

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



weekly **worker**



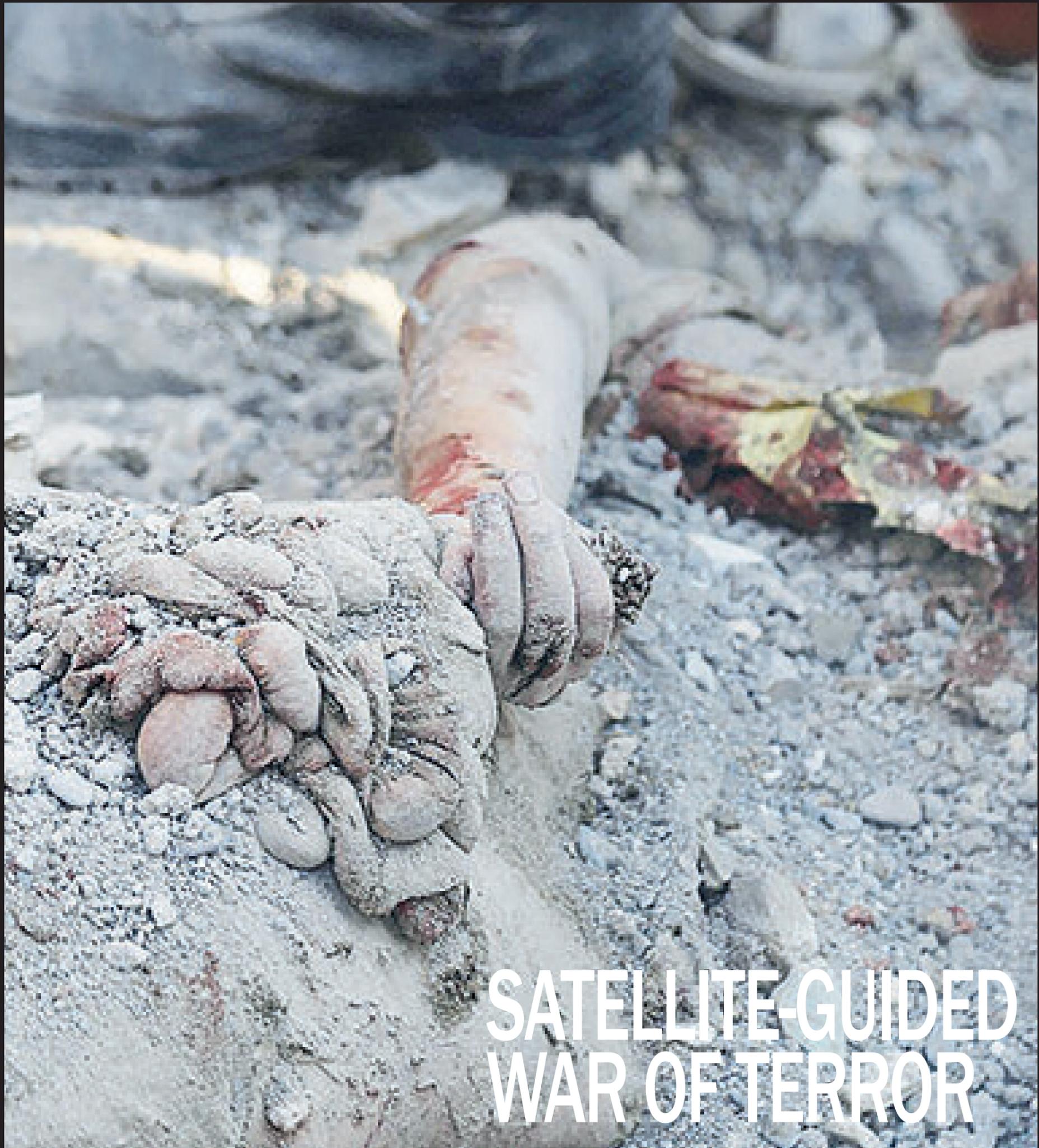
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan faces acute problems on every front. And now there is the US-Israel assault on Iran

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**SATELLITE-GUIDED
WAR OF TERROR**

LETTERS



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

George's drama

Before I start, I need to state that I am utterly opposed to the American imperialist/Israeli Zionist war on Iran. However, I've been watching George Galloway on his 'Mother of All Talk Shows' (MOATS) channel on YouTube, and George's strident 'second campism' is leading him down some strange paths sadly.

While always problematic, with an ego the size of Texas, he did play a positive and rather heroic role earlier this century in opposing imperialist wars. For that we should thank him. However, in regards to the present war, in a MOATS edition called 'No surrender, Iran resists' on March 8, George is reporting that Tel Aviv is basically "on fire" and Iran is "hitting Israel at will". He claims that hundreds of American troops have been killed and seriously wounded by Iranian strikes (contrary to all mainstream reports), and that even a US Delta Force commando team has been captured by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, according to an Iranian government report. Galloway appears to be reporting Iranian government claims uncritically. The clear inference is that Iran is essentially totally victorious on all fronts! In reality this is pure second-campist propaganda.

George, in late 2024, talked up the survival chances of the Ba'athist regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria - only to be devastated when it quickly collapsed, following a Turkish-backed rebel offensive. George, in a fit of pique, then declared on his YouTube channel, "The Arab world is dead to me!" - he took it so badly. He has since gathered himself together and appears to be interested in the region again.

While no doubt George relies on drama and hyperbole to attract eyes to his monetised social media channels, this does point to a profound political weakness in his second campism. When you invest so much in backing and supporting uncritically various regimes, and then those regimes collapse or are tamed by imperialism, you are essentially left hanging in the wind politically. You have nowhere else to go except to search out a new one.

George appears to have left Britain in late 2025 after he and his wife were stopped and interviewed on a single occasion by authorities at the UK border. It appears that he was particularly vexed that his wife was asked about her nail polish! (Having been subject to a similar interview in the past by dint of my Irish surname, it isn't a pleasant experience, I can assure you.)

He has since relocated abroad and broadcasts from there. But all this is indicative of the political decline of a man who once provided a rallying point for those opposed to imperialism. **Paul O'Keefe** email

Spart workers

I was interested to read a few paragraphs in Vincent David's piece in the *Weekly Worker* ('Not a serious response', March 5). The Spartacist League wants to send young comrades into the industrial working class, and comrade David writes: "To my statement that 'it is much better for young revolutionaries to become plumbers, electricians, welders, nurses or even teachers' than to pursue academic or white-collar jobs, Macnair basically argues that those working class jobs do not really exist any more, and that almost everyone is a worker anyway. He writes: 'The

proletariat is, for Marx, *the social class which, lacking property, is forced to work for wages*'."

He continues: "This is a classic revision of Marxism, which dissolves the centrality of the industrial proletariat into a sea of wage-earners. According to this definition, there is no difference between a dockworker, an assembly operator at Land Rover, an Oxford University professor and a lawyer in the City of London. All earn a wage, right?"

When I was a lad (some years ago, I'm afraid), in the UK we had miners, dockers, the iron and steel industry, ship builders, car manufacturers, all kinds of engineering plants - in the West Midlands and elsewhere. There were potteries in Stoke, there was ICI, there was Courtaulds and a myriad of other textile manufacturers. There were too relatively strong trade unions, and wages and other concessions were often seen as cheaper for employers than even a short strike.

That's nearly all gone. Yes, there are some industries left and still some unions. The stronger unions are those like the railworkers, fire brigade workers and others whose jobs would be difficult to export to, say, Thailand. But David's plumbers and electricians are in many (most?) cases self-employed (petty bourgeois?), as they were when I worked in the building industry over 50 years ago. As to welders, there used to be a mass of them - in the shipyards, for instance. What work is there for them now? Perhaps the Sparts should be sending their youngsters to India, China, Bangladesh - almost anywhere outside Europe and North America - where the industry is.

David dismisses, among others, employees in small shops and baristas. Coffee bar employees have been fighting long, bitter battles in the US for decent wages and proper employment rights.

Then we have Amazon workers (large numbers in their warehouses) - are they proletarians? David's "lawyer(s) in the City of London" may be on a wage - perhaps with incentives and bonuses - and so may be quite comfortable. That would just leave a few clerical workers supporting them, along with cleaners and security staff. There are millions in the UK who are not in full-time employment in industry, but merely in shit jobs getting shit wages.

Given our current strength, we need to recruit comrades who want to be in a communist party with a programme and organisation: who want to get rid of the bourgeois parasites currently ruining the lives of nearly everybody. Go and get your welders, David: we might make do with an Oxford professor or two - for now.

Jim Nelson email

China apologist

Although many foreign enterprises ostensibly advocate team spirit, they still set assessment indicators for each individual. They use this concept-swapped 'independence' to exploit - linking each person's assessment indicators to performance and then eliminating the worst-performing employees. This is essentially a disguised exploitation of surplus value by capital.

Behind this distorted 'independence' lies an even more naked logic of exploitation: foreign enterprises forcefully bind 'independent work' with 'performance compliance', and at every turn label employees as 'incompetent' on the grounds of 'not working independently and failing to meet results' - or even directly dismiss them. Under such rules, 'independence' is no longer a yardstick for cultivating

abilities, but a sword hanging over employees' heads - employees dare not ask for help or collaborate, can only bear all work pressure alone, and are forced to sacrifice personal time and overdraw their physical and mental health to complete excessive tasks, fearing that a single mistake will cost them their jobs. Capital, under the name of 'independent assessment', saves the costs of team training and collaborative support, shifts all work responsibilities entirely to individuals, and reaps the surplus value created by employees' overwork. How selfish, how unjust.

Of course, opposing this distorted 'independence' by no means advocates shifting responsibilities or lying flat in the workplace. For example, when things are deliberately made difficult for new employees by senior colleagues, who push all their work onto seemingly vulnerable newcomers, the newcomers are forced to take on all work that does not belong to them due to their status. This distorted relationship of one side exploiting and the other compromising is never true mutual help.

Some state-owned enterprises in China, whether from 1949 to the 1970s or now, have always adhered to the same core spirit: the interests of the working class are deeply linked to the interests of the factory. The working class is the leader; everyone regards the factory as their home, upholds the original aspiration of selfless dedication, helps each other, and shares technology and experience without reservation. No-one guards against others having better skills, let alone feels anxious or worried about being eliminated because of others' excellence. Everyone thinks and works in the same direction, condensing a joint force to push the collective economy forward.

In conclusion, capital exploits surplus value under the name of 'independent work'; there are essential differences between socialist and capitalist factories (companies).

Li Huanghao Shanghai

YP opportunity

The moment has passed. The pooch has been screwed. The opportunity has been lost. The tremendous opportunity, which was opened up by the successes of Nigel Farage and the Reform party, has been wasted - by the malfeasance of Zarah Sultana and the useless leadership of Jeremy Corbyn.

The Trotskyists concentrated upon eating themselves. Whilst they were navel-gazing, the Green Party jumped into the breach and seized the opportunity. It was a miserable episode, and wholly indicative of the complete degeneration of the trad left.

Warwick Alderman email

Karl or Groucho?

When asked at a press conference in Washington about a growing number of critics at home and abroad opposing the war with Iran, Donald Trump scoffed that the anti-war crowd was just quoting "some Marx guy", who is reported to have said, "military intelligence is a contradiction in terms".

Trump had always suspected that Karl Marx hated the military. When an aide explained that the quote was in fact from Groucho (!), Trump doubled down on blaming Karl because, as he explained, "Same last name, very suspicious family. These are not good people." Trump assured supporters that he has tremendous respect for the military, but absolutely none for the left - especially when it's hiding inside old black-and-white comedies! He then vowed to appoint Jared Kushner to a board to investigate whether *Duck*

soup was in fact an early communist manifesto.

The remainder of the press conference appeared to bring into question not only modern-day diplomacy and geopolitics, but the basic laws of chronology. Trump explained that the United States was heroically defending itself from Iran by responding in advance to a retaliation that had not yet occurred. According to Trump's timeline, Israel launched an entirely spontaneous 'unprovoked, but necessary' strike on Iran, which the US helped plan, coordinate and deliver in order to prevent the Iranian response that would obviously follow, once Iran realised it had been attacked. 'If you wait for the retaliation, that's already too late,' said Trump.

He calls this strategic doctrine 'pre-retroactive deterrence'. Under the plan, which is to last until Trump gets bored, the US reserves the right to strike first in order to stop the consequences of strikes it already helped happen. Military analysts described the concept as 'bold', 'innovative' and 'difficult to explain without crying'.

A Trump spokesperson later added that the doctrine also resolves the awkward question of why several of the targets in this war were facilities the same spokespersons previously insisted had been completely destroyed months ago in the last war. 'They were obliterated,' one spokesperson had claimed, 'but you never know when obliterated things might come back. That's why you have to obliterate them again before they retaliate for the obliteration'.

Here in Britain, spokespeople for Keir Starmer described him as showing 'Churchillian resolve with flexible scheduling' after Trump had accused Starmer of being "not Churchill". According to 'sources', which are usually all Luke Akehurst, Starmer had firmly refused Trump's request to use RAF bases for operations for nearly a whole 20 minutes due to concerns about the breaking of international law. The PM held this principled stand heroically right up until the moment he agreed to allow the bases to be used. Supporters of Starmer, including Akehurst, Paul Mason and @TBlair4war, later took to Twitter to praise the approach as a "masterclass in measured resistance followed by prompt cooperation".

Speaking from Mar-a-Lago, Nigel Farage defended Trump, supporting strikes on Iran due to "Islam taking over the world" despite the slightly awkward backdrop of several Muslim-majority countries assisting the US and Israel in bombing the shit out of another Muslim-majority country, including targeting a girls' school. On this, Farage explained that it has long been rumoured these schools are not devoted to education, but to teaching students how to fill out UK benefits forms.

Standing in front of a long-decommissioned tank, Tory leader Kemi Badenoch said that she wouldn't give Trump carte blanche in the Middle East, but couldn't come up with a single example of what she wouldn't let them do. But Starmer is a 'big wuss', she added.

Those at the press conference back in Washington were still trying to map the timeline of events being offered to them. It seems that they appear to be moving simultaneously forward, backward and occasionally sideways in a military approach where the future attacks the present for something the past is about to do.

Exhausted, one reporter at the back of the room asked the Trump spokesperson how history will judge 'Operation Epstein Cover Fury'. History, according to the Trump administration, will judge the

operation to have been a "joint post-preemptive, post-retaliatory, pre-post-preemptive strike to remove the weapons it said it had obliterated last summer". The bombing won't stop until Iran has surrendered, although it was later clarified that they don't have to say they have surrendered. Trump will be the judge.

Not even Groucho, who built a career on ridiculousness, would have concocted such a scenario.

Carl Collins email

Inspiring duo

How uplifting, how inspiring, it was to read Yasmine Mather's piece of work ('Defeat US-Israeli aggression, defend the peoples of Iran' March 5), especially coming as it does in the midst of a bragging, boasting, gloating era we are told to accept as part of western so-called 'civilisation'. This dystopian paradigm of war-waging rabidity is steeped in arrogantly blatant lies - one based upon a Nazi-esque *law of the jungle*.

Equally encouraging is the statement from her and Moshé Machover around their setting up of Nur (a regional collective). Surely together they even amount to something of historical significance, in the sense they could be read not only immediately, but also at any time in the future, as a comprehensive anatomy of social, cultural and political forces in play - those that together might just possibly constitute opportunities available to any remaining *authentically* poised socialist-communist outfits anywhere around the world.

Most importantly those two items are what might be called *expansive*, managing to be outward-looking and holistic rather than churning and cyclical in that endemically introverted nature of our Marxian left wing in current times (also tempered by the very hardest and even cruellest notions of realism). However, those enthusiastic plaudits of mine are 'dropping over the edge of a cliff' at comrade Mather's inclusion of Your Party in her list of sources and targets for Marxist support. Where based not least upon Carla Roberts' reporting of things (eg, 'Definitely His Party now' March 5), that's regrettably, but glaringly misplaced, insofar as any such faded/jaded to the point of *rancid* Labourite-modal organisations cannot nowadays provide anything except a ghastly dead-end in terms of the raising of consciousness amongst the population at large. It's a pernicious distraction from the central task of exposing the core nature of capitalism-imperialism's paradigm - either currently or in relation to its historical roots, let alone any of its future varieties or permutations.

In short, surely completely *independent* methods of thinking and then newly-built and wholly *independent* organisations are required by any global forces of workers and supportively attuned intelligentsia? As comrade Mather herself noted, "the world has changed", so any notion of influencing, bending, steering, pressuring either orthodox trade union or existing parliamentarianism-based activities lie rotting in heaps. Surely they're all dead as the fucking dodo!

All of that having been said, nonetheless I continue to support the *Weekly Worker*/CPGB in contrast to any other *mess of potage* available out there. Most pertinently where all comrades at the *WW*/CPGB should feel some simple pride to have published (both so prominently and so fulsomely) those insights and perspectives from Yasmine Mather and Moshé Machover.

Bruno Kretzchmar email

MIDDLE EAST

Within the circle of fire

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan faces acute problems on every front. Now there is the US-Israel assault on Iran. How will Turkey respond? **Esen Uslu** gives his take on regional rivalries and the challenges faced by the left

Since October 2024 the ruling classes of Turkey have been desperately trying to 'consolidate the inner front' by finding a kind of resolution to, or an accommodation with, the 'Kurdish problem.' On May 12 2025, the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) announced its intention to disarm and dissolve, ending its four-decades-long armed struggle. That followed the call by the PKK's imprisoned leader, Abdullah Öcalan, for militants to lay down their arms. Whether or not the Turkish state will reciprocate by granting the Kurds autonomy or constitutional recognition is, of course, an open question.

Now, though, Israel has shown its shark's teeth once again and dragged the region into war ... and Turkey and Iraq, and especially Iraqi Kurdistan, are the obvious choices for any land operation into Iran. The provocations began early on, but currently Iraqi Kurds are not willing to be used: Nechirvan Barzani, the region's president, stated that they "will in no way be part" of the conflict. Nevertheless, US bases within the region have come under Iranian missile attack.

Conversely, Iranian Kurdish forces - though highly fragmented - appear willing to turn the region into a battlefield: the Coalition of Political Forces of Iranian Kurdistan was formed by six organisations on February 22 2026. The coalition has expressed a definite interest in working with the US and Israel to take advantage of the weakened condition of the Iranian regime. Reports indicate that the CIA and Israeli intelligence are considering or actively arming them. However, for the moment at least, the coalition remains on the sidelines.

Black Sea

To the north of Turkey, the never-ending war in Ukraine has upset the delicate balance in the Black Sea region. Turkey depends on Russian oil and gas supply, as well as its grain exports. The sanctions regimes and precarious exceptions obtained by begging to the western powers are a severe handicap.

Turkish air space has been violated by drones from Russia and Ukraine - some of which have penetrating as far as Ankara in central Anatolia - and have been shot down or crashed. Several anti-shipping mines have detached from their moorings and unmanned naval vehicles have gone astray and ended up on the Turkish Black Sea coast.

The legal regime governing passage in the Turkish Straits, which constitute the gateway between the Black Sea and Mediterranean, has been framed by the Montreux Convention since 1936. This is once again being tested. The convention blocks the passage of warships in the case of a war. This prevented Russia from providing maritime support for the former Syrian Ba'ath regime and from bringing its Mediterranean warships into the Black Sea. The straits were also closed to Nato navies (except those of Black Sea nations).

This caused ructions in Nato, forcing the US to expand the port of Alexandroupoli on the Aegean coast of Greece near the Turkish border, to use it as a prime supply depot. They also upgraded the rail link to the north through Greece, Bulgaria



Erdoğan: cometh the war, cometh the opportunity

and Romania into Ukraine. Turkey being seen, of course, as a 'bad' Nato member.

Greece has used the brownie points it earned for being a 'good' Nato member to upgrade 83 of its existing F-16s fighters and obtain up to 40 new F-35s - giving it a clear edge over Turkey. Its Achilles Shield initiative will also see Greece ploughing roughly €25 billion over the next decade into high-tech weapons, including AI-powered missile systems and drones to counter Turkey. Then there is purchase of French and Italian frigates and corvettes. This new naval muscle has allowed Greece to militarise the Aegean islands under the guise of a new Nato defence posture. That despite old treaties between Greece and Turkey prohibiting it.

Cyprus

Almost simultaneously, a consortium of Israel, Egypt, Greece and Greek Cypriots is developing the oil and gas fields in the south-eastern Mediterranean. This cooperation has expanded to include naval exercises in the region, with the participation of Indian navy. The US has lifted its long-standing ban on exporting arms to the Greek Cypriots.

More recently, when the British sovereign bases in Cyprus came under missile attack, the UK government changed its attitude towards the Israel-US war, opening its bases to the US planes for "defensive" operations. Greece simultaneously sent F-16s to bases in Cyprus, prompting Turkey to retaliate by sending its own planes and air defence units to the Turkish Cypriot bases. The Greek navy has

sent its latest frigate, the *HS Kimon*, to Cyprus, while France sent its *Charles de Gaulle* nuclear-powered aircraft carrier group there too.

Meanwhile, Nato naval assets shot down two missiles heading towards Turkish airspace, presumably en route to the Incirlik US airbase near Adana. When Turkey protested, the Iranians vehemently denied responsibility for the missiles. The claim is that it may have been a false-flag operation by the Israelis.

In any case, Turkey sought Nato's assistance, and a German army Patriot missile battery was sent and deployed in Malatya, ostensibly to protect the US Kürecik THAAD radar station. This long-range early-warning radar covers countries east of Turkey and provides real-time data to the anti-ballistic missile defence systems. This is one of two Patriot missile batteries deployed in Turkey - the other one is an Italian unit protecting Incirlik air base.

In the past Turkey has wanted to purchase Patriot missile defence systems, but the US refused to sell them. So the Erdoğan government went against the wishes of Nato by purchasing an S-400 anti-aircraft missile system from Russia. They were delivered in July 2019. As a result, the US and Nato refused to sell advanced aircraft and missiles to Turkey, despite its attempts to placate them by not deploying the S-400 missiles. In the intervening years Turkey has been trying hard to develop and deploy a series of indigenous land-based and naval air defence missile systems. They are still being developed and tested, but it will take years for them to

be integrated into the defence system. Currently the Turkish armed forces have no effective anti-ballistic missile capacity.

North-east

In our north-eastern neighbourhood, a truce and almost a peace has existed between Azerbaijan and Armenia since the end of the Nagorno-Karabakh war. While Armenia has maintained good relations with Iran, Azerbaijan has good relations with Israel, regularly supplying it with oil via a pipeline going through Turkey. There is also a maritime connection between southern Turkish ports and Israel.

However, the war could jeopardise this truce, as there is now a project to open up the Zangezur corridor, which would connect Azerbaijan and its exclave, Nakhchivan, through Armenia's Syunik province along the Iranian border. As a part of the peace deal, the 27-mile-long 'Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity' corridor would be controlled by the US. This corridor would form a barrier between Iran and Armenia, cutting off Iranian land corridors into the Caucasus and Russia.

When the current war began, Nakhchivan air space was violated by Iranian missiles, as was Turkey's. President Aliyev of Azerbaijan was one of first heads of state to convey condolences for the death of Ali Khamanei by visiting the Iranian embassy in Baku. The missile strikes in Nakhchivan occurred immediately afterwards, and soured relations with Iran. When the Azerbaijani government protested, Iran once again

denied firing the missiles, and accused Israel once more of carrying out a false-flag operation.

In the north-east, Georgia's former Abkhaz autonomous republic, which has been under virtual Russian occupation since 2008, has decided to extend the small coastguard harbour at Ochamchire into a major port for the Russian navy, which has difficulties using other facilities along the northern shore of the Black Sea. Ochamchire is less than 100 miles from the Turkish border. The new naval base will also be very close to the Anaklia deep-sea port, which is being developed by the Chinese as a part of its Belt and Road Initiative, despite growing pressure from western powers not to allow China access to the Black Sea.

Eye of storm

As any of the above flashpoints could draw Turkey into open conflict, the regime is trying to maintain a steady course. It is trying to maintain good relations with all parties involved in the conflicts, while keeping a firm grip on any internal opposition.

Leftwing forces in Turkey have been unable to adopt a unified anti-imperialist policy beyond opposing wars. Even the unprovoked Israeli-US attack on Iran was not enough to make some sections of the left change their stance, because of their negative attitude towards the Iranian regime. Meanwhile, the drawn-out peace negotiations with the Kurds, which have yet to produce any concrete results, have fuelled the nationalist tendencies within the Turkish left.

While the economy is deteriorating, and the oil price rise and other negative impacts of war are putting more pressure on the living standards of working people, the various strikes in many different factories and facilities has yet to prompt the working class to make political demands, such as a radical change to trade union legislation.

Fake negotiations on pensions or the minimum wage, where state-appointed representatives and employers' organisations hold a built-in majority against the workers' organisations, have yet to prompt a campaign for political change.

The militarist and bureaucratic state, with its ever-increasing millions of 'civil servants' receiving their salaries for doing nothing (in addition to uncontrolled state spending), has resulted in an unbearably high cost of living for working people. These conditions have been exacerbated by the regime's insistence on downgrading state education and health systems, while extending religious administration.

Meanwhile, the politics of the parliamentary opposition remain squarely focussed on the legal case against their main candidate for the 2028 presidential election. Ekrem İmamoğlu, former mayor of Istanbul and a leading member of the Republican People's Party (CHP) has already been in jail for a year. His trial began on March 9 2026 and he faces a 2,430-year sentence if convicted! As for the Peoples Equality and Democracy Party (DEM) - the Kurdish-led left opposition - it is still awaiting the outcome of the 'peace process'.

Certainly a regional war involving Turkey could easily be used by the Erdoğan regime to extend its life and further curtail democracy ●

IRAN



Launching Tomahawks

Satellite-guided war of terror

Not so long ago Trump was saying that there would be a popular welcome for US intervention. A big lie: the working class has always opposed regime change from above. **Yasmine Mather** assesses the battle for hearts and minds

In the weeks before the US-Israeli attack on Iran, we had a lot of statements by famous Iranians, from Nobel peace prize winners to film directors, ex-football players, as well as liberal bourgeois groups inside and outside the country, calling for 'foreign intervention' to get rid of the Islamic Republic. And, of course, outlets such as the BBC and US and Israeli media were promoting them all. Many consumers might well have thought: 'Wow, these people are all in favour of US military intervention'. They would perhaps conclude that this was the only way to 'save the Iranian people'.

During that same period, I was reading the leaflets issued by workers of the Haft Tappeh sugarcane plant - workers who have been protesting for a long time now. I was reading statements from workers in the Vahed Bus Company, as well as the oil workers who are trying to set up a national oil workers' organisation that will include contract workers and workers in the many privatised companies of the industry. Each raised a lot of demands. They were for the separation of state and religion. They cannot speak openly because some of them are semi-official organisations - they do not use the word 'overthrow' - but, if you read their statements, it was clear they were for the overthrow of the Islamic Republic. However, they all had one thing in common: no to any foreign intervention.

Of course, now that the country is being heavily bombarded daily, now that parts of Tehran are beginning to look like Gaza, the celebrities mentioned above are distancing themselves from US-Israeli military intervention: 'We didn't mean this kind of intervention. The US should have stopped after the first day, when they killed Khamenei!' Ironically the same is true of some exiled broadcasters, who until March 1 were gung-ho for military action.

A text from a worker inside Iran sums it up: "Almost all major cities have been bombed. 40,000 residential homes have so far been destroyed, as far as figures tell; 56 schools have been destroyed; 11 hospitals have

been targeted. Warplanes do not fall on the heads of governments, but on working class people."

Now, add to this the March 8 oil refinery fires and the heavy bombings during the nights of March 9 and 10 (described by the regime as 'carpet bombing'). You can see pictures of flames and plumes of thick black smoke over Tehran. The CNN reporter, who managed to remain in Iran, was telling us on March 7 that everything was reasonably quiet: "Last week everyone was telling me the government is trying to pretend nothing has happened. This week all that has changed - most people open their windows and can see destroyed buildings. I have seen images of some horrific destruction."

In most of central Tehran I do not think you can find a street that has not been bombed. The main square, Enqelab (Revolution), as well as Ferdowsi Square, Mehrabad Airport and nearby buildings have been destroyed. The central stadium is completely flattened.

Iran has complained to Unesco about historic sites that have been damaged, including Golestan Palace - originally built in the 16th century and modernised in the 19th century during the rule of the Qajar dynasty. In the main square in Isfahan, Chehel Sotoun Palace, built 379 years ago, is also badly damaged. None of these historic buildings were anywhere near military installations. By targeting such historic sites one can only assume the Israelis or the US (or both) want to cause demoralisation and despair.

Global power

Can Iran win this war? Absolutely not - that would be impossible. However, you have to recognise that surviving for over two weeks now is considered by some inside the Iranian regime as a kind of victory. The longer they survive, the more powerful they will get internally, in the region and globally.

In Iranian governing circles some say, 'We lasted the eight-year war against Iraq [Saddam Hussein era]; we can last a long time.' Of course, that is over-optimistic. Yes,

the US supported Saddam, but was not directly involved in the military operations. Some European countries, such as the UK, were selling arms to both sides. Today Iran is not getting arms from anywhere. It is apparently getting some AI support from China, but it is not clear if that is propaganda or real support.

As far as I know, all the claims about Russia sending missiles or new aircraft are just wishful thinking. However, Russia is providing satellite intelligence, according to US officials. On March 6 they reported that Russia is sharing high-quality satellite imagery and targeting data with Tehran. This includes the real-time locations of US warships and aircraft in the Middle East. It is also reported that Russia deployed or shared electronic warfare operational lessons from its Krasukha jamming systems to help Iran disrupt GPS-guided western munitions. Russia is also presenting itself as a mediator - thus maintaining its relationship with the Trump administration, which Vladimir Putin views as essential to achieving Russian goals in Ukraine. This explains why Putin has avoided personal criticism of Trump despite the war. There is speculation that the US might waive certain oil sanctions to stabilise global supply, which Volodymyr Zelenskyy has warned would be a "serious blow" to Ukraine.

Meanwhile, China has maintained a policy of 'strategic ambiguity', providing significant indirect and technical support to Iran, while refusing any direct arms transfers. One of the most controversial developments in the last two weeks has been the reported sale of the CM-302 (YJ-12) supersonic anti-ship missile. On February 24 and March 1, multiple sources claimed Iran was finalising a deal for these mach 3 missiles to counter US aircraft carriers. On March 2, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning officially denied these reports, calling them "disinformation".

Reports from early March indicate that China is utilising its BeiDou-3 navigation system and a fleet of over 500 satellites to provide Tehran

with real-time tracking of US naval movements in the Persian Gulf. Since January, China has been helping Iran transition its military and government infrastructure to closed Chinese software systems to prevent cyber sabotage by western intelligence agencies. China has also supplied advanced UHF-band radars, which are designed to detect 'low-observable' (stealth) aircraft like the F-35s which are being used in the current strikes. None of this has stopped most US and Israeli aircraft striking numerous Iranian military, economic and civilian targets.

Where Iran is doing better than expected is in its use of drones. On February 28, announcing the start of US airstrikes, Trump said that Iran's missiles and missile industry would be "completely destroyed", but made no mention of drones. Almost two weeks later, and in response to the US and Israeli attacks, Iran has launched more than 2,000 low-cost drones at targets across the Middle East to overwhelm defence systems and spread fear in the region. Shahed's carry an explosive charge that detonates on impact and can cause considerable damage. The deadliest attack on American forces so far occurred when a drone struck a base in Kuwait, resulting in the death of six American soldiers.

Iran says it is only targeting US military bases; however, these drones are notoriously inaccurate. Some have landed in densely populated cities, causing panic on the streets and expressions of strong concern among the governments of Gulf countries. A video verified by a number of media outlets shows an Iranian drone descending at high speed before striking what appears to be a radar system at the headquarters of the US navy's Fifth Fleet in Manama, Bahrain. The impact sends debris flying into the air and causes the structure to collapse. Another video from the United Arab Emirates shows a drone hitting one of the hotels at Palm Jumeirah, a luxury artificial island complex in Dubai, causing a massive fireball.

Saudi Arabia's largest oil refinery, located in Ras Tanura on the coast of the Persian Gulf, halted production

after a blaze caused by debris from an intercepted drone. In Qatar, the world's largest liquefied natural gas export terminal was also shut down after being targeted by Iranian drones.

Despite their simple design and relatively low production cost, these drones have caused significant damage across the region. The production cost of the long-range Shahed 136 drone, manufactured in Iran, is estimated to be between \$20,000 and \$50,000. A snippet compared with Patriot anti-missile missiles: launchers cost \$10 million, each missile about £4 million. Iran, of course, is relying on quantity overwhelming quality.

By launching swarms of 50 to 100 drones at once, they aim to overwhelm the number of available tracking channels on radar systems. There is also success through 'failure': if 90% are shot down, the remaining 10% that 'leak' through can cause disproportionate damage. A key example is from March 1: a single Shahed that evaded defences in Bahrain struck an AN/TPS-59 radar site. The drone costs say \$20,000; the radar system it destroyed is valued at \$300 million, representing a 10,000x return on investment for Iran.

As for infrastructure strikes (March 7-9), drones successfully struck Amazon Web Services data centres in the UAE and Bahrain, disrupting regional digital infrastructure despite heavy air defence cover.

Beyond money, the issue is inventory. Iran can produce hundreds of Shaheds per month - well it could do that before the war. However, the US and its allies cannot manufacture complex interceptor missiles at the same level. By forcing the coalition to 'empty their magazines' on cheap drones, Iran is attempting to leave them vulnerable to its remaining more dangerous (but limited) stockpile of precision ballistic missiles.

Three people

Talking to the *Washington Post* last week, Donald Trump said he has three people in mind inside Iran to take over, adding that one of these 'contenders' had been killed. It was not clear if the

person he was referring to was killed by US or Israeli bombing. A day later he said, "No, I just want to be involved in electing the leader, in nominating the leader." And then he said it has to be a strongman - someone respected inside the country. So who are the contenders for Trump-style regime 'transformation' à la Venezuela? Trump is obviously ruling out Reza Pahlavi, whom he has dismissed as a "nice guy, but not significant".

Despite many rumours, no-one seems to have a clear idea of who Trump has in mind as the new "leader" or indeed if there is one.

Internal rivalry is not limited to the clerical leadership. The Kurdish groups that Trump is putting some hope in seem ready to fight ... including, though, each other. First of all, the claim of Abdullah Mohtadi, secretary-general of the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, that his group can mobilise many thousands in Kurdistan should not be taken seriously. Kurds are said to constitute 15% of Iran's population. However, many do not live in Kurdistan. They live in Mashhad, Tehran, and other major cities; they are assimilated into the rest of the population - a bit like Scots or Welsh in England.

Two major Kurdish organisations have completely denounced the pro-Trump Kurdish alliance. They include Ibrahim Alizadeh's Communist Party of Iran, from which Mohtadi split. The nationalists - the ones who wanted to approach anybody for money - went with Mohtadi; the slightly more principled stayed with Alizadeh's group. I would say that inside Iranian Kurdistan Alizadeh's group has more support and can mobilise more than Mohtadi's. The statement the CPI has issued is very clear: No to any acceptance of support from the US, and no to this kind of siding in the war.

The other group is the Worker-Communist Party of Iran - Hekmatist. It has fewer people in Kurdistan, but in terms of propaganda, what it says is important. Both in Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan it has supporters, and in the last week I have seen a number of videos of prominent activist Azar Majedi arguing very strongly against Mohtadi supporters. So, if the pro-US/Israeli Kurdish alliance actually manages to organise itself, we will see civil wars in Kurdistan before it can 'liberate' Iran for Trump.

We also hear a lot about other national minorities. The Azeris are more assimilated in Iranian society, in both Persian and Kurdish areas, than the Kurds. A long time ago, someone told me that 50% of the Tehran population has an Azeri background. I think that is probably true. So this could make things very difficult for Azerbaijan and Turkey. Turkey right now is supporting Iran's Islamic Republic. Before the current war, we heard quite extensively that Tabriz and other major cities in Iranian Azerbaijan had seen the biggest anti-American and anti-Pahlavi demonstrations.

Propaganda claims

I am not sure who is giving this line to BBC reporters, but both in English and in Farsi they seem to claim that the overwhelming majority in Iran is quite happy to see bombs falling. Apparently they are just waiting for all of this to finish, and then they will go onto the streets to support Trump's regime change. First of all, it is true that the overwhelming mass of the population are against the regime; around 20% genuinely support it. However, that does not mean that the 80% are pro-war. Even many expatriates who did support the war in the first few days are now thinking maybe there won't be much of the country left for them to go back to.

No-one in their right mind would underestimate how bombs and wars actually engender an enraged sense of patriotism and nationalism. In the

last few days, most of what I have had to struggle with is to try to convince young Iranians - who until last week were strongly critical of the Islamic Republic and now say this is not the time to criticise the Islamic Republic - that this is *precisely* the time to do so and to organise for its overthrow from below. You can be against this war and not fall into the trap of becoming a supporter of the new supreme leader or the current interim council.

Reports from CNN and Al Jazeera show large demonstrations, where, after being bombed, people go out on the streets *against* the US and Israel, of course. These are partly organised, partly spontaneous. I cannot understand what the logic was, but in January the US administration decided that getting involved in the protests against the rulers by military action would make the regime less unpopular. For sections of the population, at least for the short term, this is precisely what Trump or Netanyahu have achieved.

Regarding the royalists, the last two weeks have been disastrous for them. Unlike the celebrities mentioned earlier, Reza Pahlavi is still cheering on the US military. He failed to mention the schoolchildren killed by what we now know was a US Tomahawk missile; however, he sent condolences to Trump for the death of US soldiers. His supporters are diminishing in number, but those who have remained still appear on the streets of western cities with the Zionists. Israeli and royalist flags are happily waved together.

Last week the car-crash meeting with Russian pranksters was described by many as Reza Pahlavi's 'Newsnight' moment, comparing it to Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor's Epstein interview. The prank is widely considered one of the most embarrassing moments for Reza Pahlavi because of how obvious the set-up was.

Here are the details of the call. The pranksters contacted Pahlavi's team, pretending to be aides of the German chancellor Friedrich Merz. During the video call, one of the pranksters appeared on screen using the name, 'Adolf', and sporting a distinct, Hitler-style moustache. They told Pahlavi that his grandfather (Reza Shah) had been a German agent in the 1940s and that Germany was now ready to "join a crusade" and support a military strike against the Iranian regime.

The video, which circulated heavily on social media (including X and Telegram) and a number of mainstream TV stations, showed a few startling moments that critics have used to question Pahlavi's political judgement: he was recorded saying he would welcome a broader international coalition, including Germany, to join what he called a "crusade" to neutralise the IRGC (Revolutionary Guards). Despite the prankster's heavy Russian accent and the absurd 'Adolf' persona, Pahlavi continued the conversation seriously for several minutes. When the fake 'Adolf' mentioned that his own grandfather served in the German army and knew Pahlavi's father in Tehran in the 1940s, Pahlavi reportedly replied, "That's very interesting - good to know."

Support for military attacks and calling on Germany to join the war against his own country have not improved Pahlavi's popularity. Let me remind you of one of the reasons the Mojahedin-e-Khalq (MEK) are so unpopular in Iran - you can find a huge number of people who will tell you that the one thing they can't stand is the Mujahedin. You ask why, and they say, because in the last days of the Iran-Iraq war they fought alongside Saddam Hussein's forces.

Right now, I think the royalists are in exactly the same position. People are saying, 'Well, we didn't want this

regime, but we want to live!' Reuters correspondents have highlighted that, while the diaspora remains overwhelmingly opposed to the Islamic Republic, the sheer scale of the destruction has made it impossible for many to continue "celebrating". A Reuters dispatch on March 6 noted that many who were in the streets on day one are now staying home, glued to messaging apps trying to reach family members during internet blackouts. Similar reports have appeared in *The Guardian* amongst other papers.

Supreme leader

In the middle of a war Iran has a dynastic succession. The appointment of Mojtaba Khamenei - son of the previous supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, who was deliberately targeted and assassinated on February 28 - follows a chaotic week of conflicting reports and the bombing of the clerical council's facilities. Hardliners, led by Hossein Taeb, a controversial figure within the Iranian security establishment, who has been described as the "architect of the shadow state and the IRGC", pushed the appointment through to project stability.

However, the choice is highly controversial: Mojtaba lacks the required elective experience, and his appointment breaks the foundational anti-monarchical principles of the 1979 revolution. Mojtaba's own health is uncertain (some reports suggest a possible coma). Apparently the IRGC and hardliners fast-tracked the vote to ensure a "strong voice" and signal defiance, ignoring opposition from figures like security leader Ali Larijani. The appointment likely violates the late Khamenei's written criteria and his son faced immediate assassination threats from Israel and warnings from Donald Trump.

There are exaggerated reports in the western media about his personal wealth. On March 10, the *Telegraph* claimed that Iran's new supreme leader had bought two luxury flats yards from the Israeli embassy in London. The apartments were bought through Ali Ansari, an Iranian banker, who was sanctioned by the British government in October last year for financing the IRGC. The UK government has branded Ansari as "corrupt" and has taken the step of freezing his assets and banning him from entering the country. Britain's intelligence services are aware of the existence of the properties. What the paper fails to show is any proof that Ansari bought the properties for *Mojtaba Khamenei* (see below for more on this). However, even if that was the case, the flats could be part of sanction-busting efforts by the Islamic Republic and Revolutionary Guards. So far, Mojtaba's lifestyle suggests no appetite for a luxurious life in the UK or elsewhere. He was residing in his father's modest home in north Tehran on the day of the US attack, where he sustained his reported injuries.

Beyond these details, his true character and political leanings remain an enigma.

To summarise all this, the conflict in Iran shows a sharp gap between high-level military strategy and the reality on the ground. The US and Israel rely on expensive, high-precision weapons to destroy infrastructure, while Iran responds with large numbers of cheap Shahed drones. This creates a 'war of attrition', where even successful defence against the drones by the US and Israel is extremely costly. The result is a kind of military stalemate based on economic exhaustion rather than a decisive victory.

Inside Iran, the war has made regime change more complicated. Promises of 'liberation' from exiled figures have been undermined by civilian deaths and suffering and widespread destruction. At the same time, the rise of Mojtaba Khamenei -

seen as lacking 'legitimacy' - suggests the regime is narrowing into a more closed, survival-focused 'shadow state'.

Khamenei family

Questions persist regarding the Khamenei family's connections and their wealth. The extended family has faced frequent accusations of corruption, with several members regarded as part of the 'oligarchy' detested by the public. The following summary outlines the key figures (and details how they have financially profited from their family ties), as well those who remain dissidents.

Vahid Reza Taleghani (son-in-law of Mohammad Khamenei, Ali's older brother) and Ahmad Hosseini Khamenei (cousin of the new leader) are involved in the Karavan Transport Company, under the supervision of the Hikmat-e-Islami Sadra Foundation. According to some documents - the accuracy of which cannot be independently verified - on March 8 2022 a prosecutor in Iran recorded "breach of trust, obtaining property through illegitimate means and embezzlement of public funds" by Karavan.

The new supreme leader's maternal family (surname: Khojasteh) have benefited politically and financially from family connections. Mohammad Khojasteh Bagherzadeh (brother-in-law of the deceased Khamenei) ran the Khojasteh Charity Foundation in Mashhad. His son, Komeil Khojasteh, was former CEO of Tebyan (affiliated with the Islamic Propagation Organisation) and manager of Ali Khamenei's official website. Farshad Mehdipour (married into the family) was the editor of the conservative *Sobh-e-No* newspaper and former deputy for culture at the Supreme National Security Council.

The family has also many dissenters: Badri Khamenei Robabeh, the younger sister of Ali, had directly and publicly criticised her brother. In 2022, following the death of Mahsa (Jina) Amini in police custody following her arrest for failure to wear the hijab, Badri Khamenei distanced

herself from her brother, stating that he did not hear the real voice of the people or listen to critics. She emphasised that she had cut ties with him because of his "continued path of suppression and the killing of innocent people".

Ali Moradkhani Arangeh was the husband of Badri Khamenei. He moved to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war and publicly opposed the Islamic Republic. He returned to Iran in 1994 after seven years in Iraq and was sentenced to prison. He passed away three years ago in Tehran at the age of 96.

Hadi Khamenei, Ali's 'reformist' younger brother, attended university in Mashhad for two years before being arrested and barred from continuing his studies. After the revolution, he was an active member of groups close to Khomeini. Hadi managed the newspapers *Jahan-e Islam* and *Hayat-e-No*. The latter was critical of the establishment and was banned in 2002 (and again in 2009). As the secretary-general of the Assembly of Forces of Imam's Line, he supported protestors during the controversial 2009 election and criticised the house arrest of Mehdi Karroubi and Mir-Hossein Mousavi. He once stated in an interview that he has not had much of a relationship with his brother in recent years. However he currently directs the Research Institute for the History of Islam, which receives government funding.

Mir-Hossein Mousavi, the wartime prime minister, is a second cousin to Ali Khamenei. Despite their familial ties, they had fundamental disputes during their times as prime minister and president. Mousavi stood against Khamenei in 2009 and has been under house arrest since.

It is true that there is significant corruption within the Islamic Republic of Iran, much of which is associated with senior members of the IRGC, 'elected' officials and ministers. However, the narrative regarding the Khamenei family pocketing huge profits appears more complex than is often reported in the mainstream media ●

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AUSTRALIA

Abolish the monarchy system

It is not about one bad apple. Nor is it about cultural identity or historical symbolism. No, it is about political power. Republicanism must be central to our socialist project, argues **Marcus Strom**, editor of *Labor Tribune*.

The controversy surrounding Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor - the man formerly known as 'Prince' - has also exposed the peculiar undemocratic nature of Australia's constitutional arrangements. That prime minister Anthony Albanese has indicated Australian support for removing Andrew from the line of succession (a requirement, given that the crown is an Australian monarch, not just a British one) may strike some as decisive. In reality, it is the safest of safe bets - and nowhere near enough.

Removing one royal from the line of succession raises the obvious question: why stop at the eighth in line? Why not remove one through seven - and indeed the entire hereditary principle itself? The monarchy is not just a problem when one of the royals fucks up: it is an institutional bulwark against popular sovereignty and democratic control - not only in Britain, but in Australia, Canada and everywhere Charles is head of state.

Yes, Andrew's behaviour has been particularly odious - but, remember, it is not his misogyny and allegations of rape, use of prostitution (all male royal activities, going back centuries) that have seen him arrested. It is the leaking of 'state secrets' to his pal, Jeffrey Epstein: state secrets of the crown.

Merely calling for removal of the eighth in line to the throne sits uneasily with Australian Labor Party's commitment to a republic in the ALP national platform. But, like many things that sit in the national platform, they are implemented at the discretion of the parliamentary party and, of course, with royal assent. Party members - like our citizens - are not sovereign.

Andrew's notoriety is framed through the lens of scandal and moral outrage, much of it connected to his associations with Jeffrey Epstein. However, focusing on a single royal as the problem risks misunderstanding the deeper issue. It allows a safety valve within the system, much along the lines of an 'heir and a spare'. This time the spare can be thrown to the dogs to save the monarchy.

But the privileges and protections that allowed such entitled behaviour to flourish are not Andrew's alone. They flow from the institution itself. Monarchy is not an ornamental curiosity perched atop the Australian system. Monarchism is woven into the constitutional fabric. The crown is the legal foundation of executive authority, military command and vast reserve powers that sit counterposed to democratic principles.

To pretend that republicanism is simply a matter of 'tidying up' these arrangements - swapping a distant monarch for a president wielding identical powers - is to miss the point entirely.

This is where organisations like the Australian Republican Movement have long faltered. Its minimalist vision, promising continuity with cosmetic alteration, has failed to inspire. Australians have repeatedly shown little enthusiasm for models that leave existing power structures fundamentally intact. Symbolic change without democratic transformation generates neither urgency nor passion.

In general, the socialist left is much the same - but in reality worse, as it should know better than to tail after liberal constitutional 'progressives'.



Not just a UK institution

The episodic republicanism of the 'radical' left is usually reserved for royal weddings, jubilees or scandals, drawing attention to the cost of the 'feudal relic', only to recede once media attention shifts.

Even the death of Elizabeth II - heralded by some as a potential turning point - predictably produced a rise in monarchist sentiment. Such moments of transition tend to reinforce continuity, not disrupt it.

For many on the left, republicanism is dismissed as irrelevant, because the monarchy is perceived as 'British' and so somehow external to Australian political life - or just window-dressing, when the 'real power' lies with capitalists. Others reduce it to a nationalist gesture - a final severing of colonial ties - yet these perspectives are wrong and trivialise what is at stake. The question is not about cultural identity or historical symbolism: rather political power in our own constitution.

Genuine republicanism is not constitutional tinkering. It is the democratic and radical re-establishment of a state under popular, working class control. It is about accountability, electability and recallability of public officials. It is about dismantling unaccountable authority and replacing it with institutions grounded explicitly in popular sovereignty. This includes dismantling the Australian Defence Force, which pledges allegiance to the crown, not the people, and replacing it with a popular militia.

A democratic republic means more than the absence of a monarch. It will require a new constitutional order: proportional representation to a single chamber, the removal of undemocratic veto structures in the Senate and the courts, real mechanisms of recall and strict limits on executive power. It would overturn secrecy in government and

the concentration of authority in unelected offices. It would insist that political authority is as decentralised as possible and flows upward from the people, not downward from the crown, president or 'nation'.

Seen in this light, Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor is not the constitutional problem. He is merely a reminder of the putrid institution of monarchism sitting atop our constitution. Removing one controversial figure leaves untouched the logic that produced the controversy in the first place.

If Australia is to confront the contradictions exposed by each new royal embarrassment, the solution is not selective adjustment. It is revolutionary-democratic renewal through radical republicanism. Not removal of one individual from the succession, but removal of the entire edifice.

That is why *Labor Tribune* calls for a democratic constitutional convention with full powers to establish a provisional government and a new republican constitution.

Such a democratic republic should:

- abolish the monarchy system and its constitution;
- reject presidentialism, monarchism's undemocratic offspring;
- ensure election by proportional representation to a single legislative and executive assembly;
- abolish the Senate - an undemocratic check on popular power;
- institute annual parliaments, where MPs can be recalled and are paid no more than the average skilled wage;
- abolish the states and introduce meaningful regional-local government.

A democratic constitution must ensure:

- a treaty with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, comprehensive land rights and reparations for lost lands;
- freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of conscience;

- secularisation; separation of church and state; religion is a private matter;
- election of the judiciary from qualified persons;
- disbandment of the standing army and a democratically armed population;
- citizenship rights for migrants and refugees; for the free movement of people;
- the right to work and the right to strike;
- the right to housing free from arbitrary eviction;
- an end to secrecy in government and business; abolish state 'intelligence'

- and 'security' organisations;
- workers' supervision of management and production through workplace councils.

The fight for a republic is not a diversion from the fight for socialism. On the contrary, it is the means by which we open the political space for the victory of socialism and the democratic government of the working class. Socialism without democracy is impossible ●

This article first appeared in *Labor Tribune* March 2 2026: www.labortribune.net.au

Fighting fund

Below going rate

As is usual with the second week of each month, we have fallen quite a bit behind the going rate, if we're going to reach that monthly £2,750 target for the *Weekly Worker* fighting fund.

I'm afraid to say that only £295 came our way this week, taking our running total up to just £858 after 11 days, as I write. So now we need just under £2,000 in 20 days - an average of £100 per day! But I remain confident - I know we have hundreds of readers and supporters who value our work so much, and I'm sure a good number of them will do the necessary. Don't forget, we need to make up for last month's shortfall too!

Anyway, a big thank you to the comrades who contributed this week - especially comrade TDB, who donated no less than £95 via PayPal. Also using that payment method were comrades HH (£50), ST (£20), AB (£11), MH (£10) and JV (£7).

Then there were those who chipped in via bank transfer or standing order: thanks to comrades DV and NH (£30 each), RD (£12) and SM, PM and CC (£10). So, as I say, that came to £295. But, of course, the weekly average we need is more like £650!

Well, I know that we're about to reach that time of the month when quite a few substantial amounts come our way, but will they be enough? Please play your part to make sure they are! Go to the web link below if you want more details on the various ways in which you can help us out. We'd love you do your bit! ●

Robbie Rix

Our bank account details are name: Weekly Worker sort code: 30-99-64 account number: 00744310 To make a donation or set up a regular payment visit weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/donate

POLEMIC

Key questions for uniting the left

Today's left is in a mess. The worst thing we can do is to repeat solutions that unmistakably failed in the past. Charlotte Bouchier of the Spartacist League of Australia discusses the debates in Communist Unity

Over the January 17-18 weekend the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (now renamed Communist Unity) held its fourth general conference - the first one Spartacist comrades have attended. The Spartacist League of Australia was unanimously accepted into the organisation and we were able to participate fully as a minority tendency.

The coming period portends burgeoning reaction and economic turmoil for the 'lucky country', as well as further fractures in its already perennially splintering socialist movement. Especially in this context, it is a welcome development that the SLA and RCO have been able to merge our forces. It is true that this is only one step forward in the many we will need to take, and our status as a medium-sized fish is only relative to the very, very small pond of Australia's left. Nevertheless, it is a breath of fresh air.

The conference itself was well organised and leading comrades of The Mountain tendency (MT, which forms the majority of the newly-voted CC) made great efforts to ensure Spartacist Tendency comrades were fully able to air criticisms and motivate our motions and amendments. As a result, discussion allowed for the healthy debate over topics, which the left as a whole needs to have. Over a myriad of key questions, agreements were able to be had and differences brought to the fore.

Where next?

One of the key questions that framed the conference was: 'Where is Australia going, and what do we do about it?'

As ST delegates emphasised throughout the conference, we understand the world not as rival imperialist blocs vying for redivision, but from the standpoint of the relative decline of US hegemony and its struggle to stay on top - principally against a rising China. For this purpose, the American empire is tearing up the international liberal status quo of the past four decades, and Australia's liberal order will be no exception.

Working class discontent, having previously reared its head during the lockdowns and in the resounding defeat of the 2023 'Indigenous Voice' referendum, has not gone away. The Labor government and the union bureaucracy have thus far been successful in preventing frustrations being channelled through class-struggle action. But they have not been successful in subduing discontent altogether.

With the failures of the workers' movement, backlash at the status quo has increasingly turned rightwards, with One Nation's Pauline Hanson emerging as the *de facto* leader of the opposition. In the aftermath of the Bondi killings, One Nation has been able to skewer the Labor government for its response to beef up 'hate speech' laws and further gun control, while tapping into frustration at the immigration policies maintained by the Labor government and its predecessors. It is no accident that prime minister Anthony Albanese has increasingly treated token reforms as more tarnish than varnish, and support for Australia Day is higher than it has been in years. With the American empire escalating its moves against Australia's biggest trading partner in China, the liberal order's economic stability is set to crater, which will put these trends on overdrive.

This is bad news. A rightwards



Pauline Hanson: far right on the rise

turn amongst the working class will only further isolate the left. Australian capitalism is set to further tighten its vice, crack down on campus radicals and increase repression more generally. In the face of this, left groups remain hitched to their strategy of tailing the liberal leadership of worker and social movements or of further isolating themselves in a little radical bubble. The recruiting pool is set to stagnate and muddy. Pressure will push some towards further isolated, desperate actions or to simply burn out. In this context the task must be to break from our current course and brace ourselves - both the CU itself and the socialist movement as a whole.

This was the perspective that the ST struggled for in the conference, as exemplified in our proposed programme, but also through key motions which sought to concretise specific points for deliberation. Rooting oneself in a materialist understanding of the world, and Australia's place in it, and setting tasks accordingly, has been key to the SLA's method since its political reorientation - which previously contented itself with r-r-revolutionary sloganeering, divorced from both an understanding of the world and what is to be done.

Unfortunately, one is hard-pressed to even find the most basic discussion of Australia's present juncture in the left, reflecting a similar void in Australia's bourgeois press. As such, it was refreshing that the conference brought some of these questions to the fore. Discussion over MT-supported theses dedicated to the international and Australian situation took up a significant portion of the conference. These discussions not just strengthen CU more generally, but also the ST specifically. Thoroughly engaging with comrades on this question has enabled the ST to further sharpen and develop our arguments. And, on the international situation, some agreement was even reached with other CU comrades.

This included an ST-proposed motion, which defined the world as under a hegemonic American empire in decline. The motion concluded that international revolutionary unity must be forged on the basis of opposition to the American empire and its *attachés*, including defence of China and the gains of the 1949 revolution. Some leading MT comrades voiced their support for the motion, which was critical to it passing.

Where the sharpest differences were brought to the fore was on Australia's place in the world. Unfortunately, the MT-supported theses argued that Australia in many ways will be shielded from the coming world crises. Instead of a working class being driven rightwards against Labor and the liberal order it governs for, the theses argues that "The Labor Party still broadly commands the votes and support of workers in this country". It went further to argue that

"other capitalist parties do not offer an alternative government to that of Albanese", with MT comrades even arguing that Albanese is well on course for a decade in government! Such a view disarms CU in the face of increasing reaction and undercuts the necessity to address the vital questions that attract workers to rightwing demagogues.

If those theses aimed to answer the question, 'Where is Australia going?', the 'three-year plan' effectively functioned as a counterpart to it answering the question, 'What do we do in the coming period?' The effort and detail that was put to this effect in the plan and its accompanying report is commendable. However, where the plan suffers is in its detachment from an understanding of both the capacities of the CU and the class dynamics in the country.

Year one alone of the plan projects every city having its own publication, running a Marxism school, reading group, social events, and more. It remains a question how we will accomplish this in Melbourne or Brisbane, let alone the Newcastle or soon-to-be Central Coast section. This 'recruitment conveyor belt' is projected to double our membership in the first year, and double it again in the next, before CU eventually becomes the 'centre of gravity' of the Australian left by the third year.

This presumes a reservoir for recruitment far vaster than what actually exists. It also assumes that these recruits are just waiting in the wings for a conveyor belt to scoop them up. In the current context of increasing reaction, such projections are especially illusory. Not only are we setting ourselves up to be disappointed: we risk burning out the cadre we have already won over in the process. It was for this reason that the ST argued against adopting this motion, as well as the theses on the Australian situation - both of which ultimately passed.

Party building

If the 'three-year plan' proposed a lot for the years ahead, one thing it argued not to do was intervene in the workers' movement. Well, not until year three. This gets to the heart of another question that was debated throughout the conference - 'How do we build a party?' The debate over the ST motion, 'Towards a proletarian RCO', which aimed to fight for a 50% blue-and-pink-collar CU, brought this question to the fore.

There were myriad arguments against the motion, much of it over the definition of a worker. But the argument that emerged in the debate that best got to the core of why the proposal was so controversial is summed up by the title of a polemic written against the (now former) SLA: 'Party first, then split the class'. That is: "How can we intervene into the workers' movement today? Our forces

are too small to meaningfully impact anything until we reforge a party. Let's sort out the left, let's reforge the communist party, then let's talk about the fight for revolutionary leadership."

This argument starts from a point of truth, that the left's forces (much less the CU's forces) are currently too small to break the working class wholesale from its misleaders. Where the argument goes awry is precisely over how we can build and develop the necessary forces for this.

There were a lot of correct points made about how the left today is a mess. But nothing would change the political landscape of the paltry and almost chemically pure petty bourgeois left more than an influx of working class militants committed to not just talk-shops but actually 'what is to be done?' Nothing would strengthen the CU's forces, harden its cadre and make it a pole of revolutionary regroupment and reorientation more than forging itself as an organisation of proletarian militants committed to this goal. Building a mass workers' party is a dialectical process. We must build up the forces to intervene in the working class, yes, but those forces will only be built through intervening in the workers' movement and demonstrating to working class militants and the left that we are "that section which pushes forwards all others" (to quote Marx). The union work that has been backed by the International Communist League highlights the fact that isolated revolutionary militants can have a modest, but real, impact.

While the ST intervened on this basis, other CU comrades also spoke up in favour of the motion. The debate was lively and the most contentious in the entire conference, ultimately losing by the smallest of margins through an evenly split vote.

Our approach

The most fundamental difference highlighted at the conference was: what basis for unity? Some MT comrades, correctly seeing two different methods behind the motions proposed by the MT and ST, have argued that the difference is over the question of 'actionism'. While there is a certain truth here, in that the ST very much emphasises that Marxism is a guide to action, the difference between the two tendencies is not over how much we do, but on what basis.

Where the differences were most clear was the debate over the ST-proposed programme and the MT-proposed Docklands Programme. The latter seeks unity on the basis of not the *road* to power, but the *idea* of it - a shared "vision" of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Its 'minimum' programme is explicitly what a communist party ought to do, once it ascends the reins of power. As MT comrades motivated, this programme was consciously made to be more-or-less unobjectionable (at least in theory) to the rest of the left. Its strength is that it touches on a truth that today the left is splintered due to a thousand sectarian reasons, and there is no real programmatic basis for all these different little groups.

Where it suffers, however, is tackling why the left, ostensibly sharing the same ideas of a socialist future, is nevertheless in a weak and divided state. Striving towards workers' power entails breaking from the biggest failure of the left - its attachment (or its sectarian phrase-mongering aloofness) to the current-day leadership of the working class. The labour movement today is led by all sorts of Laborites, who preach nice

words on the working class, Palestine and peace, but in one way or another are attached to the Labor government. It is the left's conciliation of these labour fakers that has driven it to its current-day irrelevant status, which in turn has empowered its most sectarian and cannibalistic elements. For socialist unity to be tenable, it must be on the basis of struggling to break these chains, which bind the working class to its oppressor - not a 'vision' of a future when oppression is done away with. While action is crucial to this fight of separating the wheat from the chaff, it is but the concrete expression of this broader framework.

The discussion over this question was where we made the least progress at the conference, aptly described as 'two ships passing in the night'. Nevertheless, there will be plenty of opportunity for further discussion and to put our views to the test. Emblematic of this are two MT-supported theses on the Labor Party and the Socialist Party, in which almost all of the politically crucial ST-proposed amendments passed or were accepted as "friendly" (thanks to the backing of some MT comrades).

The theses on Labor now explicitly argues that struggling for democracy within it is key, but this can only happen on the basis of "driving a political wedge between Labor's working class base and its pro-capitalist tops, exploding the contradictions of this rotten entity". It continues by arguing that "our goal is not to build a better, more left, more democratic 'cleaned up' Labor Party. Rather, this struggle would expose the 'left' Laborites..." Such a perspective puts the CU against both those hitched to the current day liberal-Laborite leadership of the working class (like Solidarity, Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance) as well as those who stand aloof from it.

These theses, if put in practice, would expose the ambiguities within the Docklands Programme (now officially the CU programme). This proposes unity with the left as it is, albeit with more democracy and *sans* sectarianism. The Labor Party and SP theses propose unity on the basis of irreconcilable struggle against the current-day misleadership of the working class and those who conciliate with it. The latter means a struggle to break the left from its current trajectory - the only way we can succeed in regrouping the revolutionary left, which is today scattered.

Real test

The discussions at the conference and resulting motions are only the beginning. Now the real test begins for both the motions, the merger and CU as a whole. Key to this will be to put the agreed motions into practice. The ST is committed to making as real as possible not just the motions we put forward or agreed with, but also those we argued against, including the Docklands Programme and the 'three-year plan'. While there are sure to be differences on how to apply these motions, fighting for them in the struggle to build a common organisation will test both agreement and disagreement and will be the only way forward for political clarification.

It is a testament to the good will and political seriousness of CU comrades that we have been able to reach this stage. Continuing this approach on all sides will be key to ensuring its success, and we look forward to building CU as comrades united in a common organisation ●

OUR HISTORY

Great Unrest to councils of action

Marking the centenary of the 1926 General Strike, Jack Conrad looks at the background of imperial decline, Ireland, women's suffrage, trade union militancy and working class defence of Soviet Russia

Without doubt, the general strike of May 3-12 1926 is one of the most important events in the history of the working class movement in Britain. Other strikes have lasted longer. Some much longer - most memorably the year-long 1984-85 miners' Great Strike. However, the general strike pitted class against class. It too had the miners at the centre of battle - there were around a million of them in those days. But the front was much wider, involving, as it did, the TUC and all the big trade union battalions. Ultimately state power was at stake.

Hence any party, any movement which is serious about socialism must painstakingly study the general strike and draw appropriate lessons for future struggles. Peddling nostalgia and unthinking hand-me-downs have no place in Marxism.

The immediate origins of the 1926 general strike lie squarely in the late 19th century and the relative decline of Britain as the global hegemon. Eric Hobsbawm estimates that in 1850 Britain produced as much as "two thirds of the world's coal", about "half its iron" and half its commercially produced cotton.¹ Needless to say, Britain had rivals. That became all too evident with the 1873-96 Long Depression.

Britain's industrial supremacy finally met its day. Already by the end of the 1880s competition from Belgium, France, but above all Germany and the US, affected even branches of production where Britain previously enjoyed a virtual monopoly. Rockefeller, Carnegie and Morgan, Krupp, Thyssen and Stinnes accumulated capital, which in absolute terms left their British counterparts far behind. So it is of more than symbolic importance that in the early 1890s both Germany and the US surpassed Britain in the production of steel - that era's gauge of industrial prowess.²

Such external challenges brought about a sharp intensification of the class struggle at home. In the name of restoring competitiveness, rates of exploitation had to be upped. One attack followed another. Lock-outs, recruiting scab labour, police violence and court action broke the new unionism of unskilled workers. Trade union membership tumbled. But it was not all one way. Under these testing conditions the working class giant finally awoke from its long post-Chartist slumber.

In 1900, the trade unions gave birth to the Labour Party. Britain's two-party, Con-Lib system slowly morphed into a two-party, Con-Lab system, by way of a three-party, Con-Lib-Lab system.³ Beginning with just two MPs, Labour made its big breakthrough in 1906. Some 300,000 voted Labour and 29 MPs were returned. In January 1910 that increased to 40 MPs. True, politically, most were liberal-labour politicians, not socialists.

Nonetheless, socialist ideas underwent a revival. The Social Democratic Federation was founded in 1881 (taking on its new name in 1884). Less than a decade later the reformist Independent Labour Party came into existence under the leadership of Keir Hardie. Though beginning very much as a sect, the SDF won an important, if thin, layer to its Marxism. The ILP won a somewhat wider layer to its Christian-tinged socialism. Yet, while organised adherents were always few in number, socialist ideas spread far and wide. Into the



Idealised view of what Soviet Russia hoped for in Poland

intelligentsia, into the trade unions, into the masses.

Alarm bells sounded in ruling class circles. Traditional methods of intimidation - scab labour, army bayonet and police baton - proved inadequate. From amongst the more astute minds there had already begun the search for a strategy that would obtain consent for capitalism and provide a positive *alternative* to socialism.

Paying a ransom

Joseph Chamberlain argued that property should pay a "ransom" for the "security which it enjoys".⁴ Along the same lines, Arthur Balfour stated: "Social legislation is not merely to be distinguished from socialist legislation, but is its most direct opposite and its most effective antidote."⁵ In his pamphlet, *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism*, Lenin quoted another of these patricians, Cecil Rhodes. He had related to his close friend, the journalist, WT Stead, how in 1895 socialist agitation and fear of revolution gave an added impetus to his imperialist convictions:

I was in the East End of London yesterday and attended a meeting of the unemployed. I listened to the wild speeches, which were just a cry for 'bread! bread! bread!' and on my way home I pondered over the scene and I became more than ever convinced of the importance of imperialism ... My cherished idea is a solution for the social problem: ie, in order to save the 40 million inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, we colonial statesmen must acquire new lands

to settle the surplus population, to provide new markets for the goods produced in the factories and mines. The empire, as I have always said, is a bread-and-butter question. If you want to avoid civil war, you must become imperialists.⁶

Between 1870 and 1900 Britain added 4,754,000 square miles of territory and 88 million people to its already extensive empire. There was, moreover, a corresponding shift from free trade to empire protectionism and finance capital (banking, insurance and overseas investments). However, not only did the empire provide a captive market for Britain's industries, lucrative positions for the haughty products of its public schools and an ideological focus for national cohesion. The 'white Dominions' became the chosen destination for the "strongest and most energetic" among its surplus population.⁷ Millions journeyed to Australia, Canada, South Africa and New Zealand.⁸

It ought to be added that meanwhile the British state faced massive discontent in the Kingdom of Ireland: remember, since 1800 a 'home' country in the United Kingdom. The 1879-82 land war saw a revolutionary overturn of landlordism. This was followed by John Redmond and legislation conceding home rule. Opposition in Ulster triggered the Curragh mutiny and threatened civil war. Easter 1916 opened the door to the rise of Sinn Féin and Dáil Éireann. By the early 1920s the whole of Ireland had been lost to semi-independence apart from the six counties of Northern Ireland.

Then there was the women's

suffrage movement. Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst successfully committed the Women's Social and Political Union to a "Deeds, not words" strategy, which saw letter bombs, arson, vandalism and other forms of direct action, leading to frequent arrests, imprisonment and hunger strikes. The WSPU was the Palestine Action of its day (not that it was subject to a formal state ban). Note, women did not achieve equal voting rights with men till 1928.

Economistic accounts of the general strike are more than prone to disregard questions such as Ireland and women's suffrage. Eg, Peter Taaffe's book, *1926 general strike*.⁹ Trade unions, bosses, wages and conditions constitute a tunnel vision, which excludes such vital political factors from consideration. Not our approach.

Nonetheless, there was certainly a huge upswing in economic struggles. Between 1910 and 1914 - the Great Unrest - there were roughly 3,000 strikes, over 1,200 of them in 1913 alone. Some 2.5 million took part. An all-time high was recorded in 1912, with 40 million working days lost to strike action. Trade union membership grew in leaps and bounds. Membership, which stood at 2,447,000 in 1909, almost doubled to 4,135,000 by the end of 1913. Though representing only 15% of the workforce and divided into some 1,100 separate unions, this still meant that Britain had one of the highest trade union concentrations in the world.¹⁰

It was the strike wave itself which made weakened unions strong. Rosa Luxemburg was undoubtedly right on this score - well, if objective conditions are favourable. Against

conservative trade union officialdom, which argued, "We are not yet strong enough to risk such a hazardous trial of strength as a mass strike", she insisted that the social explosion organises.¹¹

In April 1914, the Triple Alliance was formed uniting the Miners' Federation, National Union of Railwaymen, and the Transport Workers' Federation. The core idea being that, if one strikes, all strike. Events appeared to be heading towards a strategic confrontation - the snuffy Fabian technocrats, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, write of a "spasm of 'insurrectionism'"¹² Their fellow Fabian, HG Wells, likewise worried: "It may be that we are in the opening phase of a real and irreparable class war."¹³ Tragically, as with Germany, the outbreak of World War I in August 1914 put a *temporary* stop to all that.¹⁴

There was a tidal wave of patriotic madness. The Labour Party and the TUC stopped protesting against the war threat and instead put themselves at the service of king and country. Class war at home gave way to imperialist war abroad.

Beacon of hope

October 1917 showed what could be done ... if there was a Communist Party. The Bolsheviks inspired advanced workers everywhere to follow suit. In Britain this beacon of hope combined with a steadily growing war weariness - together they put class war back on the agenda.

Strikes - especially amongst engineering workers - became frequent from 1915 onwards. In turn the army and navy became ever more restless in the last two years of

the war. With the end of hostilities, reluctance to demobilise the forces meant a growing spiral of dislocation within the state machine. Mutinies and desertions, increasingly common in 1917, became organised and ever more dangerous to the capitalist class.

Soldiers unwilling to return to France staged mass demonstrations and in January 1919 troops effectively took over Calais in protest at the refusal to demob them. Only by dispatching two divisions from Germany was the mutiny broken. And, as is often the case, it was in the navy that discontent took the most politically defined forms. At Plymouth and Portsmouth the red flag was run up on several ships, and ships' committees became widespread, with delegates going from ship to ship and from port to port.

Against this backdrop, the counterrevolutionary intervention against Soviet Russia could only mean further politicisation and provide a vital common cause. In March 1919 the miners' Fed demanded the withdrawal of British troops from Russia. In April, supported by other unions, it proposed the same thing to a joint conference of the Labour Party and TUC. The general part of the resolution was endorsed. But the miners also proposed a series of defiant actions, which would force government compliance with this and other demands (the lifting of the blockade against Germany, the end of conscription and release of conscientious objectors). TUC chair H Stuart-Bunting would not accept this part of the resolution. It "implied taking industrial action" for political ends. And that, according to many trade union tops, would mean plunging Britain into "revolution and civil war".¹⁵

With even the Black Watch and Coldstream Guards refusing to embark for Russia, a police strike and a flood of wage disputes, there was more than a whiff of revolution and civil war in the air. Therefore, when it came to stopping British intervention against Soviet Russia, revolutionaries could confidently demand that official resolutions had to be turned into deeds.

On January 18 1919 a national conference of 350 delegates met in London under the slogan, 'Hands off Russia'. Called by the London Workers' Committee, in association with the British Socialist Party, Socialist Labour Party and the International Workers of the World. It agreed a resolution, moved by Harry Pollitt, pledging "to carry on active agitation to solidify the labour movement for the purpose of declaring a 'general strike', unless the unconditional cessation of allied intervention had been officially announced and we are satisfied as to the truth of the announcement".¹⁶

The resolution was not designed to be a paper one. Nor was it. Meetings and organisation followed and in May Harry Pollitt, Sylvia Pankhurst and a small band of Workers' Socialist Federation members began a determined campaign of agitation among London dockers and shipyard workers, urging them "to refuse to touch any ship that is to carry munitions to Russia".¹⁷

Reflecting the growing influence of those arguing for direct action, a broad Hands Off Russia campaign was set up in June 1919 at a conference in Manchester. Its president was AA Purcell, a member of the parliamentary committee of the TUC, and also included on its national leadership were CT Cramp, industrial secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen, Tom Mann, general secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, and George Peel, secretary of

the National Shop Stewards' Committee.

The same month saw Russia dominate debates at the Labour Party conference. James Sexton of the Dock Labourers was typical of the right wing and the time. He claimed to be a "revolutionist of a social character and believed in social revolution". That said, he did not believe in "letting mad dogs loose".¹⁸ Frankly, the best left forces wanted just that - if by "mad dogs" was meant the self-activity of the working class.

The BSP - from 1916 a Labour Party affiliate - advanced the call for a national conference, "having as its object the organisation of a general strike that shall put an end once and for all to the open and covert participation of the British government in attacks on Soviet Russia".¹⁹ This was overwhelmingly defeated - no small thanks to a wily speech by Ernest Bevin, in which he warned against ill-prepared action that must result in failure. In spite of that, the left still won the day by a substantial 1,893,000 to 935,000 majority for its resolution committing Labour to consult the parliamentary committee of the TUC "with the view to effective action being taken".²⁰

Unmoved and now on the territory of the Labour Party's NEC, the right continued to obfuscate. As the constitution would in the future serve a Labour government, it must not be torn apart by mad dogs. The government should be persuaded by parliamentary words to leave Russia alone. Nothing more. Faced with deliberate inaction from the official centres of leadership, the Triple Alliance unions decided (by 217 delegates to 11) to recommend a ballot on industrial action among its members. That was on July 25 1919. Four days later, Winston Churchill, secretary of state for war, announced the withdrawal of British troops. Showing the undying commitment ministers of the crown have to the truth, Churchill swore blind that the decision had been made a year before! As to the other demands around conscription and conscientious objectors, what was the fuss all about? They had already been dealt with or were in the process of being so.

Sanky Commission

Such a retreat could only but be temporary. Battle was soon renewed. Emboldened by Labour Party and TUC shilly-shallying over Soviet Russia, the government rejected the Sanky Commission's report on the mines. Set up under Sir John Sanky in 1919, it recommended among other things higher pay, shorter hours and public ownership of the coal mines. These recommendations were due in part to the miners' nominees who sat on it, but also owed a lot to new-found sense of liberalistic justice brought about by the tilting balance of class forces.

Instead of acting themselves to secure these concessions, the miners' leaders decided to pass the buck to the TUC, apparently hoping it would organise general strike action in their support. Their trust in the TUC was sadly misplaced. Not for the first time, nor the last. The result was a timid "educational campaign": on this occasion the theme was "mines for the nation".²¹ Furious, the miners' Fed demanded that the parliamentary committee of the TUC organise a special congress to consider a resolution calling for "trade union action in the form of a general strike".²²

On March 4 1920 they got the former, but by 3,732,000 votes to 1,050,000 not the latter. Like many other government-sponsored

commissions of enquiry - primarily set up as a sop, designed to put off decisions and cool ardour - the Sanky Commission report sank without trace.

Single issue

Sanky and the setback suffered by the miners did not mean class peace. In April 1920 Polish forces, armed and diplomatically backed by British and French imperialism, launched a wide-ranging offensive against the Soviet republic. The Hands Off Russia campaign wrote to every working class organisation, emphasising that "more pious resolutions won't force the hand of the government, but resolutions backed by industrial action will".²³ The need was pressing. Rolling back the Red Army, Polish forces had cut deep into Ukraine. Things appeared exceedingly bleak.

On June 12, the very day that *The Times* gleefully reported the Polish capture of Kiev as a "great triumph", it carried a congratulatory message from George V to the former left nationalist, Joseph Pilsudski, now the marshal in command of Poland's armed forces. However, the workers in Britain delivered a blow surely worth more than 10 extra divisions for the Red Army. After being told that there was the prospect of strike pay, the East India dockers loading Polish-bound munitions onto the *Jolly George* walked off the job. The work of Pollitt, Pankhurst and their comrades had at last paid off.

Suddenly the whole working class was brimming with confident indignation and was readying for action. In Russia they had their battle standard. Effectively a single-issue campaign, true. But such narrowness is characteristic and even suits the needs of any mass movement at its earliest stages. Of course, once battle is seriously joined on any level, the most varied tactics and the most far-sighted strategy become a necessity. By keeping to single-issue campaigns, single-issue then turns into its opposite. From being a means to mobilise the widest forces, it becomes a barrier to forward momentum and in point of fact invites demobilisation and defeat.

The Hands Off Russia campaign made colossal strides forward. Demonstrations outside the Polish embassy drew huge crowds. The TUC and Labour Party were bombarded with resolutions. The dockers' union reaffirmed its support for the London men and demanded that no docker be used for sending arms to the enemies of Soviet Russia. Making matters even worse for reaction, the Red Army executed a brilliant counterattack. The open terrain, the sheer scale of operations and the limited forces employed on both sides meant a war of rapid movement. The Poles had overextended themselves. Supply lines could not be maintained. General Tukhachevsky struck a timely blow and succeeded in driving Pilsudski's forces out of Ukraine, across the plains of northern Poland and to the very outskirts of Warsaw itself.

If Poland

If Poland fell, it would unleash a revolutionary deluge that would spread into Germany - at least that was the desperate calculation made by Lenin and his beleaguered comrades in the Kremlin. Instead of relying on growing the organisation and the consciousness of the working class in Germany, they clutched at the straw of military methods. Dreadfully disappointed by the post-World War I failures in Austria, Hungary and Germany, they were also emboldened by the stunning successes of the Red Army

in conducting the civil war in Russia. The German revolution would once again be run as a minority action, which would, this time, secure victory by urgently requesting 'fraternal assistance'. From a sovietised Poland, the Red Army would come to the aid of an essentially *artificial*, uprising in Germany. Central Europe would supposedly follow and after that the gravitational centre of world socialism would then shift from Moscow to Berlin, from backward Russia to advanced Germany. Such were the ambitions ... and illusions.

To begin with, the British lion was full of bombast and snarling threats. Winston Churchill belligerently told the cabinet: "We ought to take the transport workers [ie, the dockers - JC] by the throat."²⁴ In the House of Commons Lloyd George spoke the unmistakable language of war and *The Times* warned that another conflict was imminent and must be faced "with the same unanimity and the same courage with which we faced the crisis of 1914".²⁵

The Baltic fleet was given contingency orders. British troops were used against Danzig (Gdansk) dockers, who had struck against the landing of munitions for the Polish army. To leave no shadow of doubt, foreign secretary Lord Curzon dispatched a 'diplomatic' note threatening war, unless there was an end to the Red Army's advance.

However, the working class in Britain had its own answer. On July 21 1920 the Hands Off Russia campaign issued a statement which highlighted the danger of war. It demanded "direct action to prevent it".²⁶ There was an almost instant rallying of the working class, including the Labour Party.

On August 4 1920 its headquarters wired all its branches and trades councils, warning of the "extremely menacing possibility" of an escalation of the Polish-Russian war.²⁷ "Citizen demonstrations" were announced on the following Sunday, August 8 1920. According to its own estimates, they "met with an unparalleled response".²⁸

Suitably flushed, on August 9 Labour and TUC leaders, meeting in the House of Commons, set up a national Council of Action. Pressed on by the movement below, it cast caution to the wind and gave notice to the government that "the whole industrial power of the organised workers will be used to defeat this war". A message was sent, notifying the executives of all affiliated organisations "to hold themselves ready to proceed immediately to London for a national conference", and advised them "to instruct their members to 'down tools' on instructions from that national conference".²⁹

One day after, the national Council of Action met the prime minister, Lloyd George. He assured them that Britain's intentions were peaceful. It would continue to support the Poles and Russian whites, but there would be no deployment of British forces. Labour's claim that the government was engineering an "intolerable crime" against the Soviet republic was "ridiculous". All it wanted to do was to preserve Polish independence.

This "promise" that there would be no British intervention "robbed" the national conference, which met three days later in the Central Hall, Westminster, "of some of its drama".³⁰ It also, as Ralph Miliband suggests, allowed some of the most rightwing figures in the labour movement the chance to stand on a political platform remarkably similar to the BSP's that they had flatly rejected little more than a year before.

Parading themselves as 'principled leftists', JR Clynes, JH Thomas, AG Cameron and other Labour notables made near revolutionary speeches. Before the singing of the

'Red flag' and the 'Internationale' the thousand delegates fully endorsed the setting up of local councils of action and agreed to the threat of strikes "to resist any and every form of military and naval intervention against the Soviet government of Russia".³¹

Such bold statements from the united body of the organised working class undoubtedly stayed the hand of British imperialism. As we have shown, this was not because of bureaucratic initiative, but the determination of leftwingers, grouped under the banner of the Hands Off Russia campaign. Their pro-Soviet propaganda, their successful agitation among dockers, their skilful combination of official and unofficial avenues were responsible for winning virtually the entire labour movement to threaten a general strike. Labour leaders duly claimed that it was they who saved the country from war. But, as Miliband again points out, Labour was not in fact "called upon to challenge the constitution" and it is "impossible" to tell how its leaders "would have behaved, had the government actually embarked on offensive operations against Russia".³²

Though it was plain that the leadership had no revolutionary intentions, TUC and Labour Party officialdom was swept along by events, because they were determined to keep control of them ●

Notes

1. E Hobsbawm *Industry and empire* Harmondsworth 1975, p134.
2. In 1880 steel production in Britain stood at 1.3 million tons, USA 1.2 and Germany 0.7. By 1900 US steel production had reached 10.2 million tons, German 6.4 and British 4.9. (Figures in R Palme Dutt *The crisis of Britain and the British empire* London 1957, p75).
3. Perhaps the most influential, albeit flawed, account of this transformation is George Dangerfield's *The strange death of Liberal England* (1935). The writing is witty and wonderful. If you have not read it, you are missing a real treat.
4. CW Boyd (ed) *Mr Chamberlain's speeches* Vol 1, London, p137.
5. Quoted in R Miliband *Parliamentary socialism* London 1973, p37.
6. Quoted in VI Lenin *CW* Vol 22, Moscow 1977, pp256-57.
7. JA Hobson *Imperialism* London 1938, p41.
8. www.researchgate.net/publication/5138702_Emigration_from_the_UK_1870-1913_and_1950-1998. A personal aside: those migrants included my own granduncle, Joe, and my grandaunt, Flo. Joe "rose from obscure beginnings to a position of almost unchallenged power in the Labor Party ... He became uncrowned Labor king." He was also a determined anti-communist (see -adb.anu.edu.au/biography/chamberlain-francis-edward-joe-12304).
9. P Taaffe *1926 general strike: workers taste power* London 2006.
10. See M Haynes *International Socialism* No22, winter 1984, p90.
11. R Luxemburg *The mass strike* London nd, p61.
12. S Webb and B Webb *The history of trade unionism, 1666-1920* London 1919, p665.
13. HG Wells *An Englishman looks at the world* Frankfurt 2018, p30.
14. See my last article in this occasional series: "German takes on the general strike" *Weekly Worker* March 5 2026 (www.weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1575/german-takes-on-the-general-strike).
15. R Miliband *Parliamentary socialism* London 1973, pp67, 69.
16. Quoted in J Mahon *Harry Pollitt* London 1976, p77.
17. *Ibid* p78.
18. Quoted in R Miliband *Parliamentary socialism* London 1973, p70.
19. Quoted in A Hutt *The post-war history of the British working class* London 1937, p37.
20. Quoted in R Miliband *Parliamentary socialism* London 1973, p72.
21. *Ibid* p76.
22. Quoted in A Hutt *The post-war history of the British working class* London 1937, p31.
23. Quoted in J Mahon *Harry Pollitt* London 1976, p80.
24. Quoted in P Addison *Churchill on the home front* London 1993, p216.
25. *Ibid*.
26. Quoted in J Mahon *Harry Pollitt* London 1976, p82.
27. Quoted in R Miliband *Parliamentary socialism* London 1973, p78.
28. *Ibid* p76.
29. Quoted in A Hutt *The post-war history of the British working class* London 1937, pp38-39.
30. R Miliband *Parliamentary socialism* London 1973, p79.
31. Quoted in A Hutt *The post-war history of the British working class* London 1937, p39.
32. R Miliband *Parliamentary socialism* London 1973, p81.

YOUR PARTY

Corbyn's suffocating regime

Everything was factionally choreographed. All of them knew what was going to happen and how they were supposed to vote. That is how The Many fights the left. Appeals for 'unity', 'reconciliation' or, god help us, 'away days' are beyond useless, says **Carla Roberts**

In these challenging times, it can be rather amusing to read the *Daily Mail's* increasingly desperate attempts to "stop the Green menace" (it has a campaign logo and everything). On March 10, it roped in George Galloway and Jeremy Corbyn to conjure-up a "hard-left election pact". Apparently, according to "its leading expert", a Polanski-Corbyn-Galloway deal could inflict "very substantial" losses on Labour in May's election. Galloway's Workers Party of Britain gleefully reposted the article on X.

This story has more than a hint of shit stirring about it, as anybody who has been paying *any* attention to what is going on the left can attest - obviously the *Mail's* "leading expert" is clearly not amongst them. Leaving aside the fact that there is absolutely no reason why the Greens would throw in their lot with the miniscule and Stalinoid WPB, Your Party is also in no position to field candidates in May - or, to be more precise, *it does not want to*, as the various reports from the first 'proper' meeting of Your Party's central executive committee (March 8) show.¹ Just like it does not want the branches to function (more on that below).

I say 'proper' meeting - it lasted a mere two hours and 20 minutes, including breaks. Unsurprisingly, the officers' group is now made up entirely of Corbyn loyalists. Some had expected Corbyn to throw a little bone to independents like Sam Gorst and Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi. But no. Even the most naive must have noticed by now that any appeals for 'unity', 'reconciliation' or, god help us, 'away days' are beyond pointless. The only way for there to be 'peace' on the CEC is a total surrender by the left. Those who suggest that the Grassroots Left should now disband might like to know that The Many acted as a choreographed faction, where everybody knew what was going to happen and how they were supposed to vote: against everything the GL put forward, for a start.

The Corbyn clique presented a whole whack of motions - at 8pm and 11pm on *the night before* the CEC meeting. Most things fell off the agenda, as they were supposed to, including 'branch formation', which was put as the *last* item.

Jeremy Corbyn might not have been there in person (he was on Eurostar), but it is his right-hand woman, Karie Murphy, who is in charge of Your Party anyway. She was certainly there and actively. Just like at the first introductory meeting the week before, it was she who gave the key reports (verbally, via Zoom).

None of the amendments feverishly produced by GL CEC members and supporters in the few hours between the email and the meeting were distributed to CEC members, and not even printed out. They were shown on a screen, in tiny writing. GL CEC were allowed a whole *30 seconds* to read out and explain each amendment. No debate was allowed, and only after protests did chair Jennifer Forbes ask for 'speeches against'.

Pretty much every single vote went, as expected, 14 to 9. Monique Mosley, one of the two CEC members from Yorkshire, did not attend the meeting - but the 'independent' Sam Gorst voted almost exclusively with Corbyn's leadership faction. As a rather amusing aside, a few days before, on March 4, he posted this excruciating message on X alongside



Karie Murphy and Len McCluskey: she is the power behind the throne

a video of Jeremy Corbyn: "This is my leader. The only leader the world needs right now. He inspired me into politics in 2015 and over a decade later inspires me to do everything I can to make our communities and our world better places."²

To no avail - he was snubbed by the dear leader, whose faction voted against Gorst and for Cassie Bellingham as membership officer. Fadel Takroui, now YP treasurer, was not actually elected to the CEC - he replaces his running mate in the West Midlands, Sue Moffat, who could not take up her post because of "family illness". Takroui has the added benefit of being a far more reliable ally of Karie Murphy.

Voting down

Forbes did not even allow a date to be set for the next meeting and no decision was made on how often the CEC should meet. Earlier on, The Many had voted down the GL proposal for monthly all-day meetings, plus a weekly two-hour Zoom meeting. The intention is clear: *every single important decision* - on staffing, finances, strategy - will now be made by the officers' group, very much away from full CEC scrutiny. This became clear during a (brief) discussion on a question raised by Naomi Wimborne Idrissi. She writes in her report:

I raised a point about party finances, noting that the electoral commission's 4th quarter report on donations to political parties showed £670k for Your Party, representing transfers from MOU limited. I asked for the CEC to approve further substantial transfers which are available from MOU and desperately needed to fund local branch activities. This discussion was shut down and referred to the officer group.

In fact, we hear that Jenn Forbes only noticed after a couple of minutes that, "with Zarah in the room, there is a clear conflict of interest", so the issue should be one of many referred to the officers' group. There is a good chance she noticed that, thanks to one of a number of text messages she seems to have received from one Karie Murphy. There were a number of such instances, we hear.

Murphy remains the key player in Your Party and once again took an active role in the CEC meeting. The other staffer present online was press officer Angus Satow. Artin Giles and Alex Nunns were in the room too. The meeting was told that £16,000 a month is paid by YP on staffing,

which also pays out another £7,000 a month for staff "seconded" from the Peace and Justice Project. But we do not know - and the CEC was not told - how many people are actually employed by YP and who they are. None of our business, right? Wrong. Even trade unions publish the names of their key employees.

These are, of course, some of the people who have been running Your Party so wonderfully for the last eight months (and its predecessor organisations for two years before that) - and now they will do so together with the officers' group. CEC members, incidentally, are not officially 'allowed' to report which staffers were present at the meeting, but these things have a way of getting out.

Karie Murphy certainly leaked her side of the story - naturally to the bourgeois press first, as she always does, to announce the happy news that "Jeremy Corbyn has officially become parliamentary leader of Your Party. Fourteen members voted to appoint Corbyn parliamentary leader, with zero against."³ No need for *PoliticsHome* to mention that the nine GL supporters on the CEC abstained (they should have voted against, in our view). Or that this is a position which does not actually exist in the constitution.

There might or might not have been a breach of the YP constitution, which states that "none of the officers may be members of any national parliament".⁴ The plan is for Corbyn to "not be an officer, but [he] will, subject to ratification by members, be invited to attend and vote at OG meetings *ex officio*, in line with clause 3b.v of the constitution", according to The Many's CEC motion on the matter. It is certainly sneaky, but it is hardly the worst thing the Corbyn clique has done. Any such issues which might hinder the Corbyn clique doing exactly what they want can now be ironed out by email referendum - you are guaranteed to get the answer you want. It is the most undemocratic way to involve the members and merely gives the illusion of democracy.

Comrade Wimborne-Idrissi incidentally explained in a meeting organised by YP Connections Network that she had presented an amendment *to do away* with the position of parliamentary leader altogether⁵ - quite right too. But, like all other amendments, it was voted down. Hannah Hawkins at one stage admitted loudly that she "couldn't hear a word" when an amendment was read out - but still voted against it, naturally.

The perhaps most bizarre example

of this automatic block voting was over a GL amendment that sought to specify that "any independent community groups we work with across the regions and nations in May 2025 [sic] should have *explicitly socialist principles* reflected in their founding documents or constitution, on the basis that Your Party is an inherently socialist party". A socialist party wanting to collaborate with socialist groups - heavens, what a bizarre thing to suggest. Of course, The Many voted it down: "A CEC member spoke against the amendment, characterising it as a form of 'purity testing'", as the GL report explains.

Another one is the 'the mysterious case of the membership officer', as we shall call it. There were two versions of a document describing the roles of the officers' group - one sent at 8pm and one sent at 11pm on March 7. The only difference in them is the description of the role of the membership officer. This bit was taken out of the second version: "Promote and maintain effective communication and engagement with diverse communities, including BAME groups, smaller local organisations, and underrepresented members, to ensure inclusive participation in party activities."

No reason was given for the deletion, even when GL members asked. GL members proposed via an amendment that this sentence is reinserted. But even that was, somewhat bizarrely, voted down. Which has led to members up and down the country scratching their heads, wondering what it is in that harmless, bog-standard formulation that Karie Murphy suddenly disliked. It does not mean very much as it is and Bellingham could have simply not implemented it. Answers on a postcard, please.

Election 'strategy'

HQ boasts in an email to members on March 11 that the CEC agreed "a targeted seats strategy, alongside supporting community independent groups aligned with our values. We aim to publish the full process next week - there's no time to waste!" The Many presented a motion to the CEC with a list of 22 pre-approved "local community groups", whose candidates it will endorse - including some expected ones (Arise in Harrow, Islington and Liverpool Independents), but also less obvious groups like Newton-le-Willows Independents and Redbridge Matters (in addition, bizarrely, to Redbridge and Ilford Independents).

If you just read The Many's motion on 'electoral strategy', it also looks

as if individual YP members are able to put themselves forward and, after some basic checks, could stand under the YP banner. There is even an election timetable, which shows you can apply from March 15.

But this is not quite so. For a start, potential candidates will have to pay a mysterious and unspecified "admin fee". And we hear that, during the 'discussion' on this item, various CEC members of the leadership faction explained, repeatedly, that all YP branches would also have to be set up as "accounting units in accordance with the requirements of the electoral commission" - for this election and beyond. Interestingly, the electoral commission *does not actually require* such units - a national party can choose to register as a whole unit, allowing branches to stand under the party's banner. But that is not what HQ wants. Naturally, it is now impossible to do so before the deadline to register for the May elections - that kind of bureaucracy takes time.

To make things more complicated, in order for candidates to be approved, says the timetable, they will have to attend "local member selection meetings", which take place "between 28-30 March". But hold on: "official branches" don't really exist unless they become "accounting units". So how on earth could these meetings take place, in two weeks' time? You get the drift. It is beyond Kafkaesque.

The reason that there are not any 'official' branches yet is, of course, because HQ does not want them. Even branches set up by trusted Corbyn loyalists bear the potential danger of becoming 'democratic' - and might even get a bit pesky and, say, vote on motions critical of the leadership. That is the kind of branch that the Corbyn clique absolutely wants to avoid. Which is, of course, why they put branches as the last item on the CEC's agenda (it was supposed to fall off the agenda) - and there was no actual written proposal on how they could be recognised. Add to that the ridiculous constitutional requirement that 'inaugural branch meetings' will have to be attended by 20% of all local members - an utter impossibility, thanks to the way HQ has been alienating members - and it is clear that this is no oversight. HQ does not want branches - not active ones anyway.

There might be occasional 'assemblies' and 'community organising units' doing this or that and they might even be called 'branches' - that is all part and parcel of the Corbyn clique's strategy to make YP into another version of Momentum or Podemos, with members' involvement reduced to email referendums and posing for photographs at 'conferences' that are not allowed to vote on anything.

Where now?

What remains of the GL and the proto-branches, is, to put it mildly, very politically diverse. The left needs transparency and openness, but it also needs to discuss what went wrong and why - and on what kind of political programme it needs. The tight grip exercised by the Corbyn clique also begs the question of what role GL comrades on the CEC can and should play.

For a start, we think they should start going on the offensive. Of course, it is a good idea to come with a set of amendments to the

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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How not to do democracy

Abridged report from Grassroots Left CEC members

The meeting was fraught, with sound issues with the hybrid set-up meaning it started 20 minutes late, and not enough time was allocated for democratic discussion and debate.

It was a highly unusual meeting, with papers circulated less than 24 hours in advance, changes to the papers made in the night, CEC members not having sight of amendments before voting and incredibly limited debate. Only 30 seconds was allocated for the proposers of motions or amendments to speak on them, with no room for other perspectives. We did make the point during the meeting that we would like to hear why CEC members were voting against amendments. We were then offered an explanation as to why some members voted against a few points, but after that the explanations promptly stopped.

The key points and submissions we tried to put forward were interventions on the grounds of democracy, accountability and healthy debate, as well as points on ensuring our party is inclusive and anti-racist. Many of the amendments would have brought the standing orders, code of conduct and officer role descriptions in line with the wider trade union and other movements and we do not feel that they were controversial or unusual. These amendments were voted down in their entirety, with the exception of one.

We went into this CEC meeting apprehensive, as in our introductory meeting and emails to the interim chair we had continuously stated that the allotted time for this meeting was not long enough. These calls for extension to a full day had been ignored, with only 45 minutes additional time agreed. A longer meeting would have ensured we could democratically co-create, debate and agree on the CEC's founding documents. These documents were some of the most important that the CEC will agree, as they set the tone, precedent and operational reality of the committee.

We are concerned that the documents passed at this meeting may amount to the CEC being collective in name only, and real power being held in the hands of the officers group and the 'secretariat' (staff). We are, of course, not opposed to an officers group, and staff are a necessity in any large party - but these groups should be for practical purposes only and should report to the wider CEC, where decisions should be made.

As expected, we did not get to several items on our agenda. Most notably, branch formation, which was put at the end of the agenda, with no papers shared ahead of time. We know members will be disappointed by this and many of them contacted us before the meeting to express that they wanted their branches set up as soon as possible. As we did prior to this meeting, we will request that an appropriate amount of time is set by the chair, who now has sole responsibility and authority over setting agendas and timings, to discuss this properly. We don't believe any of these processes should be rushed through at the expense of democracy, but they should be urgently addressed.

CEC members still have no real way of contacting each other, with all emails going through the general Your Party email, which is monitored by staff and all members can use. None of us have ever had a response from that email address, other than the same automatic reply many of you may have received.

Throughout the meeting, it was mentioned that amendments raised were slowing down business. However, we believe it is our responsibility as members of the collective leadership of

a democratic socialist party to represent the will of the membership. Our members continue to tell us that they want more transparency and a party that is truly run by them. As such, it was important to suggest amendments, where pre-defined papers raised questions or concerns about them. There was no time to debate or discuss. Solma tried to raise this and ask the chair for time to discuss early in the meeting. This was met with Solma being muted. In short, there was no time for democracy.

The draft standing orders stated that the regularity of meetings will be decided by the CEC, which we deemed to be vague, and at risk of enabling infrequent full CEC sessions akin to the Labour Party NEC. This would likely see the officer group or the secretariat running the party in the meantime, counter to the collective leadership that members voted for. Our amendment stated that, during this foundational stage, the CEC should meet weekly online for two hours, plus a monthly meeting for a day in length, which should be hybrid and rotated around the regions and nations for accessibility.

The next amendment on the sovereignty of the CEC proposed that it should be up to the CEC to decide on confidential items in meetings, rather than being instructed by the officer group or secretariat. It also proposed that topics may be revisited within three months where necessary, contrary to the drafted standing orders. One CEC member spoke against that amendment by saying it could be a recipe to discuss the same issue over and over again.

The next amendment stated that the identities of the secretariat should be available to all Your Party members (as many of our members have been asking), and that minutes of their meetings should be reported to the CEC. It also stated that they should be subject to recall. There was an argument against the amendment regarding references on social media about 'unelected bureaucrats', which the speaker felt the naming of staff could worsen. At this point, Sophie Wilson expressed willingness to remove the section on staff names being public as a friendly amendment.

The next amendment was on CEC meeting sections and stated that CEC meetings should be separated into parts, with some reserved for CEC members, and others with the secretariat in attendance. The amendment also stated that confidential business could be taken in one part, with public discussion in another part. Sophie Wilson stated that this is common practice in the trade union and labour movement. There were no speakers against.

The next amendment was on limiting the chair's power and would have reduced the number of votes needed to overrule the chair from a two-thirds vote to a simple majority. It also removed their right to decide, alongside the secretary, which motions feature on the agenda. We believed that it would be more collaborative to hold a priority ballot on agenda items based on members' submissions. A speaker against the amendment shared that it could be a recipe for the dysfunction of the committee and would lead to instability.

The next amendment was on ways of working for the CEC and officer group and stated that a vote of no confidence in an officer would require a simple majority rather than a two thirds majority, and could be tabled at any CEC meeting rather than just the AGM, as proposed. It also removed the sections about operational, finance and regulatory matters being reserved for the officer group, and instead stated

that the full CEC was responsible for these.

There were reports on electoral and regulatory matters, staffing and the financial position of the party. In Tuesday's meeting we were told they would be sent in writing, but they were not. Currently the party is spending £16,000 a month on staffing, plus £7,000 on seconded staff from the Peace and Justice Project. It was also reported that Your Party needs to create 'accounting units' with the electoral commission in order for branches to receive funds. It was stated that all papers and handover documents will be given to the officer group rather than the full CEC.

Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi raised the reporting from the electoral commission on donations to political parties in the fourth quarter of 2025. Circa £600,000 represents transfers from MOU Ltd to Your Party, but there is further money to come at a time when branches are crying out for funds. Zarah Sultana made it clear that MOU is not a block and wants to transfer all remaining funds to Your Party to support branches, elections and campaigns. A point of order was raised about a conflict of interest and that financial matters need to go through the officer group, so the discussion ended. The point of order had 14 votes in favour, with 9 votes against.

We asked the following questions and all were unanswered. We were told that the officer group would look into this and report back.

■ What will the process be for candidates wishing to use the Your Party emblem and description on the ballot paper?

■ How will campaign funding be managed? Are candidates expected to self-fund or will the party provide this?

■ Who will sit on the appeals panel for potential candidates rejected from standing by the officer group?

■ Why is there a proposed administrative fee for candidates wishing to go through Your Party due diligence? What will the amount be?

■ Where there are multiple candidates seeking selection, why is it stated that the officers group will officiate a selection process involving local members and not the local CEC members who were elected by that region?

Our amendment stated that any independent community groups we work with across the regions and nations in May 2025 should have explicitly socialist principles reflected in their founding documents or constitution, on the basis that Your Party is an inherently socialist party. A CEC member spoke against the amendment, characterising it as a form of "purity testing".

The paper was passed with 14 in favour and 7 abstentions. Contributors to this report abstained, as, while we agree that it is vital to stand candidates in the May elections, this paper was incredibly vague, and problematic in parts, as detailed above ●

A full report is available at: docs.google.com/document/d/1ly-Q5kNpE7ovmXyl44ok68GuEHBE0a87IDLdI-vYw/edit?usp=sharing#introduction

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leadership faction's proposals, but comrades should consider presenting their own motions on various issues too - crucially, on the question of branch recognition and holding another conference quickly. Until November 2026, everything voted through at the stage-managed launch conference can be changed by a simple majority, including constitutional matters. After that, an undemocratic 'super majority' of two thirds is required, which will be near impossible. HQ will now want to avoid calling another conference any time soon, we suspect. GL should publish these motions beforehand, so that members can see what our representatives are doing.

It would also be good if the CEC members organise public meetings, where they do not just inform members as to what really went on at CEC meetings, but also discuss the next steps.

Ignore agenda

We believe that GL CEC members should simply ignore appeals for confidentiality. They only serve the bureaucracy and stop the membership from knowing what is really going on. Most will only see the official reports produced by the leadership faction, which will not explain how undemocratic things are. Members should be able to see - in detail - what was discussed in the meetings of the leadership, who argued for what and who voted how. Agendas, motions - everything - should be out in the open. Our CEC members have produced a good and detailed report of the meeting, but they should also publish the agendas and motions presented by the leadership, especially now that these have been agreed and are thereby official YP documents.

For a start, there are some practical considerations. As mentioned, the document on 'election strategy' outlines a strict timeline for those who want to stand under the YP banner (leaving aside that this process is designed so that very few people will actually be able to do so) - there is a short 10-day window to submit applications, which finishes on March 25. Who knows when HQ will publish the relevant document. Most members will not even know it exists - which is no doubt the point.

But the key issue is, of course, accountability. Only well-informed members can decide who on their leadership is doing a good job - and who deserves to be criticised, or perhaps replaced. Transparency and openness are clearly weapons the left in Your Party must take up.

Some fear that this could lead to GL CEC members "getting expelled". For a start, we think it is highly unlikely that HQ would really expel nine CEC members for publishing the agenda, motions and documents agreed in the leadership meetings.

There is no way to positively spin such a move. And, even if they did expel them, in practice, it would hardly make much difference. The full CEC - that much should be clear now - will not be seeing any key documents and it will not be making any key decisions. GL members are supposed to play the role of 'tame opposition'. We encourage them to strongly resist that horrible fate ●

Notes

1. docs.proton.me/doc/?mode=open-url&token=3W9C5F2830#9K126bNbvP7J.
2. x.com/Sam_Gors/status/2029332419728261391.
3. www.politicshome.com/news/article/jeremy-corbyn-officially-elected-parliamentary-leader-your-party.
4. docs.google.com/document/d/1Zj8kh2jhFvMCGVJUzgtB4RH38JNKWcBp0B1VT7pUIEA/edit?tab=t.0.
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weekly worker

**Axel Springer
is thoroughly
committed to
Atlanticism**

Selling the Torygraph

Its readership remains stubbornly of pensionable age. Its journalism has become more and more stupid. With 'AI transformation' on the agenda, Paul Demarty expects a further descent into worthless slop

It is a bad time to be a Rothermere. The British media clan, owners of the *Daily Mail* and many other outlets, were on the brink of catching their 'great white whale': securing the purchase of the *Telegraph* papers, and uniting the petty-bourgeois right flank of the British press under a single corporate banner.

Mere moments (in terms of mergers and acquisitions) before achieving preferred-bidder status, however, Jonathan Harmsworth - the fourth Viscount Rothermere - was gazumped by, of all people, the Germans. Axel Springer SE, the pre-eminent German media conglomerate, threw its considerable financial weight behind the rival bidding consortium, officially led by David Efune, publisher of the obscure American rightwing website, the *New York Sun*. Efune is not a serious player here: it is plain that the new bid, £575 million to Rothermere's £500 million, is essentially a Springer acquisition.

There is, of course, some amusement to be had in the *Torygraph* falling into the hands of the hated Boche. As an anonymous Telegraph Media Group (TMG) employee told *The Guardian*, "Red-faced Brexiteers all over Surrey [are] having conniptions ... You would need a heart of stone not to laugh."¹ The long-running saga of the TMG sale, however, has been nothing if not a world tour worthy of a Bond movie. It would almost be easier to name the countries *not* somehow implicated in bids for the house journal of Albion's most anxious retired army officers.

Criminal charges

The story begins, for practical purposes, more than two decades ago. In 2004, long-time owner Conrad Black's media empire was thrown into chaos after a series of dubious related-party transactions resulted in criminal charges (Black would later be convicted of fraud and imprisoned in the United States). That resulted in a fire sale of the *Telegraph* titles to the eccentric Barclay twins, David and Frederick. The Barclays were of petty bourgeois extraction, but steadily built a business empire in the 1970s and 80s. The *Telegraph* was their most prominent purchase; they also picked up the conservative weekly, *The Spectator*. They lived a strange reclusive life, and owned their own Channel island.

David died in 2021; not long after, TMG fell into crisis over unpaid bills totalling £1 billion. It was up for sale again. Paul Marshall, the former Liberal Democrat hedge-fund manager and owner of several rightwing outlets like *UnHerd*, secured ownership of the *Speccy* in 2024. The selling of the *Telegraph* was not so straightforward. A sale was agreed to an investment fund named RedBird IMI in November 2023, but controversy raged at the involvement in the fund of Sheikh



Telegraph HQ: time ticking

Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi - probably best known in Britain as the effective owner of Manchester City football club.

It is one thing to let a foreign princeling get hold of Man City; but a national newspaper of impeccable Tory heritage? *Telegraph* staff were up in arms. The following March, the Tory government rushed through rules preventing foreign state ownership of national newspaper titles - the bid was on ice. Eventually, ownership passed to RedBird Capital Partners - effectively the non-Emirati part of RedBird IMI - in 2025. That might have been the end of it, but RCP's links to the Chinese government rapidly became a sticking point. It was at this point that Rothermere swooped in (having attempted to pick up the titles back in 2004 in the first place).

The only controversy surrounding the Rothermere bid had to do with competition and concentration. Yet even here, the red-blooded British *bona fides* are suspicious. The Harmsworths are non-doms, resident for tax purposes in France. They are known to have been far wrier of Brexit than the political line of their *Mail* papers might have led one to believe (and indeed the *Mail on Sunday*, under brown-nosing editor Geordie Greig, plumped for 'remain' in the referendum, unlike the daily). *Private Eye* points out that the holding company, Daily Mail General Trust (DMGT), includes a not-insubstantial corporate events subsidiary, headquartered in the UAE.²

Among such company, Axel Springer seems untarnished by foreign state influence. Yet even it has weirdly explicit commitments to partisanship in international affairs. Its website proudly proclaims:

We stand up for freedom, free speech, the rule of law, and democracy. We support the right of existence of the state of Israel and oppose all forms of anti-Semitism. We advocate the alliance between the United States of America and Europe. We uphold the principles of a

free market economy. We reject political and religious extremism and all forms of discrimination.³

This is known to be essentially posed as a loyalty oath to employees of its various outlets, ranging from the German tabloid, *Bild*, to the 'insider' political website, *Politico*.

Decline

The *Torygraph* acquisition saga is thus, really, two stories in one. In the first place it is a familiar litany of woe - the endless straitening of the 'legacy media' in a hostile environment; and then also the geopolitical story, of how some foreign owners are somehow more foreign than others (in the eyes of our rulers at least).

With respect to the straitening, the decline in the quality of the *Telegraph's* output is well-known. Under the Barclays, the paper repeatedly shed large numbers of journalists and sub-editors, and its output became shallower and more sensationalistic. It began to approximate the *Daily Mail* and *Express* in all things other than its format (it remains, almost alone on newsagent shelves, a broadsheet). Its political line shifted too, from the stentorian high Toryism of yore to a degraded echo of Faragist right populism.

In doing so, it failed to be particularly successful. The *Mail* is the gold standard here; its own petty bourgeois *enragé* comfort zone was well-suited to the era of clickbait and slop, and the click numbers were impressively juiced by the infamous 'sidebar of shame' - a strip of smutty pap-snap links to be found on the righthand side of every webpage (including, amusingly, op-ed lamentations about the pomification of everything). For a time, it was the most viewed news website in the world, and is still going strong.

The *Telegraph's* attempts to move in this direction were cack-handed. The *Maily Telegraph* could never out-*Mail* the *Mail*. Its readership remained stubbornly of pensionable age. As time passed, it became more and more stupid. Its commercial operations interfered with editorial policy in ways which frequently erupted into

scandal. The level of analysis in its opinion pages rotted away into nothing. It remains to be seen if Springer can inject some seriousness back into the paper, but the fact that 'AI transformation' is apparently on the agenda hints at a further descent into worthless slop.

This is hardly a road that the *Telegraph* has walked alone. The growth of social media as the primary channel for people to access news effectively expropriated the crucial asset that allowed things to go on in the old way - the machinery of advertising sales. Online advertising rates were abysmal, and in any case entirely dependent on the platforms themselves. Digital marketing people at the papers effectively had the job of communicating the wishes of the platforms to the media outlets themselves, but even obedience to these dictates was no guarantee of success. Facebook, for example, made a big push to get its ad customers to make more video content, which they promised would be so much more profitable. It was a lie, based on entirely fabricated internal analytics, and bitterness about this persists on Fleet Street and its analogues to this day.

For true techno-utopian believers, this disintermediation of the legacy media was to be welcomed. As their grip loosened, a far more democratic media scene would emerge. It turned out that they were right that the power of legacy bourgeois media would atrophy, though it has hardly disappeared. The new entrants, however - you could think of American rightwing alt-media empires like *Breitbart* and the *Daily Wire* - turn out to be fronts for the same small gang of billionaires. Their output is merely the pure distillate of the *worst* aspects of legacy media: the brazen lying and self-dealing, the false populism, the total contempt for any content that provokes or demands even the barest minimum of rational thought.

Geopolitics

That brings us to the geopolitics, more or less. The Springer mission statement quoted above places the *Telegraph's* probable new owners squarely in a very particular political niche, representing the residual Atlanticism of the European governing class (with that special devotion to Israel, which is a particularly German psychosis). This ideology is, it is fair to say, under unprecedented pressure, with the open contempt of the second Trump presidency, its unshamed intervention in favour of far-right populists in Europe, its extractivist foreign policy, and so on. Yet one only has to note the near-surreal pliancy of German chancellor Friedrich Merz and Eurocrats like Kaja Kallas and Ursula von der Leyen during the present war to see that Europe's governing class has yet to escape the iron cage of its Atlanticist outlook.

Where exactly that leaves the *Telegraph*, in its current Brexit-

brained ranting form, is a matter of some speculation. In the end, however, it will be managed, if only because it is perfectly plain that the likes of Farage are agents of the *US government*, and their 'populism' certainly does not extend to any recovery of sovereignty from the US. In this respect, their interests are perfectly aligned with those of Axel Springer.

It is this, in the end, that answers the question, 'Why Springer and not the Emirati bidders?' One could say there is a difference between foreign *state* ownership and private ownership, but does this matter in practice? Is the average British *Al Jazeera* stringer any more silenced in relation to the Qatari monarchy than *Politico* hacks are in relation to Israel? It is not clear. Both the Springer *Weltanschauung* and the discreet censorship of *AJ* are fundamentally *state* projects, whoever happens to sign off on the monthly payroll.

Springerism, however, is fundamentally consonant with British *Staatsraison*, which consists in hugging as close to the Americans as practically possible. The emirs of Qatar and the UAE are not so reliable - they have their own interests, largely within the US sphere of influence, but playing an unpredictable role in the Middle East and, increasingly, Africa. They are not to be trusted.

The lesson, perhaps, is that there is always *someone* paying the piper. Bourgeois news organisations do serve a useful role, by reporting stories and offering institutional protection for journalists, when they happen to irk the rich and powerful. They also serve a profoundly harmful role in *limiting* the political horizons in society at large. There is no such thing as a newspaper - or TV news station, or YouTube news channel - that does not have some such ulterior motive.

It would be far better, in fact, if the motives were simply not ulterior. There is something admirable about Springer's loyalty oath, indeed, however dreadful its content - one cannot imagine Rupert Murdoch being honest enough to publish such a thing. A truly democratic challenge to the bourgeois media would, equally, have to wear its heart on its sleeve. Its readers (or viewers) would then be empowered to read (or watch) critically.

It would also, however, require similar kinds of institutional strength as the great media organisations: libel lawyers, armies of journalists, deep expertise in everything from criminal justice to commodity futures. It would need, in short, to draw on a coherent mass social movement for broad political goals - the kind of thing we call a party •

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Notes

1. www.theguardian.com/media/2026/mar/06/german-twist-in-the-telegraph-tale-shatters-lord-rothermeres-dreams.
2. March 6.
3. www.axelpringer.com/en/what-defines-us.