

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity

# weekly **worker**



**Jeremy Corbyn's Your Party clique  
turns to official optimism, make-  
believe and self-deception**

- Letters and debate
- Toxic nationalism
- General Strike 1926
- Trump in China

No 1585 May 14 2026

Towards a mass Communist Party

Free to Nakba marchers £1/£1.10

## HOW MUCH LONGER CAN HE HANG ON?



# LETTERS



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

## Never again!

I was as surprised as delighted when my attention was drawn to the picture appearing on the front page of the *Weekly Worker* (May 7). Not sure how exactly I got there, but I am honoured!

Coincidentally, on May 7 I was reconnected to my communist past twice: in both instances in a tangible way. Although unknown to me at the time, first came my picture in the *Weekly Worker*. Then, in the evening, I participated at a concert organised by the Cornelius Cardew Concerts Trust. Cornelius Cardew was a classical/experimental music composer of significance and, as I understand, a committed communist (of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain). Born May 7 1936, he would have turned 90 this year, but we celebrated his birthday without his presence. Tragically, he died half a lifetime ago at the age of 45. I participated at the concert partly because of my communist connections, but mostly because the concert honoured the Palestinian struggle (with the title, 'The world stands with Palestine').

I am a Jewish holocaust child survivor, born in hiding under a false name during the height of atrocities which European Nazis committed against European Jews. My mother, in hiding under a false name, made notes of what happened before, during and afterwards. For my 13th birthday, she presented me with her memoirs, with a top cover stating: "To my darling Agnes, so that you remember and fight, that such times which I am describing should never be repeated again."

Four years later, when I was 17, a call came to my music grammar school. A communist musicologist was looking for help with researching murdered communist composers. As I was the president/chair of the young communists at my school, I volunteered. This started my extensive year-long research into the life and works of composer

Sándor Kuti, who was a communist as well as Jewish. He was murdered for being Jewish.

Some 65 years ago, my research culminated in a substantial submission, which is still housed at the Institute of Musicology in Budapest. For the past several decades, on and off, I returned to Kuti research (and presentations), as well as to researching and presenting other Jewish composers/musicians who suffered because of the Nazi laws and genocide.

My mother wrote on the top of her memoirs presented to me: "Never again!" To me it means all genocides, all discrimination, all apartheid, and so on. This is why I participate in marches and protests, at one of which my picture now appearing on the front of the *Weekly Worker* was taken. The struggle for "never again" continues.

**Dr Agnes Kory**  
email

## YP Scotland

Your Party Scotland limps further towards oblivion with the report in *The National* newspaper that the Edinburgh and Lothians branch has resigned en masse. Newly appointed (by HQ) CEC member Jim Monaghan has attempted to paper over this latest schism by setting up a new Edinburgh YPS Instagram group: "Please be careful of unofficial sites".

Farcically, on the same old YPS Facebook page, questions have been raised about the supposedly sortitioned Scottish Working Party of eight members who have met with Monaghan and HQ (to quote CEC chair Jenn Forbes) to "take forward the planning and implementation of democratic, autonomous processes and structures for Scotland within Your Party. The work will be rooted in the principle of self-determination, while remaining within the Party's constitutional, legal and regulatory frame work." As if.

The main question being asked was the obviously reasonable 'Who are these sortitioned members?' There's been no mention of them anywhere. Monaghan attempted to fudge on whether he did actually meet them and said it wasn't his

place to name them and that he's "sure there will be more details about the working party members in due course". He also said: "I will update if and when I can. My first CEC meeting is on Sunday." That's Sunday last, but still nothing, although he has, of course, been busy dealing with the aforementioned Edinburgh fallout.

Hilariously, other YP hacks responded to that question with statements like "I personally wouldn't want to be identified as a volunteer serving on a working group for fear of being harassed" and "Members have a right to privacy - that is and always should be an absolute priority"; and, perhaps most ludicrously of all, "we all have a duty as individual members within a member-led organisation to protect all of our YP members. That means safeguarding - protecting their safety and respecting confidentiality." Apparently such members need hiding.

Meanwhile, Jenn Forbes sneers at Starmer's Kings speech today, describing it as a pantomime, whilst this tragicomic comedy, as Polonius put such nonsense in Hamlet, rolls on ...

The YP Alternative Kings Speech is bland nonsense, when it should first and foremost have been an opportunity to demand the abolition of the monarchy. The chaos of the Labour Party right now could and should have been a prime opportunity for our party to proclaim its genuine socialist alternative. But instead, locally and nationally, all that's laid bare is its utter stupidity and irrelevance.

**Tam Dean Burn**  
Glasgow

## CPGB 'secrets'

Tam Dean Burn's letter last week draws attention to some important facts (May 7). First, he recognises that Niall Christie, former Scottish Your Party member elected to the central executive committee, is a supporter of Republic YP. He remains so, even though he resigned from YP itself. This is an important admission, because the CPGB has refused to recognise Republic YP in any reports on YP affairs. I understand their motivation and *modus operandi* here, but it does them no credit.

This means that the newly elected CEC had 14 The Many (TM) members, two independents, seven Grassroots Left and - last, but not least - one Republic YP comrade. Those who don't read the letters page will have no clue about the RYP platform, because it is one of *Weekly Worker's* closely guarded secrets:

- A democratic secular republic.
- End of the union.
- An English parliament.
- Autonomous parties for England, Scotland and Wales.
- Sovereignty of the membership.
- Dual membership (DM).
- Opposition to barring dual members from CEC elections or their expulsion.

Tam's second important point is when he identifies "the huge split that has taken place in Scotland". In England this point is not recognised. The fact that some members in Scotland leave YP does not constitute a 'split'. It is a "huge" split, because it follows definite political lines, which reflect the same division amongst the people of Scotland between unionists, nationalists and republicans. Of course, supporters of the crown and the union refuse to recognise there any republicans in Scotland or Your Party!

The political consequence of this

split is that Your Party reinforced the grip of Anglo-British unionism over Scotland. The Dundee conference majority placed YP Scotland in the nationalist-republican camp. By contrast, Corbyn's TM is an Orange socialist platform following the British Labour tradition. The CEC executive on April 12 overturned the Dundee decision and placed the party in the unionist camp.

It is a reactionary split if those holding a backward position (ie, unionism) drive out the democrats (ie, republicans). I have no hesitation in condemning the CEC majority for imposing this reactionary split on YP Scotland. By contrast, Tam is sad about it because there are less people like Niall to debate with. Yet intellectually, as a unionist, he quietly applauds firm action against what he calls 'nationalism'. If Tam thinks I am "delusional", he should look in the mirror.

Tam's third important point is when he says the Scottish republican comrades who resigned should have remained "in YP till it adopted a programme, Labourite or republican". This is a point made by Republic YP. The 'party' is not really a party until it has a programme. The party is not yet formed. The die is not cast. There is no reason to leave when the programme battle between Labourites and republicans is still going on - not on paper, but by the action of splitting YP Scotland.

It is "utterly delusional" to think YP could become a mass communist party in current conditions. This is why there was no communist platform in the CEC elections. Of course, as propaganda, the CPGB demands a mass communist party right now. It has done the same at every attempt to form a left party over the last 30 years. But in the real world the CPGB threw its weight behind the Grassroots Left, the left wing of Corbyn Labour. In the main fight between Labourism and republicanism, we can rely on the CPGB to back unionist Labour.

**Steve Freeman**  
Republic YP

## Full throttle

A prominent Restore Britain YouTuber recently made a glib comment, where he bemoaned being pressured to stand as a member of parliament and the fact that an MP's salary was a step down and half his existing salary!

Following Eddie Ford's article, 'He who pays the piper' (May 7), we should go full-throttle with class politics on these 'Thatcher's' children of the Nigel Farage and Rupert Lowe types. We need to wage siege warfare against the effects of neoliberalism and deindustrialisation on the working class to show that Farage isn't a solution to their problems.

The recent local elections demonstrated that neoliberalism is dead and we can leave the

moralising anti-racist chanting to the Socialist Worker Party. The *Weekly Worker* should supercharge into full gear to expose these rich popularists who don't represent the working class, while pretenders like Corbyn and his Your Party should go back to pickling their jam.

**Frank Kavanagh**  
email

## BDS now

In response to the call from Palestinian trade unions to escalate pressure to end complicity in Israel's genocide and apartheid, three major trade union federations representing over 80 trade union affiliates across Ireland and Britain announced support for workplace actions on May 14, coinciding with the 78th anniversary of Nakba.

The Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee, the largest coalition in Palestinian civil society, including almost all trade unions, salutes the trade union federations in Britain and Ireland - all affiliated to the International Trade Union Confederation.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the Trade Union Congress are supporting the upcoming workplace day of action in solidarity with Palestine, and major British trade unions are affiliated to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Under the banner of 'Workplace Day of Action for Palestine', these federations have worked with Palestine solidarity organisations to answer the call of support for workplace solidarity action.

Omar Barghouti, co-founder of the BDS movement, said: "Of all people, workers understand well what solidarity means. The Palestinian labour movement has called for meaningful solidarity with our struggle to end Israel's genocide and dismantle its underlying, decades-old regime of settler-colonial apartheid. Ending all complicity in Israel's crimes is a profound moral obligation and a necessary first step of solidarity."

"May 14 will be a powerful statement of solidarity in this respect. When workers from across Ireland and Britain take real action to end the complicity of their respective states, corporations and institutions, they recall the best traditions of international workers' solidarity. They also contribute considerably to building the critical mass of people power we need to effect real policy change."

The workplace day of action coincides with the 78th anniversary of the Nakba - the planned ethnic cleansing and expulsion of most of the indigenous people of Palestine and the destruction of hundreds of our towns and villages to create Israel as a settler colony, premised on supremacy and apartheid.

**BDS Movement**  
email

## Fighting fund

# Your support

As usual, this week's fighting fund has been marked by the generosity and support of more than a few readers. But I have to say that we're still behind the going rate, when it comes to our monthly target of £2,750.

Let me remind you, first of all, of the real need to reach that target every month, given the fact that the *Weekly Worker* has had to deal with hugely increased costs - not least relating to printing and postage. That is why we are so grateful for the support provided by our expanding readership both here in Britain and globally.

This week £419 came our way, taking our running total for May up to £1,034 - in other words, just over £300 short of the halfway mark with, as I write, just two days before the end of the first half of the month. Thanks very much, comrades PB (£80), TW (£50), DV (£30), BB (£20), RD (£12), SM, PM and CC (£10 each) and EP (£6).

All those comrades made

their contributions via bank transfer or standing order, while a further seven used PayPal. Thanks also to comrades TB (£95), PM (£50), ST (£20), AB (£11), not to mention comrades NL, SO and AR, who all chipped in with a fiver.

In other words, we still need £1,716 in the next two and a half weeks. I'm confident we can get there, but can we go shooting past that target to try and make up for last month's shortfall? Let's hope so. Please play your part to help ensure the *Weekly Worker* can continue to fulfil its essential role in building the principled, genuinely democratic-centralist Marxist party that our movement so desperately needs! ●

**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](http://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/donate)

## Communist University 2026

Saturday August 8 until Saturday August 15, inclusive  
Central London venue, near Great Portland Street tube station  
Details of speakers and sessions will be posted online here:  
[communistuniversity.uk](http://communistuniversity.uk)

Cost: Whole week, including accommodation: £250 (£150 unwaged)  
First/final weekend, including one night's accommodation: £60 (£30)  
Full day: £10 (£5). Single session: £5 (£3)

Reserve your place by sending a £30 deposit to account:  
Communist Party of Great Britain

Cooperative Bank, sort code: 08-92-99, account number: 65109991  
IBAN: GB33CPBK08929965109991, BIC: CPBKGB22  
Make sure to reference 'CU 2025' and email [Office@CPGB.org.uk](mailto:Office@CPGB.org.uk)

LABOUR

# How much longer?

Though Sir Keir Starmer's leadership hangs in the balance, his failure is less due to incompetence than to Britain's objective situation, argues Paul Demarty

There can be no doubt that the knives are out for Keir Starmer. As I write, close to 100 MPs have publicly demanded his resignation. His latest make-or-break speech - what must be the fifth 'reset' of his chaotic, despised government - was a damp squib. He rejected "incremental change", and then promised to boldly nationalise an already-nationalised steelworks, and create an already-existing apprenticeship scheme. Truly a once-in-a-generation statesman, ladies and gentlemen; how lucky we are to live to see him at work!

The crisis is, of course, occasioned by the May 7 mauling in local elections, and brutal Labour defeats in the Scottish parliament and Welsh Senedd. All widely expected. In that light, it is hardly surprising that many of the protagonists in the ham-fisted drama of the Labour leadership were already on manoeuvres by then.

There is only one kind of manoeuvre known to these people in our day: the leak to the friendly journalist, the peculiar indiscreetness of people known only to us as 'sources close to ...' and 'allies of ...' someone or other. According to Ed Miliband's pet leakers, he had "privately" suggested to Starmer that he ought to set a timetable for his withdrawal (some privacy!). Andy Burnham - sorry, *sources close to Andy Burnham* - assures us that he has a path to the Commons, that he has some kind of agreement with the national executive not to block him, as well as several noble souls willing to step aside to make room for him in safe seats.

The other 'soft left' challenger, Angela Rayner, has so far held back. Not though Wes Streeting (of the New Labour dead-ender right). He has announced his resignation as health secretary. To run he will need the back of at least 81 Labour MPs. One must presume that enough have already given their nod. Of course, that is only the first hurdle. Besides others throwing in their hats, there is Sir Keir himself. The indications are that he would stand. Streeting's calculation must be that he has to make his bid now ... before the party's real favourite, Andy Burnham, gets back into the Commons (which, given Labour's appallingly low poll ratings, is itself a big ask).

Predictive punditry is a dangerous game for the humble weekly paper correspondent (as I know only too well, having confidently assured readers that Russia would not invade Ukraine in an article published on the very day Putin's tank columns made a break for Kyiv). Currently we have a fast-moving situation, and it may be that even a survivable challenge from Streeting would prove damaging enough for Starmer to reconsider Miliband's initial advice.

However, his position is not as weak as it appears, in several ways. In the first place, it is devilishly difficult to make a coup in the Labour Party. Even Jeremy Corbyn, despised by almost all of his parliamentary colleagues, could brass out the attempt on his leadership in 2016, forcing things in the end to a membership vote he was never in any danger of losing. Challenges must be made openly: there is no equivalent of the Tories' 1922 Committee to serve as a clearing house for discreet



Now they are at each other's throats: Wes Streeting at cabinet meeting alongside Hillary Benn, David Lammy and Rachel Reeves

backstabbing. The threat of reprisals, of promotions missed and committee appointments deep-sixed is all too real.

There is also the mere fact that the field is so crowded, and so incoherent. The old 'hard left' is thoroughly marginalised, apart for a few fossils like Diane Abbott and John McDonnell. Other than that, the gang's all here: there is the soft left, the centre and the right - and even these are divided. Soft lefties must choose between Rayner and taking a punt on Miliband. The centre and right are themselves divided into factions: the old bureaucratic machine core still exists, represented by Labour Together, which seems to be willing to ditch Starmer (Josh Simons has called for him to go in an op-ed for *The Times*); but also the true-believer Blairites, who back Streeting, and Blue Labour, and so on. Starmer is so despised by so many people that they are all somehow tripping over each other trying to give him the Ides of March treatment.

## Bad options

None of the options are exactly great either. Burnham is out of parliament, and supposing he has as clear a path to a safe Labour seat - if there is such a thing at the moment - as his close-to sources seem to think, it would be quite a thing to force a mayoral election on Manchester *now*, Labour having lost *every single seat* contested in that city last week. By doing so he would, of course, further destabilise the government and therefore make it *less* likely that Labour would win the mayoralty than if he were simply hit by a bus. It does not exactly have the smell of selflessness to it, and why would it? Burnham is a political chameleon - a somewhat more imaginative one than the average run of Labour apparatchiks, but it could not be more obvious that the pursuit of personal glory is his main aim.

Within the hallowed chamber of British 'democracy', meanwhile, we have: Ed Miliband (whose previous spell as leader was not exactly a ringing success); Angela Rayner (with charges of tax irregularities apparently cleared); and Wes Streeting (glistening

with Mandelson-slime). Catherine West, meanwhile, was at best a stalking horse (some have unkindly brought to mind the old description of Anthony Meyer, who made a similar challenge to Margaret Thatcher in 1989, as a "stalking donkey"). As a Labour MP told the *Guardian's* Jessica Elgot, "We have to face up to the fact that every single one of them is fucking useless."

The preference among the PLP malcontents, therefore, is increasingly for an orderly transition: the 'set the timetable' option. Such is the attitude, also, of Simons, who writes that Starmer

... should take control of the situation by overseeing an orderly transition to a new prime minister. What happens next is not a horse race: it's about the future of our party and our country. Over the coming months, how the Labour Party conducts itself matters. To avoid leadership chaos, senior figures across factions should come together to decide the best way forward. The public expects nothing less.<sup>1</sup>

Even that has hardly got a great track record - the handover of power from Tony Blair to Gordon Brown was buttery-smooth, but the Brown premiership was anything but. The trouble is that this scenario concedes all the initiative to Starmer. Only he can set out this hallowed timetable. If he does not want to book himself an Uber to the glue factory, Streeting, Burnham, Simons and whoever else can go hang.

He *may* want to, however - or may come to want to before long. So let us assume that some sort of 'orderly' departure is arranged, and a leadership contest is arranged (or Simons' back-room deal takes place to ensure a coronation). What should these successors do? What can they promise, really?

Simons is not uninteresting here, given his background as a backroom fixer for probably the most apolitical faction of the Labour right. His prescription for Labour is at least rhetorically bold:

We need radicalism, energy, and immense courage ... We must ditch sharp-elbowed positioning and the ridiculous debate about whether to move left or right, because the old political spectrum no longer exists ...

What most people want is not complicated. An economy that rewards hard work, lower bills and higher living standards, roads free from potholes, rivers without shit, and streets without litter. A state that punishes profiteers, rewards innovation, and harnesses technology for public good. Strong borders and a migration system run in the national interest, a willingness to celebrate our history and strengthen our communities ... All this requires radical reform ... We must embrace risk.<sup>2</sup>

His model for all this is none other than Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whose long presidency really did reshape the American body politic, establishing for a time the legitimacy of open and large-scale state intervention in the US economy. He quotes what he claims is FDR's motto: "above all, try something".

Yet it cannot seriously be argued that Britain today is in an analogous position to the US in 1932. The immediate economic situation in the US was far more dire than ours, of course, but the fundamentals could not have been more different. The US was a rising great power - indeed on the cusp of assuming global hegemony. It had a vast industrial base and agricultural sector. Britain today, on the other hand, is at the absolute fag-end of its long decline. Its economy is largely based on the financial sector, which generates enough tax revenue to just about keep most of the rest of us out of penury. We build almost nothing, and are net importers of food.

This situation is not merely a matter of will. It is possible to imagine, we suppose, a truly radical reorientation to some kind of 'war communism' and a push for self-sufficiency in the essentials, likely at huge short-term human cost (though, even then, where do we propose to get rare earths and the various inputs to semiconductor

manufacture? The tooth fairy?). Perhaps the fiscal straitjacket could be loosened *enough* to make some modest repairs to Britain's social fabric, although bond-market vigilantes are already nibbling away at gilt yields, to warn the victor of this little bunfight away from any shift to the left. What is *not* possible is for some new broom in Number 10 - Labour, Tory, or for that matter Green or Reform - to embark on some impressive national development project, fuelled purely by audacity and verve.

## Long list

Starmer looks a pretty diminished figure today. In some respects, this is probably his fault *as an individual*. Nobody forced him to make Mandelson ambassador, or to remove the whip from rebels against attacks on pensioners. His robotic, fake public image is partly a creation of a hostile media, of course, but it is not an obviously *unfair* creation. He seems to have no political opinions other than the notion that sensible people like Sir Keir Starmer should be in charge, and left to 'deliver change', and it is difficult to see his limpet-like grip on Number 10 as anything other than monstrous and baffling arrogance.

If his premiership is to be written off as a failure already, however - and surely it must - it merely joins an ever-longer list. Brown was knifed by the yellow press and had no answer; Cameron won re-election, only to inflict the disaster of Brexit on the British state; Theresa May somehow squandered her position in a snap election and limped from humiliation to humiliation; Boris Johnson barely had his feet under the table before repeated scandals undermined him; Liz Truss had a shorter tenure than the average Tottenham Hotspur manager these days; at that point, Rishi Sunak could do no more than steer his leaky boat into the scuttling yard.

These men and women were probably not as stupid as they seemed, with the exception, perhaps, of the *sui generis* moron, Truss. They were made to look stupid because there is a basic problem with British politics. We fight our elections as if Britain were still a great world power, but nothing could be further from the truth. The UK is a coupon-clipping backwater, even more radically dependent on American patronage than the rest of the so-called west. Europe *as a whole* could buck these adverse circumstances; not our drizzly little island with its even drizzlier statelet over the Irish Sea.

It is not, therefore, that we have had a series of 'fucking useless' prime ministers. We have had a series of more or less average prime ministers (and Liz Truss), who have been made to look useless, because they *cannot* - to use Starmer's favourite word - 'deliver'. The same limitations will apply to whoever succeeds him.

The only mystery is that so many are queuing up to do exactly that ●

paul.demarty@weeklyworker.co.uk

## Notes

1. www.thetimes.com/uk/politics/article/josh-simons-starmer-resign-prime-minister-figmvhc38h.  
2. *Ibid.*

## FEDERAL REPUBLIC

# Toxic nationalist recipes

With the rise of Reform UK, the SNP and Plaid as the biggest parties in Scotland and Wales, our demand for a federal republic has become even more relevant, argues **Eddie Ford**

There used to be a situation when we were told that the CPGB's call for a federal republic, together with the right of Scotland and Wales to self-determination, was either irrelevant or unnecessary. All you had to do, for example, was vote for the SNP in Scotland and eventually you will end up with independence, albeit one that sees it keeping the monarchy and retaining the pound sterling for an "extended" transition period.

But the supreme court disabused that easy notion in November 2022 in an unequivocal judgment, saying that Scotland does not have the right to self-determination based on the constitutional framework established in the 1999 laws that created the devolved Scottish parliament. All matters related to the union belong to Westminster alone. That is, it is up to the UK government to decide whether you are allowed to have a referendum in Scotland or not, let alone whether that referendum could be given actual binding legal status by a majority vote in Holyrood.

With that background in mind, the May 7 elections saw the SNP win the election with 58 MSPs, falling 13 short of an overall majority. Reform and Labour both won 17 seats, followed by the Greens on 15, the Conservatives on 12 and the Liberal Democrats on 10 - the worst performance at a Scottish parliament election for both Labour and the Conservatives. As for the Senedd elections, it was Plaid Cymru which emerged triumphant - surprising some with the ease of its victory - as the largest party for the first time, with 43 seats, while Reform secured second place with 34 seats, and Labour was reduced to third place with a historic low of nine - having previously completely dominated every Senedd vote since devolution in 1999 and general elections since 1922.

### May 7 elections

What these elections obviously highlight is the national question in Britain, which has been pointed out by numerous observers, given that the heads of devolved government are people who do not want to be in the UK. It is a bit of an exaggeration to say that these elections bring us to the edge, but they could lead to what you might call "interesting" politics. In Northern Ireland, Sinn Féin's Michelle O'Neil certainly thinks so, hailing the victories of the SNP and PC as "seismic" - arguing that the change voted for would be about getting "free from the limitations of Westminster".

Reuters, for one, also thinks that the election results could be significant. "A divided kingdom: pro-independence parties surge across Britain", runs its headline, saying that the outcome of the May 7 elections is "likely to make Britain harder to govern". The media outlet also points out the fears of George Foulkes, a former minister for Scotland under Tony Blair, who said: "There is a real risk that we end up sleepwalking into the end of the United Kingdom", because "once these things get momentum, they are hard to stop".<sup>1</sup> Both the SNP and Plaid politicians are anticipating, or hoping, that the possibility of Nigel Farage becoming prime minister in 2029 - supposedly an emblem of virulent English nationalism - could focus minds on the need for independence.

But of course, given Reform's second place in both Scotland and Wales, in reality it is a *British*



**Class unity, not national unity, should be our first and foremost principle**

nationalist party - just as the SNP is Scottish nationalist and PC is Welsh nationalist.

Exactly in that nationalist spirit there is talk about the pro-independence parties forming a 'Celtic alliance' to force Westminster to grant further powers on spending, taxation and welfare to the devolved authorities. This is not a new idea, of course: the SNP's Nicola Sturgeon in 2016, when she was first minister of Scotland, declared that the idea of a "Celtic corridor" of Ireland and Scotland appealed to her.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, a few years ago, Bangor University lecturer and journalist Ifan Morgan Jones suggested that "a short-term fix" for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland might be a greater degree of cooperation with each other, or a "union within a union".<sup>3</sup>

So what is the left's answer to all this? The general response is to tail the petty nationalists of the SNP and PC, just as there was a tailing of Nigel Farage when he led the United Kingdom Independence Party over Brexit. Some, such as the *Morning Star's* CPB, are British nationalists. George Galloway's Workers Party of Britain likewise falls into that category. But then there are the likes of the Socialist Workers Party - its line is determined by what is bad for British imperialism. The reasoning being that what is bad for British imperialism must be good for the working class. This is totally un-Marxist, of course. By the same measure, you might as well say that Covid-19 was bad for

British imperialism, which it was. But does that mean it was good for the working class? Hardly.

As we have said countless times in the *Weekly Worker*, the idea that the working class would be strengthened by the break-up of the historically united labour movement in Britain is profoundly mistaken. Yes, the working class movement in England ought to champion the right of Scotland and Wales to self-determination up to and including independence. On the other hand, we should say, 'Do not do it - we need a united working class' (just as we would not want a married couple having difficulties together to automatically divorce). Working class organisations fighting for democracy and socialism are in a stronger position if they do so together, and that is why we also raise unity of Britain with the working class movement in Europe.

### Internationalism

But, of course, you have heard near endless times the bogus argument from the Scottish Socialist Party and other left nationalists who think Scotland would be better off if it broke with England. Why? Because things are so rightwing south of the border - look at Reform, look at the Tories - therefore we need to be on our own. Hardly a socialist argument, true.

But what needs to be hammered home to the left is that *if* - and it's a very big if - you had an independent Scotland, it would resemble something along the lines of Ireland in the 1920s-30s, rapidly losing people,

as they get out of what would amount to a failed state. The Irish population crashed with the potato famine ... and continued to decline well into the 20th century. The 26 counties recording a low of 2.8 million in the 1961 census. It only started to grow during the 1960s - although slowly, as emigration was the standard option for many young people till the 'Celtic Tiger' economic boom that came with entry into the EU and positioning the country as a low-tax location for transnational corporations.

The danger is that Scotland, instead of enjoying wonderful prosperity, would actually be plunged into poverty by independence - Scottish people would then, like the Irish, vote with their feet and head abroad. Even for the UK, few if any would argue that Brexit has been a boon. But a 'Scoexit' would be even more retrogressive.

Communists have never treated the bogus promises of left nationalists as anything other than risible. Once, for example, the Scottish Socialist Party's Tommy Sheridan and Alan McCombes *boasted* that Scotland could become a Cuba off the north-eastern Atlantic coast. Well, looking at Cuba today, yes, that is imaginable.

But they were not promising grinding poverty, power cuts and mass migration. Does anyone remember their execrable book, *Imagine?* Here the former friends argued Scotland could become a shining example for the whole world because of its "long coastlines" and a "clean environment",

oil in "abundance" and a "flourishing" culture, etc, etc - supposedly what a country needs for socialism.<sup>4</sup>

In the real world, Scotland would undergo 'push back' if there was any genuine attempt at forming an SSP-type government - it would be isolated, it would be blockaded, it would be sanctioned - it would, if necessary, be invaded. That is not something any genuine socialist should strive for.

In fact, the CPGB's programmatic perspective of a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales has become more and more relevant in the context of Brexit and the petty nationalist first ministers in Holyrood, Cardiff and Stormont.

Separation into small states is not the road to socialism. While our immediate demand is for a federal republic, as communists we favour voluntary unity and the biggest possible centralised states as providing the best conditions for the working class to do anything decisive in world politics. Hence our perspective of a United States of Europe ●

eddie.ford@weeklyworker.co.uk

### Notes

1. reuters.com/world/uk/divided-kingdom-pro-independence-parties-surge-across-britain-2026-05-08.
2. independent.ie/news/scottish-first-minister-backs-calls-for-celtic-corridor/35253943.html.
3. nation.cymru/opinion/might-a-celtic-union-be-one-route-to-changing-the-balance-of-power-within-the-uk.
4. T Sheridan and A McCombes *Imagine* Edinburgh 2000.

## YOUR PARTY

# Jeremy's Potemkin village

Left election results were, in general, dismal - Your Party and YP-backed candidates being no exception. So the Corbyn clique has fallen back on official optimism, make-believe and self-deception, says **Carla Roberts**

Your Party's central executive committee met on May 10. It proved to be a magnificent example of self-deception and make-believe. It started off with an 'update' by the dear leader himself. Jeremy spoke about the "tremendous successes" of the local elections and "how we're all going to work together to make the world a better place" (as one CEC member summed it up). The meeting then moved to decide how to purge a fair chunk of its membership. You couldn't make it up.

An upbeat email by YP political officer Louise Regan on May 9 had already set the tone of 'official optimism'. There were 25 Your Party candidates and 22 "Your Party-backed candidates". But Regan ignored all of them in her email, probably because none of them came anywhere close to winning a seat. Narendra Kandel in Greenwich (coming sixth with 720 votes), Laura Graham in Lambeth (470 votes) and Ron Cooper in West Lancashire (18%) are the best of the not very successful YP bunch - and have already been swept away under the Your Party carpet.

CEC member Grace Lewis came 11th with 14.9% of the vote in a Coventry ward where three Reform candidates won. She resigned from the CEC on May 9, because "her role on the CEC was as a public office holder, so she was unable to continue holding this position", as the report of the Grassroots Left supporters on the CEC explains. We are not sure if she was pushed or if she jumped.

On one level, it does not matter - GL supporters are being entirely ignored on the CEC anyway. However, we would always urge comrades not to resign, but to go down fighting - and in the process further expose the bureaucratic shenanigans of the Corbyn clique. As an aside, the two proposals made by GL members for the agenda, including for YP to participate in the Notting Hill carnival, have left us more than a bit underwhelmed.

### Celebrate

Still, Regan assures us that "there's a lot for us to celebrate!" She means the fact that some of the 'independent' groups backed by YP did quite well. Her email focuses on the re-election of Tower Hamlets mayor, Lutfur Rahman of *Aspire*, "which Your Party is proud to have backed in these elections". According to Regan, the local measures introduced by *Aspire* amount to a "shining light of municipal socialism".

They boil down to a "winter fuel payment", an "education maintenance allowance", "free school meals" for all pupils and the provision of "free homecare for the [most vulnerable] elderly and disabled". Those measures are all well and good, but it is not exactly Paris Commune territory.

At best, Rahman and *Aspire* could be described as communalist-populist. In 2015, Rahman was found guilty of "corrupt and illegal practices" in a previous election. Transport for London withheld £1 million of annual funding because Rahman ended the borough's low traffic neighbourhood scheme to suit local businesses. And he famously refused to use public transport, instead insisting on being driven in a council-funded Mercedes.<sup>2</sup> Rahman is clearly no socialist and it is beyond bizarre to describe Tower Hamlets as "municipal socialism" - which is, of course, a contradiction in terms anyway. You cannot possibly



His Party ... will never be a mass party

escape global capitalism in a single country, let alone a single borough in London - one of the epicentres of finance capitalism.

Treasurer Fadel Takroui reported that YP had spent "a total of £17,500" on supporting local independent groups, "with the level of support given based on the number of candidates standing, the level of campaign activity and funding requests". We suspect *Aspire* was very much top of the list.

Individual YP candidates, on the other hand, were offered a pre-designed, personalised leaflet with a print run of 5,000, a few posters and "access to canvassing software at reduced cost price". Unsurprisingly, only 12 of the 47 candidates made use of the measly offer, according to Takroui's report.

A number of those candidates have since complained that communication with the centre was "extremely slow and bad" and that support was more than patchy. In an online meeting organised by CEC member Mel Mullings on May 10, for example, Ryan Richards - a young black candidate who stood under the YP moniker in Leeds - explained:

... it took over a week to approve our leaflet and then they wanted Zarah Sultana's name taken off. The posters were delivered two days before the elections and I now have a whole bunch sitting in my living room. The YP social media didn't mention local candidates at all and didn't share our content - they just focused on the independent groups. I was always told to email the election team, but I never got a response. My messages to two staffers were usually left 'unread'. I've felt really let down and alone.

This has been echoed by other candidates.

It is interesting that in her email, Regan ignored the election of former Corbyn collaborator Pamela Fitzpatrick, who won a seat from Labour in the Marlborough Ward, Harrow, standing under the YP-backed *Arise* banner. But, because she fell out with the Corbyn clique over the botched launch of the party, she is now being erased. The same goes for Andrew Feinstein, who is involved in the Camden People's Alliance, whose candidate, Shah Abdul Majeed Bakth, won a seat (which Regan also does not mention).

When it comes to the rest of the left, only George Galloway's Workers Party of Britain had any kind of

success, celebrating the election of five additional councillors<sup>3</sup> - all in areas with a high Muslim population. A handful of SWP members stood as part of Haringey Socialist Alliance, Ealing Community Independents and as 'independents', getting generally bad results very similar to the 289 candidates who stood using SPEW's Tusc moniker. Apart from a couple of odd exceptions (chief among them Nadia Noreen Ditta, who in the Bevoir ward in Southampton, managed to come second with 23.8%), the average vote for the left is under one percent.

### Downplay

Perhaps in an attempt to downplay the desultory results, the Tusc website identifies "750 or so" candidates "who stood on an anti-austerity and anti-war platform" and claims that "the election of a number of anti-austerity and anti-war councillors under a variety of banners, including some of the Green victors, offers the chance of a fightback, combining council positions with a grassroots campaign". Another piece of self-delusion and official optimism that is of absolutely no use to the working class. No, the reality is that the left did very badly, chiefly because there is no united, socialist political alternative that could inspire the working class.

Louise Regan claims in her email that "next time Your Party will be a force in every corner of the country". Doubtful. We suspect the current arrangement - letting local independent groups do the real work and hang on to their coat tails - very much suits Corbyn. He does not want a real mass working class party. He remains at best a left Labourite, who still believes in Britain's road to socialism along the lines of the *Morning Star*'s Communist Party of Britain. He has no interest in building a party that organises an active working class in vibrant branches and with a healthy culture of discussion and debate - that kind of party would hold its leader to account. And Corbyn certainly does not believe in the need to build a revolutionary party. He thinks that socialism can be introduced by a vote in parliament - and therefore you need another Labour-type party.

It is important to understand this when it comes to the so-called "summer of Your Party branch formation" announced at the May 10 CEC meeting. Membership officer Cassie Bellingham explained how the Corbyn clique will be kicking the can further down the road. There will be a "pilot launch" somewhere or other and "a branch formation report, which will

have a community organising model at its heart, because we don't want any more talking shops". The "talking shops" refers to YP proto-branches, obviously. Though we cannot tell you what exactly a "community organising model" is. No doubt Karie Murphy will come up with some of her famous waffle.

There will be "a rolling timetable" with a "spiderweb formation", which is supposed to lead to other branches in the area being formed (following "borough structures"). Each of the "planned 300 branches" have to register as an "accounting unit with the electoral commission"<sup>4</sup> and then "organise an assembly, or listening circle". Local members will receive an email with notice of a first meeting.

All of this will be news for the over 150 proto-branches that developed organically in the run-up to the launch conference in November 2025. Needless to say, they are all being entirely ignored in this process. We suspect HQ is currently busy picking local Corbyn loyalists who can be asked to set up tame meetings here and there.

There is also an "exciting summer schedule of events" being planned, which looks like a very hectic series of weekly actions, including an "event on trade unions" on July 11 in Durham (linked to the Miners Gala); the launch of an "international commission" on July 22; the launch of a "programme review and preparation commission" on July 27; the launch of a "local government network" on August 15 and an event around "marginalised communities" on August 22 in Blackburn. The first event, the "launch of a disability rights commission", will supposedly take place on June 20 in Sheffield ("or Carlisle").

This is certainly news to the proto-branch in Sheffield, which includes among its supporters CEC member Sophie Wilson. It very much remains to be seen if any of these events actually take off or in what shape. It looks to us very much like a rather shoddy and unstable Potemkin village.

### Dual membership

The CEC was also presented with a 'Dual membership integration framework and implementation of rules CEC operational paper', which has Karie Murphy's bureaucratic fingerprints all over it. On seven long pages, we can read all about 'the operational model', 'standard case flow', 'case management models', 'key timelines' and 'implementation phases'. Thanks to the outright majority of Corbyn's leadership

faction, The Many, the previous CEC meeting on April 12 had already overturned the conference decision on dual membership, which, as an important reminder, read as follows:

Dual membership with aligned allied parties: Members shall be permitted to hold membership in other national political parties, where they have been approved by the CEC as aligning with the party's values, to include those with whom the party cooperates electorally. The approved list shall be subject to ongoing CEC review and annual ratification by national conference.

No such "approved list" was ever produced - instead Murphy had drawn up a banned list of nine socialist groups (including the CPGB, Socialist Workers Party and SPEW), who are now deemed "ineligible". The May 10 CEC meeting agreed (against the votes of the GL supporters), that "the integration pathway for external parties" sets out the "two routes" on how to avoid expulsion: "Route A - individual transition: resign and join YP normally"; or "Route B - organisational integration (dissolution model)". In other words, there are no parties with which dual membership will ever be allowed (any such arrangements are only "temporary") - it has simply been abolished by CEC diktat. This last point in the paper made us chuckle: "16. Conclusion: Ensures fairness, coherence and operational clarity." For sure.

But there will be no 'hot' witch-hunt like in the Labour Party. This is mainly because YP has neither the staff nor the money to actively chase members of leftwing groups and, for example, trawl through social media profiles or leftwing papers. But we suspect there is a list of names ready to be processed, with more names being added by willing snitches and rightwingers.

Most left groups have made it quite easy for the YP bureaucrats and have effectively walked out. The Revolutionary Communist Party never really got involved, while the SWP declared in April that it will "not pursue a 'deep entryism', where we secretly maintain our own organisation inside Your Party. The key battles are outside the structures of Your Party",<sup>5</sup> explained *Socialist Worker* - all the while continuing to suck up to Corbyn and calling for a vote for the Greens in the local elections. Under its new leadership, the SWP really is moving to the right at record speed. Meanwhile, SPEW has staged a soft walkout, withdrawing its members from local steering committees.

We urge YP members to hold on to their membership for now, and to get involved in the new branches as and where they are being set up in order to openly fight for the kind of party we actually need. ●

### Notes

- docs.google.com/document/d/1YdS1V7eiWM6mcC4xXg5D21dwIpzEKOLV1ThiZ8yYLY/edit?tab=t.0.
- www.theguardian.com/uk-news/davehillblog/2015/jun/10/tower-hamlets-the-rise-and-fall-lutfur-rahman.
- www.workerspartygb.org/full\_results\_2026.
- docs.google.com/document/d/1YdS1V7eiWM6mcC4xXg5D21dwIpzEKOLV1ThiZ8yYLY/edit?tab=t.
- socialistworker.co.uk/your-party/your-party-leadership-votes-to-ban-dual-membership-for-socialist-organisations.

## OUR HISTORY

# What could have been done?

People, their accumulated class traditions, their militant organisations, their ability to produce and sustain a whole body of strong, capable, far-sighted leaders - that is what makes history. Jack Conrad concludes his series of articles on the 1926 General Strike

When writing history, Marxists quite rightly strive to do more than detail 'what happened'. There is also 'why what happened happened' and, perhaps more importantly, 'what could have happened'. That is most decidedly the case when it comes to *modern* history. After all, here we are dealing with the struggles of the working class and our organisations, leaders, political parties, trends, factions, etc.

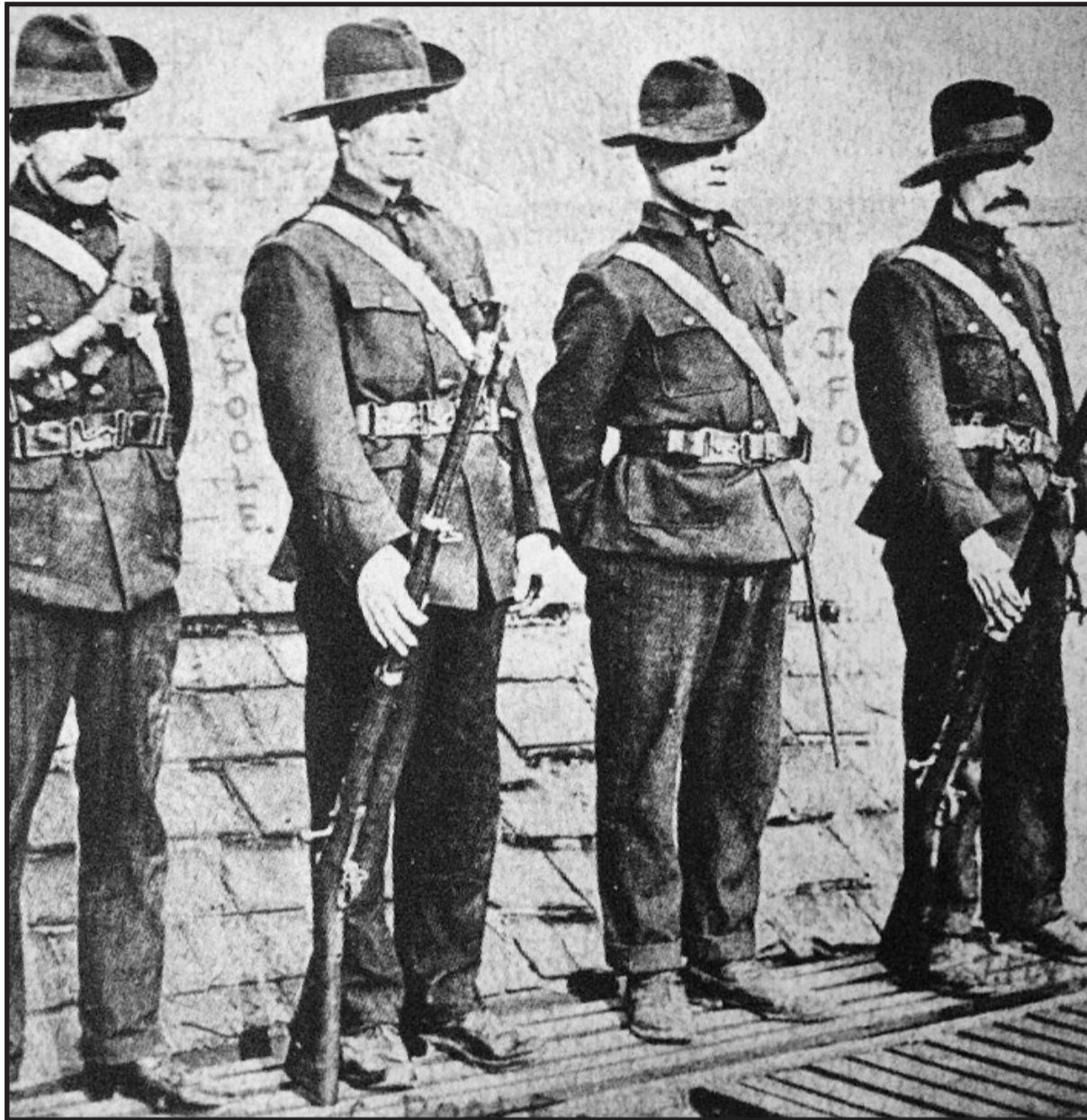
Needless to say, we are primarily interested in drawing out lessons with a view to revolutionary practice, Marx's celebrated 11th thesis on Feuerbach setting the paradigm: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it."<sup>1</sup>

For good reason, cadets at West Point and Sandhurst study ancient military campaigns: the Battle of Cannae, where Hannibal triumphed over much bigger Roman forces; Alexander the Great's logistics, combined arms tactics and speed of manoeuvre; the battles of Salamis and Marathon during the Greco-Persian war; Julius Caesar's Siege of Alesia, where he employed circumvallation. Despite the vast technological changes since then, there are many repeating patterns, challenges and available solutions.

When, for example, we study the October Revolution, we do so not in order to make the banal statement that victory was inevitable, because the revolution was victorious. That tells us absolutely nothing. Study is for the purpose of illuminating the past, that almost goes without saying; but, especially with us, there is also illuminating the path to the future. The same goes for analysis of the vastly more numerous *valuable* defeats suffered by our class, including historic turning points such as the 1871 Paris Commune, the 1905 Russian Revolution, the 1918-19 German Revolution, and, of course, the 1926 General Strike in Britain. Defeat was not inevitable. Other outcomes were achievable. Hence my series of articles.<sup>2</sup>

There is a very useful cottage industry dealing with the nine days at a local level: Hackney, Stoke, Bradford, Newcastle, Glasgow, etc. Readers will discover all manner of wonderful little details. However, it is the larger picture - the national and the international - that primarily interests us. Why? Because here, and here alone, at the level of high politics, lies the possibility of working class self-liberation.

Such a goal can never be achieved if we act only under conditions where success is absolutely guaranteed - a recipe for resignation, sitting on the sidelines and permanent submission. Knowledge about the momentary balance of class forces is usually partial, sketchy ... sometimes it is radically wrong. Often too we are forced into making a stand under circumstances not of our choosing, where we have our backs against the wall, where the enemy is demanding surrender. Do we resist? Or do we give in? Even if underlying objective conditions are favourable, events are driven forward by hope or held back by fear. In a word, the subjective factor always plays a vital role. History is not predestination. It relies on people, above all their accumulated class traditions, their militant organisations and their ability to produce and sustain a whole body of strong, capable, far-sighted leaders.



Irish Citizen Army should have provided inspiration

In that light, we ask ourselves what the Communist Party *should* have done in 1926 to change what became a strategic defeat into something else. After all, the General Strike did not occur in an historic epoch where socialism was materially impossible. True, given bureaucratic inertia and a Tory government determined to defeat the enemy within, 1926 was far more like our stillborn 1905 than our failed October 1917. Note, Lenin famously called 1905 the "dress rehearsal" or the "general rehearsal" for October 1917. But was it inevitable that our 1926 dress rehearsal had to end in such a disastrous flop? Definitely not.

As the reader will already have gathered over this series, this writer agrees with those in the 1920s, including Leon Trotsky, who stressed the necessity of building the CPGB and therefore the need for a clear understanding of the 'official' lefts in the Labour Party and the trade union movement.

Left reformism can never be a force for socialist revolution, because it is organically tied to the pro-state right and therefore the existing state-constitutional formation. Indeed left reformism often *boasts* of its commitment to the nation, parliament and the rule of law. Its 'national socialism' comes via the existing state and is therefore *anti-socialism*.

### United front

Nonetheless, the CPGB was quite correct to fight for a united front with 'official' lefts in the National Minority Movement. Here was a way - based on an agreed *advanced* programme<sup>3</sup> - to reach out to the considerable

numbers who were under the spell of the likes of Alf Purcell, George Hicks and Alonzo Swales. But such unity should never have involved the CPGB in buttering up 'official' lefts and giving them an unearned Bolshevik reputation. These 1926 trade union tops were the Sharon Grahams, the Mick Lynchs, the Arthur Scargills of their day ... only considerably to the left. Therefore, the CPGB had to *combine* unity with criticism. If that criticism meant Purcell, Hicks and Swales breaking from the NMM, then that would have been a price worth paying.

Understandably then, united fronts are usually time-limited. They are a balancing act, a tactic which involves unity with 'official' lefts around an agreement to defend, or advance, the immediate vital interests of the working class. Whether negotiated from above or secured from below, the united front offers the communists the *possibility* of winning the majority: that being our overriding objective. So the united front is a *competitive alliance*.

There, should, therefore, have been no thought, no toleration of any tendency towards organisationally or politically blurring the distinction between the communists and the 'official' lefts: only the Communist Party can "defend the interests of the proletariat as a whole"<sup>4</sup>. So the 'official' left leaders cannot be treated as if they are quasi-communist, halfway near us, cothinkers, etc. They were being set up in order to expose them.

Naturally, there had to be something in the NMM for the

'official' lefts too. It could not be a one-way street that just benefited the communists. The 'official' left wanted to be seen as defending, or advancing, the interests of the working class ... and thereby maintain their established positions. So, to the extent that within united fronts communists grow their influence, the 'official' lefts will be looking more and more for an excuse to bail out.

### Open criticism

The CPGB should have been aware, therefore, that such leaders would not only split at some point. They would probably buckle when put to any serious test. More than that, however: the CPGB needed to *openly and fearlessly* say that in front of the entire working class.

Doubtless honest, necessary, pointed criticism would have been met with indignant, pained, furious outcries from the likes of Purcell, Hicks and Swales. They would strenuously argue that the main task lay in opposing the Tory common enemy; that the CPGB was playing into the hands of the Labour right by attacking them and was thereby inadvertently performing a service for the capitalist class. That unless the communists put their divisive culture of confrontation behind them, learnt to temper their criticisms, present them in a polite, respectful manner, then Purcell, Hicks and Swales would have no choice but to turn their backs on the communists.

The 1926 CPGB certainly feared any such outcome. After all, the loss of such important 'official' lefts risked isolating communists from the mass

of the working class. JT Murphy, representing the CPGB in Moscow, even wanted to stop Soviet trade unions calling Purcell, Hicks, Swales, etc., "traitors". Unmistakable signs of opportunism ... called out by Comintern (including Joseph Stalin).

Yet the fact of the matter is that 'official' left leaders are always prone to sell out. Not simply because of their individual weaknesses, quirks and foibles. Rather it is their social position. The trade union bureaucracy is a privileged social caste that specialises in selling the commodity, labour-power, and which thereby acts as an intermediary between labour and capital. In the last analysis that means even the most leftwing trade union general secretary or president has more in common with the class-collaborationist right than with the working class taken as a whole. Only by subordinating the general secretaries and presidents to the collective discipline of a Communist Party can that link with the right be broken: ie, left trade union officials had to become communists, or be replaced by communists, who in either case agree to abide by the norms and provisions of democratic centralism.

Needless to say, being clear about 'official' left leaders does not mean denouncing rank-and-file workers who follow them - that would be self-defeating leftism. On the contrary, the CPGB should have done everything to link itself with, merge with, the militant minority - in the mid-1920s some one million strong - and win their trust, confidence and loyalty. From there it was more than conceivable to convert the moderate majority into a militant majority. The pace, the intensity, the scope of the class struggle ultimately deciding all such matters.

Obviously, in 1925 that meant preparing the working class for the General Strike. Crucially the CPGB needed an appropriate political strategy. That had to centre on what Marx and Engels called the struggle to "win the battle for democracy"<sup>5</sup>. A programme that targeted Britain's *lack* of democracy - eg, the 1924 rigged election that brought the Tories to power; the monarchy; the established Church of England; the unelected House of Lords; the MI5 and MI6 peddlers of the forged 'Zinoviev letter'; the dictatorship in the armed forces; the supposedly neutral BBC, the inferior legal status of women; the division and continued oppression of Ireland ... and Britain's rule over a vast colonial empire, whose population numbered many hundreds of millions.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the banner of democracy had to be taken away from the hypocritical hands of Stanley Baldwin, Winston Churchill, David Lloyd George, Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden.

What alternative should the CPGB have advocated to the quasi-democratic monarchical system? A fully democratic federal republic, which to be real has to be defended by the armed people - a strategic salient that opens the way for popular control to be extended to the point where the principle of profit is superseded by the principle of need.

Not for nothing did Frederick Engels say that the demand for the republic cannot "possibly be passed by". Indeed he called the "democratic republic" the specific form of working class rule, unapologetically naming it "the dictatorship of the proletariat"<sup>7</sup>.

With that in mind, the 1926 CPGB ought to have had its immediate sights

set on a revolutionary provisional government. Not, therefore, 'All power to the TUC' - too fearful, too bureaucratic, too lethargic. No, instead of that it should have been *temporary* power to the councils of action (or anything else that carried sufficient popular legitimacy). Such a revolutionary government would sweep away the old regime, but pledge itself to oversee elections to a constituent assembly, in which communists would fight for extreme democracy. In other words, the coming General Strike had to be politicised *constitutionally* from the side of the workers, not just from the side of Baldwin-Churchill-Chamberlain.

## Party change

The CPGB itself needed radical change. It had to make the transition from a party of revolutionary propaganda to a party of revolutionary action.

The General Strike posed the question of power. It was at the very least a pre-revolutionary situation. All the classic tell-tale signs were there. Baldwin's government was willing to risk the collapse of social peace because of its determination to inflict a strategic defeat on the working class. That caused divisions within establishment circles. Eg, Randall Davidson, archbishop of Canterbury - accused by the Tories of sympathising with the miners - wanted to read a "conciliatory appeal" on the BBC.<sup>8</sup> General manager John Reith banned him forthwith from the airwaves - censorship taken into the very heart of respectable society.

Indeed it is no exaggeration to say that there were deep fault lines above. While Baldwin talked moderately, Churchill hankered after an elected dictatorship, which would wield the big stick not only against the working class, but against the splits and divisions within the ruling class. He was, at the time, an open admirer of Benito Mussolini and fascist Italy. Meanwhile, Lloyd George and MacDonald readied themselves to form a *harmonising* provisional government appointed by George V. The middle classes were polarised between the counterrevolutionary Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies and siding with the striking workers. As for the workers themselves, they were quite prepared to bring the country to a shuddering halt in an attempt to impose their 'proletarian economics' on the capitalist class - first and foremost the coal owners.

That meant the ruling class could no longer rule in the old way and the organised working class was ready to fight - albeit, to begin with, only with the strike weapon. Faced with such an opportunity, the CPGB should have done everything to ensure that the General Strike became a real "festival of the oppressed and exploited".<sup>9</sup>

Our party ought to have, at every turn of events, put forward slogans one step in advance of the masses, so as to facilitate the 'direct and decisive path' of the struggle for power. That, in the first instance, meant a ruthless upping of the tempo of its work, and boldly and imaginatively using the nine-month stand-off that began with Red Friday to make strategic, logistical and tactical preparations. Not for an immediate frontal assault - that would have been suicidal: rather for challenging, undermining, delegitimising and eventually replacing the post-1688 constitution and the monarchical-prime ministerial state. That should have been the battle plan.

One of the CPGB's most talented worker-intellectuals, TA Jackson, was convinced that May 1926 could have been/should have been the beginning of the British revolution. In the second volume of his unpublished autobiography, he says:

It is my considered opinion, in the light of after-happenings, that if the workers of Britain had been equipped with a leadership at all equivalent to their splendid courage, resolution and sense of solidarity, May Day 1926 would have been the opening day of proletarian revolution. Unhappily, history shows us by many examples that, if such a chance is missed, it takes long and many years before it can be induced to return.<sup>10</sup>

No doubt he was referring to the inadequacies of the Labour Party and the TUC. Not us. The CPGB lacked programmatic clarity; it also suffered from what can only be called organisational amateurism.

The fact that the CPGB's *Workers' Daily* came out once, only to be halted by the blinkered printers' unions, says more about the communists than it does about the printers. There should have been a network of secret party presses ready in case of government banning, to say nothing of sectional stupidity. Less than 15 years later, this was done.

Douglas Hyde - an unstable CPGB middle-ranking cadre, who bizarrely turned Catholic in the late 1940s - describes, in his apostatical, but nevertheless fascinating, book *I believe*, the preparations made for the underground printing and distribution of the *Daily Worker* in 1939-40 - in case "legal facility should be denied us".<sup>11</sup> He says a "duplicate CPGB organisation was created from top to bottom, with a shadow leadership at every level".<sup>12</sup> Hyde goes on to tell how he was instructed to go semi-underground in order to get "printing presses and printworkers ready in all parts of the country". In that way, although the CPGB might be banned, we could "say illegally what could not be said legally".<sup>13</sup>

It is more than worthwhile providing a few relevant details from Hyde. Having rented a "big warehouse" in Acton, he installed "two or three linotype machines, a large flat-bed press, one or two smaller ones, a considerable variety of types and a mass of printing paraphernalia".<sup>14</sup> Besides that, Hyde established other underground printing shops in and around London: one in the East End, one in North London and two in Surrey. Newsprint was stored in a dozen counties.

Given the technology of the day, typesetting was a big difficulty. Papers were made up using hot lead, not our neat PCs and laptops. Six typesetting centres were organised, including one in the basement of a large house in "select Kensington" owned by a titled family. Both footman and housekeeper were CPGB members and they made sure that every Sunday "two printworkers employed in a government print works" could prepare things "in readiness for publishing an illegal revolutionary paper".<sup>15</sup> Similar work was done by Hyde in several other cities, including Manchester and Glasgow.

## Did nothing

If the CPGB could carry out such impressive measures in 1939-40, when most of its top figures were already entertaining notions of a reformist road to socialism, then it should have done better in 1926. Of course, it did not do better. Nor did it do worse. To all intents and purposes it did nothing. It was ridiculous that in 1926 the CPGB had to rely on a little duplicated news sheet during the course of what was a historic mass strike. It shows that our party leadership did not regard its paper as its most precious asset - the CPGB's main weapon. If our leaders - primarily the skeleton central executive committee under acting general secretary Bob Stewart - had been not just committed, but serious

revolutionaries, they would have done everything to establish a catacomb of illegal presses.

A high-quality *Workers' Daily* that was illegal, but free, would of itself have had an enormous impact. An illegal communist daily that damned not only the Baldwin government, but every denial of democracy within Britain and the British empire, and therefore called for a constituent assembly and (provisional) power to the councils of action, would, in spite of narrow sectionalism and government bans, have caught the attention of the entire population. Even those of a moderate opinion could only but give the CPGB grudging respect.

An illegal communist daily that was fearlessly exposing the passivity of the left reformists and fighting for a mass Communist Party would have sent the TUC right wing into an apoplexy, but would have produced many, many thousands of recruits.

An illegal communist daily, armed with a democratic programme, that was laying the groundwork for an armed uprising to overthrow the anti-democratic Tory regime not least by encouraging the Workers' Defence Corps to put up effective, concerted, overwhelming physical resistance to police and special constable attacks - that would surely have produced an entirely different outcome, compared to the TUC-led damp squib.

So too would actions designed to disrupt, intimidate and stop OMS scabs. To begin with, that would have meant equipping and training the Workers' Defence Corps in the use of heavy walking sticks, pickaxe handles, iron bars and the like. But also a stated readiness and willingness to up the ante. There were many soldiers and sailors who were more than sympathetic to the strikers. Rifles and pistols could therefore be easily obtained.

Charles Dukes of the Municipal Workers testifies:

Every day that the strike proceeded, the control and the authority of that dispute was passing out of the hands of responsible executives into the hands of men who had no authority, no control, no responsibility, and was wrecking the movement from one end to the other.<sup>16</sup>

He was, of course, talking about the communists and their growing influence. That is why he and his ilk sabotaged, collapsed the whole thing after just nine days.

What that posed was the necessity of building, having in place, an alternative leadership before and during the General Strike. CPGB members - especially those on the leadership - should not have waited for revolution to somehow happen by itself, as if TUC intransigence could lead to 'All power' falling from the sky. Revolutionary situations arise but revolution has to be made. In 1926 we had a chance to go from a revolutionary situation to making a revolution. Not by naming a date or attempting some sort of minoritarian putsch: but by fully securing leadership over the militant minority and then fighting to win a militant majority.

The CPGB could have done well by drawing lessons - positive and negative - from James Connolly and his Irish Citizen Army. Ireland being not only close culturally, geographically and politically but till 1922 an integral part of the United Kingdom. Thirteen years before the General Strike, Connolly helped form the Irish Citizen Army alongside James Larkin and Jack White. This was during the Dublin lockout and was designed to help fend off the violent attacks launched on the workers by the police and scabs. Women drilled alongside men and the ICA greatly boosted morale. The ICA began armed only with hurley-sticks and wooden shafts ('shoed'

with a cylinders of metal). The police became noticeably less aggressive.

Staging a limited uprising in the midst of general apathy, of course, amounted to revolutionary suicide. Connolly surely knew it in Easter 1916. But to have sent a contingent of 50 toolled-up CPGB comrades and supporters to occupy the Stephen's House HQ of the hated OMS would have set the situation aflame. So would a mass invasion of the stock exchange. Mainly staffed by middle and upper class volunteers, it would have been a pushover. The government, note, took emergency measures to keep the stock exchange open to reassure markets that for Britain PLC the General Strike was business as usual. A red flag proudly flying over Paternoster Square would have sent an entirely different message.

The same goes if police stations had been successfully stormed and arrested strikers freed. Armouries holding rifles and ammunition would have been ready for our crowbars too. The Workers' Defence Corps would thereby obtain standard-issue weaponry (it should be added that many workers who served in World War I kept their revolvers as 'souvenirs').

Lessons should have also been taken on board from 1905 Moscow. The government was freely and arrogantly moving goods. What about barricades surrounding the London, Glasgow, Liverpool and Hull docks to stop them? The CPGB had enough influence on sufficient local councils of action to make that 'official'. Mass defiance involving the whole community, not just striking trade unionists, could have been organised. A rent and rates strike would have been a good idea too, along with mass squats of empty properties. The same goes for securing voluntary contributions from local shops and businesses that were given permission to continue operating by the councils of action. In return they would have been provided with protection by the Workers' Defence Corps.

## Calculus

Insurrection is a "calculus", said Engels, with "very indefinite magnitudes, the value of which may change every day". "You must," he went on, "surprise your antagonists"; you must with every day prepare new successes: "rally those vacillating elements to your side which always follow the strongest impulse, and which always look out for the safer side; force your enemies to retreat."<sup>17</sup>

If the police tried to break through the barricades with a mass baton charge, they could have been met with a "surprise". Perhaps a barrage of Molotov cocktails and homemade bombs launched from the building ranged above them. Perhaps hit-and-run attacks by armed fighting squads that take out sergeants and inspectors, but then instantly disappear into the nearby maze of houses and back yards.

If the army was then used in combination with the police, all the better. As a seasoned military commander, chief of staff Sir George Milne was unenthusiastic about the deployment of his troops against the civilian population. Ostentatiously moving tanks and armoured cars through city centres, soldiers standing guard over buses and trains, billeting units in parks - that was one thing. Ordering them to apply lethal force against strikers and their supporters - that was another matter entirely. For the top brass the danger was well understood: a debilitating split in the ranks.

However, their difficulty would be our opportunity. Soldiers' councils of action, soldiers protecting the General Strike, soldiers obeying our orders, not those of Sir George Milne. The nucleus of a Red Army. The contagion

would have readily spread to the fleet too and seen sailors taking over their ships and running up the red flag (as they did in 1919 and 1931).

The TUC right would have furiously denounced the CPGB - guaranteed. No doubt various 'official' lefts would have wobbled, recoiled in fear and unconsciously repeated the post-1905 words of the Menshevik leader, Georgi Plekhanov: "They should not have taken up arms."<sup>18</sup> Good. If we were in tune with the fast-developing capabilities ambitions and hopes of the militant minority, the flow of events could have cascaded in our direction.

The 'official' lefts would thereby face a stark choice: stay true to the NMM's aims and objects - ie, "To organise the working masses of Great Britain for the overthrow of capitalism, the emancipation of the workers from their oppressors and exploiters, and the establishment of the Socialist Commonwealth."<sup>19</sup> That, or they renege, and therefore lose the militant minority to the CPGB.

India, Jamaica, Egypt and other unwilling members of the British empire might well have given the domestic crisis an international dimension with bids for freedom. Ireland should definitely have been encouraged to renew the civil war against neo-colonial partition. Coordination provided by Comintern would, of course, be vital. Our slogan would have been plain and simple: national self-determination.

What the results would have been if the CPGB had fought like Bolsheviks in 1926 is impossible to tell. But I think we can say three certain things.

First, communists in Britain would have been able to look back and say: we are proud of our tradition; we did our utmost; we gave our all to liberate the working class, using every opportunity history provided; we did not simply wait upon events.

Second, the communist tradition would have become altogether deeper, wider and richer.

Third, subsequent British and world history would have been different - very different ●

## Notes

1. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 5, Moscow 1976, p8.
2. This being the last of 13 articles, the first being 'Approaches to the General Strike' *Weekly Worker* January 22 2026 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1569/approaches-to-the-general-strike).
3. See www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/sections/britain/subject/minority/nmm.htm. It is worth putting on record that it was our members and supporters who took the initiative in getting the NMM programme reprinted by the Camden Miners' Supports Group during the 1984-85 miners' Great Strike.
4. J Riddell (ed and trans) *Towards the united front: proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, 1922* Chicago IL 2012, p1158.
5. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 6, New York NY 1976, p504.
6. India had already undergone what Rajani Palme Dutt described as the "second great wave of struggle" in 1919-22 (the "first wave" being 1905-10). The "third wave" could, conceivably, have begun in 1925 or 1926 ... not have had to wait till 1930 (R Palme Dutt *India today* London 1940, p298ff).
7. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 27, London 1990, p227.
8. GKA Bell *Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury* Vol 2, Oxford 1935, p1306.
9. VI Lenin *CW* Vol 9, Moscow 1977, p113.
10. Quoted in M Woodhouse, B Pearce *Essays on the history of communism in Britain* London 1975, p144. This taken from TA Jackson *Solo trumpet* Vol 2, an unpublished, partially completed, autobiography. The manuscript is held by the Marx Memorial Library.
11. D Hyde *I believed: the autobiography of a former British communist* London 1950, p90.
12. *Ibid* p91.
13. *Ibid* p99.
14. *Ibid* p99.
15. *Ibid* p101.
16. TUC General Council *Report of proceedings of a Special Conference of Executives* London 1927, p58.
17. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 11, London 1979, p86.
18. Quoted by VI Lenin *CW* Vol 12, Moscow 1977, p108.
19. www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/sections/britain/subject/minority/nmm.htm.

## POLEMIC



Trotsky, Lenin and Kamenev: all had long factional histories

# Break with diplomatic self-silencing

Common-sense anti-factionalism is beginning to be called into question. So the likes of Claudia Webbe, RS21 and the Mandelites have been putting up what passes as an argument. As **Mike Macnair** shows, the results are neither impressive nor convincing

I began this series with three articles directed against 'factionalism': former MP Claudia Webbe's defence of Corbynistas' bans and proscriptions of far-left groups in the *Morning Star*,<sup>1</sup> Tristan Colum of RS21 on *Die Linke*,<sup>2</sup> and Duncan Chapel polemicising specifically against CPGB for 'permanent factionalism'.<sup>3</sup> I suggested that the partial coincidence of the appearance of these arguments reflected the fact that the UK left's 'common sense' of anti-factionalism is beginning to be called into question.

The article then addressed some of the specifics of the three arguments: Claudia Webbe pursued cold war anti-communist use of Luxemburg and Eurocommunist use of Gramsci; Tristan Colum suggested that the Socialist Workers Party (of 2,500) offered a better organisational model than *Die Linke* (120,000); Duncan Chapel offered a fairy story about the CPGB's role in Left Unity, claiming that we always intended to create a front.<sup>4</sup> But the real story was about Nick Wrack and others in the Socialist Platform defending the 'silent majority' against CPGB factionalists, just like Claudia Webbe's arguments.

In the second article, last week, I moved a lot further into the abstract and general. All our three anti-factionalist polemicists are trying to 'dodge around' the fact that communists/socialists are a minority, because of the failure of the Soviet state and economy, and trying to scam the working class into taking power. Nonetheless, firstly, the working class needs a socialist project, because the dynamics of capitalist competition tend to force down the wage share. To accept that capitalist competition will continue for the indefinite future is to *accept* a continuing tendency of the wage share to decline (as has, in fact, been seen since the 1980s). Conversely, even at the lowest level of working class demands beyond trade union sectional ones (10-hour day, public education), they involve demands for planning for the provision of goods in kind, interfering with market allocation.

Secondly, *the society as a whole*

needs to move into planning in kind - if it is to overcome the plain failures of neoliberal financial marketisation, and to avoid the threat of human extinction either by global warming or by generalised nuclear war. And, thirdly, the experience of the Soviet regime proves (among other things) that functional planning in kind requires radical political democracy, and in particular freedom of association, in order to *subordinate* the managers and officials to the working class as a class. Hence, anti-factionalist leftists are promising the broad masses that *there is no alternative to capitalist managerialism*.

In this article I return to the arguments of Duncan Chapel against 'permanent factionalism' *apart from* his fictions about the CPGB in Left Unity, and to other Mandelites' pseudo-self-critical arguments about their own policies in broader left formations, which comrade Chapel has put up on his Substack. I start, however, with one more general point about the centrality of political democracy - and in particular political democracy in the workers' movement and the left - in regard to posing an alternative to the current capitalist regime.

### Capitalist decline

Capitalism is in decline. That is not the same thing as saying that revolutionary crisis is imminent.<sup>5</sup> It reflects the rise of the proletariat as a class, with the result that *managing* the proletariat as a class increasingly overrides market imperatives in capitalist decision-making (already by the 1850s, the British Limited Liability Act 1855 aimed to protect middle-class savers and thereby block the Chartist alliance between the working class and lower sections of the middle class), but, by doing so, it blunts market incentives. A more recent example of the same policy is the British Conservative and US Democrat aim for the "property-owning democracy" by promoting freehold-mortgage in housing - with deeply irrational results.<sup>6</sup>

It also reflects increasing inability of free markets to deliver state needs (for example, sufficiently healthy and

educated recruits for the military). Public education and public or semi-public health provision, among other activities, reflect these needs.

Capitalist decline entails a tendency towards *statisation*, like the Roman Principate and Dominate, European absolutism or the Japanese Tokugawa regime. The significance of this tendency towards statisation is, on the one hand, that we have already seen in the 1950s-70s that nationalisations under standard corporate management neither emancipate the working class nor produce socially desirable planned outcomes in more than a very limited sense. On the other hand, we mostly live under *corporate* capitalism: the self-identified freebooters like Elon Musk or Donald Trump actually depend on layers of bureaucratic managers, lawyers and PR flacks, and the workers will encounter not the parasite freebooter 'ultimate boss', but the line manager and/or the 'Human Resources' department.

This corporate capitalism, moreover, mostly sucks on the teats of 'mother state'; the sheer level of subsidies, including tax reliefs, in operation means that we have almost no knowledge of what free-market outcomes would actually look like. I have explored this very slightly for Britain in an article last August,<sup>7</sup> but countries less absolutely dependent on finance than Britain also display complex subsidy regimes.<sup>8</sup>

We cannot return to peasant and artisan society (which never existed in a pure form).<sup>9</sup> Equally, we cannot return to either national capitalism, or to pre-corporate capitalism (neither of these, either, ever existed in a pure form). Nor can we return to a capitalism without complex state management and subsidies: the *supposed* 'free market' neoliberal turn was actually merely a turn to the dominance of the financial services sector, which was supposed to do better than state management, but actually needed (from the moment of the 1987 crash,<sup>10</sup> and still needs) endless money-printing, since the financial services merry-go-round can never be allowed to stop.

In last week's article I posed the

centrality of political democracy to socialism in terms of the need for the socialist horizon and the failure of Soviet planning. Here, the issue is posed because capitalist society in decline is already semi-planned. That is, corporate management is a form of planning; and this, in turn, is dependent on political decisions about subsidies, money-printing, and so on.

As things now stand, corporate management works for itself (in the form of 'executive compensation' - actually a form of distribution of profits), for shareholders (increasingly, 'private equity' asset-strippers) and for bond-holders. Political decisions are institutionally corrupt: that is, they are taken in the interests of contributors to party funds, of the payers of lobbyists and of the advertising subsidy to pro-capitalist media, and of the payers of counsel in judicial review proceedings. The result is a sort of simulacrum of capitalism proper. Yanis Varoufakis's and others' 'techno-feudalism'<sup>11</sup> and similar ideas have a real basis in this respect. However, capitalist competitive dynamics actually persist, mainly in the form of geopolitical competition and the increase in the rent/property speculation share of output, and of the finance share, driving the downward pressure on the wage share.

The problem is for the working class as a class (remember, the whole social class is dependent on the wage share, not just workers employed in industry) to take *control* of these decisions away from corporate management and in states away from the bribe-paying class and the bribe-taking lawyers, lobbyists and professional politicians. In order to do so, the working class needs to develop (partly, to redevelop) forms of decision-making that *de-managerialise* the decision-making process.

The development of a properly 'post-1991' capitalist politics has been towards *Bonapartism*: meaning by that, not Marx's sense of a last-ditch independence of the state faced by short-term revolution (adopted by Trotsky in relation to inter-war Europe),<sup>12</sup> but the *methods of political management* of Napoleon and Louis

Bonaparte: the pretence of democracy through plebiscites (referenda), managed by control of the available choices and of information, and the cult of the personality of the individual - first consul or president turned emperor, and so on). Capital has been since the 1980s actively promoting the direct election of presidents, prime ministers and party leaders, forcing a choice controlled by the corrupt media: *Votez escroc, pas fach* ('Vote for the crook, not for the fascist') in France in 2002, and so on.

### Collapse of 1991

What drives this shift is not the threat of revolution, since the collapse of 1991 has marginalised socialism (as I said last week). The question is of *increasing* routine capitalist control of political processes, since the actual decline of capitalism carries with it a decline in political support for the regime that can be turned out at elections. The result is a *pretence* of democracy in the form that 'democracy' consists in choosing the personally better manager (president, party leader, and so on) and the occasional right to vote in a controlled referendum.

The organisational forms of Podemos, La France Insoumise, Momentum, and so on - 'leftist' proprietary political brands - consist in *promoting a Bonapartist regime, which is the increasingly dominant form of capitalist political order*.

On Podemos, Manuel Gari in 2020 wrote that the Mandelite Izquierda Anticapitalista - Anticapitalistas group

focused its efforts almost exclusively on responding to the internal democratic question - a really important matter - but without raising the battle for a political project with enough energy to have brought together the existing currents of radicalisation within the Anticapitalistas<sup>13</sup> environment.

Lesson from then and for the future: establishing the relationship between political project and aspiration to an ecosocialist and feminist society is the *sine qua non* condition for building the strategic

political groupings that must have a horizon of post-capitalist society. Only in this way can an antagonistic historical bloc be created and unified.<sup>14</sup>

This is to propose a project with only a maximum and no minimum programme. The question of political democracy is seen as an *internal* problem of Podemos. It is, consequently, not grasped as a problem of how to confront the *capitalist constitutional order* - or, as the Podemos leadership round Pablo Iglesias and co did - to support the regime of institutional corruption in its Bonapartist form.

## Mandelites

Gari is one of several Mandelites to have written on the problems with the Mandelites' own project, since the 1980s, of building 'broad front' parties 'not delimited between reform and revolution'. Duncan Chapel has published the English translation. He has also published a more recent Anticapitalistas text from Julia Camara and Raul Camargo; Phil Hearse on the 1970s Scottish Labour Party of Jim Sillars and others, on Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party, and Your Party, with side-references to the Brazilian Workers' Party and to the Scottish Socialist Party; and he deploys Livio Maitan from 1978, on the (allegedly) belated break of the Gruppi Comunisti Rivoluzionari from entry in the Partito Comunista Italiano as an objection to leftists' continued involvement in the Democratic Socialists of America.<sup>15</sup>

Both the Camara-Camargo text and that of Maitan have, for Chapel, the side benefit of anti-factionalist commitments. Separately (going along with his anti-CPGB polemic) he has published in a paid-for form Ernest Mandel's 1977 polemic against Argentinian Trotskyist Nahuel Moreno,<sup>16</sup> arising from Moreno and his co-thinkers' refusal to join the 'grand majority' in the Unified Secretariat of the Fourth International, assembled after the dissolution of the International Majority Tendency and Leninist-Trotskyist Faction, on the basis of commitments to the Eurocommunist 'Theses on socialist

democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat<sup>17</sup> and the 'turn to industry' (industrial colonisation projects).

(On this polemic I *observe merely* that the actual dissolution of the factions and 'grand majority' in the USFI were a complete disaster. The 'Turn to Industry' was immensely destructive for those among the USFI's sections which took it seriously. The 'Theses on Social Democracy' foreshadowed the Mandelites' inability in the 1990s to recognise that Boris Yeltsin was a rightwinger. The Moreno faction was driven to split in 1979 (though in my opinion a little prematurely) by the USFI giving the names of Trotskyists in Nicaragua to the Sandinista police - a clear scab act of 'non-sectarian' support to a left-nationalist regime.)

I have written repeatedly and at considerable length about the Mandelites' repeated failures with 'new party' projects, and I do not propose to repeat the arguments at length.<sup>18</sup> I will say here only that the core of the problem is the Mandelites' commitment to *diplomacy* in the initial stages of these projects. This achieves a certain friendliness of the 'official lefts' to the Mandelites. They may even be employed, as the Fourth International Supporters Caucus were in Scargill's Socialist Labour Party, as witch-hunting gatekeepers. But this inevitably breaks down. The Mandelites' diplomatic self-silencing turns out to encourage the 'official lefts' to move right. The 'official lefts' are committed to loyalty to the capitalist nation-state and constitutional order, believe that publicly demonstrated loyalty to the state is essential to winning elections and winning reforms, and are therefore committed to the silencing or ostentatious exclusion of tendencies that are not loyal to this state.

The Mandelites' diplomatic method is not a novelty in the period since the 1980s of the policy of building new parties 'not programmatically delimited between reform and revolution'. It was the policy of the United States Socialist Workers Party and its co-thinkers towards the Cuban Communist Party, and towards Fatah in the Palestinian movement and the African National Congress in the

struggle in South Africa, *before* the US SWP's post-1979 break with Trotskyism. In Britain in the 1970s, it was the practical meaning of the "priority united front axis towards the left social-democratic organising cadre" of the Ross *et al* tendency in 1973-75. In the 1950s-60s, it was the 'replacement leadership' approach - that the small size of the Trotskyists meant that the Labour right would inevitably be replaced by Labour lefts (and so too with left socialists and communists in Europe), and the Trotskyists' job was to work with the 'replacement leadership' at the first stage and only confront them later.<sup>19</sup> Even earlier: this policy is not, in fact, descended from the pre-war policy of Trotsky and his co-thinkers, but from that of Raymond Molinier and Pierre Frank, who twice broke with Trotsky in order to create 'broad-front' or 'agitational' newspapers.<sup>20</sup>

I refer to this long history, or rather to examples from it, for two reasons. The first is that it is perfectly straightforward that these are all tactics, which fail to be judged simply by their success. Have the Mandelites succeeded in creating broad mass parties by the tactics of 'replacement leadership' or of 'parties not delimited between reform and revolution'? I accept, as I accept in relation to the British SWP, that the Mandelites are a lot bigger than the CPGB and that in that sense there is an argument from success. But the tactics in question were aimed at creating *mass parties* (or mass leftwing oppositions within the traditional socialist or communist parties). In this aim they quite plainly failed. Chapel offers as success stories the Left Bloc in Portugal, which is a unification of the far left for electoral purposes that has had considerable success, and the Red-Green Alliance in Denmark, which is based at its core on the old Danish Communist Party in alliance with a smaller left splinter off it and the Danish Mandelites. Both are success stories, but neither is an example of the Mandelites' policy.

Second, as I have argued elsewhere, there is an intimate connection between the policy of diplomacy with a view to creating a 'replacement leadership' or a 'party not delimited between reform and revolution' and the imposition of bureaucratic controls on the speech of critics among your own membership - and hence, also, anti-factionalism.<sup>21</sup>

In Maitan's arguments, and in Mandel's polemic against Moreno, and in an indirect sense in Gari's 2020 argument,<sup>22</sup> what is actually proposed is, within the broad-front project, a Trotskyist party based on *theory*. But the effect of this is that there can be no unification of the Marxist or 'revolutionary' left.

This was dramatically demonstrated by the split in December 2022 of the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste by the walk-out at the conference of the largest minority (the tendency descended from the former majority of the LCR) in order to pursue a unity policy towards La France Insoumise. The Mandelites' broad-frontism here prohibited them from acting as a disciplined minority in a unitary far-left party they had themselves created (though they were clearly disappointed to have picked up no more than other far-left trends).<sup>23</sup> The Mandelites hold themselves out as permitting 'tendencies' (which are actually factions); but only as long as they, in the form of the full-time apparatus, retain control.

## Programme

This inability to unify as *Marxists* produces, inherently, the triumph of the 'official lefts' and incapacity of the 'revolutionary lefts' in broad-front parties. As long as the far left is so splintered, it cannot be taken seriously by the broad workers' vanguard. It is not a problem just for Trotskyists. The 'official' communists could operate

anti-factionalism because they had the USSR as a shining light (and also a material supporter). China provided less material support, and the Maoists were and are even more fissile than the Trotskyists. (So too are the anarchists, 'left communists', and so on.) Trying to create an *ideologically homogenous* party already produced bureaucratic-centralist sects before 1914 in Rosa Luxemburg, Leo Jogiches and others' Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, and Daniel De Leon's Socialist Labour Party in the USA and its imitators elsewhere.

The alternative, which was already visible in Chartism, in the Second International and in Bolshevism (and the mass parties of Comintern that came out of the Second International), is unification on the basis of an *accepted party platform*, voted on and amendable; and the acceptance that there will be factions, including open factions, and including factions lasting as long as Bolsheviks and Mensheviks (1903-1917 before their final split).

The Mandelites cannot live with long-term factions and open factions, partly - as I have already said - because their diplomatic method requires self-censorship and thus censorship of oppositional groupings. But it is also partly because the 'transitional method' itself is antagonistic to the idea of unity round a party programme. After all, the 1938 *Transitional programme* includes the statement:

It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demands and the socialist programme of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of transitional demands, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.<sup>24</sup>

But the 'transitional programme' is then on its own self-description *not* "the socialist programme of the revolution", which is some ulterior programme. Perhaps the documents of the first four congresses of Comintern, plus those of the International Left Opposition, and so on ... but already this mass of documentation is looking like a body of *theory*, not a political platform for a party. The party grounded on theory - or on 'method', as Duncan Chapel quotes Livio Maitan as arguing - cannot tolerate any serious differences persisting over any prolonged period of time. But, for precisely that reason, the effect is inevitably the multiplication of sects and their ineffectiveness in face of the 'official lefts' like Pablo Iglesias in Spain, like Mélenchon in France, like Corbyn and his clique in Britain.

The alternative is to break with the method altogether and unite on the basis of a summary political programme, put to the vote and amendable, and accepting that there *will* be open and long-lasting factions and sharp debates. If we can achieve this *among the Marxist left*, we may be able to pose this method as an alternative to the method of bureaucratic-managerial controls the 'official lefts' seek. And then perhaps we can de-managerialise and democratise *the workers' movement*. And by de-managerialising the workers' movement, we may be able to pose the possibility that a socialist and democratic transformation of *the society* is possible ●

## Notes

1. morningstaronline.co.uk/article/your-party-what-kind-socialist-party-does-british-working-class-actually-need-2026.
2. revoc21.uk/2026/04/08/the-charms-and-pitfalls-of-extreme-pluralism-lessons-from-die-link.
3. redmole.substack.com/p/flat-pack-leninism-

why-mike-macnair.

4. In contrast, with Labour Party Marxists, we *did* always intend to support a group in political solidarity with the CPGB; the reason being that we identified the Labour Party as seriously hostile territory, in which a 'broader front' would pretty much inevitably be left-Labourite; in Left Unity we believed that it was possible to have a 'partyist' coalition broader than ourselves and our immediate periphery, but were defeated by the Socialist Platform leaders' commitment to bureaucratic-diplomatic methods.

5. On 'revolutionary crisis', see 'Against action programmes' *Weekly Worker* December 18 2025 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1566/against-action-programmes). On the decline of capitalism, see 'World politics, long waves and the decline of capitalism', January 7 2010 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/799/world-politics-long-waves-and-the-decline-of-capit) and 'Capitalism as a star fort', June 5 2025 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1541/capitalism-as-a-star-fo).

6. Compare 'Stunts, problems and solutions' *Weekly Worker* May 5 2022 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1394/stunts-problems-and-solutions).

7. 'Class composition in a snapshot' (part 2) *Weekly Worker* August 28 2025 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1550/class-composition-in-a-snapshot).

8. Googling 'business subsidies' with a country name will produce masses of information.

9. Compare the 1880 *Programme of the Parti Ouvrier* (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/05/parti-ouvrier.htm): "That the producers can be free only when they are in possession of the means of production; That there are only two forms under which the means of production can belong to them - (1) The individual form, which has never existed in a general state and which is increasingly eliminated by industrial progress; (2) The collective form, the material and intellectual elements of which are constituted by the very development of capitalist society". The point is not that this is true because it is Marx, but that it is absolutely corroborated by the global tendency for family-scale production to be marginalised.

10. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black\_Monday\_(1987) is a convenient summary account.

11. *Techno-feudalism* London 2023.

12. K. Marx *The eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852): www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire; on Trotsky, see, for example, 'German Bonapartism' (1932): www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/germany/1932/321030.htm.

13. In the text as published. Should perhaps be "the Podemos environment".

14. redmole.substack.com/p/before-your-party-there-was-podemos.

15. Camara and Camargo: redmole.substack.com/p/we-made-political-mistakes-anticapitalistas; Hearse: redmole.substack.com/p/phil-hearse-three-attempts-to-forge-maitan: redmole.substack.com/p/dsa-repeats-italian-lefts-fatal-hesitation.

16. redmole.substack.com/p/available-in-english-at-last-ernest.

17. iire.org/node/939. The judgment that the text is Eurocommunist is one I made at the time.

18. Eg. 'EuroTrotskyism' *Weekly Worker* June 4 2003 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/483/eurotrotskyism); 'The Fourth International and failed perspectives' *Weekly Worker* June 7 2012 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/917/the-fourth-international-and-failed-perspectives); and 'Strategy and freedom of criticism' June 14 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/918/strategy-and-freedom-of-criticism); 'Daniel Bensaïd: Repeated disappointments' July 31 2014 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1021/daniel-bensaïd-repeated-disappointments). In fact, my small book *Revolutionary strategy* started with an attempt to grapple with a debate on strategy in the French Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire in 2006 (the first article was 'Floundering towards Eurocommunism', February 16 2006 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/612/floundering-towards-eurocommunism)).

19. P Peterson [P Jordan], 'Aspects of the history of the IMG' (1972): redmolerising.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/sl\_img\_fusion\_conference.pdf, p18.

20. Trotsky, February 14 1939: www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1939/03/psop.htm: "adventurers of the type of Raymond Molinier who try to gain influence not by ideological struggle, but by corridor intrigues"; In defence of Marxism (New York 1970) p147 ("When [Molinier] decided to found a paper on the basis of 'four slogans' instead of our programme, and set out independently to execute this plan, I was among those who insisted upon his immediate expulsion": January 1940).

21. Talk, 'How broad-frontism requires top-down bureaucratic controls', Communist University, January 2022: www.youtube.com/watch?v=gC-42E4Bsk4; 'Principle not diplomacy' *Weekly Worker* November 24 2022 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1420/principle-not-diplomacy).

22. 'In an indirect sense' because "aspiration to an ecosocialist and feminist society" is in itself merely 'motherhood and apple pie', so that the actual political basis of Anticapitalistas has to be the Mandelite theoretical commitments.

23. Account with both sides' statements: tomasoflatharta.com/2022/12/14/france-nouveau-parti-anticapitaliste-mpa-new-anticapitalist-party-divides-down-the-middle.

24. http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1938/tp/tp-text.htm.

## Online Communist Forum



Sunday May 17 5pm

### Labour's fratricidal civil war: political report from the CPGB's Provisional Central Committee and discussion

Use this link to register:  
communistparty.co.uk/ocf

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

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

## IRAN

# Ceasefire on life support

With Donald Trump in Beijing, hopes of an Iran deal rose. But not by much. **Yassamine Mather** does not believe that China will come to the rescue of the US. There is, therefore, the danger of another outbreak of hostilities. Meanwhile many poor countries stand on the brink of economic collapse

What began as a series of back-channel negotiations in Islamabad has become a volatile stand-off between Washington and Tehran, leaving the world's most critical energy artery - the Strait of Hormuz - effectively closed. While diplomats from all sides trade insults and threats, a stark divide has emerged: the global south is being pushed toward systemic collapse, at a time when a select number of western financial and industrial giants are reaping record-breaking 'blood profits' from war and the instability it has created.

On May 8, reports surfaced that the United States and Iran might resume direct talks in Islamabad. As I wrote last week, mediators were reportedly circulating a 14-point memorandum of understanding, designed to address the most controversial issues of the conflict, including the security of the Strait of Hormuz, and the potential transfer of Iran's highly enriched uranium to a third-party country.<sup>1</sup> By May 10, Iranian state media confirmed that Tehran had dispatched its formal response to the American proposal through Pakistani intermediaries. According to news agency reports, this response prioritised a total cessation of hostilities, before addressing more detailed, technical nuclear questions. There was a lot of speculation over the weekend regarding the 'delayed' Iranian reply.

## Make him wait

On the one hand, the Iranian government claimed it would not respond, because there are numerous breaches of the ceasefire in the Strait of Hormuz. This alludes both to US attacks on Iranian ships as well as attacks on the United Arab Emirates. Some journalists in the Iranian press suggested that the government actually takes pleasure in making Trump wait as part of a game they are playing. According to them, Iran is essentially saying, 'Look, Trump makes these promises, but we don't just jump. We are in a strong position. We are not weak, we haven't lost this war, and there is no reason we should succumb to his deadlines.'

In the western press, however, there was a repetition of another theory. First, the pro-Trump media - like the *New York Post* - used it, and later CNN reported on it as well. It follows a standard theme: there are deep divisions within the Iranian regime and that is why they cannot send replies to US proposals.

The CNN article was slightly more accurate, as it described the internal pressures Tehran is facing, as opposed to factional disagreements. Essentially what we have is a very small political faction in Iran that is not currently in power. So claims by the BBC, CNN and others that those in power 'cannot reach an agreement because of factional in-fighting' is simply wrong - at times an expression of the false hopes of sections of the media.

The faction I referred to has around six seats in the Majles out of 290. It has no representation in the current 'reformist' government, nor does it play a significant role in the 'conservative'-dominated parliament. It is a pressure group called the *Jebheh Paydari* (Front for Resistance). It has a loyal following which, back in 2015, opposed Iran's nuclear deal with the US. They were rebuked by the then-



Chinese vice-president Han Zheng greets the Don

supreme leader for their consistent opposition to any negotiations, any deal. Last week around 260 MPs signed a motion opposing this faction's proposal to withdraw from any talks.

The optimism about negotiations faded on May 11, when Donald Trump summarily rejected the Iranian reply, labelling it "totally unacceptable" and declaring the existing ceasefire to be on "life support". According to reports from Associated Press, Iran had actually included significant nuclear concessions in its reply: quoting two regional officials, the agency reported Iran had offered to dilute part of its highly enriched uranium and send the rest to a third country, possibly Russia. According to *AlJazeera*, Iran had offered to halt all uranium enrichment for at least 12 years and hand over about 440kg of uranium enriched to 60%. The US position is a demand for a 20-year enrichment suspension and Washington dismissed the counterproposal as "a piece of garbage".

Irrespective of these aspects of negotiations, the fundamental rift remains: Iran demands immediate sanctions relief and an end to the maritime blockade as prerequisites for broader dialogue - a position the US continues to rebuff.

On May 12, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, the Iranian parliamentary speaker and top negotiator, issued a scathing rebuttal via X. His message was one of calculated defiance, framing Tehran's 14-point proposal as the "no alternative" ultimatum. He warned that any American attempt to deviate from recognising the "rights of the Iranian people" would be "completely inconclusive" and lead to a repetitive cycle of failure. Qalibaf also targeted the American electorate, asserting that, the longer the US government "drags its feet", the more the American taxpayer will be forced to subsidise the escalating costs of the conflict.

## Profiteering

Although it is correct to point out that ordinary citizens in the US, and indeed throughout the world, are suffering from the economic consequences of the war, many large companies are actually benefiting from it. Indeed for some it is a bonanza.

While the two-month closure of the Strait of Hormuz has crippled global supply chains, the resulting market 'uncertainty' has proved to be an unparalleled goldmine for specific corporate sectors. The effective cessation of shipments, representing one-fifth of the world's oil and gas, has produced extreme volatility - a condition exploited by the world's largest energy and financial institutions.

The most immediate beneficiaries have been European oil conglomerates, whose sophisticated trading divisions have turned price spikes into massive windfalls:

- BP reported that its first-quarter profits more than doubled to \$3.2 billion - a surge the company attributed to the "exceptional" performance of its trading unit amidst the chaos.

- Shell shattered analyst expectations by posting Q1 profits of \$6.92 billion.

- TotalEnergies saw a nearly 30% jump in profit, earning \$5.4 billion due to the very market volatility that is currently impoverishing families globally.

In contrast, US majors like ExxonMobil and Chevron saw lower revenues, compared to the previous year, due to direct supply disruptions from the Middle East. However, even these firms outpaced analyst forecasts and are positioning themselves for higher profit margins, as oil prices remain elevated.

The banking sector has similarly capitalised on the atmosphere of fear. As investors flee 'risky' assets in favour of 'safe havens', trading volumes have reached fever pitch.

- JPMorgan Chase: Its trading division alone generated a record \$11.6 billion in the first quarter of 2026, driving the bank to its second-largest quarterly profit in its history.

- The Big Six: Collectively, JPMorgan, Bank of America, Morgan Stanley, Citigroup, Goldman Sachs, and Wells Fargo reported a staggering \$47.7 billion in profits for the first quarter.

- Investment-heavy firms like Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley have been the primary beneficiaries of the 'extreme market volatility' that has taken others to the brink of ruin.

As air defence vulnerabilities are

exposed in real-time, the defence industry has seen a massive influx of capital. Analysts note that military contractors are the "fastest winners."

- BAE Systems, Lockheed Martin, Boeing and Northrop Grumman have all reported record-breaking order backlogs. There is a renewed and accelerated investment in missile defence and counter-drone systems across the US and Europe, as the conflict rumbles on.

Paradoxically, the war has acted as a violent catalyst for energy transition. With fossil fuel dependency now viewed as a critical national security liability, investment is flooding into renewables as a source of stability.

- NextEra Energy has seen its stock value climb 17% since the start of 2026.

- Both Danish wind giants, Vestas and Ørsted, have reported significantly higher profits, as counties scramble for energy independence.

In the UK, solar panel sales have surged by 50%. Simultaneously, the skyrocketing cost of petrol has driven a massive demand for electric vehicles, with Chinese EV manufacturers emerging as the primary global beneficiaries.

## Human toll

While corporate boardrooms are celebrating 'exceptional' first-quarter results, the global south is enduring the brunt of the war. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has triggered a domino effect of higher transport costs, food inflation and currency devaluation.

As the primary destination for oil passing through Hormuz, Asia has been particularly hard hit. In the Philippines, the government has been forced to impose a four-day work week for executive offices simply to conserve fuel. There is a similar picture in Thailand where energy-saving measures, including state-mandated work-from-home orders, have been implemented.

In Africa, the impact of the war has resulted in acute shortages and the emergence of black markets. Ethiopian reports indicate rampant fuel scarcity and long queues, forcing the government to prioritise fuel for essential services and mandate work-from-home for public servants. The

shock has even dampened religious celebrations and sent food prices soaring. In the Kenyan capital of Nairobi motorists face long queues at the few petrol stations still holding supplies.

For Latin America, the crisis is an "external strain" that tests the very foundations of their economies. The International Monetary Fund and World Bank warn that net importers - such as Chile, Peru and much of central America - are facing devastating "inflation expectations" due to energy costs. Even for the region's oil exporters, any potential revenue gains are overshadowed by slower regional growth and systemic financial stress.

## China

There has been much discussion about China's role as a mediator in the current crisis. This is undoubtedly a significant political gain for Beijing. And Xi Jinping will milk it as much as he can with Donald Trump in China. Xi will present China to the world as a responsible international actor, capable of dialogue and de-escalation. By contrast the US is widely seen as associated with coercion, sanctions and military threats.

China has a close relationship with Pakistan. While Trump may enjoy a certain rapport with the Pakistani military establishment, and while Iran may view Pakistan as an important Islamic neighbour, the deeper strategic force operating behind the scenes is clearly China. Pakistan is central to Beijing's regional strategy, not least through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and China's broader ambition to secure trade routes, energy supplies and geopolitical influence across southern Asia. For that reason, China is not merely observing Pakistan's role in the negotiations: it is shaping it.

Economically, China is also vulnerable to any major escalation. If the war blows up again, it would threaten energy markets, shipping routes and global supply chains. As of early 2026 China accounted for some 80-90% of Iran's oil exports. So the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz is a huge problem for the Chinese economy.

This helps explain why Beijing is doing everything it can to broker negotiations and prevent a wider market collapse. China's diplomacy is not simply an expression of peace-loving neutrality: it reflects the material interests of a rising power that wants stability - not because it opposes exploitation or imperial rivalry in principle, but because instability threatens its own global strategy. Beijing's mediation is therefore both a political opportunity and an economic necessity.

The message from Tehran, meanwhile, appears uncompromising. Iran's armed forces have warned that they are prepared to deliver a "memorable lesson" in response to any further aggression, insisting that "all options" remain on the table. All this could change very quickly if there is pressure from China, forcing Iran to accept a modified version of the US proposals.

## Notes

1. 'Standoff amid talk of a deal' *Weekly Worker* May 7: [weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1584/standoff-amid-talk-of-a-deal](http://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1584/standoff-amid-talk-of-a-deal).

## AGGREGATE

# Living in dangerous times

Mainstream media has the government in Iran deeply divided. This seems largely unfounded. Meanwhile the Strait of Hormuz remains doubly blockaded. The risk of a sudden escalation is obvious. **Scott Evans** reports on the May 10 CPGB aggregate

Last weekend, the CPGB held one of our regular all-member meetings, where we primarily discussed the war on Iran, followed by a brief report on the organisation's financial situation, before completing the election of the Provisional Central Committee, which had been deferred at the AGM.<sup>1</sup>

Comrade Farzad Kamangar opened with an introduction attempting to look beyond the immediate situation regarding the war on Iran by raising questions about its implications for our theory of imperialism and the current world order. Why has a deal not emerged yet? What is holding things up? She pointed to a number of unsatisfactory explanations floating around the media. For example, some allude to Tehran making Trump wait by refusing to act according to the USA's imposed deadlines. Some claim significant internal divisions within the Iranian government, though this is largely wishcasting - the regime is not hugely divided. There are factions outside, such as the Front For Resistance, which has only nine of the 290 seats in the Majles, who oppose negotiations. There are also voices on the left outside Iran making similar claims - that Iran is winning, so why bother negotiating? But the regime itself does not think like this, except when it pretends to in the propaganda it promotes. The Iranian economy is on its knees, and the country cannot win militarily.

Israel played an important role in triggering the conflict, but the war was actually due to the logic of the USA-China rivalry. Iran was an obvious proxy target after Iraq; the USA's veto control over the flow of Middle Eastern oil is strategically important, and China's ongoing access to cheap Iranian oil is damaging to the US position. Other regional countries are also unhappy with the dangers posed by US bases early in the war. The USA's relative decline and its increasing appetite for risk may also explain why Trump, unlike previous presidents, finally went along with Netanyahu's long-standing plans.

We may need to revise how we conceive of the working of imperialism, continued comrade Kamangar. We should dismiss any idea of multiple global imperial powers. Comrade Mike Macnair, she recalled, has argued that any capitalist power has elements of imperialism within its logic: it is not merely 'the highest stage'. We should nevertheless be careful not to underestimate the significance of the hierarchy of imperialist power, which leaves, at the end of the day, a single global hegemon. And then there are the competitors - the only realistic one today being China. Iran has had bigger ambitions in the past, especially in its early days, but those are much diminished. It has exerted influence in the region through proxies and allies, but these have never been about 'imperialist ambitions': rather they are insurance policies.

Statements from some of the pro-Nato 'left' who claim that Iran had played a significant role in starting the war because of its nuclear ambitions and its (delusional) desire to become a regional imperialist power. Nor have the Kurdish or Balochi sections of Iran ever been as separatist as such people claim.

China will likely benefit, however, with Iran increasing its alignment with Beijing, whatever else happens. China is playing an important diplomatic role



**Benjamin Netanyahu addresses Congress with House Speaker Mike Johnson and Senator Ben Cardin clapping approval**

as the power behind Pakistan in these negotiations. All that said, the threat to the global economic outlook threatens China too: it is more insulated than most, but not immune from a global economic collapse. The situation raises many questions: how should we understand China, how does US decline work in this transitional period?

Comrade Kamangar concluded by noting that there have been four major protest movements in Iran since 2017, largely driven by economic conditions, but significant sections of society are still rallying behind the regime - though this will erode if the war drags on.

She was followed by guest speaker Moshé Machover, who disagreed that imperialist concerns about China are central. This is primarily Netanyahu's war, he claimed, although he did refer to us now being in a 'bipolar world'. He pointed out that Netanyahu had campaigned for the USA to attack Iran for decades and was ultimately behind the withdrawal from the nuclear deal. The main cause of Trump choosing this war was not to weaken China - the actual effect has been the opposite: preventing the USA from continuing its pivot to Asia and even pulling weapons away from the Pacific. The Trump administration is obviously irrational, while Netanyahu used his skills as a conman to sell his plans to the USA. In an asymmetric conflict it does not make sense to talk of winners and losers, concluded comrade Machover, but clearly the USA has not achieved its stated aim of a quick victory, capitulation or disintegration of the Iranian state.

### Debate

Following the two opening speeches, Jack Conrad said he never took the stated war aims seriously. You cannot achieve regime change from 20,000 feet, and there is no alternative regime waiting in the wings. There are irrational elements, as in the two world wars, but this must be understood in the context of the USA looking to reverse its relative decline. The fear is of a stalemate, in which eventually all hell breaks out.

Mike Macnair quoted a leading US central command figure: in the Middle

East, the USA has its hands on the throat of the Chinese economy. The 'pivot to Asia' was always nonsense: it is through negative control over oil access that the USA aimed to strangle China. Israel has its own interests in overthrowing the Iranian regime, but there is a clear US interest too. On the current 'stalemate', America is not politically willing to take the casualties required to force open the Strait of Hormuz, which would require boots on the ground. Escalation of some kind remains likely. On risks to the world economy, comrade Macnair was sceptical: as long as the USA is doing all right, the world economy will not collapse.

Comrade Tom Cormack suggested that some in the CPGB may be underestimating the decline of US hegemony, and that adventures like Iran are intended as advertisements of US power. We should not just look at a snapshot of military might, but the fact that China's economic strength - reflected in GDP growth - is much greater than the USA's, he claimed. But comrade Conrad replied that this analysis is facile - nothing grows linearly forever. For his part, comrade Ken Smith emphasised the unpredictability of the war's course. A mistake or rush of blood could trigger an escalation beyond anyone's control.

Comrade Kamangar responded to Moshé Machover by stating that she is not denying Israel's role as a trigger, but the lack of Republican pushback and Biden's failure to restore the nuclear deal show that the US *does* want this war.

Comrade Jim Moody raised the question of nuclear weapons, arguing that people are becoming complacent about the so-called 'nuclear option'. To which comrade Conrad responded that there is no modern practical military use for tactical nuclear weapons: conventional weapons are sufficient.

Moshé Machover's closing response made two main points. First, people make mistakes because they convince themselves circumstances are 'different this time' - the USA believed the Iranian regime was so unpopular it would collapse if you merely blew a puff of air at it. The USA has plainly not achieved its war

aims, he said. Second, the comparison with the world wars is wrong: this war was entirely one-sided, initiated by the USA, and, had Washington known it would drag on this long, it is possible Trump would not have started it. Only JD Vance has shown any inkling of rational thinking on the war, though he did commit himself to falling in behind Trump.

Comrade Kamangar concluded the debate by pointing out that Mossad-back media seemed to have convinced much of the Iranian left that the regime's collapse was imminent. The Iran war is showing again that in asymmetric warfare there is much you can do in terms of defence on the cheap. The fact that China is in no position to take on the USA as a military power is fundamental, she stated: the gap is still huge. And, even if a negotiated peace is signed soon, that does not mean this conflict is over. We should expect worse to come.

### PCC election

At the AGM in March, the PCC had proposed re-electing the existing committee of three plus a fourth, younger, comrade as a candidate PCC member - ie, without voting rights. It seems that comrade Conrad had mistakenly suggested that a current PCC member, who was not present, might walk if the extra member was elected with voting rights - which the majority present seemed to prefer. This, I suppose, would have been an amendment to the PCC motion. However, it was never confirmed by a formal vote. Instead, the AGM had decided to defer the PCC election to the next aggregate, while re-electing the existing three-member PCC in the interim.

Back to the present aggregate. Comrade Conrad, for his part, was surprised by the pushback against the proposed use of candidate membership for a new PCC member, which had been a common practice in communist parties.

A somewhat heated back-and-forth resulted in the clarification that the PCC member absent at the AGM had not threatened to quit if the additional comrade was elected with voting rights. Comrade Stan Keable's prompting helped to clarify this. However, the proposed fourth candidate had now decided to withdraw their nomination, at least for the time being, as changed personal circumstances meant they would not be able to devote their full energy to the role.

There is a recognition in the organisation of the need to expand the PCC with younger blood, if the organisation is to reproduce itself. This serious problem thus continues unresolved, and will hopefully be treated - alongside the need to recruit, even in small numbers - as a matter of some urgency ●

### Notes

1. See 'Through the slough of despond' *Weekly Worker* March 26: [weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1578/through-the-slough-of-despond](http://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1578/through-the-slough-of-despond).

Sign up to CPGB news

bit.ly/CPGBbulletin

## 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.

The *Weekly Worker* is licensed by November Publications under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International Licence: [creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode.en](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode.en)

# Bent on provocation and violence

Zionists are turning up on leftwing demonstrations in Italy. They want to get excluded, so they can claim to be victims of anti-Semitism. However, as **Toby Abse** reports, a particular target of the Zionists is leftwing Jews

The last few weeks have been marked by an escalation of tension between the National Association of Italian Partisans (ANPI)<sup>1</sup> and leaders of the official Jewish Community, especially in Milan and Rome.

This started in Milan on April 25 - the 81st anniversary of Italy's liberation by the Partisans, who drove the Germans out of the main northern cities before the British and Americans arrived. Milan is always the location of the main Liberation Day march: this year it was 100,000-strong - impressive, although smaller than on last year's 80th anniversary and some other occasions in the past (eg, 1994, when people responded to the victory of Silvio Berlusconi's coalition, which had brought the neo-fascists into government for the first time since 1945).

For some years, even prior to the Gaza war of 2023-25, there had been some tension about the participation of people claiming to represent the Brigata Ebraica in the march. The Brigata Ebraica (Jewish Brigade) - as it was originally known, and as it is still referred to outside Italy - was set up by the British in north Africa in 1944. It was a successor to the Palestine Regiment, recruited from both Jews and Arabs in mandate Palestine, which had already fought against Italian and German forces in north Africa. The Jewish Brigade landed in Puglia in southern Italy in March 1945, making a very belated contribution to the Italian campaign.

The reason I am going into detail about the brigade's history is that, while we must acknowledge that these Jews made a serious contribution to the Allied war effort, very few of them were of Italian descent, none of them were part of the Italian resistance and their contribution to Italy's liberation was minimal. The people who now carry their banner on the Liberation Day marches are Italian Jews with hardline Zionist views. If all they were seeking to do was to identify Italian Jews with the wider struggle against the Italian fascists and German Nazis, one could not reasonably make objections, even though the considerable - given their small number - contribution of Italian Jews to the Italian resistance was actually channelled either through Giustizia e Libertà Brigades (representing the legacy of the Rosselli brothers - Jewish anti-fascists murdered by Benito Mussolini's agents) or the communist Garibaldi Brigades, not by any exclusively Jewish formation.

## Banners

This year, the section of the march led by those carrying the banners of the Brigata Ebraica placed itself (or was placed by the police) at the head of the march, in front of the ANPI, the long-standing organisers of the Milanese liberation marches. Regardless of whether this positioning was deliberate or accidental, it was in itself provocative. More seriously, the contingent led by the Brigata's supporters included many carrying Israeli flags, as well as people with



Hand-in-glove: Zionists and Iranian royalists

pictures of Trump, Netanyahu and the late shah of Iran!

The ANPI claimed that the Brigata had made an agreement with them not to carry Israeli flags, in order to avoid trouble with the rest of the march - the Brigata supporters deny this. Brigata supporters also try to make out that the Israeli flags and pictures of Netanyahu and Trump were the responsibility of a group of Iranian monarchists, who were marching with them, but this seems rather disingenuous.

Somewhat unsurprisingly, the Brigata contingents were met with heckling. It may well be the case that this was started by a couple of dozen members of the Comitati di Appoggio alla Resistenza per il Comunismo (CARC, an extreme Stalinist-Maoist sect), who had done this sort of thing on previous marches, albeit on a smaller scale and in a far less organised fashion. However, the hostile chanting was taken up by hundreds, perhaps thousands, of ordinary marchers totally unconnected with the CARC.

This confrontation held the entire march up for two hours - something guaranteed to irritate and alienate anybody who had come on the march to commemorate the liberation, rather than to confront hardline Zionists. While there were a few isolated instances of anti-Semitic, as opposed to anti-Zionist, chanting, the Zionists have deliberately exaggerated such occurrences in their subsequent bid to brand the ANPI itself as anti-Semitic. Eventually the police escorted the Brigata contingent away from the march in order to prevent any more public disorder.

Walker Meghnagi, the president of the Milanese Jewish Community, subsequently claimed: "We were expelled, kicked out of the march and the ANPI is behind all this. From the beginning it had said, 'No Jews on the march'!" Gianfranco Pagliarulo, the ANPI national president, has responded by saying that he will sue Meghnagi for defamation.

Stefano Levi della Torre, a writer and architect, and a leading figure in Mai Indifferenti - Voci Ebraiche per la Pace (Never Indifferent - Jewish

Voices for Peace) has pointed out that:

The president of the Milanese Jewish Community is very friendly with rightwing politicians, with Fratelli d'Italia, with the La Russa brothers, and says he is a friend of Giorgia Meloni. Therefore, the fact that he wants to make accusations against the April 25 demonstrations seems to be part of his job ... And it does not seem to me a great favour to the Jews. He exposed the Jews to something very serious. It is an enormous historic responsibility that they are taking on.<sup>2</sup>

It is worth pointing out that Mai Indifferenti and the broadly similar group called Laboratorio Ebraica anti-Razzista also participated in the Milan march, quite separately from the Brigata contingent, and met with a very different reception. As Bella Gubbay of Mai Indifferenti emphasised, "We were applauded by people on the pavement. Many of them said to us, 'Bravi, bravi, finalmente'."

## Rome

Whilst the Milanese dispute between the Zionists and the ANPI remains a verbal one, in Rome matters have taken a different turn.

On April 25, two ANPI members in their sixties were attacked in Rome, where the ANPI was celebrating the anniversary of the liberation. The attacker wounded both of them with pellets from an airgun. They were wearing ANPI handkerchiefs around their necks, so the motive was quite obvious - a terrorist attack on random ANPI sympathisers. For days it was generally assumed that the gunman was a hardline neo-fascist, but on April 28 the police, following up on a variety of video camera leads showing the number plate of the scooter he has escaped on and so forth, located him.

The terrorist proved to be not a member or supporter of any of the hardline neo-fascist groupings, but a 21-year-old Roman Jew called Eithan Bondi. Immediately after his arrest, Bondi claimed to be a member of the Brigata Ebraica. The Brigata's leader,

Davide Romano, was quick to point out that this was not true: not only was Bondi not a member, but the Brigata was a purely Milanese organisation anyway.

The Roman Jewish Community was eager to present Bondi as a 'rotten apple' or 'lone wolf'. For example, Victor Fablun, the current leader of the Roman Jewish Community, dissociated himself from "any form of violence", and said Bondi's use of the name, Brigata Ebraica, was "an outrage". Ricardo Pacifici, the previous leader of the Roman Jewish Community, and current vice-president of the European Jewish Association, said, "I am ashamed. Why he did it is something he will have to say. We will have to ask ourselves even inside our institutions as to how it was possible to arrive at such a gesture."

This statement is hypocritical and unconvincing. Despite his name, Pacifici is not a man of peace, but a man who has endorsed, even if he has not necessarily participated in, violence. Pacifici was definitely present at two violent incidents in recent years. On April 25 2024, he witnessed (or perhaps was part of) a group of mask-wearing Zionists who threw tins full of food at demonstrators with Palestinian flags - a gesture designed to mock the starving civilians of Gaza. In October 2025, he was around when a group of students and teachers holding a peaceful assembly for Gaza in Monteverde was assaulted by Jewish men from a neighbouring synagogue.

Apart from these two episodes, there have been a number of occasions when people on their way home from marches and pickets for Gaza have been surrounded and beaten up by helmet-wearing Zionists, carrying chains, iron bars and bottles. More carefully planned and targeted actions have also been mounted against Roman universities. In short, the claim that Bondi's terrorist attack had no wider context is complete nonsense.

The hardline Zionists seem to have no hesitation in targeting dissident Jews - not just non-Jewish supporters

of the Palestinians. Gad Lerner, always an outspoken and combative Jewish leftist, who had no hesitation in calling Bondi "a Jewish fascist", has been a particular target. After the publication of an appeal entitled 'No to ethnic cleansing in Gaza and the West Bank', Lerner received a warning from the ministry of the interior that he was in need of protection. However, he refused to accept such protection, since in the past he had received many threats from fascists, and some Lega supporters, and said he was not now going to be intimidated by Zionists.

He was sent a WhatsApp message on April 28, a few hours before Bondi's arrest, by a Zionist responding to his attempt to explain the real history of the Palestine Regiment and the Jewish Brigade. The troller, whom he chooses not to name, said: "Gad, do they pay you, or are you a drug user? There were Arabs in the Jewish Brigade? ... You are stirring up hatred against the Jews with your historical revisionism. The Palestinians were allies of Hitler." The elderly Jewish historian, Anna Foa, received such a level of abuse after the publication of her book *Il suicidio d'Israele*<sup>3</sup> that she left the Roman Jewish Community and took up membership of the Torinese one instead.

An attempt is being made to present Bondi as an irrational lone wolf - something which seems to be encouraged by his lawyer, who has acted for official organisations of the Jewish Community in the past, and at the moment of writing the charges against Bondi seem to have been downgraded from attempted murder to something roughly equivalent to 'actual bodily harm'.<sup>4</sup>

However, what the episode reveals is the way the statements of Benjamin Netanyahu, Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben Gvir (faithfully relayed by hardline local Zionist leaders) seem to be pushing some young Italian Jews into an equivalent of the Jewish Community in the past, and at the moment of writing the charges against Bondi seem to have been downgraded from attempted murder to something roughly equivalent to 'actual bodily harm'.<sup>4</sup>

## Notes

- Originally the ANPI was entirely made up of veterans of the Italian resistance, but some years ago the organisation decided to admit younger people sympathetic to the resistance legacy, as there were fewer and fewer survivors of the 1943-45 resistance still alive.
- Ignazio Benito La Russa is the president of the Italian Senate, and was a co-founder of the FDI, whilst his brother, Romano La Russa, is involved in Milanese local politics - both have been active neo-fascists all their adult lives, and their father was an official in the fascist regime prior to the Allied landing in Sicily.
- This book could be seen as liberal Zionist, rather than anti-Zionist - arguing that Zionism went off the rails with the post-1967 occupation, rather than being flawed from Israel's birth in 1948.
- It seems rather unlikely that Bondi's attack was some irrational moment of madness, since the police found no less than seven different guns, three pistols, three rifles and a revolver in his home. In addition, his father has a criminal record, and his most recent arrest, in July 2025, was for a robbery aggravated by racial hatred. He and his accomplice had attacked three 'extracomunitari' (people from outside Europe), whom they racially insulted.