banner over the ruins of the Reichstag in May 1945.

By contrast, the Ukraine war has been slow, grinding and narrowly focused. Vladimir Putin gave the go-ahead for a full-scale invasion on February 24 2022. The special military operation began with simultaneous thrusts from the north, east and south. A Russian armoured column, sporting the tactical ‘Z’ symbol, headed towards Kyiv from bases in Belarus. The city’s outskirts were reached three days later. Hostomel Airport was taken. Special forces briefly occupied positions in Kyiv. Selected Russian soldiers were told to take dress uniforms with them. The expectation being that within a few weeks Russia would hold a strutting victory parade through the ‘liberated’ city.

However, the PO2 road from Chernobyl to Kyiv became hopelessly clogged. It turned into a turkey shoot. Russian tanks, armoured cars and soft-skinned vehicles were blown to smithereens. Western-supplied Stinger, Javelin and NLAW shoulder-launched missiles turned the tide. Effectively they ended phase one of the war. Putin’s generals scuttled. Even the latest T90Ms proved highly



Trump seems to be trying to split Russia from China

vulnerable. The tank, for sure, is no longer the main deliverer of shock and awe on the battlefield. A revolution in warfare prefigured by the US-supplied Mujahideen in Afghanistan.

True, in the south Russia made substantial gains. Kherson was taken and so, after a long siege, was Mariupol. Hence a land bridge was created, joining Russia with Crimea (annexed in September 2014). Things looked set for a further, a decisive, push on to Odessa and the breakaway Russian-speaking Moldovan republic of Transnistria. That would have cut Ukraine off from the Black Sea. Meanwhile, in the east, Russian forces advanced on a wide front and approached Kharkov, Ukraine’s second city.

However, western arms, plus Ukrainian nationalism, plus severe Russian logistical limitations ensured that any forward momentum was quickly lost. As a result, there were Ukrainian gains, though mainly after the Russian high command ordered a retreat to optimum defence positions. Kherson was abandoned without a fight. Phase two of the war ended anything resembling rapid movement. Instead, there came lines of trenches, minefields, tank traps and dragon’s teeth. The 800-mile-long front thereby bears comparison with World War I and its associated horrors, routines and possibilities of fraternisation. The war became a war of attrition.

Ukraine’s failed 2023 southern offensive, Yevgeny Prigozhin’s *miassoroubka* tactics in Bakhmut and the unsustainable incursion into the Russian oblast of Kursk - all underlined the essential stalemate. A salient fact which we quickly recognised and repeatedly emphasised.<sup>1</sup> That, of course, never meant a frozen war.

The fighting and the killing have continued at a pretty steady and sickening rate. Who knows how many have died or been terribly injured: one recent estimate puts Russian military casualties at around 1.2 million (of whom as many as 325,000 have been killed); as for Ukraine, the reported figure is between 500,000 and 600,000 (of whom 100,000 to 140,000 are thought to have died). Civilian fatalities, mercifully, have in comparative terms been small: around 7,000 Russians and some 16,000 Ukrainians.<sup>2</sup> So, again, more like World War I, certainly not World War II.

The kill rate is increasingly down

to that other revolution in warfare: drones. The skies above battlefields are thick with them. There is also the long-range drone war: Russia’s mainly against Ukraine’s energy infrastructure; Ukraine’s mainly against Russia’s oil and gas sector. Most drones are intercepted, but enough get through to cause real problems. There are also cruise and ballistic missiles: most get through.<sup>3</sup> But, whereas cruise and ballistic missiles are expensive, drones are, in relative terms, dirt cheap, and are produced on a mass scale.

## Emulating Engels

We have consciously sought to emulate Fredrick Engels and his coverage of the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian war (he wrote for the *Pall Mall Gazette* under the heading, ‘Notes on the war’). Over the last four years readers have been provided with the best information available: ie, technological developments, the significance of this or that town changing hands, the shifts in infantry tactics, the marginalisation of fixed-wing aircraft, the role of morale, etc.

But there has always been the bigger - the strategic - picture. How Ukraine was cynically set up to fight a proxy war by Joe Biden’s administration. The demand was for the withdrawal of every last Russian soldier from every last inch of Ukrainian soil ... that and the overthrow of the ‘murderer’, Vladimir Putin. The impact of sanctions and the political economy of the Russian Federation have been analysed: yes, it aspires to be, but is definitely not, an imperialist power. The fragility of the Zelensky regime, the endemic corruption and the lowering Banderite menace have been stressed throughout. Crucially, the Russo-Ukraine war has been placed in the context of the global rivalry, pitting a declining US against a rising China. Nothing can be understood in isolation.

Leon Trotsky’s March 1924 observations - ie, when he was still commissar of war<sup>4</sup> - concerning Engels’ *Pall Mall Gazette* articles are well worth quoting:

Of Marxism or dialectics, Engels says not a word in all these articles; which is not to be astonished at, for he was writing anonymously for an arch-bourgeois periodical and that at a time when the name of Marx was still little known. But not only

these outward reasons prompted Engels to refrain from all general-theoretical considerations.

We may be convinced that even if Engels had had the opportunity then to discuss the events of the war in a revolutionary-Marxian paper - with far greater freedom for expressing his political sympathies and antipathies - he would nevertheless hardly have approached the analysis and the estimation of the course of the war differently than he did in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Engels injected no abstract doctrine into the domain of the science of war from without and did not set up any tactical recipes, newly discovered by himself, as universal criteria.

Regardless of the conciseness of the presentation, we see nonetheless with what attentiveness the author deals with all the elements of the profession of war, from the territorial areas and the population figures of the countries involved down to the biographical researches into the past of General Trochu [Louis-Jules Trochu served as president of France’s government of National Defence from September 4 1870 until January 22 1871 - JC] for the purpose of being better acquainted with his methods and habits. Behind these articles is sensed a vast preceding and continuing labour.<sup>5</sup>

Of course, we have said more than a word or two about Marxism and about dialectics too: eg, the shift from quantity into quality, when it comes to drone warfare. We also write for a revolutionary-Marxist paper. Polemics against centrists, social-pacifists, social-imperialists and conciliators therefore regularly feature. Nonetheless, we have followed Engels down to an assessment of the key players involved in the war, both directly and indirectly: Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelenskyy, obviously, but also the likes of Ihor Kolomoisky, Yevgeny Prigozhin, Aleksandr Dugin, Mykyta Nadtochiy, Denys Prokopenko (‘Redis’) and Andriy Biletsky.

We have, too, tried to get to grips with Donald J Trump the man. I have, in particular, recommended Michael Woolf’s books, a biopic and *The art of the deal*.

*Fire and fury* (2018), *Siege* (2019) and *Landslide* (2021) cover

the trials and tribulations of the first term, including the January 6 2021 attempted self-coup. A fourth volume by Woolf, *All or nothing*, was published in February 2025 and deals with the last presidential campaign and Trump’s return from ‘exile’. Given that Woolf says he remains in contact with Trump, more books should be expected. One does not need to treat his quartet as gospel, that goes without saying. However, there can be no doubting their worth. A mine of information, especially given the close, first-hand account of events and people: above all of Trump himself.

Then there is Ali Abbasi’s 2024 film, *The apprentice*. It appears to be thoroughly researched and solidly based in fact - note, Trump has not carried through on his threat to sue the producers. The biopic focuses on Trump’s early years as a budding tycoon. His father, Fred, made his money from low-end New York real estate. He is domineering, sometimes cruel. Donald is determined to surpass, to overthrow, the family patriarch. His buildings will be high, upmarket and full of gold, marble and bling. Donald shamefully fails to help his alcoholic brother, Fred Jr. Self-aggrandisement, the pursuit of money, power and sex always came first. He is contemptuous of weakness. Trump’s 14-year marriage to the former Czech model, Ivana Zelničková, ends in violence, public scandal and a bitter divorce. He also abandons his mentor, the ruthless, manipulative and thoroughly crooked lawyer, Roy Cohen. He was gay and suffering from Aids-related illnesses.

What about *The art of the deal*? (The 1987 book is credited to Trump, but is written by the journalist, Tony Schwartz.) Here we have how Trump wants to be perceived by others. He certainly wanted to see himself as a self-made business genius - a visionary along the lines of Ayn Rand’s Howard Roark (the central character in her 1943 novel, *Fountainhead*, who Trump still cites - though he might simply have watched the King Vidor film).

You will not have a clue about what is going on in global politics if you ignore or discount Trump and his driven, but highly contradictory, personality. That includes, of course, the tripartite US, Russia, Ukraine talks in Geneva. People make history. A basic Marxist proposition.

## Philistines

Yet, amazingly, we come across self-described ‘Marxists’ who object to any attempt to understand Trump. Apparently, instead of putting in the hard work, we should turn to the classic works of Marx and Engels. A completely imbecilic approach. Trump was not even a twinkle in his father’s eye when Marx and Engels were alive. They can, therefore, tell us nothing specific about him. Such philistinism is, of course, utterly alien to the real Marx and Engels, who rejected anything smacking of scholasticism and resorting to ready-made answers. They studied, studied and studied.

Having not studied, studied and studied, there are then those ‘Marxists’ who unhesitatingly dismiss Trump as “ignorant” and “stupid” and, of course, a “fascist”.<sup>6</sup> An approach which, quite frankly, goes way beyond “ignorant” and “stupid”.

Trump doubtless has a short

attention span. He is certainly not book-learned. Michael Woolf says: “Trump didn’t read. He didn’t really even skim. If it was print, it might as well not exist.” He calls him to all intents and purposes “no more than semiliterate”. Tellingly, though, Woolf adds this caveat: perhaps Trump “didn’t read because he just didn’t have to, and that in fact this was one of his key attributes as a populist.”<sup>7</sup>

If truth be told, Trump has a mercurial intelligence - a sixth sense for the public square. He puts his gut instinct above accepted opinion and consensus-making. He knows what his base thinks and how they think. He thrives on chaos, conflict and grabbing media attention. He delights in enraging adversaries, throwing them off balance. Though from the upper classes, a member of the gilded elite, a billionaire who is always on the make, he speaks as the ultimate anti-politician. He is America’s “synthesis of monster and a superman”<sup>8</sup> With a majority in both houses, an enabling Supreme Court and the constitutional ability to issue an endless stream of executive orders, the 47th president certainly possesses extraordinary powers: both at home and abroad.

New order

Since assuming office for the second time on January 20 2025, Trump has behaved according to the ‘act fast and break things’ playbook. At home that means a counterrevolution against environmental protection, established working conditions, women’s reproductive health, sexual minorities and the whole post-1945 social settlement. Most notably there is ICE and the mass deportation of migrants. Suffice to say, this is not ‘fascism’. It is unfettered presidentialism. It is the trifecta.

Abroad, the ‘rules-based’ global order has been shredded. Leave aside threats to close the Mexican border, invade Greenland, and promises to take back the Panama canal and incorporate Canada as the 51st state. With the cold war won and long gone, his America has no need to cover the imperium with cant about freedom, justice, democracy and international law. He can afford to arrogantly parade America’s power and even its naked greed. Trump no longer asks the world to love America: instead the world is expected to fear and obey.

Liberals are mortified - often reduced to spluttering incoherence. And most of the left miserably tails liberal opinion. To restore the old order we therefore have entirely hollow demands for a “general strike”<sup>9</sup> and equally vacuous calls for “determined and courageous resistance”<sup>10</sup>

Marco Rubio once again spelt out the stark realities at the 62nd Munich Security Conference with his February 14 speech (whereas last year JD Vance broke with the normal diplomatic language, Rubio was polite and seemingly ever so reasonable). Much to the relief of the assembled European prime ministers, presidents and foreign secretaries, he talked of the US being the “child of Europe”, of “unbreakable links” and sharing a “great civilisation”. Besides praising the “genius of Mozart and Beethoven, of Dante and Shakespeare, of Michelangelo and Da Vinci”, he even praised the Beatles and the Rolling Stones.

Nevertheless, the message was exactly the same. America’s main energies are directed at countering the “existential threat” of China.<sup>11</sup> So Rubio bemoaned the dependence on cheap Chinese goods, denounced the “climate cult”, the “wave of mass migration” and Europe’s “erasure” of national identity.<sup>12</sup> He got himself a standing ovation too.

What about Ukraine? Notably, Rubio skipped that meeting. Yet, as we all know, Trump wants an agreement with Russia, freezing the whole of

the 800-mile front line and then immediately thereafter establishing a buffer zone - Keir Starmer has volunteered British “troops on the ground”<sup>13</sup> and so have the Baltic and Nordic states, Poland and the Netherlands. Nato peacekeepers can, of course, easily become Nato peacemakers: ie, 100,000 active combatants.

Trump is ready to allow Russia to keep what it has got: ie, around 20% of pre-2014 Ukrainian territory ... he is even willing to transform the Ukrainian-held oblasts claimed by Russia into some sort of free trade zone. Vladimir Putin can thereby claim a victory. He has already won a firm commitment that there will be no Ukrainian membership of Nato for the foreseeable future. Russia will once again be able to safely base its warships in Crimea’s Sevastopol and thereby be allowed free access to the warm waters of the Mediterranean.

So why does an economically weakened, diplomatically shunned and militarily ineffective Russia not grab at Trump’s deal? The answer is pretty obvious. It is those 100,000 Nato troops and the associated US security guarantees. What could be presented as a Putin *victory* could equally be presented as a Russian *defeat* by rivals and potential successors.

Either way, Trump has discarded Biden’s goal of regime change in Moscow ... for now. Remember, however, that Trump comes not only bearing an olive branch: he carries a big stick too. If he cannot close the deal by June, there is the possibility of aggressively increased American support for Ukraine. Perhaps Trump will dust off Zelensky’s now almost totally forgotten victory plan ... and then add some. In other words, while Trump is seeking an accommodation with Russia, failing that, there is the “phasing into World War III” he once warned about.

Stab in the back

As things stand today, Zelensky is highly vulnerable. His spectacular political career looks like ending in its inevitable failure ... soonish. Trump has, for example, been insisting on holding much delayed presidential elections (delayed because of the war and martial law).

Imagine then that Zelenskyy reluctantly agrees to hold presidential elections and combines them with a ‘peace referendum’ ... naturally with a suitably loaded question designed to secure the ‘right’ outcome. Assuredly, the far right will accuse him of cheating, misleading voters, betraying the sacred fatherland and serving his fellow Jews, not Ukraine. Perhaps led by Mykyta Nadochiiy, Banderite mobs, guarded by Azov units, pre-empt the vote. They storm the presidential palace, arrest Zelenskyy and seize the Rada. Their central demands would be national unity and no concessions to the war criminal Putin. Why, they would ask, give away Ukrainian land that the enemy has failed to take by force? Have 150,000 Ukrainian patriots died in vain?

What Donald Trump would make of that is beyond me. The Banderites are, after all, ‘his kind of people’. But, as with Zelenskyy, a Banderite regime would still have to come to terms with global realities ... that or fight an asymmetrical war with Russia and risk total defeat and the incorporation of the whole of Ukraine into Putin’s neo-tsarist empire.

Conditions are certainly ripe for a Ukrainian version of the ‘stab-in-the-back legend’ (*Dolchstoßlegende*). Germany’s far right - crucially the high command - insisted that they had suffered no defeat on the battlefields of 1914-18. Instead, they had been betrayed on the home front by communists and social democrats. Almost instantly, the idea was given

an anti-Semitic twist, not least by Adolf Hitler and his chief ideologue, Alfred Rosenberg. The fall of the Weimar republic was already in sight.

There are precious few communists and social democrats in Ukraine today, but Zelenskyy is Jewish and its army has successfully fought for four long years against all the odds. And, inevitably, there are all manner of absurd conspiracy theories already doing the rounds: Trump has been a Russian agent since 1987; the Ukrainian government acts under the control of the “Jewish oligarchy”; Volodymyr Zelenskyy was in cahoots with Jeffrey Epstein to ensure that the war benefited the Rothschilds and other Jewish bankers; Zelenskyy is in cahoots with Vladimir Putin in the attempt to replace Ukraine’s indigenous Slavic population and create a New Khazaria, a new Jewish homeland, etc.<sup>14</sup>

Ukraine, note, has a deeply ingrained history of anti-Semitism. During tsarist times there were frequent pogroms. White forces slaughtered tens of thousands of Jews in the 1918-21 civil war. And, to this day, Stepan Bandera - Ukraine’s foremost fascist and, in the early 1940s, a Nazi collaborator - is venerated as a national hero. His anti-Semitism was combined with anti-Bolshevism: “The Jews are the most faithful prop of the Bolshevik regime and the vanguard of Muscovite imperialism in Ukraine”<sup>15</sup> There are statues and streets, bridges and squares named after him, postage stamps bear his image ... in other words, Banderism is the ideal ideological vehicle for a reactionary national revolution in Ukraine.

While parallels with Weimar are easy enough to draw, Ukraine cannot give birth to its version of the Third Reich. Empire, national independence, even neutrality are all chimeric. Small and medium countries are dependent countries. Switzerland and Ireland are dependent on the EU; Belarus is dependent on Russia and Brexit UK is dependent on the USA. Without powerful outside backers a post-Zelenskyy regime could do nothing serious militarily, that is for sure.

Will Europe ride to Ukraine’s rescue and prevent a 1938-style betrayal? No, it can only act with US permission. Europe can pay for US arms deliveries to Ukraine, it can send peacekeepers, it can complain about US bullying. But without centralised political and economic unity it is doomed to impotence. JD Vance’s hard-cop Munich speech in 2025 confirms that assessment. Marco Rubio’s soft-cop Munich speech in 2026 likewise confirms it ... as does the standing ovation he got.

Geostrategic

Given the absence of European unity, Trump recognises only five great powers: the US, China, India, Japan ... and Russia. This deliberately flatters Russia, because, apart from its nuclear arsenal, it is decidedly a second-rate power. Russia has a GDP roughly on a par with Canada - that despite its 150 million population.

We have though repeatedly speculated about Trump offering Russia entry into the lower ranks of the imperialist club. Quid pro quo, Russia would be expected to break its ‘no limits’ alliance with Xi Jinping - a Mao-Nixon rapprochement in reverse. That would allow America to surround and eventually strangle China. Probably that is what Trump’s Ukraine deal is designed to achieve.

While I am personally sceptical about the chances of a US-sponsored Russia-China schism, we have, rightly, stressed the likelihood of geostrategic shifts and realignments. True, the Brics+ have nothing in common - apart, that is, from chafing against US hegemony. But this does give Russia allies, or at least sympathy, amongst

what it calls the “global majority”. Amongst those who have, want to, or have been invited to join are Turkey, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait (all traditionally US-aligned).

Aukus has already been established and Japan and South Korea bolted on. This has broken Australia from its natural trading partner, China, and secured it firmly in the US-UK camp. The US can perhaps rely on India to be antagonistic to China, but not, it might be expected, Russia. Despite that, Trump recently announced on Truth Social that his “great friend”, Narendra Modi, agreed that India will cease purchasing cheap Russian oil. As a reward Trump slashed tariffs on Indian goods from 25% to 18%.<sup>16</sup>

There is, moreover, the ever-present danger of the five great powers being dragged into conflicts over Iran, Venezuela, Cuba, Palestine, etc, etc, with all manner of dire, unintended consequences. That said, the passivity, the non-involvement, of either China or Russia, when it comes to the Israeli-US 12-day war, the kidnapping of Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, the crippling oil blockade imposed on Cuba, testify, surely, to the fact that the US remains the global hegemon.

In this context, once again bear in mind the long ‘sleepwalk’ towards World War I.<sup>17</sup> Enemies became friends and friends became enemies. The Franco-Prussian war of 1870 transformed Germany from being the fragmented and weak centre of Europe into its most dangerous power. Soundly beaten, resentful and fearful, republican France sought allies to contain the newly formed German Reich - the chosen partner being tsarist Russia.

Their 1894 alliance committed each side to mutual aid. In the event of war, Germany would have to fight on two fronts. The alliance, however, was just as much directed against Britain. France and Britain were, of course, old enemies and there were bitter rivalries between Britain and Russia over Afghanistan, Persia, China and the Turkish Straits. Russia longed to gain unfettered access to the Mediterranean by getting its hands onto Constantinople.

And it was fear of Russia that took Britain into alliance with Japan in 1902. A few years later, in 1904, the Russo-Japanese war began, and ended in a stunning defeat for Russia. British-built and British-designed Japanese battleships featured prominently. A global shock and a trigger for the 1905 revolution in Russia.

Against the Franco-Russian alliance, Germany responded by tying Austria-Hungary ever more closely to itself. Because Austria-Hungary and Russia were fierce competitors in the Balkans, this committed Germany to a war with Russia that it really did not want. Germany also started an ill-judged naval race with Britain. Germanophobic scare stories were regularly promoted in the *Daily Mail* and *The Times* and featured in popular novels, such as Erskine Childers’ *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903). The German Reich came to be seen as Britain’s mortal enemy by elite and middle class opinion alike.

Britain’s ‘near-run victory’ in the second Boer War compelled it to abandon ‘splendid isolation’ from continental European concerns. It embraced the old enemy, France - an arrangement cemented in 1904 with the Entente Cordiale. France’s alliance with tsarist Russia became, in due course, a triple alliance between Britain, France and Russia. Historic rivalry pitting Russia against Britain over southern Asia ended with various robber-deals, including dividing Persia into two zones of interest.

Such realignments readied the conditions needed for defeating the central powers: Germany, Austria-

Hungary and Ottoman Turkey. True, the US eventually entered the war and guaranteed the outcome, and Russia was taken out of the imperial system altogether by the Bolshevik-led October 1917 revolution.

Yet, while between 15 to 22 million died, in the end, Germany was much reduced territorially, stripped of colonies and saddled with crippling reparation payments. As for the Austro-Hungarian empire, it was fragmented into small, often rival, states. That left Austria as little more than a pocket-sized territory with a grand imperial capital. And, apart from Turkey itself - ‘liberated’ by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk - Anglo-French imperialism neatly sliced and diced the Ottoman empire into colonial or semi-colonial administrative units.

Clearly there is more than a whiff of pre-World War I about the current situation - ie, great power military conflict seems all too possible - but with the added danger of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. However, tragically, what is lacking is a viable socialist alternative.

Today the general secretaries of the countless confessional sects hold out the promise to their little bands of followers that they are on the cusp of another Russian Revolution. The comforting myth is that the Bolsheviks went from nothing to everything in the eight short months between February and October 1917. Absolute and total nonsense, of course. From 1905 onwards, despite periods of intense repression, the Bolsheviks were, in fact, the *majority* party of the working class - as proved by newspaper circulation figures, workplace donations, duma, trade union and, from the summer of 1917 onwards, soviet elections in Petrograd, Moscow and other major towns and cities.

No, we must do away with sect delusions - along with Labour Party mark-two projects, strikes and streets economism and cross-class popular fronts - and get down to the serious business of uniting in the common struggle to build a mass Communist Party here in Britain and internationally. That perspective, if successful, will lift the working class into being the world’s sixth great power ... before becoming the world’s sole power ●

Notes

1. J Conrad ‘Experience and expectations’ *Weekly Worker* June 23 2022 (www.weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1400/experience-and-expectations).  
2. www.russianmatters.org/news/russia-ukraine-war-report-card/russia-ukraine-war-report-card-feb-11-2026.  
3. *Ibid*.  
4. Incidentally, an embattled commissar, Trotsky was under intense pressure from Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin and other political opponents, who feared that he might entertain Bonapartist ambitions. They began to remove - that or downgrade - his “most influential followers from the commissariat” and replace them with critics. Hence, surely, the barbed comments about “abstract doctrine” and “tactical recipes”. He resigned from the post in January 1925 (I Deutscher *The prophet unarmed* Oxford 1982, p161).  
5. www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1924/03/engels.html.  
6. C Ryan ‘A general strike to stop Trump’ *Solidarity* February 12 2025.  
7. M Wolff *Fire and fury: inside the Trump White House* London 2018, p138.  
8. F Nietzsche *The genealogy of morals: a polemic* London 1913, p56.  
9. C Ryan ‘A general strike to stop Trump’ *Solidarity* February 12 2025.  
10. A Callinicos *Socialist Worker* February 12 2025.  
11. P Navarro ‘The case for fair trade’ in P Dans and S Groves eds) *Project 2025: mandate for leadership* Washington DC 2023, p766.  
12. www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2026/02/secretary-of-state-marco-rubio-at-the-munich-security-conference.  
13. *The Daily Telegraph* February 16 2025.  
14. See foantisemitism.org/introducing-the-anti-slavic-jewish-conspiracy.  
15. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organisation\_of\_Ukrainian\_Nationalists.  
16. *The Guardian* February 2 2026.  
17. See C Clark *The sleepwalkers: how Europe went to war in 1914* London 2013.

## YOUR PARTY

# Drag towards bureaucracy

Grassroots Left is discussing how the party can be run democratically and what to do to ensure that CEC members are properly held to account. **Carla Roberts** explains

**Y**our Party leadership elections are coming to a close. February 23 is the last day to vote for the central executive committee.

The unelected YP bureaucracy - led by Corbyn's right-hand woman, Karie Murphy - has certainly done everything in its power to rig the election in favour of the leadership faction, The Many. Not only are the CEC elections run, overseen and managed by the same people who are administering Corbyn's slate. They are barring and expelling candidates and they will be the ones who will count the votes. As if that was not bad enough, there is a three-day delay between the end of voting and the announcement of the results on February 26 - what has been dubbed the '72-hour fuckery period'. Some have commented in jest that it will probably take them that long to shred everything at the Fonthill Road HQ!

According to predictions based on candidate endorsements, Grassroots Left can expect a majority of between one and four seats - which would be quite a feat under these conditions. No third party has been hired to oversee the election, despite this being announced by HQ itself in its 'First year organisational strategy' document. HQ has opted for the most undemocratic version of the single transferable vote possible: 'Imperiali' does exactly what it sounds like - it favours big players and voting blocs. Of course, that also favours Grassroots Left, but HQ has judged that it would *minimise the losses* for The Many, because it makes it almost impossible for independent candidates to get elected.

A clear left majority would certainly help to start pushing Your Party to become the kind of party we actually need: unashamedly socialist, with thoroughly democratic structures, openness and transparency on all matters and with the members and branches actually in control.

It is a huge task to undo all the damage that the Corbyn clique has done - and not just when it comes to the constitution. Grassroots Left promises that a democratic refunding conference will take place within six months, where everything in the constitution can be revisited and changed by a simple majority (the constitution states that after 12 months, constitutional changes require a "two-thirds super-majority" - that is certainly one of the things that needs changing!). All proto-branches will be immediately recognised and tasked with organising inaugural meetings, details of which will be forwarded to all members living in the locality.

Should The Many win, however, not only will they entirely ignore most of the over 200 proto-branches. The Many candidate Hannah Hawkins has spelt out that they will also try to disqualify all those who are currently running proto-branches from standing in elections when "real" branches are set up. This is to protect us from 'sectarianism', you see.

A purge of the entire organised left ('the sects') under a Corbyn leadership is also guaranteed. He has already expressed his desire to constitutionally "revisit" both the rules on "collective leadership" and "dual membership". Already HQ is interpreting the rules in the most biased way possible: until the new CEC produces a white list of those organisations whose members are 'allowed' to join, every member of a left group is considered illegitimate.



**The Many is run in the interests of a few**

Not that HQ is implementing the rule with any rationality: While three SPEW members were barred from standing in the CEC elections, Rob Rooney slipped through the net and gathered enough endorsements to stand in the South East - before he was expelled from the party altogether! The other three are still YP members. Try and make sense of that.

If the Grassroots Left wins a majority, it has promised not just to overturn all the expulsions (including those enacted just before the launch conference) - but also welcome all working class, socialist and communist organisations to openly participate in Your Party, with the right to form open factions and tendencies.

### Plebiscites?

Clearly the left needs a solid CEC majority in order to have any chance of bringing Your Party back from the brink. It is far from guaranteed that this is even possible. A massive opportunity has already been lost because the Corbyn clique did not strike when the iron was hot. Instead of launching a democratic party when 800,000 people begged for it, they dithered, delayed and thought of how to control the whole process in the most undemocratic way possible. Left members on the CEC will have their work cut out getting those people back on board.

It is therefore absolutely crucial that the left shows that it will be entirely different from the unelected bureaucrats currently running HQ. That it will use the most democratic and transparent methods possible to change things around. That it really does want the members and branches in charge. That will be a real challenge and there will be an urge to quickly 'fix' things with short cuts.

Take, for example, the constitutional requirement that 20% of all local members have to attend an inaugural meeting to launch a branch. This was the most democratic 'option' available at the launch conference and

is, of course, a mechanism to *stop* branches from forming. How could a left majority on the CEC get around such an undemocratic stipulation?

Worryingly, some GL candidates have argued that the CEC should launch an email plebiscite to abolish the quorum. Apparently, the 'end justifies any means'. Does it? Not only has GL spent much of the last few months quite rightly arguing *against* online voting and email referendums, because they atomise members, take away power from the branches and, worst of all, are hugely skewed towards those asking the questions. Using this tool would immediately make GL look untrustworthy.

Plus, the means *absolutely and inevitably* influence the ends. Of course, the proposal was to use email voting only once! But there is the real danger of the slippery slope: if it works well on that occasion, can we not just use it one more time? It is not as if there are no examples from even our recent history to illustrate the danger here: eg, there is a good chance that not even Karie Murphy started out as the horrid bureaucrat she has become.

No, we should always act as democratically as possible. Sometimes, of course, we might have to use methods that leave a lot to be desired - if there is no other way around it. But there are certainly better and more democratic ways to deal with the 20% quorum and we are glad to hear that a GL working group has come up with a far superior proposal. This episode does point to a real danger that GL CEC members will face: the bureaucratic rot could well spread.

Max Shanly (a leading member of the Democratic Socialists in YP and a CEC candidate in the South East) has taken the initiative to draw up various proposals on how the GL programme could be implemented. That is to be welcomed and he has written some very good motions: for example, on how GL could build a party of the whole left. Other proposals, however,

are more problematic. For instance, that the "workers' commission" (agreed at the launch conference) should be made up of rank-and-file trade union members "appointed" by the CEC. This surely is the wrong approach. The CEC should facilitate members getting together in trade union caucuses - and then allow them to *elect* their own convenors. Should these caucuses not just get on with it and report to the CEC directly? Call that a commission, if the constitution demands it.

Then there is the "democracy commission" - again something that the Corbyn clique pushed into the constitution, without the membership being able to discuss or amend it. Instead of scrambling around for ways to implement the outsourcing of democracy to a commission, should we not seek to put the members and branches in charge? Does it really need a separate commission - presumably again with appointed members?

### Stymied

Comrade Shanly and his supporters also want to instruct all branches to operate meetings on the basis of Roberts' rules - something he has picked up from the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). There are very many good things about the DSA - but the fact that many of their chapters are stymied by three-minute speech limits, endless points of order and procedural votes is no secret.

Roberts' rules is the American version of Walter Citrine's *ABC of chairmanship* - but more lengthy, far more complex and written for bureaucrats running non-legislative organisations. It would be bizarre to start forcing branches to use an enormously elaborate US model (even in its short version) which requires procedural experts. It is a non-starter and the proposal should be dropped.

The accountability of leftwing CEC members will clearly be very important. How this could be done, however, is now subject to quite a bit

of debate. Of course, GL is not a party within a party or even a politically cohesive faction. As we have previously reported, it almost did not even happen, because the constituent groups were unable to agree on a joint programme. It was only when the Socialist Unity Platform and Ken Loach's Platform for a Democratic Party called a last-minute meeting and Zarah Sultana presented a 15-point platform (written "with the help of Max Shanly"), that the groups finally agreed to work together. Even that did not last very long - Counterfire and the Platform were unhappy with the way the campaign was run and walked out a few days later.

The rest of the groups have continued by sending one rep each to the 'slate committee', which meets every Sunday morning. Current members are: DSYF, Trans Liberation Group, Greater Manchester Left Caucus, Eco-Socialist Horizon, Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Alternative, CPGB, Workers Power, Social Justice Party, Sheffield Left, Socialist Unity Platform and the disability platform, Nothing About Us.

Many of the candidates on the GL slate, however, are *not* members of the constituent groups: there are the five members of the DSYF, Myra Shoko is in TLG and Sophie Wilson is a member of Sheffield Left. The rest of the candidates are, in reality, independents. How can they be held accountable - and to what? Or, for that matter, by whom?

The GL programme, which all candidates were required to sign up to, has this to say on the matter: "All elected members of this slate will sit on an advisory committee with representatives of all the grassroots factions supporting this platform. The committee will meet monthly to hold elected members to account."<sup>1</sup>

It is rather vague and none of this had been properly discussed when GL was set up. There is a proposal that the current slate committee should become the advisory committee. This makes sense, of course: it was the slate committee, after all, that decided on the programme, elected the GL candidates and has helped to set up the campaign financially. Sunday meetings oversee the campaign, they have voted on who should be running which aspect of the campaign and basically hold the campaign team to account.

Funnily enough, some DSYF candidates are arguing *against* this proposal, despite the fact that it is very much part of the DSYF's programme - there are committees for everything. Some have argued that "grassroot factions" should only mean groups that have sprung up with the formation of Your Party - but exclude what they call the "sects". Thankfully, this attitude has been opposed by others in the DSYF.

An all-day meeting of all GL 'stakeholders' on Sunday February 22 will hopefully be able to agree a way forward. Obviously, GL CEC members cannot be held accountable along the lines of democratic centralism (yet). On the other hand, GL should not see comrades just 'follow their own conscience'. As a minimum, they should give regular reports to the constituent groups, who should make sure that they implement the common programme they ran on ●

### Notes

1. [cdn.grassrootsleft.org/full-platform.txt](http://cdn.grassrootsleft.org/full-platform.txt).

## LAW

# Ban fraudulent legislation

Judges have struck down the government decision to proscribe Palestine Action under terrorism legislation. This is an important victory - but a limited one, argues **Mike Macnair**. In the name of ‘national security’ the government can, and says it will, appeal

On Friday February 13 the King’s Bench Divisional Court gave judgment in the judicial review of Yvette Cooper’s decision (as home secretary) to proscribe Palestine Action as a terrorist organisation under the Terrorism Act 2001.<sup>1</sup>

The court (consisting of Dame Victoria Sharp, president of the King’s Bench Division, Mr Justice Swift and Mrs Justice Steyn) struck down the decision on quite limited grounds, but delayed their effect in order to allow the government to decide whether to appeal. (Shabana Mahmood promptly announced that the government *will* appeal, but this does not yet appear to be a formal decision.<sup>2</sup>)

In spite of its limits, this judgment is an important victory. But it is a limited victory. It may well be reversed on appeal. The judicial decision has a political background - the extent to which large numbers of people, many elderly, have been willing to expose themselves to arrest to express disapproval of the proscription. The government may decide to appeal in the hope that dragging out the process will allow them to wear down the opposition (a very common practice of governments and corporate lobbyists, assisted by the advertising-funded media as weapons of mass distraction).

The *Times* first leader on February 14 was headed ‘Blunt instrument’. It urged the government not to appeal, characterising Cooper’s decision to use the Terrorism Act as “impetuous and excessive”, and an “overreach”. It says that Cooper “failed to make the case for treating the group in the same way as dedicated terrorist groups, such as al-Qaeda and Hamas, especially when Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is exempted from such treatment”.

The Divisional Court decision, as well as the possibility of appeal, mean that the judicial defeat for the ban is absolutely not decisive. I have begun with *The Times* leader because it indicates that the judicial decision may be a step on the road to the *political* defeat of the government. This political defeat, the leader observes, would require starting from the proposition that criminal direct action and terrorism are not the same thing, which implies demanding the repeal of the Terrorism Act 2000, which defines “terrorism” as any form of criminal direct action.

## Divisional Court

The judgment of the Divisional Court is carefully crafted. The large bulk of it *upholds* the bulk of the government’s case and, in particular, *supports* the government’s rhetoric that Palestine Action is engaged in “terrorism”. It hand-waves aside (paras 141-42) the argument made by the UN ‘Special Rapporteur on Human Rights while countering terrorism’ (which intervened in the case) that there is a consensus of international lawyers that Palestine Action’s conduct does not amount to terrorism. In judicial arguments this sort of hand-waving usually indicates that the court is engaged in dodgy reasoning for ulterior motives.

There was no requirement to give Palestine Action an opportunity to make representations before the decision, in contrast to the 2013 UK Supreme Court decision in *Bank Mellat v HM Treasury* (No2).<sup>3</sup> That was, in essence, because the bank was



Thousands arrested for supporting ‘terrorism’

a corporation engaged in commercial operations, while Palestine Action is an unincorporated body engaged in political campaigning, and because its activities ‘threatened’ UK “national security” (paras 48-66).

The argument that the home secretary “failed to have regard to the fact that [Palestine Action] sought to prevent conduct that it (and large sections of the British public) reasonably considered to constitute the aiding and abetting or facilitation of genocide and other serious violations of international law” (para 68 (1)) was to be disregarded, because “it is obvious from the ministerial submissions that, when taking her decision, the home secretary was well aware of the reasons Palestine Action relied on as justifying its campaign of direct action, including damage to property” (para 71). This is not *quite* hand-waving, but it amounts in effect to refusal to consider the underlying legality of the UK government’s support for the Israeli campaign of ethnic cleansing/genocide; the court delegates this decision to the home secretary.

The decision to quash the proscription is, then, reached on very limited grounds indeed. In essence, what it comes down to is that the home office had published a policy on what criteria it would apply to banning organisations under the Terrorism Act; and that the grounds for the decision adopted by Yvette Cooper included those not contained in that policy (the operational advantages of a ban). Further, these grounds could not justifiably be included, because they would pre-empt the exercise of discretion in favour of banning given to the home secretary by the Act (paras 89-94).

For the court, it is then *merely* the home secretary’s use of inappropriate grounds - operational advantages, making her decision inconsistent with her previously declared policy and pre-empting the exercise of discretion - that makes her decision to ban “disproportionate”, as an interference with freedom of expression under article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights and freedom of association under article 11 (paras 97-140). The bulk of the discussion consists of reasserting that Palestine Action *is* terrorist and *rejecting* most of the arguments against the government.

I said above that the decision was carefully crafted. The purposes of this crafting are politico-legal: it is clearly designed to leave the government’s options open. On the one hand, if the government chooses to take the advice offered by *The Times* leader, it could use this decision as an excuse to back down, by simply not appealing it. This option would probably be attractive to police forces, given the extensive waste of police time involved in arresting numerous protestors who hold up “I support Palestine Action” placards. The very limited character of the decision to quash means that the government could still use the *rhetoric* of calling Palestine Action “terrorist”.

## Collapse

Alternatively, if the government chooses to double down, it can appeal. The Divisional Court itself offers the grounds. At para 79 it asserts that the basic discretionary decision to ban or not to ban is for the home secretary, not for the court: “One example is that the home secretary could only comply with her policy by reaching the substantive decision a court would consider to be lawful. Thus, compliance with the policy would collapse into a requirement for compliance with the general law, and to that extent the policy would contract-out the decision-maker’s decision to the court.”

Para 138, which states the conclusion that the ban *was* disproportionate for the purposes of the European Convention, begins: “Deciding where the balance should be struck in this case is difficult. When striking the balance between issues such as these, the court must permit some latitude to the home secretary, given that she has both political and practical responsibility to secure public safety.”

Either of these points could be taken by an appellate court as grounds to decide for the government without embarrassing the Divisional Court judges. The effect, then, is a *minimal* decision that *appears* to defend civil liberties without actually doing so beyond giving the government an opportunity to back down if it chooses.

We need to begin from *The Times* leader’s point that Yvette Cooper (and, of course, her officials and special advisors) “failed to make the case for treating the group in the same way as

dedicated terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and Hamas”,<sup>4</sup> so that “ministers must accept that proscription was a blunt instrument, owing more to a political desire to play to the gallery”; and the argument of counsel for the UN rapporteur “that a ‘consensus’ existed in international law to the effect that the actions of Palestine Action, assessed as amounting to terrorism within the definition at section 1(1) of the 2000 Act, did not in fact amount to terrorism” (para 141). The court discards this argument on the basis that Yvette Cooper “was entitled to rely on the definition of terrorism in the 2000 Act. Indeed, she was required to apply that definition” (para 142).

Back, then, to the definition:

- 1 Terrorism: interpretation
  - (1) In this act ‘terrorism’ means the use or threat of action where -
    - (a) the action falls within subsection (2),
    - (b) the use or threat is designed to influence the government [F1, or an international governmental organisation] or to intimidate the public or a section of the public, and
    - (c) the use or threat is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious [F2, racial] or ideological cause.
  - (2) Action falls within this subsection if it -
    - (a) involves serious violence against a person,
    - (b) involves serious damage to property,
    - (c) endangers a person’s life, other than that of the person committing the action,
    - (d) creates a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or a section of the public, or
    - (e) is designed seriously to interfere with or seriously to disrupt an electronic system.
  - (3) The use or threat of action falling within subsection (2) which involves the use of firearms or explosives is terrorism, whether or not subsection (1)(b) is satisfied.
  - (4) In this section -
    - (a) “action” includes action outside the United Kingdom,
    - (b) a reference to any person or to property is a reference to any person, or to property, wherever situated,
    - (c) a reference to the public includes a reference to the public of a country other than the United Kingdom, and
    - (d) “the government” means the government of the United Kingdom, of a part of the United Kingdom or of a country other than the United Kingdom.
  - (5) In this act a reference to action taken for the purposes of terrorism includes a reference to action taken for the benefit of a proscribed organisation.

Back in 2005 I pointed out that this definition is unwarrantably broad (when the Blair government proposed to use it as the basis of internment powers):

If the new powers [then proposed] are anything like the 2001 Act, the definition of ‘terrorism’ will be taken from the Terrorism Act 2000, section 1. This has two aspects.

The first is that “the use or threat [of action] is designed to influence

the government or to intimidate the public or a section of the public”, and “is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause”.

The second is that the “action” (a) involves serious violence against a person, (b) involves serious damage to property, (c) endangers a person’s life, other than that of the person committing the action, (d) creates a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or a section of the public, or (e) is designed seriously to interfere with or seriously to disrupt an electronic system”.

This definition is far broader than the ordinary usage of ‘terrorism’. It certainly includes threats like those made against the staging of *Behtzi* (*Weekly Worker* January 6 2005). Going further, the ‘serious damage to property’ category includes a range of things that have happened in hard-fought strikes. “Endangers a person’s life” is capable of covering strike action by workers in emergency services, as it “creates a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or a section of the public”. This could also cover the go-slow protests of the fuel protestors in 2000. Subhead (e) covers any form of political ‘hacking’.<sup>5</sup>

The definition is - precisely - about “a political desire to play to the gallery” by defining terrorism so broadly as to catch most forms of ‘direct action’ and most *effective* forms of trade union action. It was in essence fraudulent when passed in 2000.

We need to understand this fraud as the other side of the coin of Peter Mandelson and his relations with Jeffrey Epstein, and the latest revelations about *Labour Together*. This is, that the Blair leadership of the Labour Party embraced the culture of political corruption. In doing so, they blocked any lawful and peaceful road to combatting corruption; and thereby threw up powerful incentives to ‘minority direct action’ projects. To protect the bribe-payers it was now necessary to block the road of unlawful protest; and this they sought to do by fraudulently labelling it as ‘terrorism’.

In ancient Athenian law the *graphē paranomōn* criminalised proposing unconstitutional legislation.<sup>6</sup> In our own history, the Act for the abolition of Star Chamber 1641 criminalised any attempt to set up a similar court; the Habeas Corpus Act 1679 criminalised what the GW Bush administration called “extraordinary rendition”. I do not suggest copying any of these procedures, but it is arguable that perhaps we should criminalise proposing, or being concerned in drafting, fraudulent legislation - like the Terrorism Act 2000! ●

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## Notes

1. www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/R-Ammori-v-SSHD-OPEN-Judgment-final.pdf.
2. www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/c8x90q9nzyt (February 13, 10:29).
3. UKSC 39 (2013).
4. Arguably a mis-description of Hamas, but we can leave this issue aside.
5. ‘From Belmarsh to Rangoon’ *Weekly Worker* February 3 2005 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/562/from-belmarsh-to-rangoon - unfortunately, the formatting is lost).
6. Lots of controversial literature, but Wikipedia offers a convenient summary: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graphē\_paranomōn.

**ISRAEL**

# The dog and the tail

Many, including on the left, believe that America's support for Israel damages its national interests, that the explanation for the irrational behaviour lies with the sinister influence of the pro-Israel lobby, even wealthy Jews. **Moshé Machover** disagrees. American support for Israel is not irrational: it serves its national interests

**W**hat is the basis for the relationship between the USA and Israel? There has been a lively debate over this since 2006 - initially sparked by an article and then a book by two US political scientists of the realist school, John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt.<sup>1</sup>

They basically argued that US policy towards the Middle East is dictated by the pro-Israel lobby. Judiciously they do not refer to the 'Jewish lobby', because they recognise that the majority of this lobby is not in fact Jewish. There are many more Christian fundamentalist supporters of Israel than Jewish ones. An important institution in this lobby is the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, which is a coordinating committee for mobilising support for Israel.

Is the Mearsheimer-Walt analysis correct? There are some on the left today who put forward a similar analysis - a very crude version is given by James Petras - a former US academic who wrote well about Latin America, but in relation to Israel suddenly became an American patriot, claiming 'we are colonised by Israel'. This view I call 'Itwad' - 'Israeli tail wags the American dog'.

Another part of this theory is that the Israeli lobby influences US policy in a way that is against the real interests of the United States. Petras was especially sharp on this, as were Mearsheimer and Walt. But this theory shows both a deficiency of materialism and a deficiency of dialectics.

Ian Donovan put forward a sort of materialist explanation: he argued that this is all the doing of US Jewish-Zionist capitalists, who are in the vanguard of imperialism (this 'theory' sounds materialist because of its reference to capitalists). He was correct when he said that Jews are overrepresented among the US capitalist class. The proportion of Jews (depending on how you define them) among the general US population is around 2.5% and among American capitalists the figure is certainly higher (Of course, Jews in America are not the only ethnic or religious group overrepresented among the capitalist class).

However, do these Jewish capitalists actually need to influence US policy in such a way? Do US capitalists who are Jewish have interests distinct from US capitalists in general? Do they have a special *material* interest in Israel? There is no evidence for this. (As an aside, the idea that the foreign policy of imperialist states is dictated by rich individuals is ludicrous.)

Take, for instance, the famous case of Sheldon Adelson, a major capitalist and supporter of Israel. Did he have any investments in Israel? He did: he invested in a free daily newspaper, *Israel HaYom*, which is a propaganda sheet for Benjamin Netanyahu. But this was done as a political contribution - he had no material stake in Israel, but was a Las Vegas gambling magnate. Not a very strategic position from which to be influencing US policy on the Middle East!

What part of capital actually has influence on US policy on the Middle East? We know it from the horse's mouth: the military-industrial



**United States considers Israel as useful asset**

complex. President Dwight D Eisenhower's parting address to the nation in 1961 warned that the military-industrial complex has "unwarranted influence" on policy and must be stopped (in connection with the Middle East, I would add oil corporations). It is corporations, not individual capitalists, that exert hidden influence on policy and there is plenty of evidence that the military-

industrial complex has a stake in Israel. Sheldon Adelson may not have had a material stake, but this section of US capital does and Israel is strongly integrated with it.

The most concentrated collection of evidence for this can be found in the report published in 2011 by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, authored by Robert Blackwill and Walter Slocombe. A summary of

the report was published in the *Los Angeles Times*. But there is older evidence. Israeli expert Yoram Ettinger, chair of special projects at the Ariel Center for Policy Research, wrote in 2005 that the relationship between Israel and the United States was not one-sided: Israel provides important services. He quoted former US secretary of state and ex-Nato commander Alexander Haig, who

said he supported Israel because it is "the largest American aircraft carrier in the world that cannot be sunk, does not carry even one American soldier, and is located in a critical region for American national security".

What Ettinger mainly concentrated on was the contribution of Israel to the military-industrial complex - especially in terms of modern IT and robot technology. Israel is a

pioneer of drone production and in the use of drones for surveillance and assassination - particularly relevant since drones became an important tool of US global domination. In this niche Israel has played a vital role for the military-industrial complex. The vice-president of the company that produces the F-16 fighter jets was quoted by Ettinger as saying that Israel is "responsible for 600 improvements in the plane's systems, modifications estimated to be worth billions of dollars, which spared dozens of research and development years".<sup>2</sup> This is where Israel specialised, in the absence of its own heavy industry. The US companies provided the hardware, but Israeli companies provided vital scientific and electronic expertise and were responsible for many improvements. He continued:

Israel's utilisation of American arms guarantees our existence, but at the same time gives US military industries a competitive edge, compared to European industries, while also boosting American military production, producing American jobs and improving America's national security. Japan and South Korea, for example, preferred the Hawkeye spy plane and the MD-500 chopper - both purchased and upgraded by Israel - over comparable British and French aircraft.

This is the international role of Israel and its link to US global domination. It is nothing to do with Jewish-Zionist capitalists: it is to do with the military-industrial complex.

## Israeli contribution

Now let me quote from the Blackwill and Slocombe report. First of all, they make a very pertinent point which I have also made myself, using different words: the US relationship with Israel is different from those it has with any other country in the region: "In a political context, it is important to note that Israel - unlike other Middle Eastern countries whose governments are partners with the United States - is already

a stable democracy, which will not be swept aside by sudden uprising or explosive revolution: a fact that may become more important in the turbulent period ahead."<sup>3</sup>

This is a reference to what happened in Iran, whose regime was a 'partner' of the US, but was swept aside by the 1979 revolution. They continue:

Moreover, for all our periodic squabbles, Israel's people and politicians have a deeply entrenched pro-American outlook that is uniformly popular with the Israeli people. Thus, Israel's support of US national interests is woven tightly into the fabric of Israeli democratic political culture - a crucial characteristic that is presently not found in any other nation in the greater Middle East.

They then go on to detail the various ways in which Israel helps the military-industrial complex. This is from the summary of the report in the *Los Angeles Times*:

Through joint training, exercises and exchanges on military doctrine, the United States has benefited in the areas of counter-terrorism, intelligence and experience in urban warfare. Increasingly, US homeland security and military agencies are turning to Israeli technology to solve some of their most vexing technical and strategic problems.

This support includes advice and expertise on behavioural screening techniques for airport security and acquisition of an Israeli-produced tactical radar system to enhance force protection. Israel has been a world leader in the development of unmanned aerial systems, both for intelligence collection and combat ['combat' here means assassination], and it has shared with the US military the technology, the doctrine and its experience regarding these systems. Israel is also a global pacesetter in armoured vehicle

protection, defence against short-range rockets, and the techniques and procedures of robotics, all of which it has shared with the United States.<sup>4</sup>

And here comes a very remarkable passage. I have quoted Haig referring to Israel as an unsinkable aircraft carrier without US soldiers on it, but this is no longer the case apparently:

In missile defence, the United States has a broad and multifaceted partnership with Israel. Israel's national missile defences - which include the US deployment in Israel of an advanced X-band radar system and more than 100 American military personnel who man it [the first admission I have seen of US troops stationed in Israel] - will be an integral part of a larger missile defence spanning Europe, the eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf to help protect US forces and allies.<sup>5</sup>

And so it goes on and on - we can see that Israel's role as a US ally is not just regional. Note that there is a very intimate synergy between the Israeli military industry and the American military-industrial complex. If you believe that Eisenhower was right (and I do), then this provides a material basis for the very special relationship between these two states.

I want to quote from another source: a leftwing commentator, William Greider, discussing a recently released report from the Institute for Defense Analyses in Washington, dating from 1987. He notes that the report implicitly confirms the fact that Israel has nuclear weapons; this is, of course, a non-secret that everyone knew. He says: "However, the IDA's most powerful message may not be what it says about Israel's nukes, but what it conveys about the US-Israel relationship. It resembles a technological marriage that over decades transformed the nature of modern warfare in numerous ways."<sup>6</sup>

Note the global implications of this. The article continues:

The bulk of the report is really a detailed survey of Israel's collaborative role in developing critical technologies - the research and industrial base that helped generate advanced armaments of all sorts. Most Americans, myself included, are used to assuming the US military-industrial complex invents and perfects the dazzling innovations, then shares some with favoured allies like Israel.

That is not altogether wrong, but the IDA report suggests a more meaningful understanding. The US and Israel are more like a very sophisticated high-tech partnership that collaborates on the frontiers of physics and other sciences in order to yield the gee-whiz weaponry that now defines modern warfare. Back in the 1980s, the two states were sharing and cross-pollinating their defence research at a very advanced level.

Today we have as a result the 'electronic battlefield' and many other awesome innovations:

■ Tank commanders with small-screen maps that show where their adversaries are moving.

■ Jet pilots who fire computer-guided bombs.

■ Ships at sea that launch missiles over the horizon and hit targets 1,000 miles away ...

These experts were talking in the 1980s about technological challenges that were forerunners to the dazzling innovations that are now standard.

The Middle East wars became the live-fire testing ground, where new systems were perfected: "Scientists at Rafael [another Israeli centre] have come up with an ingenious

way of using the properties of a glow discharge plasma to detect microwave and millimetre waves," the report said. "The attractiveness of the project lies in the ability of the discharge to withstand nuclear weapons effects."

This observation gave me a chill because the earnest defence scientists have yet to find a way for human beings to "withstand nuclear weapons effects".

## Dialectics

Now I have mentioned materialism and the material basis of the US-Israel relationship, but what about dialectics? Nobody can deny that the pro-Israeli lobby has immense political influence in the United States - it is an observable fact.

The question is, why is it allowed to have this power? Is it beyond the power of the real engines of American capitalism to mobilise, if they wanted to, enough funds to counteract this lobby? After all, corporations are now regarded as persons for the purposes of political contributions in the US. If the military-industrial complex felt the Israeli lobby in the US is against American interests, it could surely counteract it. However, they have no interests at all in doing so. What Aipac and other such bodies are aiming to do is simply silence dissent against US Middle East policy and American support of Israel, in the interests of the real engine of American capitalism.

What about the claim that this policy contradicts US interests in other ways? Blackwill and Slocombe deal with this question dialectically, as it happens - though, of course, they are not Marxist in any way. They say, 'OK, the US has conflicting interests. This happens in relation to Israel and in relation to any other of our allies in the Middle East.' Especially nowadays (although it has always been the case to some extent), the interests of any imperialist power are not entirely coherent. There is no such thing as *the* American interest: it is about conflicting interests, which have to be balanced. Blackwill and Slocombe show that in no way does American support for Israel damage US interests to such an extent that it is counterproductive. The contradiction with other American interests is a matter of the dialectics of interests of any power.

This does not simply apply to states, by the way. No class or any other power in the world has interests that are entirely monolithic and coherent. There is always some conflict that has to be resolved one way or the other.

So my conclusion is that Israel will remain for the foreseeable future America's top ally in the Middle East and will continue to make trouble regarding its relationship with Iran ●

## Notes

1. 'The Israel lobby' *London Review of Books* March 23 2006: [www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n06/john-mearsheimer/the-israel-lobby](http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n06/john-mearsheimer/the-israel-lobby). See also J Mearsheimer and S Walt *The Israel lobby and US foreign policy* New York 2007.
2. Y Ettinger, 'American and Israeli military interdependence': [www.freeman.org/serendipity/index.php?archives/46-Yoram-Ettinger-AMERICAN-AND-ISRAELI-MILITARY-INTERDEPENDENCE.html](http://www.freeman.org/serendipity/index.php?archives/46-Yoram-Ettinger-AMERICAN-AND-ISRAELI-MILITARY-INTERDEPENDENCE.html).
3. R Blackwill, W Slocombe *Israel: a strategic asset for the United States* Washington 2011, p14.
4. *Los Angeles Times* October 31 2011.
5. This is a reference to the US-operated twin towers near Dimona, which are the world's tallest radar towers. See [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dimona\\_Radar\\_Facility](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dimona_Radar_Facility).
6. W Greider, 'It's official: the Pentagon finally admitted that Israel has nuclear weapons, too' *The Nation* March 20 2015.

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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

**Socialists  
should not back  
imperialism**

## Marxist or liberal foreign policy?

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has made a splash at the Munich security conference with a 'left' defence of US power, writes **Paul Demarty**. Can the Democratic Socialists of America hold its elects to account?

It is a strange event on the foreign policy calendar, but the annual Munich Security Conference has long been a bellwether for shifting alignments among the advanced capitalist countries.

First conducted prior to the assassination of John F Kennedy (1963), it has attained a particular salience in the last few years, as a very public occasion for humiliation of the European powers by the rather vulgar Trumpite faithful. Donald Trump's grievances with Europe are well known: he despises the Europeans for personal disloyalty, and for their parsimoniousness in regard to defence spending (which he expects, not unreasonably, will go in the end to American industry).

Vice-president JD Vance's speech to last year's event was received with icy horror by the assembled European dignitaries, while this year's keynote from the more old-fashioned neocon, Marco Rubio, was met with a standing ovation, but in substance the message was the same: Europe must be capable of 'self-defence' - yet all the *means* of self-defence somehow come with 'Made in the USA' stamped on the side!

There are good reasons to be sceptical of the *sincerity* of the ovation, of course. There can be few among the European elite - even as degraded as it is today - unaware that American interests in Europe are increasingly extractive. Behind the public fawning, no doubt more frank conversations take place between the principal players, which *might* result in a more defensibly antagonistic European posture some years down the line. Yet the top line remains as it is: Europe is unable to detach from Ukraine and, because of that, is unable to detach from the United States - and, because of *that*, the US is going to rinse Europe for all it's worth.

### Judgement

This is the necessary context for the speech of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez at a Munich panel on 'populism'. It ranged widely, and she made a point of criticising the worsening inequality in various western countries, including in the US. The result is the present foreign policy of her country:

They are looking to withdraw the United States from the entire world, so that we can turn into an age of authoritarianism, of authoritarians, that can carve out the world, where Donald Trump can command the western hemisphere and Latin America as his personal sandbox, where Putin can sabre-rattle around Europe and try to bully our own allies there.

For AOC, the objective is a rules-based international order - but for real this time. The old "hypocrisies" were corrosive: "Whether it is kidnapping a foreign head of state, whether it is threatening our allies to colonise Greenland, whether it is looking the other way in a genocide, hypocrisies are vulnerabilities, and they threaten



Looking for a primary run

democracies globally."

While in town, AOC also made time for a chin-wag with various social democratic functionaries - apparently to give them advice on getting the youth excited. She further met with representatives from Die Linke. The SPD junket is more eye-catching, given that august party's total commitment to Atlanticism (at least in public); Die Linke seems more her style - but, of course, its foreign policy has been completely nerfed in recent years by the opportunism of its leaders and dirty tricks on the part of its substantial *antideutsche* caucuses.

There is much to object to here, and we will get to it, but one must first ask what AOC is up to. Her political judgment of late has been, let us say, questionable. When Joe Biden's senility was incontrovertibly revealed by his dismal debate with Donald Trump in June 2024, and a political crisis opened up, she and Bernie Sanders formed a political phalanx around the embattled dotard.

When that failed, and Kamala Harris was parachuted in as the presidential nominee, AOC ran cover for her, claiming utterly risibly that the American government was working itself to death to obtain a ceasefire in Gaza - a proposition that was plainly false then and has only been further disconfirmed since. Her reward for being such a good soldier was to be passed over for a spot on the House Oversight Committee in favour of Gerry Connolly - a septuagenarian nonentity who was already terminally ill with oesophageal cancer and died months later. A more perfect picture of the Democratic Party could hardly be imagined.

Harris herself failed to prevent a return of Trump to the Oval Office, and the general result has been a shift in the Democratic political approach to roughly left populism - albeit a rather uneven shift (as indicated by the Connolly fiasco). AOC, to the credit of her political instincts, started down this road early. Shortly after Trump's 2024 victory, she noticed that many people in her Congressional district had voted for her *and* Trump, and she made a big public show of asking them why. This was quite an intelligent move from someone who has historically shown herself vulnerable to liberal denialism about the depth of Trump's appeal.

### Careerism

The Munich speech, then, must be seen in this light: though she has a basically liberal view of politics, she is not stupid, and sees that this view is more radically in question than it has been for some decades. She likely fancies herself as a meaningful force in the next Democratic presidential primary. As of October 2025, she is now old enough to stand (minimum age: 35) - doesn't time fly? - but she is anyway popular enough for her endorsement to matter. Hobnobbing with the European elite in Munich is an expression of her ambition.

Yet this is not merely a story of greasy-pole climbing in the world of bourgeois politics. AOC remains, so far as we know, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, now by far the largest American socialist organisation, and likely the largest since the Socialist Party at its 1910s peak. It has a (very brief) programme, which demands a "working class foreign policy", whose specific points

on Israel-Palestine and "ending the US war machine" AOC has repeatedly flouted in congressional votes.

Attempts by the left of the DSA to censure her and other opportunist elected officials have been made, and repeatedly led to bitter squabbles with the right. The rightwing argument is basically pragmatic (or, rather, opportunist): she and similar figures are widely known political celebrities, and therefore they have far greater reach in the public mind than the 'little people' of the DSA rank and file. Attacking prominent people publicly associated with the organisation is taken, therefore, to be simply an act of self-harm.

This sort of politics is, to be sure, perfectly traditional within the DSA, which emerged from the fragments of Shachtmanism in the 1970s as the Democratic Socialist Organising Committee, led by Michael Harrington, before fusing with the similarly inclined New American Movement in 1983. Its activity consisted essentially in campaigning for Democratic candidates who were deemed, in Harrington's words, to sit on "the left wing of the possible". It maintained an essentially anti-communist outlook in foreign policy inherited from Shachtman, though it did not openly support US interventions, and it was also one of the left groups that maintained support for Israel after the 1967 and Yom Kippur wars.

The jibe usually directed at the DSA in the early years of this century - that it was essentially a retirement home for an older generation of leftwing Jewish intellectuals - was always a little unfair: it was able to recruit some fresh faces over time. But its membership was transformed after Bernie Sanders' breakthrough presidential nomination campaign in 2016. Though Sanders himself was no spring chicken, the energy of his campaign was decidedly youthful. All these people needed somewhere to go, and Sanders' arms-length association with the DSA volunteered it as a destination.

Within two years, the membership had increased almost tenfold. The median age of a member dropped, in the same period, from 68 to 33! This growth attracted the existing organisations of the left, especially those too numerically weak to have much impact of their own. The result is an extremely politically heterogeneous organisation, including a great many people who are basically left liberals, along with assorted Trotskyists, Maoists, third worldists and so on. There is even the Marxist Unity Group - a not-insubstantial caucus inspired in part by our own ideas on the centrality of programme and the struggle for democracy.

### Class line

There is, therefore, much to fight for, and much fighting to be done. Above all, for serious Marxists, the fight must be for partyism - the transformation of the DSA finally into a party which can stand candidates in its own name,

move to a posture of critical support for other candidates where appropriate, maintain a posture of radical distrust towards the American state and its slaveholders' constitution, and crucially hold its elected officers' feet to the fire if they do not carry out the collective will of the organisation.

The alternatives to this are essentially all varieties of liberalism. There is the 'base-building' school, which amounts to a variant of Saul Alinsky-style community organising. In the case of the AOC fandom, there is the strategy of thoroughly mediatised populism, driven by the talents of celebrity politicians. The DSA, in both these schemes, essentially devolves into a progressive NGO of professional activists who happen to have a bee in their bonnet about universal healthcare. It would be 'Sorosism' without Soros.

### Celebrity

There are large-scale theoretical reasons for favouring the Marxist approach, but also more straightforward practical objections to the latter. It is to be assumed that 'base-building' will pan out like the earlier community organising efforts, and effectively become instruments of local and unaccountable political machines. As for the celebrity-driven approach, the career path of AOC is perfectly illustrative. If you are going to 'get things done' and 'build power', then you need to be able to get legislation through congress - which, of course requires support from the wider Democratic caucus; and you get that support by being a good 'team player'. You get it by signalling, at junkets like the MSC, that you are a safe pair of hands for American statecraft; and by voting through funding for Israel's Iron Dome, and so forth.

It is this, rather than prioritising economic demands in general politics, that is the real class line here. If the working class is to have power - if it is to be able to rule, in the end - it needs its *own* institutions of political and cultural activity, under radically democratic control. Such democratic control is *incompatible* with political careerism. Democracy and discipline are inseparable. Wariness about cutting popular politicians loose is self-defeating: it entails reconciling oneself to a political order designed, top to bottom, to allow capitalist exploitation to go on unimpeded.

It also requires clarity and independence in foreign policy, of course. The soup of platitudes offered by AOC - the fatuous dream of an American imperial state actually playing by the 'rules', the Hollywood morality tales of big bad authoritarians - is certainly not it.

Is the DSA to permit its representatives to back the US government's proxy wars, to arm a genocidal pet army? If so, it should at least have the decency to scrub all references to "working class foreign policy" from its website ●

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