

weekly **worker**



Obviously the CPGB made mistakes in 1926. But they stemmed from national conditions, not this one man

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Towards a mass Communist Party

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Why is it centrist young men who keep trying to assassinate Donald Trump?

LETTERS



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

Hebrew nation

There is much in Carla Roberts' article that I agree with in respect of the petty-bourgeois nature of the Green Party and its political opportunism ('Not so bold politics' April 23). Having seen a mass movement in support of the Palestinians develop, they jumped on the bandwagon and elected Zack Polanski over the more pro-establishment Greens.

However, Zack is no revolutionary nor anti-capitalist. That is why, although he is prepared to go further than the leader of any other political party, call what Israel has done in Gaza 'genocide' and support outlawing the Israel Defence Forces as a terrorist organisation, he is not willing to condemn Zionism as the racist, settler-colonial movement it is.

For Zack and the establishment Greens, Zionism has a 'left' and a 'right'. It is remarkable how apologists for Zionism now reach back a century to the Cultural Zionists of Ahad Ha'am, who must have had at least 20 supporters, and the binationalists of *Brit Shalom* who never numbered more than 100.

However, I disagree vigorously with the attack on the one-state solution and the idea that I am denying the "very existence of a Hebrew nation", as Carla Roberts claims. I don't want to get into semantics about what constitutes a nation, but if the Israeli Jews constitute a nation, then it is a settler nation - one that denies the Palestinians any agency or indeed human existence outside that of a guest in someone else's country.

What unites this 'nation' is not Hebrew culture, but antagonism to the indigenous population. I would have hoped that after the genocide in Gaza and the settler terror in the West Bank this obvious truth would have percolated through to the most mechanical and economic of Marxists. The binding force of Israeli Jews is, if you like, a culture of racism and genocide. That is not a nation in any meaningful sense.

Class politics do not operate within the *Herrenvolk*. There is an alliance between the working class and its ruling class against the Palestinians. The Israeli working class is a privileged class. Class struggle rarely, if ever, takes on a political character in a settler state.

Roberts says that the Israeli Jewish working class is "written off" by me. I plead guilty. Its slogan from the origins of the Labour Zionist movement in the early 20th century was 'From class to nation'. They foreswore the class struggle and transmuted it into the national struggle against the Arabs - the struggle for Hebrew labour, which meant picketing Jewish employers who employed Arabs. The Histadrut union federation deliberately broke up the mixed Jewish-Arab railway workers union.

Just as in South Africa, the working class is the most reactionary of classes in a settler-colonial state. It is a bastardisation of Marxism to pretend that the working class in all situations is potentially progressive or revolutionary. So, even when we had the great demonstrations against the judicial coup, mainly consisting of the middle classes, the Palestinians were excluded by all except a small section. And we saw what happened to the threats by members of the airforce not to serve after October 7.

Sixty percent of Israeli Jews are openly genocidal, according to Prof Rotem Sorek's survey for Pennsylvania State University. This

is far higher than the percentage of Germans in Nazi Germany. Open your eyes - 82% want Gaza ethnically cleansed.

The goal of a unitary, secular and democratic state is one revolutionaries should support, as opposed to the reactionary two-state solution. It is a democratic demand. How we get there is the problem. But it won't be by the Israeli Jewish working class breaking its bonds with its own ruling class. Of that I am certain.

Yes, I resigned from Your Party before joining the Greens. YP has become dead in the water. I joined the Green Party because of the debate on Palestine, not because I consider it has revolutionary potential! My joining the Green Party was the signal for articles in the *Telegraph* and *Jewish Chronicle* about how Corbynites were now the Greens!

It is untrue that I supported witch-hunting the SWP or any other sect in YP. I made my position clear to Roberts. In my view, having a large number of sects within YP - each seeking to recruit to their own tendency rather than building YP as a whole - is to repeat the failures of the far left over generations. However, I also made it clear that I opposed a bureaucratic solution to this problem. If Corbyn had not deliberately stifled the growth of YP by inserting his people, like Karie Murphy, into the bureaucracy and failed to recognise branches, whilst at the same time trying to carve Zarah Sultana out of a joint leadership, then YP could have been half a million strong. The left sects would have been swamped and forced to work with others or simply leave. As it is, Jeremy Corbyn has acted as a recruiting sergeant for the Green Party. The truth is, he never wanted to set up a new party.

Nor is it true that I have "given up on the working class". This is such a simplistic and trite term. If anything, the working class has given up on socialism. Where do you think the bulk of Reform support comes from? Marxists are never good at facing the facts. The old battalions of the working class do not exist any longer - miners, dockers, etc. We have an atomised working class - finance and service industries and IT predominate. That is why we have seen no major strikes since the miners 40 years ago. Manual working class jobs have been exported to the global south. The old proletariat, where political consciousness developed, is no more.

This, of course, poses real problems for socialists, but to fail to recognise that there has been a recomposition of the working class is to simply ignore reality. At the moment, with the strengthening of the state and the attacks on basic civil liberties, we do have to be open to alliances with others in order to confront the state.

The most successful direct action has been the refusal to accept the label, 'terrorist', when applied to Palestine Action. This has been the most widespread defiance of the state for years. It is a pity that socialist groups that talk of revolutionary struggle didn't lead it. Instead it was left to a pacifist group, Defend Our Juries.

The problem is that the CPGB refuses to face up to these problems and finds it easier to label people like me as opportunist and having abandoned the working class. Propaganda is fine, but it should be accompanied by a bit of praxis!

Tony Greenstein
Brighton

Hebrew workers

In her article, Carla Roberts attacks the Green Party for suspending Tony Greenstein on the absurd charge of 'anti-Semitism'. At the same time,

she states a political disagreement with Tony:

"[W]e disagree with his unwavering support for the so-called 'one-state solution', which, as Moshé Machover has explained, is no solution at all, because it boils down to denying the 'very existence of a Hebrew nation - a settler nation formed by Zionist colonisation'. Greenstein views them as a single monolithic bloc, in which no significant body can ever be won over to a progressive or socialist viewpoint - so the working class in the Hebrew nation is written off! As such, Tony can only tell them that, in his vision for the future for the region, the poles of oppression will simply be reversed: Israeli Jews will have no right of self-determination. This is clearly not a programme for socialism of any kind, although it is certainly a very widespread position. But he is no anti-Semite" (my emphasis).

Here comrade Carla attributes to me the claim that Tony's denial of the Hebrew nation's existence follows from his support for the so-called 'one-state solution'. This is a non sequitur: they are two distinct issues. Indeed, there are well-meaning bourgeois-democratic versions of the one-state 'solution' that advocate equal national rights to the two national groups - Palestinian Arabs and Hebrews: for example, in a federal or binational setup.

I have argued that *all* versions of the one-state 'solution' are illusory, because they presuppose a non-socialist overthrow of the Zionist regime. However, under capitalism there is no way in which this can be expected to overcome the resistance of the Israeli Hebrew working class, for the simple reason that it would mean this class exchanging its present position of an exploited class, but with national privileges *vis-à-vis* the Palestinians, for a position of being a class still exploited by capital, but *without* the national privileges. This is not a deal that is likely to have support from the main class force that can overthrow the Zionist regime.

The only chance of the Israeli working class supporting the overthrow of Zionism is in a situation of socialist regional transformation, which would offer this class a swap from its present position as an exploited class with national privileges to a position being part of the *ruling* class of a socialist region, without national privileges. This deal would make sense and could be acceptable to the Hebrew working class.

Moshé Machover
London

Green accusations

I was amused by the news that Tony Greenstein had been hoisted by his own petard when he was suspended by the Green Party for 'anti-Semitism' (this presumably because of the slanders against him by the Campaign Against Antisemitism, that Tony was unable to strike down in his libel court case - the judge declaring that to call someone anti-Semitic was basically just a matter of opinion).

Tony similarly accused me of "anti-Semitism" in 2023 in an open letter on his blog, which he persuaded many pals and activists to co-sign, when he called for my ostracism from the Palestinian solidarity movement. Yet Tony was there when Labour Against the Witchhunt adopted the Merriam-Webster definition of anti-Semitism as "hostility toward or discrimination against Jews as a religious, ethnic or racial group". I maintain that I have never advocated hostility or discrimination against Jews; and the Consistent Democrats refuted Tony's allegations in its open letter in my defence, which 27

activists co-signed (see it at www.tinyurl.com/petegregson).

So why did Tony call me "anti-Semitic"? Because I had observed that "the people who foisted the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism upon us were the Jews in the UK who support Israel". However, it is clear that I was talking about *Zionist* Jews, not Jews irrespective of politics - as proven by the role highly vocal Zionist Jewish organisations played in getting the IHRA adopted by all political parties - and in bringing down Jeremy Corbyn, because of his criticisms of Israel.

Tony also attacked me for saying: "Right from the outset, rich Jewish bankers such as Lord Rothschild backed Zionism. It is unlikely we would have Israel now were it not for his influence." But the current Lord Rothschild, writing in the *Jewish Chronicle* in 2017, noted the Balfour Declaration was addressed to his great uncle because "... Walter had been deeply involved in the Zionist movement ... He was fired by his very first meeting with Chaim Weizmann, when he became convinced that the future of the Jews lay in Zionism and dedicated himself to the cause. After the Declaration, Weizmann wrote to him: 'May I offer you our heartiest thanks in making this possible - I am sure that, when the history of this time will be written, it will be justifiably said that the name of the greatest House in Jewry was associated with the granting of the Magna Carta of Jewish liberties ...'"

Tony also denounced me for observing that "... until 1940 most Jews refused to move to Israel on religious grounds. These were the people that Hitler gassed. With Zionist support. Proof? Over the period 1942-44, Rabbi Weissmandl of Hungary made a deal with Adolf Eichmann whereby the Germans would 'sell' the Jews to him."

But anybody who reads my website at www.onepalestine.land will see that what I go on to say was not that I was accusing this (non-Zionist) rabbi of being involved in the extermination, but very much the opposite ... I noted that the rabbi tried to put together a scheme to buy the freedom of Hungarian and Slovakian Jews from the Nazis. There were over 720,000 Jews in Hungary at that time, including tens of thousands who had fled from Slovakia, and another 100,000 or more Christian ex-Jewish converts. Weissmandl became an impassioned anti-Zionist, because Zionists leaders *refused* to help with the scheme. Quite how it is 'anti-Semitic' to mention this defies belief.

In fact, in Tony's own book, *Zionism during the holocaust*, he made the same accusation against the leading Zionist in Hungary, Rudolph Kasztner, who, knowing full well that Jews who were deported to Auschwitz were being gassed, systematically hid this from the bulk of Hungarian Jews, and indeed made deals with the Nazis, with Adolf Eichmann as his chief interlocutor, to allow a small minority of wealthy Zionist Jews to emigrate to Palestine in exchange for offering no resistance to the deportation (to gas chambers) of the majority. Kasztner clearly worked with the Zionist leadership in Palestine and its agents in doing this. Tony notes that "Hungarian holocaust survivors testified that if they had known the truth about the holocaust then they would have tried to escape ..." It seems that Tony is flinching from the logic of his own argumentation, whilst throwing abuse at me.

The Greens' leader, Zack Polanski, now acknowledges that anti-Semitism was weaponised against Corbyn. It is sad though that he cannot see that it has been weaponised against Greenstein too. And, if Tony hadn't

weaponised it against me in turn, then my Palestine activism would not be suffering as well. It's an example of what the left does best: the circular firing squad.

Pete Gregson
Edinburgh

Green Lefts

The article, 'Not so bold politics', is black-and-white thinking, which I don't agree with. I've been a socialist for over 20 years and I was an active member of the Green Party between about 2011 and 2019, so I can speak with personal experience. I do have serious criticisms of the GP, but it's not "petty-bourgeois through and through", any more than any other political vehicle for the working class. That's just what political parties are: vehicles. You need to drive them where you want to go.

The Green Party is a social democratic party, which welcomes (unaffiliated) socialists to its ranks. It has reactionary strands, but the majority of members in many parts of the country are genuine socialists. It's a mixed bag though, and it depends very much on where exactly you are. I've also been in the Labour Party and I would confidently say that the average GP member is slightly more leftwing than the average LP member was (even in Corbyn's time), although it's pretty close and the membership demographics are very similar. General political attitudes of the grassroots are also very similar.

Looking at policies, the GP has a very well worked out roster of very leftwing policies, which are thoroughly socialist in character - well to the left of any other mainstream party. I am sceptical, however, as to how much of that policy programme would actually make it onto statute books in the event of a Green government, but in theory it's a good policy programme.

The main problem with the Greens is the same as any other leftwing political party: it is sectarian, focused solely on electoralism, and it is not a mass movement, rooted in working class communities. This makes it vulnerable to ruling class cooptation. But you could say that about any of the various leftwing sects that try to stand in elections, including whatever it is that YP has now become. The GP is currently a better bet than any of them.

However, that is not good enough. The reactionary tendencies of the GP's bureaucracy are there to be seen and the left needs something better. The GP is part of the left, but it is not the whole of the left, and that will continue to be a serious problem. The working class needs a unifying movement, which should include the Green Party or at least its socialist factions (probably the majority of GP members now). We need a movement that crosses sectarian lines, so just bad-mouthing the Green Party doesn't help - unless it's measured and constructive criticism that points the way forward.

Chris Anthemum
email

Stalinist kitchens

Eddie Ford's article on the bureaucratic suppression by the Communist Party of Britain of its own youth wing reminds me (at least superficially) of Australia's own experiment in youthful neo-Stalinism ('Style is everything' April 23).

Back in 2019, the Communist Party of Australia (originally the Socialist Party of Australia) - our own Brezhnevite party, which had split from the Eurocommunist 'official' CPA in the 1970s and taken its name from the gutter, once the original party dissolved in the 90s -

experienced a brief factional conflict and then split. The CPA's general secretary, Bob Briton, along with the youth wing, pioneered a new strategy of running soup kitchens in order to "reach the youth and masses". In what I understand to be a combination of bureaucratic suppression and restraining Briton's own dubious leadership of his initiative (according to CPA members, Briton had declined to gain the necessary permits to serve food publicly), the CPA leadership attempted to force Briton to end the kitchens. Following this, Briton and his supporters split to form the Australian Communist Party (ACP), deleting the old organisation social media accounts as a final act of vengeance.

Briton and his supporters saw some initial success. Evidently sick of playing second fiddle to a gerontocratic leadership that seemed mostly to use the organisation for free holidays (sorry, conferences of the international meetings of communist and workers' parties), many in the CPA's youth wing followed Briton into the bright future of anarchist praxis, packaged with neo-Stalinist politics.

Politically, the ACP seemed to follow Mao's old creed to 'support whatever the enemy opposes and oppose whatever the enemy supports': where the CPA longed for a return to the era of the popular front, the ACP seemed to look to the third period; where the CPA supported China unreservedly, the ACP unreservedly regarded it as capitalist. Organisationally the ACP seemed to tap into an online revival of 'Stalinism', or at least some sort of facsimile. With socialist politics on campus long dominated by Trotskyism (and for the past decade by Cliffism at that), a politics that unapologetically endorsed the Soviet Union and the leadership of Stalin and Mao seemed *chic*, proud and anti-establishment in a way that Cliffism, which seemed at times ashamed of most of the history of the communist movement, was not. Here was an organisation that was *doing something* (feeding people on the street a few times a week). That had vitality and pride, compared to the gerontocratic CPA and the meek Trot establishment.

Alas, it was not to last. Soup kitchens, as it turns out, are not a particularly effective tool for organising! Those who work on them often feel good in the immediate term, but they are very labour-intensive for negligible political gain. The promise of the soup kitchens was by far their strongest power for recruitment. But the reality was not so bright, and eventually burnout among key cadres set in. The kitchens, section by section, gradually failed.

Aside from the ultra-activist orientation, however, the ACP faced numerous political shortfalls. Briton, a rogue member of the old CPA leadership, did nothing to break the ACP from the bureaucratic centralism of the old CPA. In fact, not only did the ACP retain a functionally identical constitution: it amplified the lack of openness and democracy, going so far as to forbid members from communicating with one another across branch lines. The leadership of the ACP apart from Briton also left the organisation wanting: paranoia (the membership of the central committee was kept secret from most members) and intimidation (including threats of physical violence from central committee members) contributed to one of the worst internal organisational cultures on the Australian left. Briton and close comrades were caught in a row over transphobic comments. The ill-

fated endorsement of a "progressive no" vote on the 'indigenous voice' referendum in 2023 (perhaps another attempt to counter the CPA, who called for a 'yes' vote) was another political debacle.

Ultimately however, the forced segmentation and federalisation of the communications blackout inevitably resulted in a split. When the ACP decided to change its name (intent on removing the word, 'communist'), the Adelaide branch took this as its cue to jump ship in early 2025, forming an independent 'Adelaide Communist Collective', which still runs the Adelaide kitchen to this day. Since then, though the ACP nominally remains in existence, it is a non-force on the Australian left.

The seeds of the ACP have blossomed in several places. On the one hand, shards of the ACP have gone on to form two of the most odious organisations on the Australian left: the progressive-identitarian Black People's Union, a functionally anti-communist, indigenous nationalist group; and the Eureka Initiative, an organisation politically in-line with Haz Al-Din's American Communist Party, and its conservative-socialist revival of 'LaRouchism'. On the other hand, a number of members of the ACP have gone on to join Communist Unity, with many of them demonstrating themselves to be valuable cadres (though some retain some attachment to the activist approach of their old organisation). In the absence of the ACP as a viable organisation, the younger wing of the CPA has seen something of a resurgence, though my understanding is that these members' proposals were largely rebuffed by the leadership of Andrew Irving at the CPA conference this year (one can hardly expect them to have much more luck than Briton did).

The surge in Young Communist League membership in Britain under Johnny Hunter reminds me of the experience of the ACP: a revival of Stalinism among the socialist youth, manifesting in their bureaucratic suppression by the old Brezhnevite leadership. In spite of my scathing assessment of the ACP as a whole, the growth of a tendency within the CPA that chafed against the bureaucratic and gerontocratic leadership was nonetheless a positive development. Red Wessex's stand against transphobia and Zionism in the CPB is indeed altogether more encouraging than the mutual aid project of Briton's gang. The interview of Red Wessex by Lawrence Parker is encouraging, in that it seems to show the leadership of the project grappling with the problem of democracy in the CPB.

Nevertheless, key political questions remain: is it valuable to 'revive the Marxist-Leninist tradition' in a period where Marxism-Leninism has so thoroughly degenerated theoretically, where its guiding light (the whim of Soviet foreign policy) no longer exists? What does it even mean to simultaneously describe yourself as 'non-sectarian', while positioning yourselves against Trotskyists and orthodox Marxists? Is the localist and regionalist approach that these comrades are seemingly inclined towards correct, given conditions in Britain, or is it a nice-sounding shibboleth like the ACP's vaunted kitchens? Will Red Wessex repeat the ACP's mistake of viewing the problem of the left as over-theorisation (looking for those 'perfect positions'), rather than through *under-theorisation* and the lack of a robust intellectual culture?

From my reading of the Lawrence Parker interview, Red Wessex and Red Sussex seem to be encouraging projects. As relatively latecoming

products of the M-L revival of the late 2010s, I would implore them to learn from the political shortfalls of previous projects which emerged from that period. A clear and informed strategy of organisation (and, yes, eventually party) building will only be gleaned from learning from the mistakes of the past.

I wish them luck.
David Passerine
Communist Unity

DSP schema

Max Shanly has, as per his tweets, finally exited Your Party. It is hard to deny Shanly's towering role in the struggle for a democratic, socialist YP. It is his articles, a little under a year ago, that initiated a lot of enthusiasm for the potential of Your Party as something *different* - a pan-left workers' party - amongst a large number of socialists. His works proved central to the formation of the Democratic Socialists of Your Party, which itself became a pole against the Murphy-run, Corbyn-cultist bureaucracy, from the days of the regional assemblies that weren't, to the elections of the central executive committee.

It is my understanding that the DSYP has resolved to organise itself into a 'Campaign for a Democratic Socialist Party', seeking to fulfil the mission Your Party failed at. It is a noble mission, but in order to successfully execute it, the following steps must be pursued.

Firstly, *Zarah Sultana* must be onboard. The only way to prevent the prospective DSP from becoming a sect, for it to be a pole for at least the activist left, is for it to have an MP on its side, one amenable to its aims. And Zarah has shown great commitment to being a true *tribune of the people*, unbowed against parliamentary incentives to conciliate or become a turncoat. The only Your Party MP must no longer remain so, and that is essential.

Secondly, the *sects* are insufficient. Taking from the theory of the CPGB, and the lived experience of the Democratic Socialists of America, the DSYP and associated neo-Kautskyist organisations have sought to render the sect form redundant, ideally by merging them all into a unified, deliberative entity. But they have focused too much on formal collaboration with the leadership of the sects - the same people who have the least incentive to make any changes to the status quo of individual fiefdoms. They have also ignored that the Trotskyist sects are not even close to the only constituent parts of the organised left. Now more than ever, the left consists of, amongst others, YP proto-branches, caucuses and other formations: Palestine organising groups, climate justice groups, and so on and so forth. No true workers' party shall simply involve the top-down fusion of Trotskyist sects.

Thirdly, *decisiveness* (and a *programme!*) are paramount. Eleanor, the Green Party member who runs the twitter account, @StatsForLefties (and was also prescient enough to correctly diagnose the fate of Your Party back when it was *announced*), has correctly argued that parties are not typically formed out of an ether through a months-long discussion process, with nothing decided prior. They are usually announced on the basis of an already decided programme, after which members are recruited. This 'basic programme' does not need to be a classical minimum-maximum programme, but it must be a basis for unity on a political basis, rather than on a tactical one. The paramountcy of

decisiveness necessitates a publicly announced break, with a roadmap for the future already laid out. The break must have true gravity behind it, and must not be one of many, for the absence of such a break will only lead to the haemorrhaging of members from YP-associated branches and organisations and a weakening of the position of the left.

This is what necessitates the involvement of Zarah Sultana, which is paramount. She shall serve as the megaphone of the movement: a tribune and a rallying point, and a source of legitimacy.

The DSYP already has a constitution for a party. In the form of 'Workers deserve the Earth', it already has an interim political programme. There is no time to waste. DSYP must not spend months seeking to come to a consensus from scratch, where an interim basis for collaboration exists. With Zarah Sultana onboard, DSYP must secede, formally, from YP, on a political basis. It must announce the formation of a Democratic Socialist Party, and a founding conference in 75 days. Proto-branches and other organisations must be allowed to *affiliate* to the party. This affiliation must mean nothing but a recognition that the members of the organisation are the members of the party, and must be accompanied by a membership data transfer, so that members can pay dues to the party. It does not privilege the organisation itself, except for recognising it as a constituent, in any manner.

Within 20 days of the announcement, which must be accompanied by a membership portal, allowing individuals to join, affiliates must be compelled to merge into regional branches (while being allowed to maintain their own organisation if they seek to) on the basis of interim bylaws released by the party, and their leadership must be elected on the basis of single transferable votes by all members eligible. Once branches are constituted, and membership numbers are confirmed, elections to conference must be held in branches. Delegations must be proportional to membership, and also elected by STV. This should occur in no more than 35 days since the announcement of the party.

In the next month or so, motions and resolutions, and then amendments to them, from all members should be solicited, contingent on a nominations process based on the practices of the DSA, and the interim constitution of the party. When the conference happens, it must be of a spirit antithetical to the Liverpool conference last year, and cement the position of the new party as a mass, democratic organisation of the whole left.

Decisiveness is the need of the hour, comrades. Success may seem distant, but if we play our cards right, it may be a hop, skip and jump away. I look forward to whatever the DSYP and other partyist forces do next. Just remember, you guys can win.

David Rüper
email

Spart China

I experienced mixed feelings reading the Spartacist League's recent contribution to the *Weekly Worker* ('Just so stories' April 23). On the one hand, I appreciated their staunch opposition to the left's reduction in status to a pressure group within capitalist politics - a point which can never be made strongly or often enough. Unfortunately, the piece went on to become somewhat muddled about China's status as

an imperialist power, in a way that risked obscuring the nature of the modern capitalist order.

The main issue is their implicit adoption of a liberal definition of imperialism. It's as if, to paraphrase Richard Wolff, 'imperialism is when a country does militarism and, the more militarism it does, the more imperialist it is'. For the Sparts, America's status as an imperialist power is proven by its foreign adventures, overseas bases and naval might. On the other hand, China couldn't possibly be imperialist, as it hasn't been to war since the 1970s. So imperialism is presented as a policy choice - one pursued by the bloodthirsty Americans and abstained from by the noble Chinese.

This framing presents imperialism in moralistic rather than material terms. In actuality, China's relative restraint comes not from some kind of innate moral superiority, but from its particular economic and geopolitical position. As Lenin would point out, the primary driver of America's militarism is its need to protect the interests of American capital overseas, with its extensive foreign investment characteristic of developed capitalist economies with restricted domestic headroom. Chinese capital is relatively less developed, meaning it has a greater capacity to absorb domestic investment and a lesser need to look further afield. Secondly, its weaker military and diplomatic position means that China is, for the time being, simply not able to match the US, when it comes to strongarming the world's smaller nations.

Nonetheless, China's growth is nonetheless rebalancing both terms of this equation. China is now the world's third largest exporter of capital, with foreign direct investment outflows in excess of \$170 billion as of 2024. The Sparts cite a 200:1 overseas base ratio as evidence of China's non-imperialism (is the '1' a non-imperialist base?), but this obscures its increasing attempts to back up these investments with coercive force. Since opening its Djibouti base in 2017, China has pursued multiple avenues for further expansion. See, for example, its leaked 2022 security agreement with the Solomon Islands - which contained provisions for troop deployments and prompted delirious threats of military action from Uncle Sam - or its presence at Ream Naval Base in Cambodia, where satellite images show People's Liberation Army Navy vessels docked on a semi-permanent basis.

These covert attempts at base building are supplemented by a variety of other measures, some of which the Chinese government is quite open about: for instance, recent plans (from the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation) to provide the equivalent of \$140 million in "military grants" to African nations, whilst pledging to train and outfit 6,000 African troops (with a further 500 officers to be trained on the Chinese mainland). Doubtless some will try to position this as altruism on the part of China - reminiscent of neocon posturing about the honourable purposes of Nato - but this is again related to a faulty conception of imperialism. Do we seriously think China is doing this out of the goodness of its heart, rather than to protect its material interests? When imperialism is understood in moral rather than material terms, it simply becomes a matter of cheerleading for one's preferred jackboot.

Kieran Jeffs
email

USA

America's centrist assassins

Why do young men keep trying to kill Donald Trump? Why do political 'moderates' turn to 'extremist' methods? Paul Demarty investigates a phenomenon with deep historical roots

As I write, little is known about Cole Tomas Allen, who attempted to shoot up the White House Correspondents' Dinner in Washington DC.

He has, at least, done us the favour of leaving what they are calling a 'manifesto', published by Rupert Murdoch's *New York Post*. The scare quotes are necessary, since he says very little about his motives. "I am a citizen of the United States of America," he writes. "What my representatives do reflects on me. And I am no longer willing to permit a paedophile, rapist and traitor to coat my hands with his crimes."¹ Much of the rest is taken up with apologies to people he may have put in danger, and abstract justifications of his methods. Social media history seems to reveal a down-the-line 'resistance' liberal - anti-Trump, anti-left and pro-Ukraine.

But then, also as I write, almost nothing is known about Thomas Crooks, who nicked Donald Trump's ear at an election rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, in 2024. The latter seems to have little to no trail of social media posts; nor had he exhibited any signs of dangerous extremism to those who knew him. He seems to have been a registered Republican at one time, but what on earth that entails at this peculiar juncture in US political history is anyone's guess.

Likewise Tyler Robinson, who shot dead Charlie Kirk at a Utah university campus last year: at least in his case it is clear that his motive was to stop Kirk spreading hate, but, apart from that, he seems to have been a more or less normal young American man, whose principal hobby was playing video games and talking about that on Discord. There is a profile here, but the profile is ... nothing - a blank space, where we expect to find some grand pathological case history. Luigi Mangione, charged with gunning down healthcare CEO Brian Thompson in a New York street, had some background in the Silicon Valley 'rationalist' scene, a sort of ultra-nerdy radical-centrist ideology with an apocalyptic obsession with artificial intelligence.

Security

Perhaps more will emerge about Allen in the coming days and weeks. As of right now, beyond his little screed and Bluesky posts, we know only that he was a state-college-educated engineer and computer programmer, who made some money in private tutoring (for which, according to Reuters, he earned a 'teacher of the year' award in 2024). He lives far from Washington, in southern California.

He appears to have been a resident in the hotel, which maybe tells us how he got a weapon past security, but otherwise little: the 'manifesto' makes clear he checked in to begin his little spree, and he expresses astonishment at how easy it was for him to do that. "Like, if I was an Iranian agent, instead of an American citizen, I could have brought a damn Ma Deuce in here and no-one would have noticed shit. Actually insane." (A 'Ma Deuce' is an M2 tripod-mounted machine gun.)

Indeed, the circumstances will naturally invite speculation. Could this have been a Reichstag fire-type provocation on the part of Trump and his cronies? That cannot be ruled out, of course, but Trump's immediate reaction was not to demand gross restrictions on political freedom for his enemies, but instead to urge the speediest possible completion of his new White House ballroom, which apparently would make this



Donald Trump holds court after latest assassination attempt

impossible - the design is certainly security-conscious, underneath all the tacky columns and gold leaf. One thinks of the zombie comedy, *Shaun of the Dead*, where one character rebukes Shaun because his "idea of a romantic nightspot and an impenetrable fortress are the same thing".

Historical parallels have been drawn between these assassinations and attempted assassinations, and the political violence in Italy, especially in the 1970s. Some have even snappily termed the present situation in the US "the years of lead paint", in reference to the generally dismal state of environmental safety in America's poorer cities.

Immediately, of course, big differences jump out - the *anni di piombo* in Italy were driven, essentially, by clandestine anti-communist activities loosely directed by the CIA, at a time where the entry into government of the Communist Party was a serious possibility. Through various intermediaries, including coup-plotting army officers, Masonic lodges, fascist cells and the Vatican - possibly the only truly *X Files*-level political conspiracy ever to have happened in real life - Italy was beset by bombings, kidnappings and political murders. Both the far-right and leftist urban guerrillas were implicated, though the level of state penetration on both sides renders things especially murky.

We plainly are not looking at a similar situation in the US, objectively speaking. There is no Communist Party worthy of the name, never mind one knocking on the door of government. There is no Soviet Union, nor is half the American continent under 'socialist' rule, as Europe was said to be by some. The stakes are lower. On the other hand, the Trump administration this time around is packed with far-right toadies who may well really believe that the United States is in immediate danger of a 'communist takeover' (since the Democrats are also 'communists', and the broader liberal left consists entirely of 'cultural Marxists'...). Perhaps they are foolish and insane enough to run a strategy of tension in their own back yard.

Comparisons

We will proceed, assuming that this is not the case; that nothing more interesting than incompetence allowed Allen access to the dinner, and no FBI agent entrapped him into attempting it (which may have been the case with a foiled plot to kidnap Michigan governor Gretchen Whitmer a few years ago). Political assassinations are by no means an exclusively American pursuit, but they seem far more common than in the

average 'western democracy'. Four presidents have been assassinated; Allen's action is both possibly the third attempt on Trump's life, and the second attempted presidential killing at the correspondents' dinner in the Washington Hilton (John Hinckley Jr attempted to do away with Ronald Reagan there 45 years ago).

In the 1970s, one could look at the Italian Red Brigades or fascist cells, from a bourgeois mainstream point of view, and be quite unsurprised by the resort to terrorist violence. These people, after all, were way out at the fringes; they wanted to overthrow society - and did Lenin not say that "sometimes history needs a push"? (Actually, probably not, but who's counting?) The same would go for the Weather Underground in the US, or its rightwing militia groups; as for Hinckley, he was simply insane.

Fun fiction

This recent crew, though? Why is someone whose holy text is a piece of philosophical fan-fiction called *Harry Potter and the methods of rationality* gunning down CEOs in Manhattan? Why is a nice Mormon boy sniping at rightwing celebrities from a nearby roof? Who the hell was Thomas Crooks, anyway? Looking at Allen's manifesto, one cannot help but notice the slightly whimsical, jokey tone. This is not the Marxist-Leninist dogmatics or neo-fascist occultism of old, certainly.

In that respect, it is perhaps more useful to place them in the company of serial and spree-killers of the more usual, nihilistic type. Random acts of mass murder are now so common in the United States that they have almost lost the ability to shock. There is, moreover, a discernible historical cycle to them: serial killers in the 1960s and 70s faded away, to be replaced with workplace mass-shooters - the phenomenon of men 'going postal', from the perceived tendency especially of postal workers to take such drastic action.

With the Columbine high school massacre in 1999, such outrages became far more common in schools and college campuses - and, of course, the child victims garner especial shock and outrage. To that one can add attacks on crowded public spaces, as with the mass shooting in a Colorado cinema in 2012, and the 2017 massacre in Las Vegas - the deadliest ever, and one of the most inexplicable.

These cycles strongly suggest that the popular idea of copycat crimes has a reality to it. Spectacular acts of criminality like this, in an age of ever-advancing mass-media penetration into popular consciousness, become sensations. They dominate public discussion. The national

soul-searching at the time of the Columbine massacre was enormous, and aggravated the culture war over the second amendment. Yet it also made Dylan Klebold and Ed Harris *notorious*. That notoriety precisely provides a template for future alienated, nihilist youth.

Rough justice

The template for *political assassinations*, of course, is everywhere. It is a favoured method of the American state itself, and even more so its Israeli attack dog. The present Iran war began with assassination strikes on top officials, including Ali Khamenei; in his first term, Trump took out Qassem Soleimani, the legendary Revolutionary Guard commander. Drone strikes against real or imagined Taliban insurgents were a constant feature of the Afghanistan war, especially after Barack Obama came to power; Obama also ordered the killing of Osama bin Laden.

The latter became a big-budget Hollywood film, courtesy of CIA-aligned *auteur* Kathryn Bigelow. Steven Spielberg made a movie of the Mossad mop-up operation after the Munich massacre. But essentially *all* mega-budget Hollywood fare today, given its favoured contemporary genre of superhero action, presents brave lone avengers fighting cartoonish evildoers by means of spectacular violence. The language of the repressive state begins to mimic that of the action film hero, and war is presented as a matter of killing the 'bad guys'.

Yet that comic-book logic *predates* the comic book, in the form of the classic western, with the lone avenger or benevolent outlaw dispensing rough justice in the lawless west. It is a powerful idea in a society which has only really known specifically bourgeois forms of injustice; not for the Americans the nostalgia for *noblesse oblige* common in Europe. The world has always been a hard one, systematically rigged in favour of the rich: the Yankee WASP tycoon, the robber baron, and now the globe-spanning empires of centi-billionaires. It has only known individual retribution as a check.

Thus the political heterogeneity of American assassins and spree-killers is no great surprise. There are numerous conflicts on which one can project the same drama: domineering governments versus hard-working ordinary folks (the right); or capitalist oligarchs versus the tyrannised employees (the left). In the age of Trump, the centre has its own version: patriotic Americans against Putin's morally-contemptible Manchurian candidate. A decade of relentless lawfare and several electoral cycles have failed to dislodge him, and so the time is ripe for the centrist terrorist. (The Epstein saga provides additional colour to all variants.)

Any way out of this spiral of madness must have in mind the fundamental conflict underlying the epiphenomenal ones - between classes in the productive process, especially the capitalists and proletariat, but also significantly including the petty bourgeoisie. The working class is central for us, because its real objective interests - those objectives which, successfully pursued, increase its power in society and material flourishing - are *intrinsically* pro-social in ways those of the other classes are not. Only collective power can achieve them, and therefore progress towards them is a solvent to the atomisation and bizarre irrationalism increasingly dominating society.

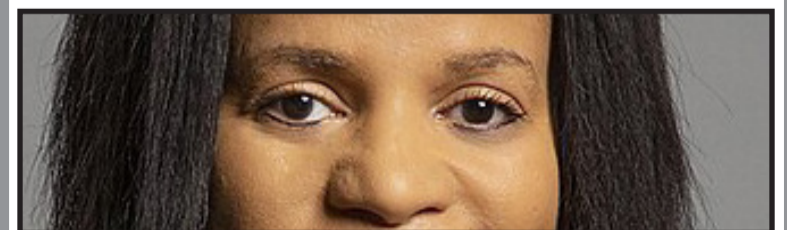
Since we start from such a poor vantage point, however, many more lone avengers of the Cole Allen type may yet be expected ●

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Notes

1. nypost.com/2026/04/26/us-news/read-whcd-gunman-cole-allens-full-anti-trump-manifesto.

Online Communist Forum



Sunday May 3 5pm

Mike Macnair: Claudia Webbe and her historically ignorant attempt to use dead Marxists to silence living Marxists

Use this link to register:
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IRAN

Second round in Islamabad

On-off negotiations are happening under the shadow of a prolonged blockade and the threat of the fragile ceasefire suddenly giving way to another round of shock and awe. **Yassamine Mather** looks beyond the talks about talks

Discussions between the United States and Iran should not be understood as substantive negotiations. They remain, in essence, 'talks about talks'. While expectations were already low, even limited procedural progress has proven difficult to secure.

Disregarding the theatrical elements - attendance, delays and absences - the core issue remains the format and structure of diplomacy itself. The US continues to push for direct, face-to-face negotiations. Iran, however, is not currently in a position to accept this format. Instead, discussions have taken place through intermediaries - crucially Pakistan - with the two delegations physically separated.

One point of contention remains the relationship between sanctions and restoring maritime security in the Strait of Hormuz. The dispute is still centred around a particular sequence of events. Iran will not negotiate on Hormuz or de-escalation while under economic blockade. Meanwhile, the US position is that of continued economic pressure and a naval presence as the necessary means to extract concessions. Because the US navy has effectively shut major export terminals like Kharg Island, Iran is pumping oil, but has nowhere to send it. The US president is reportedly relying on estimates that Iran has only two to three weeks of unused storage left. Once those tanks are full, they physically cannot pump another barrel. Admittedly, a disputed narrative: after all, Trump now talks of maintaining the US naval blockade "for months if necessary".

No limitations

Then there is the nuclear issue. The US insists that Iran can never be allowed to have the bomb. Iran insists that is an inalienable right to develop nuclear technology. In the last few days Iran's 'reformist' president and foreign minister have confirmed this as their stance, echoing what is known to be a 'red line' for the leaders of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

There are, however, differences regarding enrichment levels and stockpile limits. All factions agree that



US navy intercepts Iranian cargo ship

Iran should not accept a permanent or long-term prohibition on enrichment, which means that US demands for long-term guarantees (20 years has been mentioned) against future enrichment remain a no-go area. But before the war the 'reformist' faction was happy to negotiate a shorter pause - according to some, up to five years.

This week Iran attempted to break that deadlock by offering a 'phased framework' via Russia. In Moscow, Iranian foreign minister Abbas Arghchi presented what Iran believes to be a significant tactical shift, proposing to decouple the Hormuz crisis from the nuclear issue.

The goal is to secure immediate economic relief without conceding strategic ground. Iran has offered to reopen or stabilise the Strait of Hormuz and, in return, the US would lift or ease naval/economic restrictions. Meantime the nuclear issue is parked for future negotiations. However, this does not resolve the sequencing issue: it 'repackages' it. The US remains reluctant to separate nuclear concessions from broader

de-escalation, and the divide over Iran's nuclear programme remains fundamental.

Influential Guards

One thing is certain: the IRGC has played a much enhanced role in wartime decision-making, even after losing senior commanders. The result is a determined, more militarised line in the Tehran regime, especially around drone and missile attacks across the region. The IRGC has been involved in all major decisions since the war began, giving it more influence over the state than before.

As I have written before, command had been decentralised in what looks like long-term plans, should more IRGC top commanders be assassinated by the US-Israel, by giving more authority to lower and mid-ranking officers. This made the force more resilient, but also, according to some, more dangerous, because local commanders may act more aggressively or miscalculate more easily.

According to western media, this has made them more hardline, when it comes to strategic questions: they are pushing for a sustained drone-and-missile campaign, rather than a cautious diplomatic approach. Western news agencies present this as giving more strength to the hardliners in Tehran, thus increasing the risk of a wider war - a view echoed by the US president and his allies.

However, academics who have studied the IRGC for a couple of decades or more express the opposite view. They point out that IRGC is not just a military force: it is also deeply embedded in Iran's economy, in its politics. It is well represented in the majles and, of course, Mohammad Ghalibaf, the parliamentary speaker and Iranian representative in the negotiations, is a former IRGC commander himself.

The political landscape in Iran is currently defined by a rare cross-partisan consensus favouring diplomacy with the US, leaving hardliner Saeed Jalili and his lobby groups increasingly isolated. In a massive show of solidarity, 261 out of 290 members of parliament signed a statement on April 27 supporting speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, who has been the lead negotiator with the United States.

Professor Vali Nasr of Johns Hopkins in Washington, as well as other academics who have been

following details of factional fighting in the Islamic Republic, argue that the war has created a situation where the various factions are more united than ever before. True, Nasr states, divisions have not disappeared: there are still internal tensions between religious hardliners, diplomats, the IRGC and elected politicians. But the war has narrowed the political space for such divisions.

Maryam Alamzadeh from Oxford University suggests that hardline politics may have helped the regime survive the war, but moderation may be necessary for it to survive the aftermath. A negotiated settlement that includes limited gains could allow the regime to claim victory without continuing endless confrontation. The author suggests that parts of the IRGC may become more pragmatic, especially after experiencing the real limits of Iran's military power. Of course that might just be wishful thinking. After all, a negotiated settlement could amount to surrender, or at least be represented as surrender, and therefore unleash a popular storm of protest which splits the regime.

Under those circumstances the forces of the left, above all the working class, will be severely tested. The danger of aligning with one or another regime faction must be avoided at all costs. No faith must be invested in the 'reformists'. Our forces need to fashion their own independent programme as a matter of extreme urgency, a communist programme which must necessarily generate the mass Communist Party which alone can turn revolutionary words into genuinely liberating revolutionary deeds.

For the moment, though, as far as I can tell, contrary to what the western media tells us, those in power are more united than ever. The Iranian state presents a coordinated front, leadership statements emphasise cohesion and negotiators include supporters of several factions, now represented among the leadership of the Revolutionary Guards.

The war has paradoxically hardened the position of Iran's reformists and given hegemony to the new generation of IRGC leaders. Leading negotiators (Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Abbas Araghchi and aligned figures) have powerful allies in the IRGC, who support negotiations as a necessary tactical tool. The slogan they promote is "Diplomacy backed by strength" and they accept

conditional engagement with the US, with the aim of seeking sanction relief and controlled de-escalation

The opposition comes from conservative mosques and hardline currents in media outlets such as *Raja News*, who are sceptical or openly hostile to any negotiations. They emphasise complete distrust of the US and the 'success' of Iranian resistance. They talk of the dangers arising from concessions and frame negotiations as potential capitulation and unnecessary under current conditions. However, it is difficult to assess how much support they have in wider religious and military circles. Tasnim, the main (IRGC-linked) media outlet, supports negotiations, with some conditions: it emphasises strength, distrust and Iran's initiative. This group is closely aligned with IRGC leadership, and Ghalibaf, as head of negotiations, definitely represents their views.

It is true that inside Iran some groups that are not currently in positions of power want a continuation of the confrontation. They believe Iran can win. So the country is not fully unified, but neither is it disintegrating in a way that might produce regime change.

Meanwhile, the maritime situation remains volatile and closely tied to economic pressures. Iran's control over shipping continues to operate through a semi-formal system: the fact that certain ships are receiving Iranian guarantees reportedly functions as a revenue-generating mechanism. But recent incidents, including the seizure of vessels linked (according to Iran) to Israeli trade networks, highlight the continued risk of escalation. Trump, for example, could conceivably give the go-ahead for erasing Iran's civilization. Benjamin Netanyahu and his far right coalition are certainly itching for the renewal of the war.

Second front

Neither side has achieved a *decisive* advantage, yet both - yes, even some leading Iranian figures - continue to act as though they have one. This has produced a stand-off.

Not that Iran is locked in and powerless. Blockading the Strait of Hormuz is causing economic dislocation throughout the world. China, India and other Asian countries have been particularly hit. It can open another front too. Coordination with the Houthis in Yemen could possibly threaten the Bab-el-Mandab link from the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden by using asymmetric naval tactics (eg, missiles, drones and fast-attack boats). Of course, such a second front would have potentially cataclysmic economic consequences and risk alienating key allies, not least China.

The core structure of the conflict remains intact, but Iran's tactics have evolved: it no longer adopts a defensive refusal to delay negotiation attempts. On the contrary, a confident, new generation of the IRGC leadership is telling the government to be more proactive by making new counter-proposals, such as the one made in St Petersburg.

Iran's refusal to enter further talks is partly aimed at the US, but also partly aimed at the Iranian masses themselves. The regime does not want to look as if it has surrendered after so many people have died, been injured, made homeless or put out of a job. So its public posture of firmness is its way of maintaining what domestic support it has and countering any impression that it can be bullied into making forced concessions ●

Fighting fund

One day to go

Comrades, as I write, we have not yet reached that much-needed fighting fund monthly target of £2,750, with just one day of April remaining.

However, I'm pretty confident that we'll get there in the next 24 hours, as we are just £22 short! But, of course, I was hoping that we'd also be able to make up for the shortfall last month and get up to around £3,000. What a boost for the *Weekly Worker* - faced as it is with continuing rising costs - that would be. So please do what you can as soon as you read this. Please make a bank or PayPal transfer by Thursday April 30, so that we can really make up for last month. For more details on how to do that go to the link below.

Over the last seven days a useful £643 came our way. The most generous contributions were from comrades JC and LM, who both came up with *three-figure* donations - brilliant! Then we had RL (£60), JS, JT and DD

(£25 each), JW and PS (£24), JP and AB (£20), JM (£15), TT and JD (£10) and AR (5). All of those came in the shape of standing orders or one-off bank transfers.

On top of which, both JB and DB donated £50 via PayPal, while comrade AC came up with a fiver by the same method. Finally, there was that regular donor, comrade Hassan, who as usual chipped in with his £5 note. All in all, £643 was received over the last week.

So please do what you can to make sure we not only reach our April target, but go shooting past it! It all depends on you, our wonderful readers and supporters! ●

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

New proscriptions for old

Claudia Webbe, Tristan Colum and Duncan Chapel have all declared war on the curse of faction and division. In each case it amounts to using dead Marxists to silence living Marxists. **Mike Macnair** defends political democracy and the right to organise

On April 16 the *Morning Star* carried former MP Claudia Webbe's defence of Your Party's Corbynista leadership's regime of bans and proscriptions of far-left groups¹ - like the Labour Party's 1920s banning of the Communist Party, which has continued down to the present day in various forms.²

Webbe grounds the argument - broadly - on competing loyalties preventing democracy. Not quite coincidentally, on April 8 Tristan Colum, a leftist in the German *Die Linke*, wrote, on the Revolutionary Socialism in the 21st Century website, a critique of the (in his view) excessive pluralism of *Die Linke* and of the allegedly excessive attention of the party's leftists to debating with other party members.³ On April 10 Duncan Chapel, of the 'Fourth International in Scotland' and the *Red Mole* Substack site, published a polemic specifically against the CPGB (and me individually) and our advocacy of 'permanent factionalism'.⁴

I said above that this was "not quite coincidentally". The reason is that all these texts are defences of the longstanding view of the British Labour left, 'official communists' and far left that factions in parties and political groups should either be altogether banned or subject to control by the full-time apparatus to distinguish between 'constructive' and 'disruptive' factions. Until recently, this view has been so commonplace as not to need actual defence. The CPGB's opposition to it has had, within the UK, absolutely marginal impact, and the standard response to the *Weekly Worker* has been to characterise our insistence on open reporting of political differences within parties and political groups as 'gossip'.⁵

Recently, however, *outside* the UK the existence of permanent public factions in political organisations has proved not to be a disaster. The Democratic Socialists of America now has more than 100,000 members and significant political impact.⁶ *Die Linke*, after a period of decline, has revived in 2024-26, with 8.8% of the vote in the February 2025 federal elections and 123,000 members in December 2025.⁷ Both groups have permanent open factions and caucuses. It is only a minor-key addition to this point that my own small 2008 book, *Revolutionary strategy*, which argues *inter alia* for full freedom of factions and which is specifically targeted in Chapel's polemic, has reached a readership well beyond people willing to join CPGB or identify politically with us.

The model of tight apparatus control remains available as a model of success - in Jean-Luc Mélenchon's proprietary brand, La France Insoumise, having over 500,000 'members' in France (actually, supporters without rights) and 10.5% of the votes in the 2024 legislative elections, and the similar Podemos in Spain having upwards of 500,000 "members" and 25,000 "activists" and around 11% in opinion polls (in recent elections they have stood in coalition with other left parties).⁸ This was the model of Momentum during the Corbyn leadership of the Labour Party and it is pretty clearly the model the Corbynista leaders aspire to for Your Party.

Nonetheless, the growth in support



Claudia Webbe: historical nonsense

for what may *roughly* be called a model of open debate has meant that it is necessary to actually *defend* anti-factionalism. This is still not true for the Socialist Workers Party, which, while attempting to overcome some of the *outcomes* of its managerialist model of organisation, does not feel the need even to *argue for* either the ban on 'permanent factions' and its implications, or the central apparatus appointment of local full-timers.⁹

The three authors mentioned above offer three different brands of anti-factionalism. Claudia Webbe reproduces standard cold war 'anti-Leninism' as a form of advocacy of the dictatorship of the apparatus and the elected representatives over the membership, in the name of the 'silent majority'. Googling produces nothing about Tristan Colum other than this article and promos of it; from the content, his arguments are broadly Cliffite ('Face outwards towards the masses').

Duncan Chapel defends Mandelism, which ostensibly permits factions (usually called "tendencies"), but subject to the continued control of the apparatus. He is involved in a contradiction here, since he opposes the Podemos model.¹⁰ But the *practical activity* of the Mandelites' anti-factionalism and "non-sectarianism" in the last 60 years has been to serve as left flank-guards for 'official left' bureaucrats of one sort or another - right down to the moment of catastrophe, when the Mandelites either serve no useful purpose for the 'official lefts' and are dumped, or are forced to break by the 'official lefts' moving too far to the right for even the Mandelites to stomach.

This is going to be a series

of articles. In this one I will run through the immediate arguments of Webbe, Colum and Chapel for anti-factionalism. The next article will go absolutely down to basics - about why we need socialism and why socialism needs political democracy, including freedom of association in factions and parties, not only in the future workers' state, but also in the workers' movement under capitalism.

Webbe

Claudia Webbe is part of the Islington Labour left core of the Corbynistas - coming out of the charity/NGO milieu, acting as 'advisor' to Ken Livingstone as mayor of London, becoming an Islington Labour councillor in 2010 and being elected to Labour's NEC in 2016. She was 'parachuted in' for the 2019 general election, with Momentum backing, to the Leicester East constituency previously held by Keith Vaz, and was elected (though with a substantially reduced vote share, down 16%).

She rapidly became a victim of 'lawfare', with a dispute between her and her partner's 'other woman' being turned into a harassment prosecution (the Crown Prosecution Service was eventually forced to apologise for publicising a false allegation that she had threatened the other woman with acid-throwing) and on the basis of this lawfare operation was suspended and then thrown out of the Labour Party. She stood as an independent in 2024, winning 11.8% of the vote; Keith Vaz also stood, taking 7.9%, and a collapse of the Labour vote share, down 29.3% towards independents and the Lib Dems (up 8%) let the Tories take the seat in spite of their own vote declining.

The core of Webbe's *Morning Star* article is, as I have already said, a standard cold war argument, which deploys Luxemburg and Gramsci for 'Leninism leads to Stalinism'. These arguments already functioned, when Anglo-American security services started promoting them in the 1950s, as ideological support for the Atlanticist right wing of the workers' movement.

Webbe begins with Luxemburg's 1904 critique of Lenin's 'substitutionism' in *What is to be done?* and in his line at the 1903 2nd Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. Marxists Internet Archive, which has the Luxemburg text, helpfully gives the publishing history.¹¹ It appeared in 1904 in the Menshevik *Iskra* and in *Die Neue Zeit*; it was translated into English in 1934 and 35 (the 1935 publication by the Glasgow Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation); and the 1934 translation was then reprinted by the University of Michigan Press in 1961, together with Luxemburg's critical comments from jail on the policy of the new Soviet government, as *The Russian revolution and Leninism or Marxism?*, with an introduction by ex-communist Bertram D Wolfe. Wolfe's introduction, whose line is followed by Webbe, reflects his employment by the state department in the construction of Voice of America radio in the 1950s and thereafter by the Hoover Institution.

Wolfe wrote that "Luxemburg was offended in her whole being by Lenin's worship of centralism..." (p14). Webbe 'strengthens' this to "Luxemburg spent much of her political life engaged in precisely this debate with Lenin" - which makes it nonsense. By the end of 1905 the *Menshevik* opponents of Lenin had adopted 'democratic centralism', which was actually just the organisational model of the German Social Democratic Party, and the debate which Luxemburg's 1904 article was about. Luxemburg herself went on to operate an ultra-centralist regime in the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, of which she was one of the central leaders.¹²

Equally arbitrary is Webbe's name-check of Claudia Jones (1915-64) for the proposition that "a socialist movement could not succeed through the imposition of a pre-formed programme on communities - even communities experiencing acute exploitation and oppression. It had to meet people where they were, develop their political voice from within their own experience and build power that was genuinely theirs". Jones was a member of the YCL USA from 1936 and then the CPUSA till her deportation in 1955, and of the 'official' CPGB from 1955 till her death. These were 'democratic-centralist', meaning bureaucratic centralist organisations, and in both cases pursued party programmes - in Britain, the *British road to socialism* (1951).

Webbe is slippery in talking about "the imposition of a pre-formed programme" - since no-one is proposing to *impose* a programme: merely that Your Party members should have the right to decide what *Your Party's* programme - that is, its political platform - should be; and hence, the right to speak, to organise and to vote. What Webbe is demanding of the left is *self-silencing* in the name of the prior rights of the

silent (oppressed) majority. Jones, as a loyal 'official communist' and hence a disciplined advocate of the *British road*, might well have agreed - but her reasons would look less attractive outside the 'official communist' milieu than Webbe wants them to appear.

Gramsci

Next comes the idea that the "vanguard party" was "theorised for conditions of revolution and repression, for moments when rapid centralised decision-making was essential to survival". In contrast, Webbe cites Antonio Gramsci's *Prison notebooks* for the idea that "The task in societies like Britain is the war of position - the long construction of working class counter-hegemony in civil society, politics, culture and ideas."

This use of Gramsci was a standard argument of the Eurocommunists (in fact, beginning with Palmiro Togliatti's use of Gramsci to support the policy of the Partito Comunista Italiano in seeking people's front coalitions with 'left' capitalist parties¹³). It is arguable, as Ewan Tilley suggests on his 'State and confusion' Substack response to Webbe, that this line involved radical misreading of Gramsci's (highly coded) prison writings.¹⁴ Without getting into the extraordinarily extensive debates involved in attempts to appropriate Gramsci,¹⁵ there are a couple of points worth making.

The first is that the 'war of position' idea is not, in fact, original to Gramsci. The argument has old military-strategic roots.¹⁶ The immediate root of Gramsci's 'east-war of motion versus west-war of position' contrast must, however, have been Trotsky's arguments about the point in his military writings at the end of the Russian civil war: he argued that there was a danger of Red Army generals generalising on the civil war experience of highly fluid fronts; these, however, reflected the low development of the forces of production in the 'east', where the 1914-18 immobile western front was the true image of industrialised war.¹⁷ In 1940, Trotsky's military-political-economic argument was proved false: rapid, fluid warfare overran the bulk of the industrialised 'west'. It had turned out, moreover, in 1933-34 that the political *Ermattungsstrategie* ('war of position') failed the German and Austrian socialist parties, as the gradual conquests of "working class counter-hegemony in civil society, politics, culture and ideas" were abruptly overthrown by fascism.

The second point is that we should judge the Togliatti and Enrico Berlinguer version of Gramsci on 'war of position' by the results achieved by the *Eurocommunist PCI*. The PCI was a party of opposition during the bulk of the cold war period (not by its own choice, but because the USA instructed the Italian capitalist parties to exclude it from office). In this period the PCI *did* build up a substantial amount of "working class counter-hegemony in civil society, politics, culture and ideas".

However, deepening 'Gramscian' commitments to the 'historic compromise' and the 'broad democratic alliance' produced the transformation of the PCI into the Partito Democratico della Sinistra ('Democratic Left Party') in 1991, Democratici di Sinistra ('Democratic Left') in 1998 and finally Partito Democratico ('Democratic Party') in 2007. Far from working class counter-

hegemony, this is an instrument of *capitalist liberal* hegemony. Moreover, the collapse of the anti-systemic claims of the old PCI and the full entry into the parliamentary coalition game of the PCI-PDS-DS-PD has produced the widespread sense that the only alternative to the corrupt regime of liberal centre-left and liberal centre-right is right-populism - successively in the form of the media magnate, Silvio Berlusconi, then the comedian, Beppe Grillo, and Five Star, and now the post-fascism of Giorgia Meloni's Fratelli d'Italia.

The advocates of Togliattian and left-populist interpretations of Gramsci need to *accept their political responsibility* for this outcome. (Analogously, the British advocates of Eurocommunism, Stuart Hall's ideas, and so on, need to accept their political responsibility for Blairism, which they actively promoted.)

The reality is, first, that capitalism is a *process of change*. It does not stand still to be shot at either by a 'war of position' or by a 'war of movement'. Committing to exclude 'war of position' (the far-left mass-strikists) is to adopt Ferdinand Foch's 'principle of the offensive', and in politics to condemn yourself to small sects, like Luxemburg's SDKPiL or Daniel De Leon's Socialist Labour Parties, forever. Committing to exclude 'war of motion' (the 'Gramscians') is to bet on the Maginot line as an absolute defence - and in politics, to lay down to be sent to camps without fighting, as the SPD did in 1933.

Secondly, the *capitalist state* is, by virtue of the *forms of the constitutional order*, committed to capitalist class rule - through the character of the state as one firm among many and the 'national interest' depending on 'competitiveness'; through corruption in media, elections and lobbying, etc; through the 'property owner/employer-decides' principle in the form of monarchies, elected presidencies, directly elected party leaders, and so on; and through the judicial power as sanctifying the right of private property. Claudia Webbe and Jeremy Corbyn, both of whom have been personally targeted by security apparatus/media/judicial operations, should be aware of this character.

The issue is not 'insurrectionary politics only'. Rather a 'war of position', which seeks to build up *mass disloyalty to this state order*, can build with it a degree of "working class counter-hegemony in civil society, politics, culture and ideas". However, as soon as the left accepts the constitutional order and the 'national interest', leftwingers are driven to political collapse into tail-ends of one of the two great capitalist parties - liberal-free-marketeer or nationalist-patriarchalist (the right-populists).

Silent

Stripped of the spurious authority of Luxemburg, Gramsci and Claudia Jones, what is left is the argument that the organisation of factions with their own platforms and discipline "circumvent[s] the rights of the members who are not members of organised currents"; and that

Two loyalties cannot produce one democratic party. The CEC's framework resolves that structural truth.

The reasoning is democratic, not ideological: "Transparent, democratic decision-making is only possible when every member is able to trust that, whatever differences of opinion arise, all members put Your Party's interests first."

The problem is that we *do not know* before any decision procedure what "members who are not members of

organised currents" actually want; or, for that matter, what "Your Party's interests", which we are required to "put first", *are*.

It might be that with freedom to organise and an open and transparent decision process (unlike the Bonapartist plebiscitary method actually adopted by the leadership of Your Party, imitating La France Insoumise and Podemos) there would be an actual majority for the leadership's views. But it might be that there would not. The actual online plebiscitary votes, linked to the 'founding conference' of November 29-30 in Liverpool, did *not* consistently produce the results sought by the leadership (and the leadership has decided to disregard those which 'went wrong').

Equally, it may be that purging the left groups would create the possibility of a 'party' (actually, a political brand) as successful as LFI or Podemos. But, given British political conditions and history, it is equally likely that getting rid of the groups produces the same dynamic as in Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party: failure, accompanied by a succession of purges, as the Bonapartist method allows no means of decision when differences arise *within* the leading group.

Allowing factions does not deprive the silent majority - "the members who are not members of organised currents" of any rights. They have the right to speak, to vote and to *organise themselves* against the organised minorities.

In contrast, the method of banning the organised groups also bans the silent majority from *organising themselves*. What they are left with is the choice exclusively between which of the full-timers and elected representatives to give allegiance to. This choice may be *expressed* as plebiscites on options selected by the full-timers, but it is actually merely an option of personal loyalties.

The regime thus created is in fact a form, on a smaller scale, of the liberal parliamentary regime - in which MPs are 'answerable' to the silent majority of their constituents and not to their party membership. But the result, which has been known since Friedrich Engels, writing in 1891, is:

Nowhere do 'politicians' form a more separate, powerful section of the nation than in North America. There, each of the two great parties which alternately succeed each other in power is itself in turn controlled by people who make a business of politics, who speculate on seats in the legislative assemblies of the Union as well as of the separate states, or who make a living by carrying on agitation for their party and on its victory are rewarded with positions.

It is well known that the Americans have been striving for 30 years to shake off this yoke, which has become intolerable, and that, in spite of all they can do, they continue to sink ever deeper in this swamp of corruption. It is precisely in America that we see best how there takes place this process of the state power making itself independent in relation to society, whose mere instrument it was originally intended to be. Here there exists no dynasty, no nobility, no standing army, beyond the few men keeping watch on the Indians, no bureaucracy with permanent posts or the right to pensions. Nevertheless we find here two great gangs of political speculators, who alternately take possession of the state power and exploit it by the most corrupt means and for the most corrupt ends - and the nation is powerless against these two great cartels of

politicians, who are ostensibly its servants, but in reality exploit and plunder it.¹⁸

I do not mean in the least to accuse Jeremy Corbyn or any of his co-thinkers of personal corruption. The point is that the *organisational regime* of MPs and officials relying on the silent majority against the right of activists to organise, when applied to a party which actually achieves more than merely small minority electoral representation in parliament and local government, *would necessarily produce* the usual sort of corruption (which we can see in today's Labour Party in the Mandelson affair).

Die Linke

Tristan Colum, "a revolutionary socialist in Die Linke", is presumably a political supporter of RS21 who happens to be currently resident in Germany. He gives us a potted history of Die Linke, which is of success down to the party's electoral momentum "stalling" in 2012-13. At this point, he argues:

The party factions incorporate revolutionary socialists and social movement activists on one side, and municipal politicians and reformist social democrats on the other. This causes a continuous contradiction not just in programmatic terms, but also on the practical, strategic and tactical level. Theoretically, pluralism and the synergy of 'street and parliament' can work as a unifying internal concept - especially while advancing successfully. However, it begins to fall apart, when faced with the problem that, eventually, one form of politics must take precedence over the other.

The result is that "pluralism plays out as the locally more dominant fraction enacting its strategy and boycotting or undermining actions by the opposing fraction ... The leadership selected cannot enact even the most basic kind of collective action. In this worst of all worlds, the party congress passes resolutions that half of the organisation breaches or dismisses ..." And "Factionalism and a continuous latent power struggle within the party undermine any common platform for action."

He goes on to argue that this is partly a result of "wrong priorities set by the revolutionary wing": that is, centring "their efforts on winning over other party members or leftwing activists within the party". On the contrary, he argues:

The communists who have been most successful in tipping the balance of forces in a multi-tendency organisation have been groups focused on building out the party's strength, using a revolutionary-realist strategy. Other leftwingers are swayed more easily by seeing a successful campaign run or a strong local organisation built than by purely abstract arguments. This is not to denigrate theory, but rather to say that theory must be put to the test and measured by success, or it will shrivel into a purely academic exercise.

His actual *example* of the positive is no such thing, but rather that under its new leadership Die Linke moved into "sustained door-knocking campaigns and direct voter contact" - a policy which is perfectly available to Liberals, Greens or rightwing Social Democrats.

In substance, this is a critique of Die Linke, a party of over 100,000 members, for factionalism and lack of clear, decisive leadership in the style of the central committee of the SWP (which has about 2,500 dues-paying

members), written by a supporter of RS21, a splinter of the SWP that has a few hundred members.

It is fine for a small group to criticise Die Linke for bad *politics* - especially coalitionism, which is likely, if they actually get into government, to end with demoralisation, as happened to Rifondazione Comunista in Italy. It is also possible, as we in the CPGB do, to point out that the SWP's 2,500 members is as far as they have got and leaves them still on the same scale as the *Morning Star's* CPB (around 1,200), the Socialist Party in England and Wales (around 1,000) and the Revolutionary Communist Party (substantially under 1,000); so that this looks like an *impasse* of anti-factionalist far-left groups. But to argue (implicitly), as comrade Colum does, that the SWP is a more successful organisational model than Die Linke is plainly fatuous.

Chapel

Duncan Chapel is a "member of the Fourth International in Scotland", which I *guess* means that Anti-Capitalist Resistance has carried its commitment to Scots nationalism to the point of not organising in Scotland. He runs a currently very active Substack called *Red Mole* - the title of the newspaper of the International Marxist Group, the then British section of the Mandeliste Unified Secretariat of the Fourth International (now just Fourth International) in 1970-73. The name implies nostalgia for the 1970s IMG, which, with 600 members and a weekly paper (at its height), was certainly a lot stronger than ACR is today.

His April 10 post, 'Flat-pack Leninism: Why Mike Macnair can't save the *Weekly Worker* from Moreno's dead end', is a direct polemic against the CPGB on the undesirability of 'factionalism as a permanent condition'. He flags, in this context, Ernest Mandel's 1977 polemic against Nahuel Moreno for (alleged) permanent factionalism; he has now gone on to publish an e-book translation of Mandel's polemic.

Chapel begins with Trotsky arguing in 1940 for a split with the oppositionists who "live on factionalism".¹⁹ There is a curious character to this argument. That is, a substantial part of Chapel's underlying polemic is against the CPGB's "campism", by which is meant, our dual-defeatism on the Ukraine war: that is, that we seek (so far as we can, of course, which for the whole of the left is merely by writing) *both* the defeat of the US-Nato proxy war against Russia - for us, "the main enemy is at home"; *and* we support (again as far as we can, which is only by writing) anti-war forces in Russia.

Chapel, in contrast, along with the Mandeliste majority, seeks the *victory* of the US-Nato proxy war in Ukraine (and in order to do so, denies that it is a proxy war, denies that 2014 was a coup, denies that there are far-right elements in the Ukraine government and armed forces). In this respect, Chapel's politics are those of *Max Shachtman* - not in 1939-40, when he was arguing for 'third camp' politics, but in 1965, when he was arguing in support of US victory in Vietnam.

In Chapel's view Shachtman's politics were soft on Trotsky's "campism", but Trotsky was right to push for a split. I think that the logic of 1939-40 *pointed towards* a split, but that the split was *premature*, because the issues were not fully clarified. In my view *In defence of Marxism*, by its arguments for a premature split, has poisoned the Trotskyists against the practical ability to unite.

Chapel continues by accusing me of failing in *Revolutionary strategy* to cite Trotsky's 1923 *The new course*. To this I plead guilty. I am critical of *Trotsky* for hesitations and caveats on the question of factions, both in *The*

new course and in the section on 'The question of the internal party regime' in *The Third International after Lenin* - which I did cite, because it contains the important point that the party full-time staff is inherently a permanent faction.²⁰

We now move to a simply false story about the CPGB in Left Unity. Comrade Chapel claims we went into Left Unity, acting as part of Communist Platform, as a "Flat-Pack". The reality is that we agreed with Nick Wrack to participate in the Socialist Platform. When it came to the founding meeting of Socialist Platform, however, it turned out that comrade Wrack and his co-thinkers were committed to the idea that no binding votes could be taken on the content of the platform (to which we wished to propose amendments). The justification for this refusal to allow binding votes was that the silent majority of people who did not attend the meeting would not be able to vote!

We would have been perfectly willing to continue participating in Socialist Platform on the basis of being *defeated* in an actual vote - although part of our concern was that we considered the inclusion in Socialist Platform of the Atlanticists for Workers Loyalty (Alliance for Workers' Liberty) to be unprincipled. But, as we wrote at the time, the method of refusing to vote on the basis that the silent majority outside the room should have a veto was *undemocratic*. It was, in fact, *the same undemocratic method* that the Corbynistas are using in Your Party and that Duncan Chapel and his co-thinkers denounce in Podemos.

I shall develop the argument in the second part ●

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Notes

1. morningstaronline.co.uk/article/your-party-what-kind-socialist-party-does-british-working-class-actually-need-2026.
2. labourpartymarxists.org.uk/2011/06/23/fight-the-bans-and-proscriptions
3. revsc21.uk/2026/04/08/the-charms-and-pitfalls-of-extreme-pluralism-lessons-from-die-linke
4. redmole.substack.com/p/flat-pack-leninism-why-mike-macnair
5. It would be curious to identify who originated this particular smear. I *guess* going back to the factional opponents of *The Leninist* in the 'official' CPGB, then later picked up by the Scargillites? That was before I joined the CPGB.
6. Wikipedia has a convenient summary: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Socialists_of_America
7. Wikipedia summary: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Die_Linke
8. On LFI, see en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_France_Insoumise; cf also prometheus-mag.com/2026/03/04/the-populists-and-the-workers-party. For Podemos, see en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podemos_Spanish_political_party; cf also redmole.substack.com/p/before-your-party-there-was-podemos
9. There is a limited discussion of the SWP pre-conference document, 'Party democracy: what we should defend; what we should reconsider', in M Macnair, 'False party concepts' *Weekly Worker* October 30 2025 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1559/false-party-concepts)
10. His post is referenced above in note 8.
11. www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1904/questions-rsd
12. R Blobaum *Felix Dzerzhinsky and the SDKPiL* New York 1984, chapters 7-9.
13. P Togliatti *On Gramsci and other writings* London 1979. See also D Broder, 'The misuses of Gramsci' *Weekly Worker* February 25 2021: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1336/the-misuses-of-gramsci
14. stateconfusion.substack.com/p/the-undemocratic-principle. See also comrade Broder (see note 13 above) for more details.
15. There are 154 pages of results on Amazon ... (I was looking unsuccessfully for a Northite critique of Gramsci as a Stalinist, which I bought years ago, but have misplaced).
16. It was debated as *Ermattungsstrategie* ('war of attrition') versus *Niederwerfungsstrategie* ('war of overthrow') in the SPD discussions on the Prussian suffrage campaign in 1910-12. K Kautsky, R Luxemburg, A Pannekoek *Socialisme: la voie occidentale* Paris 1984.
17. *How the revolution armed* Vol 5, London 1981, pp297-429 at various points.
18. www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/postscript.htm
19. My copy of *In defence of Marxism* is older and does not have this passage; nor does MIA. But I am happy to believe that it exists.
20. www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1928/3rd/ti07.htm (pp2-11).

OUR HISTORY

A surfeit of slogans

Obviously the CPGB made mistakes. But they stemmed from national conditions and circumstances, not Stalin's diktats. **Jack Conrad** marks the centenary of the 1926 General Strike

Autopsies on the General Strike - and, either directly or indirectly, the role of the CPGB - fall into four main categories.

First, the far right - a political position epitomised by Winston Churchill. He instinctively understood the unconstitutional nature of the General Strike: "There is the greatest difference between an industrial dispute, however lamentable, and a general strike. A general strike is a challenge to the state, to the constitution and to the nation."¹

During this period he entertained visions of himself becoming Britain's Benito Mussolini: Churchill was of the opinion that *el Duce* had "rendered a service to the whole world" by destroying "subversive forces" in Italy.² Bolshevism had to be crushed in Britain too. Churchill brooked no compromise with the trade unions: indeed he thought "a little blood-letting" would be a good thing. A statement which had the normally lily-livered *New Statesman* pretending not to know quite how to respond. However, on balance, its editorial offered the opinion that, to "be on the safe side", it would probably be best "that he should be hanged" on a lamp post.³

In the event of a successful workers' revolution, Churchill should certainly have been punished. Me, I would have advocated a show trial. That is a demonstrably fair, BBC-broadcast trial, before 12 randomly selected men and women, where he would have been allowed to choose his own council ... something along the lines of Nuremberg 1945-46. And, having been found guilty of conspiring to commit murder on a mass scale, for guilty he undoubtedly was, Churchill should have been given an appropriate sentence.

Not hanging the bastard - we are better than that. But, showing our respect for human life, re-education through a good spell of healthy manual labour in the gardens of Chartwell (a specialist hospital established after the revolution for sick Kent miners undergoing treatment for killer diseases such as pneumoconiosis and silicosis).

Second, the bourgeois mainstream. The underlying assumption of Labour and Tory opinion alike is that in 1925-26 events conspired to take an unenthusiastic TUC into dangerously unconstitutional waters. Former Labour grandee Philip Snowden wrote in his 1934 memoirs that the trade unions "needed a lesson on the futility and foolishness of such a trial of strength".⁴

Thankfully, though, the whole unfortunate episode was conducted in the reasonable manner that typifies us Brits. Eg, football matches between strikers and police, and upper-class twits driving buses and trams just for a wheeze. Anne Perkins's *A very British strike* (2006) is typical of this "studied moderation" genre and was, at the time of publication, fittingly promoted by David Cameron's Conservative Party.⁵ The 'modernising' Cameroons wanted distance from the 'toxic' Thatcherites. According to this version of events, the constitution proved robust enough to see off misdirected trade union power and could thereafter continue to evolve in a gradualist fashion. Well, till the late 1960s at least.

Third, the 'official communists'. The *Morning Star's* Communist Party



State forces were fully mobilised

of Britain blames the "right wing" of the TUC for the defeat of the General Strike. Reflecting the CPB's own politics, it thereby exonerates the left Labourites. Naturally, the CPB is full of praise for the CPGB of 1926. But there is no criticism because there is no thought. The slogan, 'All power to the TUC', goes unnoted, as does the role of Comintern. Nor is there any discussion of whether or not there was a revolutionary situation.⁶

Fourth, the orthodox Trotskyites. Britain was gripped by a revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situation in 1926 - they are clear on that. However, because of the baleful role of Comintern and Joseph Stalin, the CPGB held back from criticising the Labour lefts *before* the General Strike. Instead of banking on the National Minority Movement, there should have been more efforts to build a mass CPGB. At least that is what Leon Trotsky argued. Comintern's wrong line, he forthrightly maintained, disarmed the working class in Britain, as did misplaced slogans, such as 'All power to the TUC'.

But who could have and who should have taken power in May 1926? And in the name of what programme? Most Trotskyites are altogether vague or even silent when it comes to such a basic question. After all, the CPGB had no more than 5,000 members at the time, and that in a country of over 40 million.

The implication being that there was a general strike road to socialism.

Something more than confirmed by the continued usage of the hoary old slogan, 'TUC get off your knees, call the general strike'. There are many variations on the theme, but the essence remains the same. Once the general strike is called, spontaneity will do the rest. The tiny group, somehow chosen out of the 57 varieties, is taken, almost by predestination, crashing through the gates of power, within a month, simply by the sheer momentum of events.

The other 56 are, of course, left far behind in the slough of irrelevance. The illusion is almost universal amongst the milieu, albeit given a different twist according to the needs of each particular confessional sect: Workers Revolutionary Party, Revolutionary Communist Party, Socialist Workers Party, etc, etc.

Confusion

Lack of a correct strategic perspective resulted in the CPGB's failure, at this auspicious and fateful moment, to make the decisive leap into mass politics. That, I believe, is a correct assessment. Admittedly, CPGB membership doubled, what with the nine days of the General Strike and the subsequent six month-long miners' lockout. A great, albeit fleeting, achievement.

But the possibilities were far bigger ... if the strike had been taken through to a victory of some kind. It is not that the CPGB would have/ could have leapt from a membership

of 5,000 to 500,000 within a couple of weeks (that would be asking too much). But a membership in the tens of thousands was well within the grasp of the 1926 CPGB ... and from there to the hundreds of thousands needed before communists can realistically think about any immediate prospect of taking power.

Strategically the task before the CPGB was to establish itself as an alternative centre of authority to the trade union and labour bureaucracy. That could have been done through the National Minority Movement or the councils of action ... or perhaps simply through the growth of the CPGB itself.

That could *not* have been done, though, by flattering, sowing illusions in, the 'official' lefts in the trade unions and Labour Party. True, that was not done all of the time, but it was done enough of the time. And that mixed message clearly resulted from confusion above in the CPGB and could only but multiply confusion below in the CPGB ... and way beyond.

It is certainly the case that any united front runs the risk that, if communists ruthlessly, effectively, criticise the 'official' lefts, then they will simply walk ... but better than holding back on criticism to keep them on board. If they walk, the calculation must be that they will expose themselves to their mass base for what they really are: rank opportunists of one stripe or another.

In other words, united fronts are tactical.

Even the 'permanent united fronts' in the Russian Revolution saw the Mensheviks, including the left Mensheviks led by Julius Martov, along with the Right Socialist Revolutionaries, eventually walking. They stormed out of the Second All-Russia Congress of the Soviets after the Bolsheviks seized power in the name of their expected majority (along with their Left SR allies). Criticism in soviet debates over the Provisional government, the inter-imperialist war, the secret treaties, land to the peasants, etc, became, with the October Revolution, the criticism of weapons. Soviets continued ... but increasingly, especially with the civil war, as shadows of their former selves.

Exploiting the contradictions between left and right reformism is good politics - if it advances the cause of communism. But the CPGB actually fostered illusions in the labour bureaucracy - a mistake encapsulated in the slogans, 'All power to the general council' ... or 'All power to the TUC'. Even though the usual slogan carried in leaflets, bulletins and manifestos was 'More power to the TUC', the fact that 'All power to the general council' could be used at all shows that the CPGB leadership, or at least its majority, suffered from the syndicalistic notion that the TUC general council *could* act in a revolutionary way, take state power and provide the paradigm of socialism in Britain.

The more modest slogan of 'More power' stemmed from a legitimate desire to overcome sectionalism and centralise struggles. Indeed, the indomitable Tom Mann had been making such a case throughout the 1910-14 Great Unrest, and, of course, the idea itself goes to the very root of *class* collectivity: ie, unity is strength.⁷

Yet the fact of the matter is that the TUC did and still does embody *sectional* collectivity. The TUC apparatus serves to manage inter-union disputes over sensitive issues such as poaching members. Trade union general secretaries are put together in a single board room in order to negotiate common approaches to employers and government. Inevitably, class compromise, even class collaboration, tends to be the norm. Fittingly, the cartoonist, David Low - self-described as a radical socialist - depicted the TUC as a carhorse. An image intended to convey it as strong, honest, hardworking, but also plodding, obstinately conservative and simple-minded.

Unless it is led by communists - *authentic* communists, as I constantly stress - there is not the remotest chance of the TUC general council representing the interests of the working class *taken as a whole* (which are, by definition, global). That requires a real grasp of Marxist theory and organisation in a Communist Party (a national section of an international). General secretaries, including the TUC general secretary, would not act according to individual whim, but communist discipline.

As for the 'All power' slogan, it not only smacked of an artificial transplantation of the Russian slogan, 'All power to the soviets', but totally misunderstood the real experience of the Bolsheviks. It is all well and good placing demands on the left-

posing TUC in order to put it to the test, and mobilising around demands that allow the working class to learn, through its own experience, that the TUC lefts are unable and unwilling to lead a revolutionary struggle ... or even capable of putting up any kind of a serious fight.

That said, facing the intrinsic possibilities contained within a general strike should have involved an orientation to the new and flexible, not a harking back to the old and inflexible. Communists should never waver in our perspective of winning the unions, but that does not blind us to the fact that the TUC is a body that can only move with glacial slowness. Members of the general council are chosen through a combination of automatically allocated seats for the biggest unions and a laborious annual ballot when it comes to the smaller unions. That encourages continuity but allows for managed political change.

Under the impact of disillusionment with the 1924 Labour government, the TUC general council certainly moved to the left. Leaders such as Alf Purcell, George Hicks and Alonzo Swalles could make fiery speeches that were popular with the rank and file. Their politics were, though, flabby, lacked rigour and objectively acted as a safety valve. In fact, the 'official' lefts were tied to, subordinated to, the counterrevolutionary right and figures such as Ramsay MacDonald and JH Thomas. So the politics of the TUC left were easily reversed.

Councils of action

The 300 or so councils of action were another matter. These bodies might in many cases have acted as little more than TUC transmission belts on May 4 1926. But that was to be expected. Russia's soviets began life under the political domination of Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary opportunists. Despite that they had the institutional elasticity needed to quickly reflect changing political allegiances, as events surged forward. Councils of action embodied the consciousness and fighting capacity of the advanced section of the working class at a local level. Therefore, they had the potential to act as organs of dual power beyond the local in a National Council of Action.⁸

There was more than a whiff of conservatism in the CPGB's call for a Labour government. As a rule, in the 1920s the slogan, 'For the formation of a Labour government', was perfectly correct - at least if combined with the tactics needed to educate. Voting for a Labour government should not be simply a matter of choosing the lesser evil: rather it is a tactic designed to build the revolutionary alternative. The mass of organised workers, including many of those with a high level of class-consciousness, believed Labour could and would deliver the socialist commonwealth if it won a parliamentary majority.

So, faced with a run-of-the-mill general election, it was quite right for the communists to support Labour ... albeit like the rope supports a hanged man. But it is another matter to stick to that tactic in the midst of a general strike, when the question of state power was unequivocally posed. As with 'All power to the TUC', the call for the formation of a Labour government was to overstate the old and undynamic, and, in terms of the Labour Party, the marginalised.⁹ Nor should it be forgotten that the Labour Party was under the pro-imperialist, pro-monarchist leadership of Ramsay MacDonald - a man who was urging compromise with Stanley Baldwin's Tory government and who for good reason was being courted by David Lloyd George and his rump of the Liberal Party with a view to forming a coalition. Indeed, MacDonald's politics were identical to the politics

of Baldwin and Lloyd George, except that they were presented in the language of Fabianism.

That is not to suggest that the CPGB should have ignored the overthrow of the MacDonald government in 1924 through the forged 'Zinoviev letter'. Yet, instead of calling for the re-election of a rightwing Labour Party, the emphasis should have been placed squarely on the widely accepted fact that the Baldwin government had gained its massive 200-plus parliamentary majority illegitimately, through fraud. The Baldwin government was therefore anti-democratic. The CPGB most definitely should have turned the tables on the claims pouring out from the BBC, the *British Gazette* and the Tory front bench that the government was gallantly standing firm against the unconstitutional threat to democracy. A blatant lie.

Defence of the miners had to be joined, programmatically fused, with the offensive struggle for more democracy. Baldwin and the coal owners were able to attack the hard-won gains of the working class - crucially those of the miners - because of Britain's lack of democracy. Hence, instead of the slogan, 'All power to the general council', the CPGB needed to win the working class to energetically, confidently and determinedly rescue the flag of democracy from the clutches of the ruling class. Concretely the CPGB should have been agitating for a democratic republic (Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels called this the state form of the dictatorship, or rule, of the working class).

That could never be achieved simply through a routine general election and under a monarchical constitutional system which fundamentally consists of a whole series of checks and balances against democracy. Leave aside the education system, the institutionally dishonest mass media and the golden strings in the hands of those who own and control the means of production. The United Kingdom's monarch is constitutionally head of church and state, formally chooses the prime minister and acts as a personalised rallying point for counterrevolution.

Before that last line of defence there is prime ministerial patronage and the House of Lords, which can seriously frustrate the House of Commons. After that there are the courts, which can review, bend or pervert legislation. And then, of course, there are the secret forces, the police and the armed forces: they stand ever ready to take on any "challenge to the state, to the constitution and to the nation".

Therefore, what was needed in 1926 was a strategy designed to overthrow the existing constitution. That would not mean forgoing the election tactic. On the contrary, we have already speculated about the distinct possibility of Stanley Baldwin losing the General Strike and then going to the country in a general election, asking: 'Who rules? The trade unions or the legitimate government?' ... and getting, for him, the wrong answer.¹⁰

Certainly, communists should strive to achieve a majority in the House of Commons. But such a majority, even an expected majority, would have to be defended by force of arms. Clearly there is a role for the Workers' Defence Corps here. However, given modern weapons, the existing armed forces have to be split. Then it becomes realistic to envisage sweeping away all the old constitutional crap as the vital precondition for the new workers' state progressively taking hold of the commanding heights of the economy.

But more about what the CPGB should have done anon.

That the CPGB made important mistakes in 1926 can in no way be excused by the enforced absence of 12 top leaders: Willie Gallacher,

JR Campbell, Harry Pollitt, Albert Inkpin, Wal Hannington, Bill Rust, Tom Bell, Robin Page Arnot, Ernest Cant, Tom Wintringham, Arthur McManus and JT Murphy languished in jail. Yet all the evidence suggests that the '12 apostles' were among the principal authors of the CPGB's tactics, put into effect during and after the General Strike.

Trotsky

Because of its collective confusion, Trotsky argued, that the CPGB had acted as a "brake" on events. A charge which the 8th Congress of the CPGB indignantly rejected: "Without the Communist Party and the Minority Movement, the pressure of the masses on the General Strike would have been weaker and the General Strike would never have taken place." The positive role of the CPGB cannot be denied. But then Trotsky was not saying things would have been better without the CPGB: only that things would have gone further, given the objective possibilities which existed, if there had not been a wavering, conciliatory, attitude towards the 'official' lefts.

Trotsky's overriding concern was, though, not the party of Inkpin, MacManus and Pollitt. No, it was the party of Stalin and Bukharin. Having finally joined the Bolsheviks in the summer of 1917, he instantly rose to the top. It was common to talk of Soviet Russia being led by Lenin and Trotsky. However, with Lenin incapacitated, then dead, by 1924 he fell out with Lenin's closest lieutenants and that found him looking for polemical weapons. The cautious attitude of Kamenev and Zinoviev in late 1917 suddenly became a scandal of the first order: instead of going for an immediate uprising, they had urged continued negotiations aimed at securing a government of the main socialist parties. Trotsky even managed to drag Stalin into this particular narrative: he edited *Pravda* alongside Kamenev in March-April 1917. Other issues revolved around bureaucratisation, industrialisation and foreign affairs. China proved to be a vicarious battlefield; so did Britain and the General Strike.

The main problem with Trotskyism though (taking its cue from its founder) is that it consists of convenient pre-1917 amnesia, on the one hand, and a studied determination to demonise Stalin, on the other. With this method the undeniable conservatism of the CPGB in 1926 is put down to one man. Accordingly, the CPGB, via pressure exerted from Comintern, adapted itself to the TUC, above all its left reformist wing, because of the diplomatic needs of Stalin.¹¹

Pursuing his strategy of 'socialism in one country', Stalin was meant to have put the preservation of the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee above the prospect of revolution in Britain.¹² That the CPGB did not fully prepare the working class for the sell-out by the 'official' lefts, and placed far too much emphasis on existing bureaucratic institutions instead of the new organs of struggle, is all true. But there is nothing to suggest that this was the result of Stalinite dictate or was "intimately bound up with the campaign against Trotsky".¹³ After all, most of Trotsky's epigones in Britain today take positions far to the right of the 1926 CPGB without the slightest overseas prompting, let alone international discipline.

Frankly, the Trotskyite version of history does not stand up to examination. It skips over the role of British national conditions and the sectarianism, centrism and syndicalism of those who formed the CPGB (even those industrial militants worshipped by Tony Cliff who had a "tradition of hatred towards the union bureaucracy and an understanding of the need for rank-and-file independence"¹⁴).

Moscow was never the sole source of opportunism in the world communist movement. There was always a complicated, two-way pattern, whereby communist parties were affected by international and national conditions. Certainly in 1926 there existed ample room for independent initiative and interpretation.¹⁵

Then, confounding Trotskyite mythology, there is the awkward, but elementary, fact that the Executive Committee of the Communist International was not the docile tool of Stalin and the emergent Soviet bureaucracy it was to become. From its foundation till November 1926, its president was Gregory Zinoviev. He was never an advocate of 'socialism in one country'. One year before Trotsky publicly joined the fray on this question, he was openly polemicising against "national socialism" and insisting that socialism in the Soviet Union could only be built as part of the world revolution. He might have been an ally of Stalin against Trotsky in 1924, but in 1925 he and Kamenev led an opposition movement against Stalin and in 1926 Zinoviev, Kamenev and Trotsky jointly headed the United Opposition.

That goes a long way to explain why the ECCI was to the left of the CPGB during this period. Five days before the General Strike was due to begin the ECCI was making it clear that the "strike could not remain an industrial struggle. It is bound to develop into a political struggle ... The fight for wages and conditions will raise before the working class the question of power". Taking a considerably harder position than the CPGB leadership, Comintern further noted: "Even the leftwing leaders of the Labour Party and the unions are showing themselves unequal to the situation" and that "the greatest danger" came not from the government, but "treacherous leaders". Again in contradistinction to Trotskyite mythology, far from demanding a toning down of CPGB slogans, Comintern was urging that, "as the struggle develops, the party slogans must be carried to a higher level, up to the slogan of the struggle for power".¹⁶

Immediately after the General Strike, even though the full extent of the TUC's perfidy was all too apparent and the connivance of the 'official' lefts had been fully revealed, the CPGB's skeleton Central Committee held back from launching a full-scale propaganda campaign against them. No doubt this was in an attempt to secure whatever support could be garnered for the beleaguered miners.¹⁷

Despite the CPGB's ongoing attempt to appease the TUC, despite the value placed on the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee, the Soviet trade union leadership - under the future Right Oppositionist, Mikhail Tomsky - denounced the British left-reformist trade union leaders for their "treachery", in an "appeal to the international proletariat" published in *Pravda* on June 8 1926. This charge was defended and repeated by Stalin on more than one occasion.¹⁸

The CPGB leadership, showing its position within the Comintern spectrum, stubbornly declined to print the Soviet trade union appeal. In Moscow, the CPGB's delegate to Comintern, JT Murphy, attacked the appeal in thoroughly localist terms. He regarded the whole thing as "interference" in the internal affairs of the British working class. Only after lengthy argument did Comintern, including Stalin, persuade him that it would have been unprincipled for the Soviet unions to "keep silent" - even if voicing criticism meant "a rupture of the bloc with the general council, in the break-up of the Anglo-Russian Committee".¹⁹

So, once again, we must separate myth from reality ●

Notes

1. J Frake and A Packwood (ed) *Letters for the ages: personal and private letters of Sir Winston Churchill* London 2024, pp140-42.
2. *The New York Times* January 20 1927.
3. *New Statesman* May 22 1926.
4. P Snowden *An autobiography* Vol 2, London 1934, p736.
5. A Perkins *A very British strike: 3 May - 12 May 1926* London 2006, p121.
6. A recent example: Phil Katz 'The spectre of 1926' *Morning Star* April 5 2026.
7. See T Mann 'The way to win' *The International Socialist Review* September 1909.
8. According to the SWP's founder-leader, the councils of action that arose in the General Strike "were not embryo soviets, but largely a forum for bargaining between different sectional interests of the local union bureaucracy". What he had in mind, when it came to alternative centres of power, was the shop stewards movement (which had largely ceased to exist by 1926). Of course, workplace organisations are of rather limited use in a general strike. What is needed at the very least is the horizontal organisation of workers as strikers. Soviets in Russia, it should be emphasised, were both workplace and geographically based organisations of the popular classes - at their base made up of delegates elected from workplaces, areas, army units and peasant villages (T Cliff and D Gluckstein *Marxism and trade union struggle* London 1986, p230).
9. Rank-and-file members of the Labour Party took part in the General Strike only as individual trade unionists. As to its leaders, they did not a thing to take the strike forward. Sidney Webb was not exaggerating when he said: "You must understand that the Labour Party and its parliamentary leaders or representatives had nothing to do with it" (S Webb and B Webb *Letters* Vol 3, London 1978, p264).
10. J Conrad 'The good, the bad and the party' *Weekly Worker* April 23 2026.
11. See M Woodhouse and B Pearce *Essays on the history of communism in Britain* 1975.
12. The Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee was formed in 1925 at the initiative of the TUC. It fitted in with the broad drive by the international communist movement to secure trade union unity and undermine the Amsterdam Trade Union International. The committee's aim was to "promote cooperation between the British TUC General Council and the All-Russian Trade Union Council in every way". It was greeted with a furore by the British capitalist press (quotes that follow are cited by James Klugmann in his *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain* Vol 2, London 1969). *The Times* warned that it opened the way for the "westward spread of communism among the workers" (April 22 1925). *The Daily Telegraph* damned the TUC for having "sold the pass" (May 12 1925), and the *Daily Chronicle* considered it a "breakaway from the saner trade unionism of this country" (April 8 1925). Nor did the anti-communist wing of opportunism like it. Ramsay MacDonald considered the committee a step "towards international disunity" (*Daily Herald* May 4 1925), and the former Polish Socialist Party leader, Józef Pilsudski, dismissed TUC leaders as "Bolshevik followers and sympathisers" (*Robotnik* April 21 1925).
13. M Woodhouse and B Pearce *Essays on the history of communism in Britain* 1975, p75.
14. Trapped in a fragile dogma not of its own making, Tony Cliff and Donny Gluckstein are forced to argue in effect that the syndicalist origins of some of the comrades who formed the CPGB guaranteed a healthy tradition. On this most tenuous basis it is (or so they say) "wrong" to argue that the majority in Comintern was to the left of the CPGB - they are arguing against James Hinton and Richard Hyman (T Cliff and D Gluckstein *Marxism and trade union struggle* London 1986, p125n). We have already touched upon their ideas and we shall return to them again in one of the final articles.
15. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith argue that only by 1927 did "Russian developments become the determining factor" in Comintern policies. The period from 1924 to 1926 was, they say, a "transitional phase", in which "it is extremely important to stress the room for manoeuvre still remaining ... to an individual party". After outlining the complex internal relationships in Comintern, they make the point that "it was possible for 'leftist' policies in countries like Germany and Italy to coexist with 'rightist' policies in countries like China, the United States, Britain or Yugoslavia. In each case, the determining factors were national rather than international" (Q Hoare and G Nowell Smith (eds and trans) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* London 1973, ppxxvii, xviii).
16. J Degras (ed) *The Communist International, 1919-1943* Vol 2, London 1971, p299.
17. In the same compromising spirit, the MFBG general secretary, AJ Cook, withdrew *The nine days* - his damning indictment of the TUC's role during the General Strike.
18. In a widely reported speech on June 8 1926, Stalin described TUC leaders as either "downright traitors" or "spineless fellow travellers of these traitors" (JV Stalin *Works* Vol 8, Moscow 1954, p170). He also argued that, because the TUC "had no intention of raising the question of power", the General Strike was "doomed" to "inevitable failure": a general strike "which is not turned into a political struggle must inevitably fail" (*ibid* p171).
19. JV Stalin *Works* Vol 8, Moscow 1954, pp205-14.

OIL CRISIS

Green capitalism is a con

The US-Israeli assault on Iran has laid bare capitalism's continued dependence on fossil fuels. Australian prime minister Anthony Albanese has made urgent trips across Southeast Asia to ensure continued oil and gas supplies.

Marcus Strom reports

If there is one thing the Iran war and the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz has shown us, it is that the global capitalist economy remains hooked on fossil fuels. This is not just for transportation, but for fertiliser, plastics and innumerable manufacturing components, including those needed to make electric vehicles. Despite the rapid growth of renewables in pockets of the world economy, fossil fuels still supply roughly 80% of global energy. Despite the existential urgency, the structure of the system has barely shifted.

But now the war has sent global markets into a panic. It has seen Australian prime minister Anthony Albanese embark on shopping trips across Southeast Asia to ensure the continued supply of oil: Singapore, Brunei and Malaysia. It has also seen opportunists make billions of dollars.

Ever since the Paris climate agreement of 2015 - and before that the 1997 Kyoto protocols - the liberal elite has engaged in sanctimonious lecturing about the need to transition to renewable energy, often putting the onus on consumers to 'do their bit'. Whether it is recycling plastic waste, separating your household garbage or trying to make working class people feel guilty about flying to Bali for a 10-day holiday, it is as if the climate crisis can be solved one household at a time. For instance, Albanese has suggested that people remove their roof racks to economise on petrol.

Fraudulent carbon credit schemes, opulent climate summits promising the Earth and delivering very little, options to give airline companies more of your hard-earned money to make your holiday flight 'carbon-neutral' - all have been revealed as sick shams, as this war hits the global economy. Meanwhile, the resource barons have been raking in super-profits, accessing the resources of our common wealth and paying very little tax. For ordinary punters it is obvious that the lifestyles of the rich and famous have not changed, but we are told to change how we consume.

According to the International Energy Agency, nearly 15 million barrels of crude oil per day - about 34% of global seaborne oil trade - pass through the Strait of Hormuz.¹ When that artery is threatened, the entire global economy feels it. And workers are expected to pay for it. That is what fossil-fuel dependence under capitalism looks like in practice.

Windfall profits

The Iran war has not just exposed dependence on fossil fuels: it has rewarded it. The *Financial Times* has reported that US oil refiners' margins surged to between US\$20 and US\$25 a barrel, nearly double the level earlier this year.² This is due to increased oil flows from Venezuela and opportunism in response to the Iran war.

The same paper estimated US oil companies were set to receive a \$63 billion windfall linked to the crisis brought on by the US-Israeli attacks on Iran.³ This is how capitalism responds to climate breakdown and war: not with planning, but with profiteering. While governments talk about emissions targets, energy shocks continue to generate super-profits for the biggest carbon polluters on the planet.

Australia's position is especially revealing. There has been a push to



Oil tanker loads with vital supplies

renewables for electricity production. Consumers are also voting with their roofs - Australia has the highest rate of household solar installation in the world.⁴ The government has a target of 82% renewables for energy production by 2030. That is some ambition, but most pundits expect us to fall short and the government is reshuffling the target deck to set aims for 2035.

But these targets hide uncomfortable realities which have been exposed by the Iran war. According to the International Energy Agency, Australia currently has net importation of more than 94% of its oil - a dramatic increase over the past two decades.⁵ Fossil fuels still account for about 91% of Australia's primary energy consumption, while renewables make up just 9%. (To be clear, primary energy consumption covers all energy inputs, not just electricity needs. Transport alone accounts for nearly three-quarters of oil use.) These figures expose the gap between climate rhetoric and reality.

Even as the Albanese government backs a war that has intensified global energy instability, it has so far refused to implement even modest increases in resource taxation on gas exports. The upcoming budget will put its rhetoric to the test. Former industry minister Ed Husic MP has backed proposals for a 25% levy on gas exports. This is a positive step. When in cabinet, he warned that there was not a shortage of supply driving up domestic prices but a "glut of greed" fuelled by gas companies. While we would welcome such a tax, the truth remains: Australia's natural resources should be publicly owned and democratically controlled, not handed over to multinational corporations extracting superprofits.

Even liberal economists like Ken Henry, former secretary of the treasury, have had enough, last week telling the Senate inquiry into gas to "cut the crap" and "just do it" - referring to the modest 25% tax on gas profits. He said:

The resources we are talking about here - gas - were created millions of years ago. They are part of the natural endowment that this continent provides for the people of Australia, including for future generations of Australians.

The people of Australia ... trust politicians to look after their interests in respect of those natural resources. To ensure that

the commercial benefits of those natural resources accrue to them and not to anybody else, or if they do accrue to anybody else for a reason that lifts the living standards of Australians.

Of course, we should also "cut the crap" of handing over such a natural resource monopoly to private profit. A nationalised energy industry could invest in a sovereign wealth fund to assuredly guarantee this natural endowment for future generations - not just for Australians, but in a way that radically reorients global economies to renewable energy.

According to Geosciences Australia, in 2023 Australia produced 6,264 petajoules of gas, with between 70% and 80% of that being exported. Most of the profits go to a handful of companies. The Australia Institute reports that almost half the gas exported attracts zero in royalty payments to the Australian government.

Global warming

Meanwhile, the planet is approaching runaway climate change. The Paris climate agreement committed governments to limiting global warming to "well below 2°C" above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to keep it to 1.5°C. Those targets have slipped through our fingers. The United Nations Environment Programme's 'Emissions gap report 2025' concluded that current national climate pledges still place the world on track for roughly 2.3-2.5°C of warming this century. On present policies, warming could reach 2.8°C.⁶ Despite years of conferences and commitments, emissions continue to rise. This is not an implementation failure - it is system failure.

Scientists warn that the 1.5°C threshold has been passed and the 2°C target is likely to be exceeded within the next decade. According to the UN's World Meteorological Organisation, the past 11 years have been the hottest on record.⁷ This level of warming will have devastating, civilisation-wide consequences - affecting agriculture, water systems, marine ecosystems, urban living conditions and coastal cities across the globe. The social dislocation it could cause might dwarf the impacts of war.

The idea that incremental policy adjustments within the existing economic system can prevent this outcome is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain - fiddling while we burn. The Greens and other

advocates of 'green capitalism' argue that stronger targets, carbon markets, incentives and renewable investment within the existing economic framework can solve the crisis.

But the Iran war exposes the limits of that approach. Capitalism is a global system, organised around violent competition between corporations and nation-states. Energy policy is shaped not by environmental and human necessity, but by strategic rivalry, export revenue and profit. Even governments that proclaim ambitious climate targets continue expanding fossil-fuel production in the name of "energy security". That is not hypocrisy: it is how the system works.

The idea that climate breakdown can be solved country by country inside a competitive global capitalist economy is an illusion. Capitalism is a system of global militarised hierarchy that subordinates human labour to accumulation of private profit. It is based on national competition, not cooperation. It is fundamentally ill-suited to solve the climate crisis.

It is abstractly feasible that some sort of 'green dictatorship' under capitalism - similar to a war economy - could be introduced, should the capitalist class view its own mortality in the climate crisis. But it would require the bourgeoisie to suppress its own instincts to pursue profit at all costs. It would not lead to universal human liberation, but would result in an authoritarian global system, focused on saving capital accumulation at the expense of human life.

The only rational way forward is through a global socialist system that can radically shift the economy from fossil fuels. While seemingly far away, we must bring it forward. That means no more liberal tut-tutting or minimalist pledges from fossil fuel

companies.

A planned global transition to renewable energy requires:

- public ownership of major energy resources;
- coordinated international investment;
- rapid expansion of renewable infrastructure - a jobs bonanza;
- guaranteed jobs and retraining for fossil-fuel workers; and
- democratic control over production priorities.

These are not just technical questions: they are political ones. None of this can be delivered by markets competing across national borders: it will require a global mass movement for popular republican democracy. It will require a radical socialist reorganisation of the global economy under working class control.

The lesson of the Iran war is clear: fossil fuels remain central to the functioning of the capitalist world economy. As long as energy systems are organised around profit and competition in an imperialist world system, wars and climate breakdown will continue to reinforce one another. Such wars reinforce that dependence. They produce massive spikes in carbon pollution.

Working class people are right to be sceptical when they are told to change their behaviour, while corporations accumulate windfall profits from crisis after crisis. What is needed is not another round of minimalist climate pledges, fraudulent market-based fixes and greenwashing. It is democratic public ownership of the energy sector and a global transformation of the energy system - planned democratically and carried out in the interests of humanity as a whole.

Only a socialist reorganisation of the world economy can begin the difficult work of slowing global warming, while protecting jobs, livelihoods and the future of the planet. Global socialism will also have the benefit of eradicating rapacious wars that threaten to plunge us into a nuclear inferno ●

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Notes

1. www.iea.org/about/oil-security-and-emergency-response/strait-of-hormuz
2. www.ft.com/content/6d0f7c29-ee60-40d8-81bf-ce8af414aed7
3. www.ft.com/content/37d49e35-8d0e-4ea6-9db8-74183101f204
4. See www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-29/australia-leads-world-in-installation-of-household-solar-panels/6813532
5. www.iea.org/countries/australia/oil
6. www.unep.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2025
7. wmo.int/publication-series/state-of-global-climate/state-of-global-climate-2025

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KURDS

Caught in the crossfire

So far the Kurds have refused to be used against Iran. Syria remains divided and highly unstable. Meanwhile, tensions between Turkey and Israel mount. **Esen Uslu** explores the web of contradictions

When Israel and the US initiated their attack on Iran on February 28, they made it clear that they were prepared to use all available options to achieve the aim of quickly and efficiently bringing the Tehran regime to its knees (and, in the case of Israel, fragmenting the country into a series of docile failed states).

One of the available options, which seemed primed to go, was the Kurds. Given their long history of rebellion against successive Iranian regimes and their armed presence in the mountainous Kurdish region of north-eastern Iraq, they seemed a ready source of cannon fodder just waiting for the US-Israeli green light.

Preparations were underway before the shooting war started. Five Iranian Kurdish political organisations - the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran, Organisation of the Toilers of Kurdistan (Komala-Reform Faction), Organisation of Iranian Kurdistan Struggle (Khabat), Kurdish Freedom Party (PAK) and the Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK). Together they formed the Coalition of Political Forces of Iranian Kurdistan in February 2026. Shortly afterwards, the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KSZK) joined, although the Komala Kurdistan Organisation of the Communist Party of Iran (Komala-CPI) declined. However, Komala-CPI did not oppose the formation of a joint guerrilla force.

All these organisations aim to topple the Tehran regime and have military units of various sizes and effectiveness available. Basically, their stated programme is to liberate eastern Kurdistan (ie, Iranian Kurdistan) by leading a popular uprising to establish a democratic and secular state. Several attempts to unify their units have been made in recent years, but all proved unsuccessful or short-lived.

At the start of the shooting war, it was claimed that US-Israeli clandestine support had changed things. The US even boasted of having used them as conduits to arm Iranian opposition forces. Fox News quoted Donald Trump saying "We sent guns to the protestors - a lot of them". However, it added that the US president believed that the Kurds "had kept the guns for themselves."¹ However, the organisations themselves denied the claim and insisted that they had received no military hardware from the US.

The Trump administration's inconsistent messages added to the confusion. On the sixth day of the US-Israeli war, Trump said: "An assault by Iranian Kurds based in Iraq would be wonderful." But two days later he stated: "We are not looking to the Kurds going in. I've ruled that out." On the first day of the shooting war, Benjamin Netanyahu had called on Iranians to revolt, saying: "Citizens of Iran: Persians, Kurds, Azeris, Abkhazians, and Baluchis. This is your time to join forces, overthrow the regime, and secure your future."

However, the Iraqi Kurdistan regional government stated clearly that it had no intention of being drawn into the war: "Under no circumstances will the territory of the Kurdistan region be permitted to be used as a staging ground for attacks, threats or hostile actions against any neighbouring countries."²

Despite that categorical assurance, Tehran turned the screws on Kurdish opposition forces, launching deadly



Komala guerrilla fighter

drone strikes on their bases. Iranian-backed militias in Iraq were also mobilised. Kurdish forces suffered a good number of casualties. Sending a further blunt political message, Iran even targeted the residences of regional president Nechirvan Barzani in Dohuk and former president Masoud Barzani in Erbil.

While a substantial number of US and Israeli airstrikes took place in Iranian Kurdistan, no substantial action was taken by Iranian Kurdish guerrilla forces up to the April 8 ceasefire.

Turkey and Israel

While the centre of gravity of the military action appeared to be on both sides of the Iran-Iraq border, the Kurdish freedom movement, which also operates in Turkey and Syria, found itself in a precarious situation. The outbreak of hostilities between US-Israel and Iran came at an inopportune moment. After all, the Kurdish Worker Party has already committed to the peace process with the Turkish government. Having said farewell to armed struggle, it had been taking steps to disarm and withdraw from contact zones with the Turkish army.

In Syria, the Kurdish movement lost the positions in the north it had established by working painstakingly within the Syrian Democratic Forces for years. Arab militias succumbed to pressure and quit the alliance. Kurdish forces undertook a forced withdrawal to their core strongholds under relentless assault from the forces of the new Syrian regime under Ahmed al-Sharaa. Meanwhile their supposed backer, the US, abandoned them. On the brink of annihilation, they made a last-minute peace deal with Damascus in a desperate attempt to survive.

The terms of the deal remain unclear, but, under pressure from Tom Barrack, the US special envoy, a compromise was reached. US forces left their bases in Syria and withdrew to Iraqi Kurdistan, leaving their bases to the new Syrian army. However, showing its fundamental weakness, the al-Sharaa regime is unable to do

anything about the 'temporary' Israeli occupation zone extending beyond the already annexed and colonised Golan Heights. Nor is Damascus in any position to counter Israel's protection granted to the Druze population in the southernmost Suwayda province.

The main tool in the US-Israeli strategy of establishing a new Syrian regime from the diverse Islamist militias was Turkey. Turkey is still al-Sharaa's main prop. But Israel does not want strong or stable regional neighbours: not in Lebanon, not in Gaza, not on the West Bank, not in Syria ... and, crucially, not in Iran.

Hence while Turkey and the al-Sharaa regime were exploring the possibility of using four bases of the former Syrian Arab Army for the New Syrian Army, Israel promptly bombed each of them in August 2025 destroying military equipment and putting them beyond use.

As Turkey and Israel have come into conflict over Syria, the deconfliction arrangements made during the last years of the Ba'ath regime have become redundant. Indeed the conflict between Israel and Turkey extends beyond the Middle East.

There is, for example, the Horn of Africa. Israel was the first to recognise Somaliland, which has unilaterally declared independence from Somalia, while Turkey has a large training base for the Somali army in Mogadishu. Turkey is also building a naval base in Somalia. Turkish army schools are being used to train Somali army officers and NCOs. In response to Israel's deployment of troops in Somaliland, Turkey has moved some older, but effective, tanks and armoured vehicles to bolster its defences. This contest could affect the Bab al-Mandeb straits if it escalates into a wider conflict.

The new circumstances are evident in the virulent anti-Turkish rhetoric of Israel. The press supporting the Israeli government is full of articles criticising Turkey's treatment of the Kurds, its neo-Ottomanist, expansionist ambitions in the Middle East and Africa, and its support for Islamist resistance movements, such

as Hamas and Hezbollah. The Israeli press also claims that Turkey is secretly preparing for war with Israel.

In a tit-for-tat move, Turkey's National Intelligence Organisation (MIT) caught several Mossad cells operating in Turkey red-handed. That despite Turkey and Israel having once been allies. Turkey has insulted Netanyahu by describing him as the "Hitler of our era" and Israel as "baby killers". Turkish airspace is closed to Israeli aircraft, meaning that flights to Russia and Azerbaijan must take a circuitous route around Turkey. Considering the rising aviation fuel prices and longer journey times, this is a considerable inconvenience for Israel. Turkey has imposed a trade embargo on Turkish goods exported to Israel, but hypocritically turns a blind eye to banned goods being re-exported to Israel via third countries. Meanwhile, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline continues to carry Azerbaijani oil destined for Israel, accounting for nearly 50% of its oil consumption.

New realities

The US bad mouthing its Nato allies, while supporting Israel through thick and thin, brings in a new era. While EU countries wobble and waver, they also find themselves on shaky ground in many respects. For example, EU commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, recently remarked: "We must succeed in uniting Europe, so that it does not fall under the influence of Russia, Turkey or China. We must think big and more geopolitically." EU diplomats quickly attempted to repair the damage, but to no avail. Once again, the Eurocentric view of Turkey has become apparent.

Just a couple of months ago, a sizeable Turkish contingent participated in Nato's annual maritime exercise in the Baltic, during which Turkish ships took part in the exercise following a 10-day voyage from the Aegean Sea - demonstrating their preparedness for crisis response. For the first time during the exercise, Turkish drones were deployed from a helicopter carrier and participated in an eight-hour mission alongside Nato aircraft. Turkish participation was highly praised.

However, in the current climate, with the Kurds under fire and Turkey facing an increasingly belligerent Israel, it is difficult to envisage a clear path through the frozen conflict between Iran and US-Israeli forces. The efforts of leftwing groups seem insignificant, compared to the forces mobilised, but the task is clear: we must cut through the fog of frozen war and continue to call for peace in the face of unabated aggression.

As the old saying goes, the main enemy is at home ●

Notes

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What we fight for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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weekly worker

Left opinion was once pro-nuclear

Banking on perfect safety

Forty years ago the Chernobyl disaster happened. **Eddie Ford** argues that nuclear power remains inherently unsafe, incredibly expensive and is tied inextricably to weapons of mass destruction

The anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster should always remind us of the inherent dangers of nuclear power. Yet there are those who want us, obscenely, to view it as a source of 'clean' or even 'green' power - such as the British government, which wants to build yet more nuclear power plants, including small modular reactors (SMRs), or 'mini reactors', the first ones on Anglesey.¹

The April 26 1986 explosion at Chernobyl in Ukraine was the worst nuclear accident to date, causing the immediate death of dozens of people and numerous, often fatal, health problems since. Western reporters who covered the accident were understandably kept well away from the site. Nevertheless, when they were given the once-over with geigercounters they were told to go and thoroughly wash and shower and *incinerate* all of their clothes - so radioactive were they. Also showing the long-term danger to human health, a vast exclusion zone was established - something like the size of Cyprus, which is staggering.

Rising above the site now is the New Safe Confinement - an incredible Heath Robinson-type affair, it is the largest steel structure ever built. Taller than the Statue of Liberty, it weighs more than the Eiffel Tower and is wider than the Colosseum - its arch curving overhead like a giant aircraft hangar.² Put in place in 2016, costing some £1.85 billion, NSC was funded by 45 countries. Its purpose? To shield the world from what lies beneath. Under its vast roof there lies the original sarcophagus - a grey concrete tomb erected in the immediate aftermath of the accident to cover the ruins of the exploded reactor No4.

Some argue that the Fukushima disaster of 2011 - the only other 'level 7 category' event apart from Chernobyl, as defined by the International Atomic Energy Agency³ - was actually worse, because the coastal location of the plant allowed radioactive waste to flow directly into the Pacific and thereby travel around the world. But Chernobyl is generally considered to be on a bigger scale due to its pluming smoke and catastrophic release of intense radiation.

Compromised

According to Ukrainian officials and western experts, a full repair is now required within four years - a project that is estimated to cost up to £432 million - otherwise the NSC's 100-year lifespan cannot be guaranteed. Unsurprisingly, Ukraine's government has not yet found the money.

This is something that should be given extra urgency by the fact that a Russian drone struck the north-west face of the arch on February 14 2025. Firefighters arrived within minutes, but sealing within the roof had caught alight and kept smouldering. For three whole weeks, teams desperately cut more than 300 holes into the outer wall to reach the hotspots with water hoses.



New Safe Confinement: a £1.85 billion structure that dwarfs the Colosseum

When the fires were finally out, it was discovered that the strike had destroyed two key systems. The confinement function, affecting the NSC's ability to contain any radioactive release from the sarcophagus, had been compromised - and so too had the humidity control system, which keeps the structure from corroding, and puts the arch itself at risk of failing. With its main functions deeply compromised, should the sarcophagus now collapse, it would certainly release another cloud of radioactive particles into the air with few, if any, safeguards.

In other words, another Chernobyl disaster is one Russian strike away, as obviously the feat of engineering covering the sarcophagus was never meant to protect it against drone attacks, let alone ballistic missiles.⁴ Indeed, rather than being an isolated incident, that February 2025 drone strike was merely the worst to date of an evolving pattern of increased Russian and Ukrainian near-miss attacks on NPPs and associated storage facilities.

We now know that a flawed reactor design - combined with a series of human errors - caused reactor No4 to explode. It was an explosion that released 400 times more radioactive material than the Hiroshima atomic bomb, affecting swathes of Europe, as the radioactive particles drifted westwards according to the prevailing wind. This included Wales, where heavy rain in April and May 1986 drenched higher ground with alarming quantities of radioactive caesium and iodine. The authorities imposed a blanket ban on the sale of milk, spreading panic.⁵ There is also a profound suspicion that children in Wales were affected too. People from

that school generation have since died from unusual or aggressive cancers and at a relatively young age.⁶

At the Chernobyl plant itself, two operators were killed instantly, while 28 firemen and emergency workers died due to radiation within three months.⁷ About 116,000 were evacuated. According to the World Health Organisation, 240,000 recovery workers were called upon in 1986 and 1987 alone to deal with the consequences. Certainly, no-one can question the heroism of the first responders. With very little protection firefighters entered the stricken plant. They would have known that they were going to die, either from the flames or the radiation.

Tragedy

Many people view Chernobyl as a contributing factor to the fall of the Soviet Union five years later. For example, Ukrainian historian Serhii Plokhyy argues in his 2018 book, *Chernobyl: history of a tragedy* (much of the information contained within appearing in English for the first time), that the disaster helped forge a "modern Ukrainian national consciousness" by exposing the failures of the Soviet system: a moment of rupture.⁸

The Chernobyl explosion was first announced not in the USSR, but in Sweden. Scientists registered a big spike in radiation levels coming from the east. At first, by bureaucratic instinct, the Soviet authorities did not let any news out - deciding against reporting the accident for almost four days, and then merely releasing a vague two-sentence announcement. Three weeks later, Mikhail Gorbachev - after initially describing western reports of the catastrophe as "malicious lies" - finally made a public statement,

as criticism mounted, disclosing the scale and detail of the disaster. So much for his newfound policy of *glasnost* (openness).

Now we are dealing with the Ukraine war, a war with nuclear power plants - either still functioning or under shutdown. In terms of the disputed areas in Ukraine, that includes Europe's biggest nuclear power plant - Zaporizhzhia in south-eastern Ukraine, which is among the 10 largest in the world and under Russian control since 2022.⁹ Are these NPPs safe? Well, all you can say is they are as 'safe' as Chernobyl. Doubtlessly they have built extra security measures since 1986, but in reality nuclear power is inherently *unsafe* - especially in a zone of military conflict.

The left as a whole does not buy into nuclear power any more, but amongst an older generation there were many - especially among the pro-Soviet left - that bought into nuclear power and its big lie of boundless cheap energy. Remember, Britain was the first country to have a civilian nuclear power plant: Calder Hall, which began feeding electricity into the grid in 1956. Then in February 1966, it was announced that the first prototype fast breeder reactor in the UK would be constructed in Dounreay, Scotland.

This was going to be a new dawn for Britain, we were told at the time, with electricity that was going to be so abundant they would not even bother billing it! Nuclear power was presented by some as the 'technology of the future'. In reality, though, the electricity generated from these NPPs was hellishly expensive (and remains so). But what it hid, of course, was Britain's post-World War II attempt to be the 'third power' alongside the

US and USSR. Having its own nukes being an essential requirement.

But America put a stop to all that malarkey, and what we now have is still nuclear power - but Britain patently does not have any independent nuclear capability, illustrating its real standing in the world. Its American-designed nuclear weapons are 'dual-key', meaning that Britain would need the say-so of the US administration before firing off a nuclear missile from one of its four Trident subs.

Nuclear weapons

Nonetheless, successive governments have relentlessly pursued nuclear power, despite the huge costs involved and the evident dangers. Why? The answer is not hard to find: "Maintaining nuclear weapons status, or having the option of going for nuclear weapons status, provides the most likely explanation" - at least according to Phil Johnstone and Andy Stirling, both of Sussex University.¹⁰

But still there are a few on the left who hang on to the idea that nuclear power represents the future. It is, after all, not a fossil fuel, and something is needed to fill the inevitable gaps when it comes to solar and wind (sometimes the sun does not shine, sometimes the wind does not blow).¹¹ Advocates tout its relative safety too. The number of deaths caused by nuclear power is nothing compared to coal (either in terms of mining accidents or diseases associated with the digging and burning of coal). Hence, we are told that nuclear is "not particularly dangerous". Well, yes, but only if things do not go wrong either through a technical failure, human error or a crazy act of war.

In actual fact, nuclear power requires a talent pool of physicists, engineers and technicians, along with a chain of companies capable of supplying the necessary components - and, in turn, the nuclear weapons industry rests on that same talent pool and same supply chain. In other words, peaceful nuclear power is an oxymoron. As for the notion that it is "not particularly dangerous", what can you say on the 40th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster? ●

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Notes

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11. E. Jacobs 'Nature's gift to humanity?' *Weekly Worker* August 22 2024: [weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1503/natures-gift-to-humanity](https://www.weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1503/natures-gift-to-humanity). We were even told that we ought to "embrace" nuclear energy if we want to "set our species on a path to an abundant life for all".