

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity

weekly **worker**



Peter Murrell's bizarre shopping habits have badly damaged the SNP. But the national question very much remains

- Letters and debate
- Tony Blair's essay
- Red-green delusions
- Animal liberation

No 1588 June 4 2026

Towards a mass Communist Party

£1/€1.10



NOT ONLY A FIELD OF PLAY

LETTERS



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

UFO commies

I read with interest Paul Demarty's piece in last week's *Weekly Worker*, which included an inter alia mention of Posadas. For all but 11 of my 63 years of conscious political life I've been an anarchist, but I did wander off into the mountains of Trotskyism for some 10 years. For five of those years, I was a follower of comrade Posadas - indeed a member of the central committee of the British Posadist section. I do intend to write a reflective on that experience with an analysis of all their theoretical publications, when the current tempo of class struggle is less demanding.

Suffice it to say the UFO thing was never ever some central theme of Posadist perspectives. We had considered that Marxism must be capable of analysing any subject, from flower arranging to space technology. There were lots of reported sightings of UFOs around the world and particularly over Argentina in the 60s and 70s. Posadas simply made a hypothesis that if these beings had developed a technology capable of taking them beyond the speed of light and across vast tracts of the galaxies, it was probable they had dispensed with the technological fetter of wage slavery and capitalism. That all reports over long periods of history would conclude such beings meant us no harm and were pacifistic.

He concluded that they had probably developed some kind of communist system. Pure speculation, of course, but rooted in Marxist logic - until, that is, some buffoon in Belgium with a duplicator started turning out leaflets "appealing to the inter-galactic masses to come to the assistance" of a local iron foundry on strike. We never actually contemplated an outside intervention. Quite the contrary: the Posadists believed in the inevitability of nuclear war, and as such contended that the 'workers' states' should launch a pre-emptive nuclear strike against imperialism.

I always thought this aspect of their outlook was more memorable and terrifying than the damn flying saucers!

Dave Douglass
South Shields

UFO truther

I'm not sure if it was one of the goals of comrade Paul Demarty's latest piece, but it did reaffirm the left's non-interest in the topic of UFOs ('People want to believe' May 28).

I'm a Marxist. I do not "want to believe" in the idea of an extra-terrestrial presence, nor do I find it entertaining to imagine. I have slowly (involuntarily) become convinced though that it is true, and also that it soon could be acknowledged officially. When that happens, the reputation of many on the left who dismissed it will be hurt. If the *Weekly Worker* publishes this letter, it will serve as proof that at least one Marxist had it right!

Noa Rodman
email

UFO relevance

I was surprised at how similar Paul Demarty's views are on the UFO issue to the original Soviet position. Both America and the Soviet Union had their own secret UFO files - in the latter case from the time of Stalin onwards

Stalin personally ordered a group of top-tier Soviet scientists to analyse the western UFO reports. The Stalin

Panel included: Igor Kurchatov (the scientific director of the Soviet atomic bomb project), Sergei Korolev (the master engineer of the Soviet rocket and space programme) and Mstislav Keldysh (a leading mathematician and space theorist.)

The original Soviet conclusion, at least officially, was remarkably similar to the views put forward by Demarty: ie, the UFO issue was bourgeois propaganda for distracting the masses. This position changed later, but it shows how suspicious communists were at first over the issue. It wasn't until glasnost that the Soviet state censorship over the issue was removed and UFOs were no longer simply dismissed as bourgeois propaganda.

Although slightly more relaxed, China had a similar view to the Soviet Union. Now you have to have a university degree to be a member of China's official UFO organisation and many communists are such members, including military people, engineers and scientists. With the exception of Posadists, most communists in the west haven't given any serious consideration to the UFO issue. Even the Vatican, which has its own UFO research body, is more informed on the issue than most western communists. The question is, as the Posadists argued, does the issue have any relevance to communism at all?

Astronomers estimate that there are between 100 billion to one trillion planets in the Milky Way galaxy alone. Next to this, the number of galaxies in the observable universe is estimated to be between 100 billion and two trillion (don't ask me how they arrive at these figures).

Combine this with the fact that all the ancient cultures of the world on every continent speak of beings who came from the heavens and interacted with humans and were even involved in genetically engineering (ie, upgrading) the latter, resulting in the birth of many of the religions on earth, in particular the Abrahamic religions. It is obvious that the subject cannot be dismissed as bourgeois propaganda.

The theme of Christianity, a religion based on prophecy, when carefully decoded from a secular point of view, is essentially about a coming extraterrestrial intervention in human affairs, which the biblical seers presented as a religious narrative, as do the churches today.

In other words, using a religious narrative, the biblical seers have been telling us of a coming alien intervention, which in truth should be called an 'open' intervention, because many researchers believe that there has been covert intervention for thousands of years.

Whether people choose to believe this or not is not the decisive issue. The decisive issue is whether the prophecies come true or not. This latter point relates to whether precognition - ie, knowing the future before it happens - is real. One thing is certain and it's that all Christians confuse prophecy with religion, when they are in fact two different things. Religion is theology; prophecy (or precognition) refers to knowledge of an event before it happens. If precognition is real, we can't rule out some major surprises in the relatively near future.

Christians, with their religious interpretation of prophecy, would be the most surprised of all.

Tony Clark
For Democratic Socialism

YP Scotland

My *Weekly Worker* letter (plus the AI image I circulated) last week has provoked further machinations

amongst the wreckage of the Your Party project in Scotland.

Jim Monaghan, freshly appointed CEC member, gave me a first sliver of information on a YPS WhatsApp group thus: "The sortitioned working group member for Glasgow is Nick Parker. Very much a real person and not a figment of Karie Murphy's imagination." So I found Nick Parker, who stood as a YP-backed Tusc candidate in the local elections and he knew nothing about the working group.

In subsequent exchanges Jim insisted he had chatted with Nick and plans to meet him in person soon. He also stated: "There are eight members in eight regions. They will be in place for about six weeks, helping setting up structures in Scotland. As a member you will hear about plans for Glasgow by email. There will be an initial branch covering the Glasgow parliamentary region. That branch will set up branches and develop things in their region in whatever way that members decide."

He said the first branch launch for South of Scotland is taking place on June 6. This was also announced on the YP website with no further details. It turns out this is a Zoom meeting covering the whole of the parliamentary regions below the central belt, stretching from the east to west coasts, covering 10 constituencies, and have already somehow "been through the process of nominating and selecting branch officers". I've come across the lead figure in this supposed branch - Ross McCann - he is clearly a paid-up member of the Murphias and recently barged through the still existing YP WhatsApp groups with Jim like he was his minder. As I said to Jim in response, it's clear that these are not branches, but means of control under the guise of "hubs set up in communities rather than talking shops", offering no party life whatsoever, except to give hyperbolic orders from on high.

I also told Jim that, until we see actual concrete proof of the working group, Nick Parker must remain as that old Scottish concept with the same initials - Not Proven!

I've made repeated attempts this week to find out what guidelines I've broken to be removed from the YPS "unofficial" Facebook group, but moderator Hayley Green has not replied at all and so left me in a Catch-22 limbo by only stating, "If you want to rejoin, then apply at a later date when you are willing to follow the group guidelines."

Another group I've just been removed and barred from is the Marxist Caucus Community WhatsApp group, which I raised in last week's letter. There was a lot of petulance and swearing at my daring to highlight the political differences over AI use and my description of most of them as "deep-fried left nationalists". Then with no explanation at all I was removed from the group. Most shamefully this was done in the middle of a discussion I was having there with an Iranian comrade about the Lego animations I featured in the letter. He was as surprised as me at my removal and said: "I left too. When they treat an experienced leftist like you this way, staying in such a group is pointless."

Another "experienced leftist" in the group, Bob Goupillot, said he publicly argued that I shouldn't be barred and the door was now open to me again. Except it wasn't and I remain excluded. The intolerance and emotional reactions to political differences seems particularly heightened amongst those younger comrades.

They really don't like my

description of 'deep-fried nationalism', but it's apt and fits what's rife in Scotland now. The deep-fried Mars Bar invented by a Scottish chip shop made news around the world and I'm suggesting a parallel with the supposedly unique nature of the national question here. They're both recent phenomena, taking hold since the rising Scottish National Party vote from the late 1970s, but are only skin-deep and flaky - a battered reaction to Thatcher and the rightward shift of Labour.

This is all given much deeper analysis and evisceration in Jack Conrad's three Scotland *Weekly Worker* supplements in December 2020. I will add those with the next post on my new Substack, where it's possible to combine the AI-generated images with letters and links. Just like with AI and how the CPGB uses tech possibilities for the live weekly Online Communist Forum, seeking new ways to offer a communist alternative to the fragmentation of the left is vital right now.

Such disintegration and rightward drift is further exposed in reactions to the YPS wreckage, with the new party due to develop from the interim Scottish executive committee split from YP now "going back to the drawing board", as "The soft launch has been postponed again due to a number of factors." They've not even been able to come up with a name that isn't already taken - 'People Before Profit', 'Scottish Left Alliance' and 'Scottish Socialist Alliance' (the latter was discounted, when it was pointed out it was the earlier name of the Scottish Socialist Party).

All this is encouraging 'broad-front localism' to be looked on as the solution. Most prominent in that is the former Leith and North Edinburgh YP branch, which has now come out as 'Leith Organises', launching a community listening exercise to go knocking on doors to find out what folk want. This has been lauded by many, including Duncan Chapel in the Ecosocialist Scotland group and his Red Mole Substack as "building a new kind of left politics through community roots, worker solidarity and ecosocialist campaigning". He's been advocating that the "Leith model" be rolled out across Britain as the real way for the new Socialist Federation to develop a left programme from the ground up.

So localism, broad-frontism and nationalism on one side, bureaucratic control-freakery and Labourism on the other. With an ear worm of Gerry Rafferty's clowns and jokers ringing away, I'll now get back to ChatGPT and that deep-fried image for the next Substack issued in my name ...

Tam Dean Burn
Glasgow

YP feds

Things are moving quickly in Your Party. Not because of anything its central executive committee has done, but in response to what they have only grudgingly done at a snail's pace because of the prevarication of Jeremy Corbyn and his acolytes. Branches are only just being formed and only then in places where the CEC feels that its writ runs - mainly outside the urban conurbations, where the bulk of the politically active membership is. Of course, lots have simply left YP altogether - many to join the Greens or just save their money.

In the meantime, hundreds of activists in 'proto-branches', who, despite the inaction of the CEC, have worked the hardest to give YP a campaigning profile, are determined that their efforts should not be in vain. One of the first initiatives to keep the proto-branches together was the

Member's Charter. Initially, this was an attempt to bring pressure to bear on the CEC to do something, after the victory of Corbyn's slate in the CEC election. This was quickly overtaken by events, as the CEC ignored conference decisions, particularly on holding dual membership, and began a witch-hunt of the left.

At a conference of the Members Charter last Sunday, May 31, those who had signed up voted overwhelmingly to rename themselves Socialist Federation. This has been widely portrayed as a 'split', but many taking part were at pains to point out that they were still active members of Your Party and wanted to coordinate and organise the left. The decision to form a 'federation' was made, as distinct to a looser 'network'. Motions to form a party directly were withdrawn.

Claimed participation ranged from 220 to 250, with about 110 in the meeting at any one time. Some of those present were explicitly representing other organised groups, such as the Spartacists and the International Bolshevik Tendency. Most, however, were left activists in YP, determined to see through what they joined YP for: to develop a mass socialist party that could stand in elections but not be wholly defined by electoral politics.

What was most encouraging was that here were people determined to work together in a comradely way, debate and form an organisation that would have a lasting legacy. The organisers did a phenomenal job of making it happen. Many different groups submitted - sometimes long - motions or statements, and these were grouped in such a way as to give attendees the best possible chance to have their say before they were voted on. Those with the greatest number of votes will be composed and debated at the next conference, provisionally booked for the June 28, where attendees will be able to submit amendments.

Aside from the name change, attendees also overwhelmingly supported the establishment of the Socialist Education and Debate Association (SEDA) as "a distinct organisation": "The idea is to bridge across all factions of the socialist left, and that includes to bridge the divide between the SF and the DS [Democratic Socialists] and the Connections group, and to involve groups who are nothing to do with YP or have left it."

The upcoming, in-person YP Connections conference in Sheffield on June 6 will provide a further opportunity for YP activists to debate the future of the left and preserve some of the energy that was a feature of the Grassroots Left slate in the CEC election. Similarly, what had been the Democratic Socialists in Your Party has now reconstituted itself as Democratic Socialists and by the time this is published will have held a meeting on June 3 on 'Why we need a socialist democratic party', prior to its formal relaunch in Sheffield, where representatives of SEDA will also be attending.

Of course, not everyone who participated on Sunday has greeted the launch of SF with enthusiasm. Max Shanly, who for a while held a leading position in Grassroots Left, posted on X: "I'm not a member. I don't believe in federations - they're rarely coherent and never last", before going on to say of Sunday's conference: "I attended for a bit to present a proposal; it didn't pass. I stuck around for a while, because I felt that there was an overall lack of seriousness and the contributions from the floor were poor, so I left early. I remain unaligned."

Previously, having been defeated in a vote to liquidate DSYP, he left to try his luck with Members Charter.

I was pleased to be an early signatory to the Members Charter. I am glad I stayed for the whole of the conference on Sunday because, notwithstanding Max's assessment, there are good, committed comrades in SF. I'm looking forward to the Connections conference in Sheffield and the formal relaunch of DS as a membership organisation with a developing communist programme.

On the left and in the wider world, things are moving quickly. Communists/socialists need to work together to resist intensifying state repression. Freed from the leaden-footed Corbyn, tied as he is to Labourism, SF have an opportunity to forge unity. It could be objected that the politics of SF has yet to cohere, but, as far as I'm concerned, that is as good a reason as any to actively participate in it.

Ian Spencer
email

YP's St Jeremy

I recently wrote an article for *The Left Lane* titled 'Why Jeremy Corbyn should step down as Your Party leader'. Your diligent correspondent, Carla Roberts, and I have written more about this alleged (I guess that's the best word) "mass socialist working class party" over the past 18 months than any other jourmos on the left and I thought it was time for at least one sum-up piece.

After I submitted it and reread it, I thought I had not focused enough on two aspects of Your Party's tortuous history: (1) its actual political ideology or line; (2) the fundamental flaws in its democracy. Addressing point 1 in more depth would have taken another 1,000 words at least (another article is needed for that), while the actions of some fellow YP members have taken care of answering point 2.

Shortly after a mate of mine successfully posted the piece on the unofficial Facebook group called

'Your Party', one of the group's moderators ripped it down. Although it says "this page was created by like-minded people to discuss the policies and politics of Your Party", their silencing action showed these words are as truthful as the idea that YP is "member-led". Criticising Saint Jeremy is not allowed.

So I offer it up to *Weekly Worker* readers (go to theleftlane.media/why-jeremy-corbyn-should-step-down-as-your-party-leader) for open debate and criticism - the only way a successor party will be built.

Alan Story
Norwich

Cuba disgrace

Eddie Ford follows the well-worn and disgraceful path of the British left in dealing with its Cuba problem, relying on anecdotes and opinion presented as fact ('Under siege and still resisting', May 28).

It is a pity that he did not leave his article to the few paragraphs that show some basic appreciation of the pressures on the Cuban revolution in the face of 65 years of US aggression. He does not pay tribute to its massive achievements, and what humanity stands to lose if imperialism triumphs. Where is the praise for an underdeveloped, formerly oppressed, neo-colonial state, which built a system of universal healthcare free at the point of use? Free universal education, even up to university level? An educated professional and technical population, over half of whom are women?

Cuba created a biotechnology industry which has created pioneering treatments for cancer, against mother-baby transfer of Aids, five Covid vaccines; sent hundreds of thousands of healthcare professionals across the world to deal with crises such as Ebola and Covid. It is a state where working class democracy exists to the full, where there is the most advanced stand on LGBTQ+ rights in the new Family Code. Why decline to mention the fight and defeat of apartheid forces in Angola and then

support for the liberation of Namibia? Or its solidarity with the Palestinian people?

Instead we get a miserably shallow dive, at which the petty bourgeois left excels, when forced to deal with Cuba. Ford says: "It is perfectly legitimate to critique early revolutionary Cuba, seeing that there are those who held it up as a model - and still do." Why? What is the purpose of such a critique? For a left in Britain which has spent decades defending a racist, imperialist, war-mongering Labour Party we can only expect a prelude to some counterrevolutionary sentiment. Does he mean as a model to be followed in Britain? Britain is a major imperialist power which has, like all imperialist powers, ensured the political domination of a privileged layer of the working class over the mass of the working class.

The problems we face in Britain are quite different from those faced by revolutionaries in Cuba. Here, the obstacles are created by the left, describing themselves as 'revolutionary socialists', while obsessing over electoral politics. In this context, communists have to point to the examples cited above as a demonstration of what socialism can achieve even in an underdeveloped country, showing that it is both possible and necessary, and that it will never be achieved by wretched electoral vehicles, such as Your Party *et al.*

The petty bourgeois or social-democratic left constantly works to expunge the revolutionary essence of the Cuban revolution from the records. Ford's superficial account of Guevara's approach to revolutionary foci is supposed to do the trick, especially if you ignore the parts where Che spoke of the need to build alliances with the urban movement, where there were already revolutionary processes taking place.

But this is not the end of Guevara's achievements. His extensive theoretical contribution on the subjective element of building socialism, the need for a constant development of political consciousness as part of the development of the productive forces is unequalled since Lenin. (see H Yaffe *Che Guevara: the economics of revolution*, 2009). It is one of the many great legacies of the Cuban revolution as much as it is of an outstanding theoretician. Ford does not address this - why? Is he completely ignorant of it?

So when Ford repeats the mantra, "it no longer represents a model to follow", there is simply arrogance: 'We socialists here in Britain may have achieved nothing - indeed we may be in full and ignominious retreat - but, by jingo, we can tell others across the world how a socialist revolution has to be done or not done.'

We in the RCG are often told that we are uncritical of the Cuban revolution. What the left misses is that the fiercest critics of their revolution are the Cuban people themselves - fierce because they are contantly having to fight intellectually and politically for the best path forward to defend their achievements, when they know that these best paths are never going to be the ideal ones, while imperialism exists. *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* regularly covers the changes, the retreats, the recoveries, the advances, as Cuba grapples with the operation of the law of value. We unashamedly engage with what the Cuban leadership thinks and says, and certainly do not condescendingly dismiss them as 'Stalinists' or 'bureaucrats'. We are clear: the true communists in Cuba are within the Communist Party of Cuba, and we unreservedly stand

with them and the Cuban people.

Trashy dismissals of our standpoint - with labels like 'Castroists', 'Maoists', 'sub-Maoists', 'Stalinists', 'third worldists', 'Guevarists', 'ultra-leftists', 'dogmatists' (we have had all of these) - betray the unwillingness of the social-democratic left to get out of its self-serving framework and engage with questions of imperialism and the working class struggle in the imperialist countries (with those divisions repeatedly described by Lenin), or, in alliance with the oppressed, in the underdeveloped countries.

In Britain, for the RCG that means ending the the ludicrous ambition of creating a new social-democratic party or imagining that it can be perfected under a different name; it means ending the obsession with the overtly reactionary trade unions as the primary or even exclusive site of working class struggle.

The struggle to defend the Cuban revolution is the vital question of the day.

Robert Clough
Revolutionary Communist Group

One of the Neets

I would like to comment on the report by former Blairite health minister Alan Milburn into the one million young people aged 16-24 who are 'Neets' - 'not in education, employment or training' (Polly Toynbee has written a useful article about the report in the May 28 edition of *The Guardian*, which I recommend people read).

The report points out that 84% of 'Neets' want to work or get into training or education. Milburn points to the 1.6 million first-rung jobs that have vanished in the past 20 years. He also notes the 35% fall in apprenticeship starts in the past decade and the loss of retail and hospitality jobs.

The report reminds me of my own experience on leaving school in 1978. After being unemployed for three years, I reluctantly enrolled on a mathematical sciences sandwich course degree. When I finished my degree I worked in the economic services section of the Welsh Office before returning to my hometown due to home sickness.

I then got a job as a part-time bookkeeper with the community programme, before working as an accounts clerk until I got ill with psychotic depression in 1992. My community psychiatric nurse told me to ask my employer if I could work part-time. My employer said no, so I left. I have been unemployed and in receipt of disability benefits ever since then. In 2004 I was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome - most people with that don't work. At the same time, if someone leaves their job for mental health reasons, their chances of working again are zero.

Alan Milburn's report says that 53% of Neets are economically inactive - many are in receipt of health and disability benefits due to mental illness. I can understand why we should be worried about them. Without state support their chances of ever working are very slim.

John Smithee
Cambridgeshire

Lost generation

I think it's a case of *déjà vu* after hearing that youth unemployment has topped the one million mark again. I sense there was little genuine sympathy for youth overall - just a case of patronising them: a 'lost generation if we don't push them into doing something' (lost to benefits, of course, without saying what the real cause is!). It brought back to me memories of the 1980s, when

unemployment topped over three million, and only benefit and fear kept the workers in line.

At least now there is a realistic notion that it would be insanity to cut benefits or publish the figures of working disabled, let alone the non-working disabled (if there is such a thing - most disabled individuals do voluntary work when possible). Unrecognised and undervalued by the government and media, few get to hear about Unite Community (the voluntary sector of Unite the Union) and play their part in the community across the country.

Pat McFadden, the secretary of state for work and pensions, treats these individuals with contempt, as exposed in the Epstein files. His statements about cutting personal independent payments would fit in nicely with Tory policy on the 'undeserving'!

Yet another embarrassment, which leaves us yet again wondering how many 'secret Conservatives' in the Labour Party actually want them back in office (not to mention the boost for the dangerous Reform, whose spectre haunts society). Many ex-Labour supporters will find it hard to vote for them again - it's scary to think how out of touch Labour really is now.

Ian Reynolds
Aylestone

Radical centre?

The former prime minister with seven living successors does not speak for the centre, radical or otherwise. It is we who seek to strengthen families and communities by securing economic equality and international peace through the democratic political control of the means to those ends, including national and parliamentary sovereignty. In the struggle for economic equality, the leading role belongs to those who suffer most from its absence - namely the working class - while in the struggle for international peace the leading role belongs to those who suffer most from its absence: namely the working class and the youth.

Social solidarity is an expression of personal responsibility, which is protected by social solidarity. International solidarity is an expression of national sovereignty, and national sovereignty is protected by international solidarity. Equality and diversity must include economic equality and class diversity, regional equality and regional diversity, the equal sovereignty of diverse states, and equal respect for diverse opinions within a framework of free speech and other civil liberties, including due process of law with the presumption of innocence, requiring that conviction be beyond reasonable doubt.

All of this is opposed by the EU, Nato, the World Trade Organisation, International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Then there is the anti-industrial Malthusianism and misanthropy of the Green agenda, the treatment of identity politics as equal or superior to class politics, the treatment of gender identity as equal or superior to sex ('biological sex'), and the cancel culture, of which our people have always been the principal victims. We also have the erosion of civil liberties, the stupefaction of the workers or the youth, the indulgence of separatist tendencies in any of the three parts of Great Britain, plus the failure to recognise that a sovereign state with its own free-floating, fiat currency had as much of that currency as it chose to issue to itself, with readily available fiscal and monetary means of controlling any inflationary effect, under democratic political control.

David Lindsay
Lanchester

Online Communist Forum



Sunday June 7 5pm

**The problem isn't two-tier policing.
It's the police**

**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

FOOTBALL

Not only a field of play

With the Mexico versus South Africa opening match of the 2026 World Cup just days away, **Carl Collins** examines the background and inherent contradictions of the beautiful game. It is not just about money, money, money

Commencing on June 11, the six-week tournament, is jointly hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico. It will be the largest World Cup in history. Expanded from the previous 32 teams to the 48 which qualified for 2026, and transformed into a sprawling, continent-wide tournament, it will be presented by liberals, media pundits and football officials as proof of the game's supposedly universal and apolitical character.

Hundreds of millions - billions - will watch. Vast sums of money will circulate. Entire city centres will be reshaped around sponsorship zones, hospitality suites and security operations.

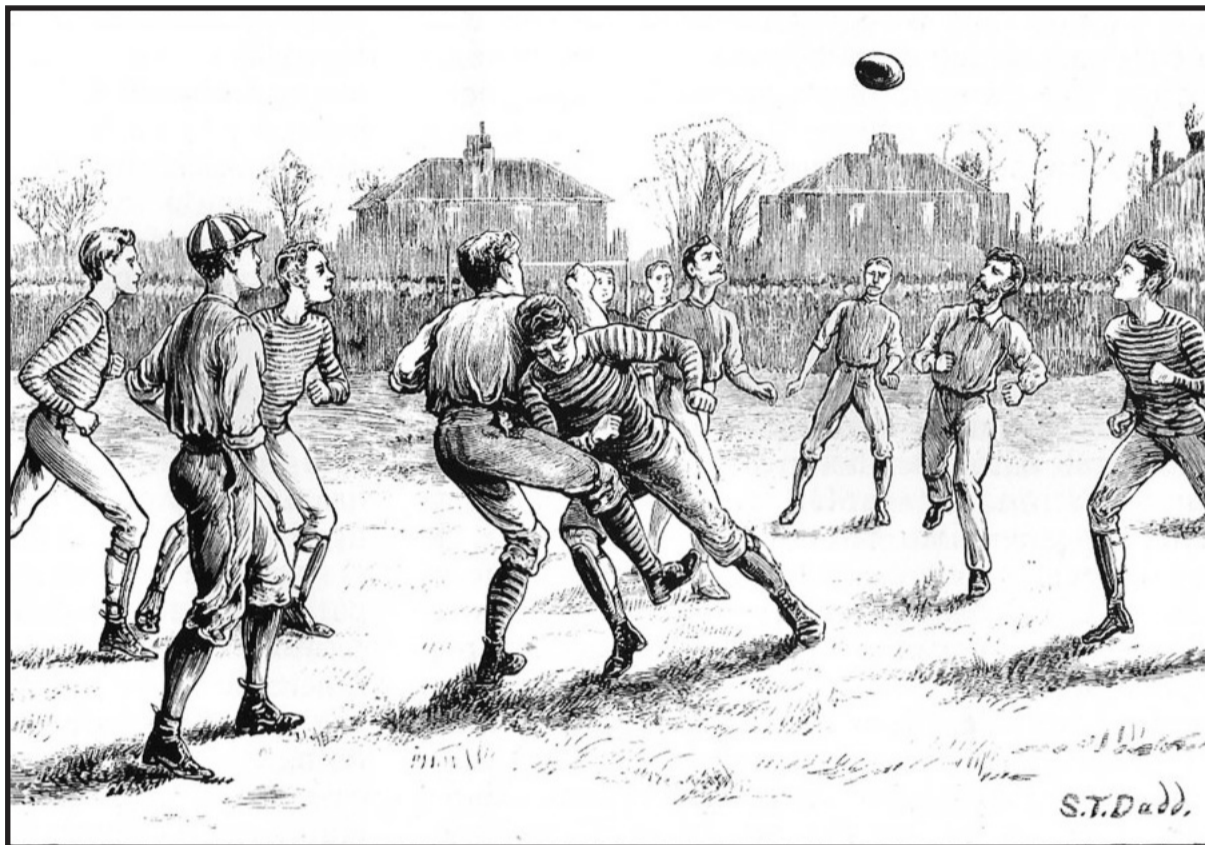
For revolutionaries the temptation exists to dismiss the tournament as little more than an immense modern 'bread and circus' distraction organised by the capitalist class to divert anger, pacify workers and replace collective political struggle with passive spectacle. There is some truth in that argument. Football under capitalism is saturated with exploitation, nationalism and commodification. But stopping there would be a mistake.

Football cannot be understood simply as manipulation from above, nor romanticised as a pure expression of popular culture existing outside capitalism. It emerged from the popular classes, became tied to local identities and collective life, and was later transformed into one of the world's most profitable industries. Yet commercialisation has not erased the emotional and social attachments millions still have with their teams. The task for socialists is therefore not moral condemnation or naive celebration, but understanding football as a field of political struggle.

Football was not born in corporate boardrooms, but in villages, towns, docks, mines and factories. Clubs across England and beyond were often founded by workers, churches or neighbourhood associations. Matches became one of the few spaces where workers could gather collectively outside of direct managerial supervision.¹

For many communities, football clubs became repositories of memory and identity. Entire generations attached family history and local pride to clubs representing districts that industrial capitalism created but often neglected. The club badge, terrace chants and matchday rituals reflected a desire for belonging in societies otherwise organised around alienation and exploitation.

Marxists who dismiss this reality as merely false consciousness misunderstand how culture operates. Workers do not live through economic struggle alone. Human beings seek community, emotional release and collective expression, and football has historically provided that. The ruling class understood this early. Employers sometimes supported football, because it channelled energies away from more confrontational forms of organisation. Politicians recognised its ability to cultivate patriotism and social cohesion. Newspapers discovered the profits generated by sporting coverage. Advertisers, broadcasters and gambling interests followed.



Old Etonians vs Blackburn Rovers 1882 FA Cup final at Kennington Oval: the toffs won 2:1

Yet the fact that elites sought to use football does not negate its genuine roots among ordinary people. Football became valuable to capital precisely because it possessed authentic mass appeal.

Roman circuses

The phrase, 'bread and circuses', is frequently invoked by sections of the left during major sporting events. Certainly, there are parallels between ancient Roman spectacles and contemporary mega-events. Governments facing crises often wrap themselves in sporting nationalism.

But a crude 'bread and circuses' argument risks reducing workers to passive dupes. It implies that the millions who follow football are simply manipulated into political inactivity by entertainment.

The working class is perfectly capable of contradictory consciousness. A worker may passionately support their team, while simultaneously participating in strikes, protests or political organisation. Football fandom does not mechanically erase political potential. Throughout history football crowds have often reflected broader social tensions and sometimes with remarkable intensity.

Across Europe and Latin America in particular, terraces have repeatedly become spaces where anti-racist, anti-fascist and working class traditions compete against chauvinism and reaction. In Egypt, organised football ultras played important roles during the uprisings of 2011.²

Leftwing supporters of Spanish club Rayo Vallecano, known as *Los Bukaneros*, are renowned not only for supporting the club, but for political and community activism in their working class Madrid district - including organising food banks, resisting evictions and protesting against ticket prices and unsociable kick-off times.³

In Britain, Football Lads and Lasses Against Fascism⁴ demonstrate how supporter culture can become a vehicle

for anti-racist and working class political organisation, even without developing into a fully revolutionary movement. If such tendencies were able to evolve further - comparable, say, to the sports and workers' associations historically linked to the Social Democratic Party of Germany - football culture could potentially provide an organisational basis for broader forms of political participation rooted in everyday collective life.

Football remains one of the few mass collective cultures not yet fully fragmented into isolated consumption, which is precisely why it remains a politically contested terrain.

Fascist football

Reactionary forces have long recognised football's political potential. One of the clearest historical examples came under Benito Mussolini during the 1934 World Cup hosted by Italy. Mussolini understood the tournament as a tool for legitimising his fascist regime. It became a carefully orchestrated propaganda exercise designed to present fascist Italy as disciplined, modern and powerful. Stadium architecture, choreographed crowds and nationalist imagery all contributed to projecting the supposed unity of the fascist nation.

The success of the Italian national team was heavily politicised. Players were pressured to embody fascist ideals of masculinity, obedience and national strength. International football became intertwined with state propaganda and imperial ambition.

This was not unique to fascist Italy. Right up to the present day, authoritarian regimes have repeatedly exploited football to consolidate legitimacy through nationalism and mass spectacle. More broadly, both states and corporations have used football as a vehicle for sportswashing: employing tournaments, sponsorships, club ownership and media spectacles to enhance public

image, cultivate legitimacy and divert attention from human rights abuses, corruption, environmental harms or other forms of political and economic misconduct.

The lesson is clear: football's popularity makes it politically valuable to competing social forces. In Britain, figures associated with the far right have repeatedly attempted to use football culture as an entry point for chauvinist politics. The Football Lads Alliance emerged publicly through mobilisations claiming to defend "ordinary supporters", while cultivating reactionary nationalism and hostility toward migrants and Muslims.

Although the FLA drew support from people with varying political views, far-right activists quickly recognised its potential as a recruiting ground. Its rhetoric depended heavily upon notions of embattled national identity, cultural grievance and masculine resentment. Football symbolism and terrace culture were appropriated to create an image of authentic popular rebellion, while directing anger away from capitalism itself toward minorities.

Figures like Tommy Robinson attempted to position themselves as defenders of 'real' working class communities abandoned by elites. This strategy mirrors broader far-right politics internationally: adopting the language of betrayal and community, while ultimately reinforcing racism and protecting capitalist interests.

Liberal myth

Football crowds reflect broader society. Where economic insecurity, alienation and fragmentation deepen, reactionary politics can flourish. But these same conditions can also produce solidarity, collective resistance and radical consciousness. Which tendency develops depends to a large extent upon political intervention.

Liberal commentators frequently insist that football should remain separate from politics. Yet this supposed neutrality invariably protects the status quo. National

anthems, military flyovers, royal patronage, corporate branding and policing strategies are treated as natural features of the game, while anti-racist banners or labour solidarity are condemned as 'politicisation'.

The reality is that football under capitalism is already political. The question is not whether politics enters the game, but whose politics dominate. FIFA itself embodies this contradiction. It presents football as a force for universal harmony, while operating through opaque relationships with states, corporations and security apparatuses.

The 2026 World Cup will almost certainly involve intensified border controls, enormous policing operations and extensive corporate exclusion zones around host cities. Migrant labour, precarious service work and public subsidy will underpin a tournament generating extraordinary profits for sponsors and governing bodies.

Even before a ball is kicked, the contradictions surrounding the tournament are already visible. Donald Trump's return to office has brought renewed restrictions and hostile rhetoric directed toward migrants and several predominantly Muslim countries, including Iran. When Iran qualified, immediate questions emerged over whether supporters, journalists and officials would be able to travel freely to a World Cup supposedly celebrating international unity.⁵

The hypocrisy becomes even clearer when considering FIFA's treatment of Russia and Israel. Russia remains banned from international competition following the invasion of Ukraine and was not permitted to even attempt at qualifying. Yet Israel continues to participate fully in international football despite the destruction inflicted upon Gaza and mounting global condemnation of its actions against Palestinians.

In this context, the recent stance taken in Ireland demanding stronger opposition to sporting normalisation with Israel deserves recognition. Former Irish international Richie Sadlier was correct to condemn the silence and cowardice surrounding the issue, arguing that football cannot pretend to occupy a moral vacuum, while atrocities are broadcast daily across the world.⁶

At the same time, millions of ordinary people will still experience genuine joy, solidarity and emotional connection through the tournament. Families and communities will gather collectively around matches. Shared moments of celebration and despair will cut across everyday isolation. Again, the contradiction remains central●

Notes

1. See R Sanders *Beastly fury: the strange birth of British football* New York 2010.
2. R Blaschke *Power players: football in propaganda, war and revolution* Chichester 2022.
3. R Dunne *Working class heroes: the story of Rayo Vallecano, Madrid's forgotten team* Chichester 2017.
4. www.facebook.com/FootballFansAgainstFascism/?locale=en_GB.
5. www.theguardian.com/football/2026/mar/04/donald-trump-really-does-not-care-if-iran-play-at-football-world-cup-2026.
6. www.dailyrecord.co.uk/sport/football/football-news/ireland-spelt-out-emotional-case-37220500.asp.

SCOTLAND

Small-nation crook

Peter Murrell's bizarre shopping habits have badly damaged the SNP. But the national question is still very much on the agenda, argues **Paul Demarty**. Around half of voters remain committed to separation

What can we possibly make of Peter Murrell, who has admitted to embezzling £400,000 from the Scottish National Party?

Murrell was certainly in a good place to do so: chief executive of the SNP in its decade of glory, where it began to displace Labour in Scotland's central belt, came agonisingly close to winning an independence referendum in 2014, and rode the fallout from defeat to a half-decade of near-total dominance in Scottish politics, in Holyrood and Westminster alike. Its membership rolls multiplying, its coffers filling, it was an attractive target for a well-placed malefactor.

And you could not get more well-placed than Murrell - with a senior post of his own and a marriage to the SNP's unquestioned and well-respected leader, Nicola Sturgeon. So steal he could, and steal he did. Yet there is something slightly off about the whole thing, which is simply the *pettiness* of the theft. The list is, to be sure, of expensive items. He bought a Jaguar SUV. He bought a motor-home, which apparently sat rusting on the driveway of his mother, like Alan Bennett's *Lady in the van* (four miles on the clock, according to the evidence given). He bought two advent calendars at Fortnums (£200 each!), crystal salt and pepper grinders (£2,600 and change), a Starwalker fountain pen (£4,225, and who today can even write with those things?).

The list goes down into more plebeian territory - games consoles (why he needed three different Nintendo 3DS handhelds remains a mystery), Scandinavian detective TV box-sets, and so forth. But it seems to be random splurging with little real purpose behind it. Sturgeon hotly denies any awareness of all this, and I suppose we must take her at her word, but it frankly beggars belief. ('Honey, I'm home!' 'Hello, darling. How nice of you to bring four hundred quid's worth of Le Creuset coffee cups, whose provenance I am definitely not going to ask you about. And that's a nice Jaguar!')

Grand larceny

Sturgeon is not the only person spluttering in outrage - real or confected - that they could have been so deceived. Current SNP leader and first minister John Swinney, a veteran of the party, likewise had to put on a show. In his case perhaps, ignorance could more plausibly be maintained. Humza Yousaf, whose tenure in the top job separates those of Sturgeon and Swinney, has demanded a hefty prison sentence.

Of course, Murrell is guilty of robbing ordinary party members, and some punishment will surely be meted out. If he were really motivated entirely by greed, though, he surely would have picked a different rosette. The profits available to those in the Labour and Conservative parties who traverse the revolving door between public life and private business are stupendous.

We expect that Tony Blair and Peter Mandelson enjoyed many more overpriced home trinkets and luxury advent calendars in their years riding high on the boutique-consultancy hog than Murrell ever could have. After George Osborne was ejected from Number 11, it became a full-time task merely to keep track of all the lavish sinecures he was collecting. That is to say nothing of the countless



Nationalism is bigger than just the Scottish National Party

freebies accepted from lobbyists. All of this stuff has the advantage of being perfectly legal, and even the cheapest pair of spectacles bought for Keir Starmer by Lord Alli is - politically speaking - far dirtier than Murrell's salt grinder.

Perhaps there is something rather *compulsive* about Murrell's past behaviour: a psychopathological quirk that undermined a sincere commitment to the cause of Scottish independence, activated by the world of temptation that is bourgeois political life. Here I speculate: we may never know what led him to commit these eminently detectable crimes. He seems a little more like Sam Brinton, a minor Biden administration official who attracted notoriety for repeatedly stealing expensive-looking suitcases from airport baggage carousels. In both cases, it is hard to avoid resorting to amateur Freudianism, and diagnose an unconscious desire precisely to be caught in the act.

The more important matter is how the party came to be so vulnerable to such bizarre petty criminality, which, we should remember, took place over the course of an entire decade. It will not be too much, I hope, to expect some sort of internal inquiry into this matter; but the core problems are clear. The SNP was a fairly marginal party prior to devolution - its high watermark at Westminster coming in the second general election of 1974, where it took 11 seats (and famously played a significant role in the downfall of James Callaghan in 1979). More typically, its contingent could comfortably fit in the proverbial London taxi and, in many parliaments, on a tandem bicycle.

It was established immediately as the main opposition party in Holyrood, however, and in 2011 became not only the main party, but the governing party, a position which it has yet to lose. (This was about the time that Murrell began fishing in the till.) In 2015, still high on the referendum near-miss and the subsequent backstabbing by David Cameron, the SNP achieved

an astonishing victory in Westminster, taking all but three of Scotland's 59 Commons seats. Scotland began suddenly to look like a one-party state.

This, of course, made the SNP worth bribing (though Murrell did not take bribes as such!). It generally plunged it into the world of temptation, as noted, that bourgeois politics generally is. But it also must have imposed certain growing pains. All those MPs and MSPs needed staff; the party's internal machinery suddenly needed to support vastly more activists; and those jobs had to be filled, more or less, by the human capital ready to hand. Personal connections to senior politicians no doubt counted for a lot - sometimes the man at the top of the greasy pole turns out to be a kleptomaniac!

Stasis

But then there is the strange effect of the referendum defeat itself. The poll was supposed to settle the question 'for a generation', but the close result meant that the independence question was placed in a strange kind of stasis. The nationalists lacked the power to secure a fresh referendum, so movement in that direction tended to become rhetorical - setting up standoffs with Westminster, getting the expected rebuff, and turning that into electoral propaganda.

In some respects, it resembled, to take an American example, the question of abortion before *Roe v Wade* was finally overturned. So long as abortion was politically delegated to the Supreme Court, whose composition changed only glacially, it could serve as a rallying issue for both the religious right (who wanted *Roe* overturned) and liberal Democrats (who feared what has now happened). It can be quite convenient, after all, to have as a central political rallying point something you cannot do very much about: power can be secured on an ongoing basis with the grand goal always out of reach.

Sooner or later, reality will tend to catch up with you. In the case of Murrell's antics, the problems

began in 2020, when eyebrows were raised at the annual accounts the SNP submitted to the electoral commission, with only £97,000 of ready cash in the bank. This was down from close to £500,000 the previous year, with the money likely splurged on the 2019 general election. Eagle-eyed Sturgeon-hostile nationalists, however, saw an immediate problem. The money raised for an independence referendum do-over campaign had shown up on this balance sheet; now it was gone, despite promises that it would be ring-fenced.

Attempts by several SNP figures to get some clarity about this were aggressively rebuffed by Sturgeon, Murrell and their allies. There was nothing to see here. But it did yield the initial police investigation; and before long, the plods started to find more alarming irregularities. Murrell was arrested in 2024 and soon charged with embezzlement.

The Murrell affair is only one of several political setbacks to have afflicted the SNP in its pomp; the defection of Alex Salmond to form his own nationalist outfit, Alba, various culture-war squalls over trans rights, the rapid cycling of leaders. The embezzlement situation has at least the potential to be more damaging, despite the relative safety of the timing (so thoughtful of Murrell to delay his confession until after May 7!). A whole series of senior party figures are accused of dismissing the allegations. Though there are still a few girlboss-feminist die-hards defending her, Sturgeon's reputation is surely destroyed. She escaped prosecution, but her protestations of innocence can only seem utterly fanciful. A country that gave such a compromised person any role in its future governance surely lacks the self-respect required for independence!

In these situations, the carrot of independence is typically dangled. So the SNP, again victorious in Holyrood, has now passed a meaningless piece of legislation 'requesting' the right to hold another referendum. (Amusingly,

of course, no SNPers were available to promote the policy on media rounds, because they knew very well what they would actually be asked about.) When Swinney first floated this last year, the left-nationalist website *Conter* - which has a notably more sober outlook than much of that milieu, and with which I am broadly in agreement on the role played by independence in SNP politics - was suitably scathing:

This latest attempt by Swinney to give the pretence of another independence referendum being just one more SNP vote away is as pathetic as it is deeply cynical. Notwithstanding the obvious inherent flaws in the prospectus offered in 2014 that led to defeat - flaws that haven't been subject to any form of proper analysis and scrutiny since - the credibility gap here is the size of the Grand Canyon.¹

That said, however cynically the issue is exploited by the SNP, the Scottish national question *per se* remains live. Opinion polling suggests a society strongly polarised on the question of independence: over the years since the referendum, both 'aye' and 'no' have enjoyed a lead for a time (currently the 'ayes' have it!), but run each other fairly close. Unionism and separatism both have solid cores of support and, were there to be another referendum, the contest would likely be quite as feisty as the last one.

Self-determination

All of this is purely theoretical, of course, because Scotland *does not* have the right of self-determination. Her Majesty's government was so kind as to grant a referendum in 2014, but theoretically would have been within its rights to nullify the 'wrong' result. We have changed monarchs once (and premiers more times than anyone can count) since then; but, so far as Westminster is concerned, the question remains settled 'for a generation'. In the meantime, the very tendencies that brought separatism to the centre of Scottish politics - economic decline since deindustrialisation and the great crash, the decay of what passes for democracy in Britain, the rise of far-right national chauvinism in England out of proportion to the other British nations - continue apace. The denial of self-determination is thus a profoundly anti-democratic feature of the British constitution.

That said, it has always been, and remains, the view of this paper that separatism is a non-solution for the Scots (or Welsh, for that matter) to these problems. The drifting British economy suffers its particular malaise because of its role in the global system. Separation would produce two even more vulnerable nation-states. The political drift to the right is likewise a *global* phenomenon, and Scotland has no special immunity to it.

The power of capital is international, and must be confronted as such: chopping up the working class into ever smaller national slivers is movement in the wrong direction. Choosing internationalism over petty nationalism is just as much an exercise of self-determination ●

paul.demarty@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

1. www.conter.scot/2025/7/29/swinney-the-movement-and-the-british-state.

LABOUR

There is an alternative

Tony Blair accuses Labour of ‘playing with fire’ with personality politics. Instead he offers a political line that effectively amounts to banking on deregulation, the wonders of AI and tailing whoever occupies the White House. **Mike Macnair** thinks this is a recipe for continued decline

Late last month Tony Blair published a substantial essay on why the Labour Party should return to Blairism. A great deal of it is worthless spin; but within the mass of spin there are some serious points - and some very noticeable silences. It is worth, then, discussing this piece of zombie Blairism. We cannot call it *recently risen* from the grave, because Blair’s American sponsors have kept him episodically employed as a Middle East ‘expert’ (meaning pro-US lobbyist) down to his current membership of Trump’s Board of Peace for Gaza;¹ and the ongoing Mandelson scandal and before that Labour Together’s dodgy dealings were, in essence, about Blairism.

Blair offers a political line. He calls it “policy”, which he thinks is somehow more dignified than “politics” (*how* it differs he does not really attempt to explain. He argues: “Trying to force the prime minister out before we know what policy direction we’re bringing in is not a serious way of conducting ourselves.” This is remarkable, given that Blair himself was elected leader of the Labour Party in 1994 on competence (as a forensic rhetorician in parliament and as a ‘communicator’), not on any clear policy platform. And as prime minister his government was characterised by an unusually large number of proposals from the Law Commission carried into legislation - reflecting its *lack* of a substantive policy.

It is nonetheless true that the Starmer government is notable for its lack of a clear political direction, and the question of leadership is posed *because* selling Labour as an apolitical competent management - the Starmer/Labour Together policy - has produced the political impression of incompetence. And the rival contenders for the Labour leadership *are* offering policy directions - if fairly indeterminate (Streeting: a return to the EU and NHS ‘reform’;² meaning further privatisation in the interests of Streeting’s US health industry funders; Burnham: a break with ‘Thatcherism’ in favour of stronger state intervention).³

Within the spin and the arguments, Blair’s political line can be quite briefly stated. In the first place, in relation to global politics, he argues for unambiguous acceptance of subordination to the USA and clinging tightly to the US administration, “even when it is difficult or unpopular”. Secondly, he argues for giving free rein to ‘big tech’. AI is, he argues, the new industrial revolution and those who do not get on the bandwagon will be left behind.

Early adopters

It is worth noting at an early stage that this was *already* Blair’s political line in the late 1990s - then in relation to the commercial and productivity/‘efficiency gains’ possibilities of the internet, fintech and the ‘dot-com’ boom. Britain, becoming one of the ‘early adopters’ of the tech, was to open the door to a new era of prosperity and ‘lean government’.

Following from this, while Blair thinks that Brexit was a mistake because of the loss of the ability as a member-state to block undesirable (from his point of view) regulation of big tech, he thinks that the UK should *not* rejoin - yet. Rather, radical deregulation of big tech, finance and



Stick with the good old US of A

so on will, he argues, strengthen the *relative* position of the UK (under the US, but better than continental Europe) to the point that the continental Europeans will be forced to accept an EU remodelled in British (actually, in US) interests as something more like a pure free-trade zone.

He summarises with a 10-point plan; again, heavily characterised by imprecision and spin; Philomena Cunk’s “Tony Blur”.⁴ Stripping the list down to its actual proposals, it is:

1. Business and entrepreneurs need to know government is on their side, removing obstacles to business growth [ie, drop net zero, reverse new employment rights, and the rises in the minimum wage and in employers’ NI contributions].
2. Transformative programme for planning reform and deregulation The government has taken significant steps, but well short of a truly radical reform.
3. Prioritise cheaper energy and electrification over net zero and use what is left of our North Sea oil and gas resources.
4. Partnership with the private and voluntary sectors for apprenticeships and training [and retraining] and not dilute the education reforms for schools started under New Labour and continued under the Conservatives [ie, education privatisation]. And keep our universities strong because they’re critical to the technology economy.
5. ‘Reindustrialising’ the north of the country can be encouraged by government giving incentives and help, but most of all it will come through first-class

infrastructure, education, freedom from bureaucracy and government working in partnership with the private sector and with the forward-facing part of the trade union movement. And with a broad definition of ‘industry’ if we want to create jobs, because much of future manufacturing will likely be done by robots, though there will be also major opportunities in areas requiring a high degree of traditional skills.

6. A plan for fundamental reform, over time, of welfare ... The system at points incentivises people not to work. The triple lock is unaffordable long term ... If the Conservative Party repeats its offer of working together on welfare, Labour should accept the offer.
7. The NHS needs not NHS reform, but whole-system healthcare reform. Moving from cure to prevention. Mixing private and public provision in a fundamental realignment of the two. Reorganising the delivery of healthcare: for example making weight-loss drugs and other preventative products widely available. Getting rid of all the old shibboleths, which have turned the NHS into a point of theological principle rather than a modern service, where the transformative power of technology alters its foundations.
8. Take effective - ie, ‘whatever it takes’ - action to solve the illegal immigration issue ... We should deal by whatever means with small boats, but recognise the necessity of targeted immigration in certain sectors for economic growth and be unashamed to advocate it.

9. Most important of all, reorganising the whole of government around the harnessing of the 21st century technological revolution. All governments for the foreseeable future will govern in the age of AI.

10. Our aim, for the long term, should be a Reimagined State, in which taxes and spending can be lower, productivity higher and government seen as enabling, not directing.

Kemi Badenoch has argued that Blair’s proposals show that “the facts of life are Conservative. There is only one show in town for the political project you proposed.”⁵ This is, in substance, an accurate characterisation of Blair’s views: Tory.

Take, for example, the immigration issue. Blair proposes to crack down on “small boats” without addressing at all the “push factors” that lead people to take the desperate action of illegal migration (US-imposed and US-proxy supported wars, IMF restructuring programmes, and so on); tough on crime, soft on the causes of crime. But he proposes *also* to pursue the policy of Boris Johnson’s ‘Boriswave’ of radically increasing *legal* immigration *on condition that the new migrants undercut wages*.

The Tory policy of pushing down the wage share of output is also reflected in the proposals to reverse new employment rights and the rise in the minimum wage. So too welfare reform’, since welfare is, except insofar as it is a subsidy to landlords, a *form* of the wage share of output. That pensions are deferred wages was recognised by the European Court of Justice in 1990. Equally, a certain

level of unemployment is necessary to capitalism in order to hold down wages; if the unemployed are starved to death immediately, labour markets will be too tight. So capitalism from its beginning has been accompanied by ‘poor law’ regimes: keeping the paupers alive is a necessary part of the wage share of output.

Tory then. But what are we to make of these Tory arguments? Are they at all plausible?

AI bandwagon

The core of the argument is that artificial intelligence will radically increase productivity - comparable to the effects of the ‘Industrial Revolution’ of the late 18th and 19th century: those who are on the bandwagon will prosper, those who are not will be left behind. The way to be on the bandwagon is to accept the demands of the big tech oligopolists and aspirant monopolists - for radical deregulation, and for massive increases in electricity and water supply for data centres.

I observe merely in passing that Britain did not ‘jump on’ the Industrial Revolution. It was both prepared by commercial and agricultural revolution, and fuelled by the proceeds of empire and success in the (sail-driven) shipping industry, backed by elaborate protectionist legislation. If AI *does* turn out to be the new industrial revolution, the breakthrough will be made in the US or China, which can enforce protectionist legislation. The UK only benefitted from free trade when it was the world-dominant power and the ‘bill on London’ the world’s reserve currency.

I made the point that ‘go with the tech’ was *already* Blair’s line in the late 1990s in relation to the dot-com boom and the supposed transformative possibilities of new tech. What in fact happened was the dot-com crash of 2000, leading to extensive money-printing. The money-printing for a time prolonged boom conditions, and also allowed Gordon Brown as chancellor to make limited concessions to the working class on wages and welfare under cover of stimulative spending.

Then came the crash of 2008. For a brief moment Brown as prime minister was the hero of the capitalist system - the saviour of the banks by bailing them out; but the Murdochs had all along wanted David Cameron to succeed Blair, and they - and the rest of the press following - turned on Brown with a succession of spun-up stories. Though there was a serious attempt to drive Labour into third place in 2010, it failed because urban working class voters reacted against it. The Conservative and Lib Dem coalition government nonetheless introduced austerity; which meant *not only* reductions in the wage share, but also further cuts in defence and infrastructure spending, police and the criminal justice system.

New tech did *not* radically increase productivity, as the spinmeisters of the dot-com boom claimed it would.⁶ Instead, what we got was a series of failed large-scale government purchases of information technology.⁷ One of the more spectacular results was the Horizon/sub-post office scandal, which is *still* running on, as the Post Office drags its heels on compensating victims. The Land Registration Act 2002 was marketed as permitting cheap and speedy electronic conveyancing - still not there 24 years later. And so on. One

of the more striking 'productivity gains' was the introduction of self-service tills in supermarkets; but this is actually not a gain in *total social* productivity at all, but merely outsourcing from paid labour onto the unpaid labour of customers. The same is partly true of staff and branch cuts in banks: reduction in the *service provided*, more than the same service provided more cheaply.

It theoretically *ought* to be the case that the new tech of the 1990s-2000s should have produced productivity gains. Part of the problem, fairly clearly, is that the tech providers are actually selling mainly consumer product, and their business model is adapted to this. Extremely high capital intensity in the production of the hardware (desktops, laptops, tablets, phones) together with sunk infrastructure costs, means that profitability is dependent on "planned obsolescence" far more radical than was the case with cars, etc, when the term was coined. This planned obsolescence is provided for by constant 'upgrades' of the software to use more memory - bloatware - enforcing new hardware purchases.

As a consumer market model this works well enough. As applied to government and service industries, it has the effect that most potential productivity gains are actually consumed by retraining and re-equipment costs. In addition, in the hope of 'getting ahead of the curve', software that has not been adequately tested is put in circulation - leading in public purchases to very large-scale failures.

What about AI? There is a fair probability that it has been seriously over-hyped, like the dot-coms in their time, and a crash is coming in the short term.⁸ At the moment, AI looks like more bloatware to enforce more hardware purchases - in which case, as with the last tech bubble, productivity gains will actually be quite limited. AI hallucinations remain a serious unsolved problem.

Suppose, on the other hand, that the AI tech has *not* been seriously over-hyped and that what is in reach in the 21st century is technology that can *do any job that a human can*, as opposed to what we have had so far, which is the automation of *specific skilled jobs*. For a range of examples: the Ukraine war front lines already involve heavy levels of drones fighting drones. Japan has been experimenting with robots to do elderly care work.⁹ In China, surveillance devices are marketed to overworked women as substitute mothering.¹⁰ Humanoid robots are on the market (how successfully I do not know) for domestic service;¹¹ similar devices could probably be trained for plumbing and some forms of building work. Sex robots using AI 'large language models' are already on the market.¹²

In February this year Citrini Research caused a brief market panic by suggesting that effective artificial general intelligence would lead to a downward spiral in which massive layoffs of humans caused by the substitution of AI devices would destroy demand and lead to a generalised collapse of the economy. Michael Roberts has argued, as Marx and Engels did, that new technology, while displacing old jobs, would create new ones.¹³ But this does not meet the point that I made above, that if AI has *not* been seriously over-hyped, what is at issue is not the automation of specific skilled jobs, but the possible replacement of *any* human capability. In this case the 'AI doom loop' would result.

There is, therefore, no reason to suppose that AI is the 'new industrial revolution' and if the UK gets on the bandwagon by giving big tech whatever it wants, the UK will prosper, while continental Europe declines. Rather, the more probable outcome is money wasted on a repeat

of the failures of IT purchases in the last 30 years, and another financial crash that demands more bailouts, followed by more austerity ... On the other hand, if we *do* get artificial general intelligence, it means the end of capitalism by way of the 'AI doom loop'.¹⁴

US and EU

Blair's argument on world politics, the EU and the US contains important truths, but also fundamentally misleading silences and spin.

To start with, the UK is dependent on the USA. This has been true since the geostrategic position of the UK was destroyed in 1940 and the UK *agreed* to hand over world hegemony to the US. The UK made two attempts to squirm out from below - in 1944 with Keynes's 'Bancor' proposal, and in 1956 with the Suez invasion; both failed, and the USA after Suez demanded that Britain join the then European Economic Community (now EU); Charles de Gaulle blocked this until mass opposition in May 1968 brought him down as French president the following year.¹⁵ The relation of the UK to the USA is most analogous to that of Portugal to the UK from the 1660s through to the 'Carnation revolution' of 1974-76: an empire, but one dependent on a larger empire.

This truth makes Blair's arguments more realistic than Burnham's. Burnham imagines that it is possible to return to a 'pre-Thatcherite' policy, in which the UK government promotes industry, as opposed to finance. But this is a delusion. The Thatcher policy was one promoted by the USA, when in the 1970s it broke with Bretton Woods, began to promote financialisation, and shifted political and financial support from the social-democrat and Christian-democrat centre parties to neoliberals. Thatcher was handsomely paid off after stepping down as prime minister in 1990, with a £3.2 million advance on her memoirs and a 'consultancy' for Philip Morris tobacco, etc, so that she was worth £9.5 million two years after her resignation. Blair was even more handsomely paid off after his stepping down in 2007.¹⁶

The effect of their policies - continued since their leaving office - has been continued de-industrialisation and the sale to US-owned 'private equity' asset-strippers of much of the businesses operating in the UK, as Angus Hanton shows in his 2024 book, *Vassal state*.¹⁷ Any project of rebuilding British industry, let alone breaking with Thatcherism, would involve open opposition to the USA and ways of dealing with a sanctions regime as tough as those imposed on Iran or Venezuela.

Turning to the EU, Blair excludes without argument the possibility of a European unification that could pursue a policy independent of the USA. What he advocates, as I said above, is for Britain to stay out until the supposed benefits of deregulation force the Europeans to accept a changed "structured formal relationship" with a potentially "multi-speed" Europe: that is, a free-trade zone with a race to the bottom on labour rights and regulation.

He claims that *Europe's* interests are in subordination to the USA. This is, first, because "America allied itself to Europe in the 20th century to fight two world wars alongside us, and that alliance continued after the second world war in opposition to communism" - a remarkable description for US interventions *on one side of European wars*.

It is, secondly, because, "Though American security strategy is couched in very 'America First' terms, it identifies the principal threats - in the Arctic from Russia; longer term, globally, from China; and in the Middle East from Iran - no differently from how Europe sees the world."

Really? The sharp debate over the invasion of Iraq in 2002-03 is one example of the fact that US and European interests may be *opposed*, especially in the Middle East. Since then, the US has secured increased control of European politics through the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance 'definition' of anti-Semitism as opposition to the US's settler-colony in the Middle East, Israel, and its expansionist character. If there is an *Arctic* threat from Russia, it is to the US and Canada; the actual (unrealistic) agitation about Russian aggression in Europe is not about the Arctic, but about the Baltic and eastern Europe.

Blair's silence about the EU as a potential unified state and hence world power is not senseless. In essence, the choice of the Germans in the euro zone debt crisis in the wake of the 2008 crash, to prefer hard money and national control of taxation over 'European solidarity', destroyed the *potential political authority* of the EU as an institution that could be a proto-state power. Meanwhile, the confederal structure of the EU constitution holds the EU in political subordination to the USA - just as, before 1860, 'states' rights' functioned to hold the USA in political subordination to Britain and the lack of German unification held Germany in political subordination to Britain.

The other side of this coin, however, is that the USA is no longer willing to make serious concessions to Europe *as subordinate allies*. The 1985 Plaza Accord 'deleted the Japanese economy'. The US operations against Iraq were directly against French and German commercial interests. The US-sponsored Maidan coup embroiled Europe in war with Russia (and the US or its proxies blew up the Nord Stream gas pipeline to emphasise the point), directly inflicting damage on the German economy. And so on.

If US operations overseas were delivering an improved security environment for capitalist development, making *theoretically* possible 'trickle-down', this might give some sort of justification for Blair's policy of radical subordination of Europe (like Britain) to US capital. But, first, what I have already said about Britain means that what we should expect from this policy is what we have got in Britain: declining wage share, declining infrastructure, increasing foreign ownership, structural job losses, producing increased welfare dependency ...

Second, since the middle 1970s it has been increasingly apparent that the USA in *relative* decline as an industrial producer cannot manage a protectionist empire that provides stable conditions for capitalist investment - unlike the European empires of the later 19th and early 20th century. Instead, in a series of cases US and US-proxy interventions have delivered *merely* destruction. We do not yet know the outcome of Ukraine; but we do know the outcome of the Lebanese civil war and US intervention in it in the 1970s-80s, of US-backed operations against the post-colonial regimes in Mozambique and Angola in the 1970s, of the long history of US interventions in Afghanistan, beginning in the late 1970s ... and, more recently, of Iraq, of Libya, of Syria ...

In short, at the moment Europe is paralysed and the individual states cling to the USA as a security blanket. But the USA increasingly demands more tribute from its vassal states (as Blair recognises), increasingly uses it to protect US businesses and undermine *allied* competitors, and is increasingly unable to deliver actual security. Hence, Europe *objectively* needs a political equivalent of Lincoln or Bismarck to overthrow its constitution and thereby to set it free from US domination. Clinging

to 'the American alliance', meaning vassalage to the USA, as Blair urges, is merely a road to more rapid decline.

The best option would be for the European working class to play this Lincoln in the shape of European unification; but the workers' movement remains paralysed by delusions in 'socialism in one country', 'national roads to socialism' and people's fronts. EU 'Returnism' as promoted by Streeing or by the Atlanticists for Workers' Loyalty (Alliance for Workers' Liberty), without a struggle to overthrow the EU constitution, is just a pseudo-left version of Blair's argument.

Underlying

Why do Blair's arguments fail? And why did Thatcherism not deliver prosperity for the UK ... and so on? Why, for that reason - and underlying these problems - is the USA *not* able to act as a 'world cop', securing the conditions for profitable investment? Why does Blair *not mention* the 2008 financial crisis, or the massive interventions of governments in the Covid pandemic?

The underlying issue is that marginal-utility general equilibrium economics is false in the same way that flat-earthism is false: that is, it identifies a superficial appearance (prices vary according to supply and demand; the world *looks and feels* flat) and insists that there cannot be anything more complex behind the superficial appearance.

So far as the utility for marginalism is treated as purely subjective and as identifiable *only* by supply and demand, the result is that the theory is unfalsifiable, and it leads to early Chicago economist Frank Knight's suggestion that armed robbery is utility-maximising.¹⁸ This version is merely 'Everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds' providentialism, lightly secularised. As soon as this approach is rejected, it becomes clear that the equilibrium claim is false: wages *must* over time deliver 2,500 calories and other basic needs, so that wages cannot fall to the 'market-clearing' level or the level given by the 'marginal product of labour'.

The consequence is that substantial downward pressure on the wage share of output will not overcome problems that are created by the over-valuation of capital assets and excessive levels of accumulated debt built up in order to acquire over-valued capital assets.

Hence, the scheme initiated by the end of Bretton Woods and financialisation from the mid-1970s was a Ponzi scheme on the largest possible global scale. The idea that borrowing in order to build and financialisation would generate virtuous-circle growth, substituting for taxation and a degree of state planning, was just false.

World capitalism objectively needs the US empire in this century to meet the fate of the British in 1914-50 - in particular, it needs debt defaults on the scale of those in 1914-19 and 1945-50, in order to create the conditions for stable profitable growth.

Britain has been trading at a loss, as far as balance of trade and of payments is concerned, since the mid-1980s. It has partly made up for this gap by attracting hot money to a deregulated City - the 'London laundromat'. It has also done so by selling off UK capital assets, like an individual who is in the course of going bust and sells their furniture to keep paying the bills. Pretty much all that remains to be sold is the hospitals and the universities ...

This brings us back to Blair's 10 points. They imagine that deregulation and pushing down the wage share would allow the UK to (relatively) recover - at least enough to force the Europeans to agree to a regime of race-to-the-bottom deregulation. The problem is that everyone else will

also be pushing down the wage share and deregulating. There may be a *temporary* recovery in profitability at the expense of the working class (and of French, German, etc, capitals ...). But, as soon as the others catch up, the underlying overvaluation of assets and debt burdens resulting from these will reassert the relative weakness of the UK economy.

No long-term benefit to the UK. But a benefit to someone - that is, to US capital, and at the expense of everyone else in the world.

Back to the working class and Europe. By some way the most probable outcome of the 21st century is generalised nuclear exchange, as the increasingly destructive aggression of the USA pushes some nuclear-armed state too far. Next most probable is that no-one is prepared to push the button, and the USA succeeds in 'Somalifying' the whole of the rest of the world; probably also accompanied by accelerating global warming leading to human extinction.

International - and in particular continental-scale - political action of the working class offers a *potential* alternative. Tony Blair's delusions of a return to 1997-2007 provide *no* alternative whatsoever ●

mike.macnair@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

1. Of this 'Board of Peace', the speech Roman historian Tacitus put in the mouth of the Caledonian fighter, Calgacus, in 83/84 AD, has never been more appropriate: "To ravage, to slaughter, to usurp under false justifications, they call public order; and where they make a depopulation, they call it peace" (Agricola, chapter 30).
2. Eg, www.lbc.co.uk/article/streeing-government-abandon-nhs-reforms-5HjdZwq_2 (May 31).
3. 'The simple truth on the doorsteps that Tony Blair has ignored' *The Times* May 29.
4. www.youtube.com/shorts/xsz0dkd_wA.
5. www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cglpj6een1o (May 29).
6. 'Productivity paradox' (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Productivity_paradox) is a useful summary of the literature. The UK government's 2025 'AI-assisted' review - www.gov.uk/government/publications/ai-assisted-vs-human-only-evidence-review/the-impact-of-technology-diffusions-on-growth-and-productivity-findings-from-an-ai-assisted-rapid-evidence-review - appears to have the vices of over-selective reviews discussed by Gideon M-K 'Health Nerd' on his substack in relation to a recent NHS 'review of evidence' into hormone provision for trans teens (gidmk.substack.com/p/hormone-therapy-for-trans-teens).
7. www.nao.org.uk/insights/governments-approach-to-technology-suppliers-addressing-the-challenges (January 16 2025).
8. Eg, www.levyinstitute.org/blog/minskys-vision-and-the-coming-ai-induced-crash (May 14). On the other hand, see also thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2026/06/02/global-profits-an-upward-turn (we await comrade Roberts' next post, in which he will return to the issue of the US economy as a "bet on AI").
9. www.technologyreview.com/2023/01/09/1065135/japan-automating-eldercare-robots; www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9wdzyyqlq5o (October 28 2025).
10. R Murphy and G Wu, 'Why do rural migrant mothers in urban China digitally monitor their children?' *Gender & Society* Vol 39 (2025), pp91-119.
11. Eg, www.unix-group.ai/martian/1822.html.
12. J Cassar, 'Face to face with sex robots and the cultures surrounding them' *Sexuality & Culture* (2026): link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12119-025-10525-y.
13. thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2026/02/26/citrini-and-the-ai-doom-scenario.
14. There is a mildly interesting anti-labour speculation on this from a Russian émigré, V Charushin at modemdiplomacy.eu/2026/04/13/the-human-loophole-ai-and-the-end-of-labour-economy.
15. N Moss *19 weeks: America, Britain and the fateful summer of 1940* London 2004; B Steel *The battle of Bretton Woods: John Maynard Keynes, Harry Dexter White and the making of a new world order* Princeton NJ 2014; DB Kunz *The economic diplomacy of the Suez crisis* Chapel Hill NC 1991; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accession_of_the_United_Kingdom_to_the_European_Communities.
16. www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/apr/09/margaret-thatcher-estate-family-secret; www.businessinsider.com/tony-blair-money-millions-2011-09.
17. See also my review of the book: 'Vanishing capitalists?' *Weekly Worker* April 10 2025 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1533/vanishing-capitalists).
18. See also M Piccione and A Rubinstein, 'Equilibrium in the jungle' *The Economic Journal* Vol 117 (2007), pp883-96.

GREENS

Our flag stays red

In terms of origins, the Green Party is unmistakably the progeny of far-right politics. Nowadays, though, it passes as leftwing. But that does not make it socialist, let alone revolutionary, argues **Jack Conrad**

Common sense on the soggy left takes it for granted that reds and greens are natural allies: greens are thought of as nice, progressive, sensible, like-minded folk. But, in fact, as an ideological current, greenism has many shades, many rooms, many schools of thought, ranging from the utopian left to the far right. There are anarchist greens, there are reformist greens, there are liberal greens, there are business-friendly NGO greens, there are fascist greens of the Jorian Jenks and Walther Darre type. Hell, today, we even have a Green King.

To get a handle on Charles Windsor's particular version of greenism you can do no better than pick up a copy of his co-authored book, *Harmony*.¹ HRH begins boldly by declaring: "This is a call to revolution." Against what? Well, nothing less than "the current orthodoxy and conventional way of thinking, much of it stemming from the 1960s, but with its origins going back over 200 years".² A barely concealed call for the counterrevolutionary restoration of feudalism.

Belief that western civilisation took a wrong turn with the Enlightenment is common coin amongst rightwing conservatives. Take Roger Scruton (1944-2020). He invented the term *oikophobia* - *oiko* being Greek for home - to damn those who repudiate traditional notions of home, family and country. Scruton singled out, in particular, Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky for opprobrium. He urged "environmentalists and conservatives" to make "common cause" around "territory" - in particular its "strongest political expression", the "nation-state".³

Not an original idea. In October 1988 Margaret Thatcher made her famous 'green' conference speech: "No generation has a freehold on this Earth. All we have is a life tenancy - with full repairing lease."⁴ The Countryside Alliance also comes to mind. Still claiming over 100,000 members, this ermine-led campaign aims to protect and promote the interests of rural Britain: farming, fishing, fox hunting ... and making Brexit work.⁵

Indeed, ever since industrial capitalism rose to dominance there has been a strand of Tory thought which has sought to defend so-called traditional ways against the flood tide of utilitarian liberalism and republican democracy. Eg, Young England during the early 1840s.

Born on the playing fields of Eton and Rugby, Oxford and Cambridge, it loosely grouped together a blue-blooded membership: George Smythe, Lord John Manners, Henry Hope, Alexander Baillie Cochrane, but most notably, its figurehead and leader, Benjamin Disraeli (who was no aristocrat, nor did he attend Eton).⁶

To gain a wider audience these gentlemen feigned an indifference to their own specific class interests. Nostalgically they advocated a rural idyll of snug hamlets, independent artisans, upstanding yeoman farmers, benevolent Christian alms-giving and absolute monarchy. Everyone has their place and everyone knows their place: "The rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate".

Dreamy poems and didactic novels lauding a mainly fabricated past went



Carla Denyer and Zack Polanski: realo and fundie ... but the nearer to office, the greater the capitalist realist pull

hand in hand with eviscerating attacks on rapacious industrialists, who heartlessly exploited their workers, rode roughshod over family values and inadvertently fuelled the danger of revolution. Young England had not the least interest in nor wish for democracy. But they wanted to rouse the masses: that way they sought to restore the power of landed wealth and put an end to the "madness" of Chartism (Thomas Carlyle).⁷

Charles Windsor very much stands in this Young England tradition. In the name of "generations yet unborn", he told world leaders gathered at Cop26, meeting in Glasgow in November 2021, that we "have to put ourselves on what might be called a war footing". However, the "vast military-style campaign" that his royal greenness advocated was designed to engage with the "global private sector", not subordinate it to state power (so no 'climate socialism' as of yet).⁸

Cross-class

Undaunted, Anticapitalist Resistance says it wants "working alliances with green activists", which would "help efforts to make the green movement more [sic] anti-capitalist".⁹ An approach that effectively plagiarises Eurocommunism in its 1990s dotage.¹⁰ And there are always those determined to reinvent the square wheel. James Schneider's *Our bloc* similarly advocates a left federation of "social movements, trade unions, the Labour grassroots and socialists in parliament".¹¹ He has also suggested running joint open primaries with the Greens. There is too Chantal Mouffe, with her "chain of equivalence". She envisages bringing together reds and greens against the neoliberal consensus.¹²

Not a few in and around Your Party's left have bought into the perspective. Typical is the article written jointly by Candi Williams and Anahita Zardoshti. Its title says it all: "The Green Party is great, but it's not enough".¹³ What is "great" about the Green Party goes entirely unexplored.

Apparently, though, some greens are "using the word 'socialist'".

Doubtless there are some socialist greens (not least those who have decamped from Your Party). However, that is certainly not the case with the official Green Party. What features in its manifestos, election addresses and conference resolutions is the usual 'social justice,' 'environmental justice' and creating a 'fairer society' goop. Nonetheless, the operative conclusion of Williams and Zardoshti is exactly the same as ACR: popular frontist, cross-class politics.

In essence, the Socialist Party in England and Wales is no different. *The Socialist*, in an editorial, wanted the Greens "invited to affiliate" by Your Party.¹⁴ An outrageous suggestion, not because of the sure-fire certainty that, if ever made, any such invitation would be flatly rejected. After all, the Greens boast of being on track to get 30 MPs at the next general election and wanting to "replace the Labour Party".¹⁵ No, what is *politically* outrageous is the suggestion itself.

Class lines are abandoned, forgotten or rejected ... and in pursuit of what? A Labour Party mark two, a cross-class, *federal* party and the forlorn hope of SPEW receiving an official YP invitation to affiliate!¹⁶ Such a thoroughly misconceived *strategy* - and that is what it is - inevitably culminates in paying no more than lip service to establishing "an independent working class party".¹⁷ That is, sadly, what the much vaunted 'transitional method' amounts to in practice. Paradoxically, tactics become all.¹⁸

By the by, editorials in *The Socialist* must be regarded as authoritative statements on behalf of SPEW (which, of course, publishes, finances and tightly controls the paper). Perhaps the final edit was done by the 'newspaper team' (six HQ-based full-timers). But, whoever actually wrote the damned piece advocating affiliation, prime responsibility for what is *class treachery* must be placed on SPEW's leadership as a whole.¹⁹ And class treachery it is: after all, for good reason, as *The Socialist* says, the "Greens are not a party rooted in or emanating from the workers' movement ... The

party also - consciously - does not have a socialist ideology, a vision of an alternative system to capitalism."

Roots

So what traditions are greens rooted in and what movement do they emanate from?

There are greens who take fiery inspiration from the likes of William Blake, Mary Shelly, Karl Marx, William Morris and Peter Kropotkin. People such as Derek Wall and the Association of Socialist Greens and Green Left come to mind. Others prefer the milder flavours of St Francis of Assisi, Leo Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi.

But none of that can be said of the official Green Party. By tradition it is firmly rooted in Young England conservatism and the overpopulation theories of the reverend Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) ... especially as updated by Paul R Ehrlich.

In *The population bomb* (1968), Ehrlich - a Stanford University entomologist - depicts the planet as drowning under "too many cars, too many factories, too much detergent, too much pesticides, multiplying contrails, inadequate sewage treatment plants, too little water, too much carbon dioxide" all of which can be "traced easily to too many people".²⁰

Looking forward just a little, to the 1970s and 80s, he apocalyptically announced: "The battle to feed all of humanity is over."²¹ Instead of giving aid to the needy and feeding the hungry, responsible states should henceforth put in place the harsh population control measures needed.

Ehrlich equated this, admittedly unpleasant, task with cutting out a "cancer".²² The operation will "demand many apparently brutal and heartless decisions. The pain may be intense. But the disease is so far advanced that only with radical surgery does the patient have a chance of survival."²³ Surely a barely concealed call for the mass extermination of the surplus population - considered globally, that means the poor and destitute in the so-called third world. Accusations of unintended racism appear more than

justified. Expropriating the kleptocrats, the tech bros, the giant corporations, the parasitic royal houses, the banks, insurance companies and private equity funds never seems to occur.

The population bomb served as an antidote to the spirit of '68. After a slow burn, Ehrlich's book not only became a media-celebrated best-seller: it spurred on what became an anti-population growth crusade. Millions were sterilised, often coercively, in countries such as India, Mexico, Peru, Egypt, Tunisia, Indonesia and Bangladesh - all backed, promoted and urged on by the UN, the World Bank and a swathe of NGOs. And, of course, between 1980 and 2015 China imposed its own draconian one-child policy.

Optimum Population Trust was founded in Britain in 1991 and rebranded as Population Matters in 2011. Its website displays a "world population clock" ticking away (presumably towards the final moment of ecological collapse).²⁴ A thoroughly respectable pressure group, it makes the case for putting population reduction at the heart of government policy. Britain should, it submitted, reduce its numbers to 30 million by 2130 - about the same level as 1870 (nowadays, of course, the far right worries over declining birth rates - well, the birth rates of their *preferred* kind of people).

Not so long ago the Green Party too prescribed a similar human purgative - except down to 20 million!²⁵ True, the Green Party's neo-Malthusianism has been somewhat sugar-coated; likewise Population Matters. Under the banner of living in harmony with nature, it advocates empowering women and girls, quality education for all, free contraception and reversing foreign aid cuts.

But the truth will out. In 2013, Population Matters strenuously objected to Syrian refugees being granted asylum in the UK.²⁶ The organisation stands for zero net migration. Nonetheless, worthy public figures lined up to endorse the organisation - apart from Paul Ehrlich himself, Sir David Attenborough, Jonathon Porritt, Sir Partha Dasgupta, Jane Goodall, John Guillebaud, Leilani Münter, Lionel Shriver and Chris Packham.²⁷ Sons and daughters of the reverend all.

Inevitably, however, if voluntary methods fail, then other, involuntary solutions present themselves ... and the danger is that sooner or later such other methods will come to be accepted as commonsensical: Population Matters boasts that an international opinion survey conducted in February 2019 found that two thirds of respondents consider "population growth a global catastrophic risk".²⁸ Clearly, you can fool most of the people some of the time.

In *The population bomb*, Ehrlich was quite explicit: "We must have population control at home, hopefully through changes in our value system, but by compulsion if voluntary methods fail." He toyed with the idea of lacing food sold in the US with contraceptives. After rejecting this as *politically* unfeasible, he advocated ending US food aid to countries abroad. And, he added, almost as an afterthought, that all men in India with "over three children" should be "forcibly sterilised".²⁹

Very much in that Malthusian spirit, in January 1972, Edward Goldsmith - uncle of Zac Goldsmith, the green Tory peer - published 'A blueprint for survival' in his magazine, *The Ecologist*. Shortly thereafter issued in book form by Penguin, it sold 750,000 copies.

Goldsmith and fellow author, Robert Allen, have, unfairly, been described as "blackshirts with green welly boots". Why unfairly? Simply because they had no intention of forming extra-state fighting formations. Either way, they argued for cutting the British population by 50%, repatriating immigrants, small-scale farms, tight-knit communities, living in harmony with nature, establishing a social order based on the patriarchal family and something resembling the Indian caste system.³⁰

No obscure, cranky schema invented by a couple of upper class eccentrics. On the contrary, *Blueprint for survival* provided the meat and potatoes for Michael Benfield, Freda Sanders, Tony Whittaker and Lesley Whittaker, when they established the PEOPLE party in November 1972. These impeccably respectable professionals - surveyor, property agent and solicitors - framed their policies on agriculture, self-employment, national defence, land tenure, communities, reducing fossil fuel consumption and curbing pollution within a 100-year perspective of zero-growth and sub-population replacement.

After its first conference, attended by roughly 70 members, PEOPLE published its 32-page 'Manifesto for survival' in June 1974.³¹ PEOPLE subsequently stood five candidates in the October 1974 general election securing between 0.51% and 1.28% of the vote.³² Goldsmith then merged his Movement for Survival with PEOPLE and became one of its leading figures. A year later, in 1975, it morphed into the Ecology Party and 10 years after that the Green Party (UK).³³

Faultline

The Green Party has moved far away from the far-right conservatism of those days. Yes, there was David Icke, the former footballer and BBC sports presenter. He almost instantly became one of the Green Party's leading spokespersons in the 1980s - till, that is, he resigned in March 1991. A month later he announced to a packed media conference that he was the son of the Godhead.³⁴

Nowadays though, the main faultline at conferences and in leadership contests runs between centrist realos and leftist fundies. As a result there were more than a few commendable democratic demands contained in the June 2017 general election manifesto of the Green Party (England and Wales): scrapping Trident; a citizen army; withdrawal from Nato; replacing the monarchy with a republic; proportional representation for local and parliamentary elections.³⁵

Positions well to the left of Labour's "socialist" *For the many, not the few*. Hence rightwing accusations that the Green Party is a 'watermelon party': green on the outside, red on the inside. A nice joke, but, in fact, even under Natalie Bennett, Green Party perspectives remained firmly located within the narrow confines of existing society. Wage slavery is, for example, taken for granted.

While it proposes to tinker with the constitution, GPEW is, in fact, a thoroughly loyalist party constitutionally. It accepts the so-called 'rule of law' and therefore the capitalist state machine: the courts, the civil service, the police, the armed forces, etc. There is, certainly, no equals signs between GPEW and the Left Socialist Revolutionary Party which joined the Bolshevik government headed by Lenin, Trotsky, Kamenev, etc, in late November 1917.

The Left SRs were, note, the majority party of the peasantry in Russia and, as their name suggests, were committed to both the revolutionary overthrow of the landlord-capitalist classes and a socialism. The Bolshevik-LSR coalition was therefore red-red.

In practice, the Green Party is committed to the survival of capitalism through urging legislation against polluting industries, promoting recycling, championing wind farms and solar panels, maintaining commitments to meeting net zero CO₂ emission targets, etc. Not that talking the talk and walking the walk are synonymous. Proved in miniature with neoliberal Brighton and Hove: "a 'Green' council in name only"³⁶

The Green Party leaderships of Caroline Lucas, Johnathan Bartley, Siân Berry, Carla Denyer and Adrian Ramsay swung the pendulum in the direction of the realos. They wanted GPEW to be a "serious electoral force".³⁷ Here "serious" should be understood not merely as increasing votes, councillors, mayors and MPs. It means being a politically acceptable junior coalition partner, like Greens in other European countries ... and, therefore, if given the chance, responsible administrators of, not fighters against, capitalism.

Their role model is Germany's Joschka Fischer. Once an incendiary leader of the ultra-left Putzgruppe in the early 1970s (they fought riot police using clubs, bricks and molotov cocktails), Fischer soon 'matured', going on to serve as the green foreign minister and vice-chancellor in Gerhard Schröder's 1998-2005 coalition. Inevitably, he backed the Bundeswehr joining Nato's Balkans intervention in 1999 and Afghanistan in 2001.

In that realo spirit, the Green Party's republic, Nato withdrawal and popular militia were dumped or left to slowly gather dust - a passing childish phase. Instead GPEW leaders present themselves as buyable - open, that is, to the same institutional corruption that routinely sees fire-breathing politicians turned into pliant servants of capital (barely remarked upon by the mainstream media). Note: the Green Party-backed Republic in Parliament Campaign has been officially "closed".³⁸

To leave not a shadow of doubt about her state loyalty, Caroline Lucas (never much of a fire-breather) ensured that the Greens adopted the "very clear" International Holocaust Remembrance Association's so-called 'working definition' of anti-Semitism.³⁹ Code for restricting free speech, witch-hunting anti-Zionists and siding not only with the racist Israeli colonial-settler project, but the US-dominated world order.

Polanskism

Of course, since then we have had the election of Zack Polanski. Yes, a political shapeshifter. One day he is a "strong Zionist"; the next "certainly not a Zionist"; one day he is a Liberal Democrat, the next a Green; one day he accuses the Labour left of being rife with anti-Semitism, the next he apologises for the slur.

Nonetheless, with him the Greens have undergone a redwashing. He highlights the cost of living crisis, talks about workers' rights, castigates growing inequality, and even toys with reinstating opposition to Nato. Hence today the Greens are definitely reddish on the outside: something which persuaded *Socialist Worker* to issue a rather opaque call for a Green vote in English council elections and elections to the Scottish and Welsh parliaments on May 7 this year in a wonderfully titled editorial: 'Will Greens stay red?'⁴⁰

When it comes to numbers, Polanski's leadership has been transformational. Membership surged from some 68,000 in late 2025 to

around 216,000 in mid-2026.⁴¹ There was too Hannah Spencer's stunning by-election victory in Gorton and Denton. And latest polls put the Greens on 14.4% (ahead of the Lib Dems and just behind the Tories⁴²). According to psephologists, that mass base is disproportionately young, student, female, well-educated and renting.⁴³ So we are talking about proletarianized professionals.

Programmatically, however, the Green Party remains unmistakably a petty bourgeois party, which wants to reform capitalism in the interests of the petty bourgeoisie. As a matter of pride the underlying ethos is local, not global. Small businesses, mutuals, home and self-employment are upheld as an ideal. Meanwhile, in the imagination, a remoulded banking system will provide them with "cheap basic" services and lend "locally". So finance capital is reined in, but continues, albeit in a severely diminished form. Essentially the same happens with industrial capital.

However, by its very nature small capital drives towards becoming bigger and bigger capital. Unless it is limited to 'simple commodity production' - ie, C-M-C (an abstraction) - that is inevitable. Small capital is locked into the same M-C-M' cycle as big capital. Production is not about satisfying needs: it is about making more and more money. Failure to do that on a sufficient scale is to risk bankruptcy or takeover.

Demonstrably, *green* British capital cannot compete, especially with big *foreign* capital, on equal terms. It needs subsidies, it needs protection, it needs beneficial legislation, it needs the state. And that legitimises the *realism* of green politicians ... and makes them the target of the disinterested generosity of green capital. Already there are a few biggish donors.⁴⁴ But, the more MPs and the nearer to coalition politics they come, those "no strings" donations become an organisational necessity needed to keep the show on the tracks. Media handlers, executive officers, talented researchers, political consultancies, advertising agencies, etc, do not come cheap.

Note, in 2021, Germany's greens "received more large donations than Angela Merkel's party".⁴⁵ In government from 2021 to 2024, they distinguished themselves from their social democratic and free democrat partners by their militarism, greenwashing and neoliberalism. They unconditionally supported the Israeli war in Gaza. Green foreign minister Annalena Baerbock and green vice-chancellor Robert Habeck even rejected calls for a "humanitarian ceasefire".⁴⁶ When it came to Nato's proxy war in Ukraine, Germany's greens spearheaded demands for the delivery of heavy weapons ... and escalation.

So you can see why ACR wants a so-called red-green alliance in today's Britain.

Imagine

For one moment then, imagine that Zack Polanski is called to Buckingham Palace. The Green Party has won a convincing enough general election victory. In front of serried microphones and countless camera crews, Zack Polanski ostentatiously arrives by bicycle. Still sweating somewhat, he is escorted by blank-faced courtiers, dressed in full court uniform, to the Audience Room.

After a little polite chit-chat, William V formally asks him to form a government and Zack Polanski humbly accepts: the 'kissing of hands'. The two say their goodbyes and Zack Polanski does an awkward bow. He leaves Buckingham Palace as prime minister in a black, heavily armoured Audi A8 saloon, along with his two protection officers and

an accompanying motorcade, before entering No10 to the cheers of an ecstatic crowd.

An unlikely scenario, admittedly, but a useful thought experiment. For the sake of argument, then, we shall put aside a joint chiefs of staff mutiny, MI5 black ops, CIA pushback, naval blockades and a US-sponsored nationalist break-up of Britain.

The Zack Polanski government successfully pushes through parliamentary legislation transforming banking giants, such as Barclays, HSBC, Lloyds and NatWest, into purely domestic concerns. However, well before the third reading and the granting of royal assent, the CEOs of Barclays, HSBC, Lloyds and NatWest have already ended their listing on the London Stock Exchange and transferred their main operations to New York, Frankfurt and Paris.

Executives, senior investment bankers, front-line dealers and traders likewise make tracks. With their remuneration packages being well in excess of £10 million, Zack Polanski's government suffers a huge hit with their departure. Tax revenues shrink dramatically. There is, too, the banking ecosystem. Giant banks are responsible for generating vast amounts of business for lawyers, accountants, IT consultants and PR firms. That comes to a shuddering halt.

Meanwhile there is a massive exodus of hot money from the City. Zack Polanski's government imposes strict controls on the movement of capital. But it is too late. Share prices crater, interest rates rocket. There is a run on the pound on international markets.

Zack Polanski's government is also determined to downsize the UK branches of transnationals. That, if it were possible, might see the shutters come down on the British operations of companies such as AstraZeneca, BP, Ford, BMW, Tata, Honda and Airbus. Either way, say the likes of AstraZeneca, BP, Ford, BMW, Tata, Honda and Airbus continue in the UK, there could only but be a severe drop in labour productivity.

With what result? Steeply rising costs. Production thereby tends to become unprofitable. Unemployment therefore soars. Welfare payments become ever harder to sustain - what with falling government revenues and rising borrowing costs.

Shortages grip. Some turn to growing their own food in desperation. Many fall into debt. Mortgages and rents go unpaid. Evictions assume epidemic proportions. People occupy vacant properties. Black and grey markets appear. Corrupt fortunes are made by well-connected Green Party members. Other Green Party members find themselves in danger of going bust. Their businesses relied on importing what were once cheap goods: now they are prohibitively expensive.

Social tensions reach boiling point. Wildcat strikes rip. Riots erupt. Those with marketable skills flee abroad. Zack Polanski's government thereby faces an unenviable choice: either impose a police state, prevent valuable people leaving the country, screw up rates of exploitation and administer poverty through rationing; that or abandon the Green Party's manifesto commitments.

Seemingly unfazed, the Zack Polanski government breezily continues to promise: "everyone" will "live happier and more secure lives"; "everyone" will have an income "above subsistence level"; there will be "an environment where everyone feels fulfilled in worthwhile employment"; and "everyone" will have "access to healthy, nutritious, locally grown food".⁴⁷

Greenism as manifest self-deception ●

Notes

- Downloadable as a pdf from: sufipathoflove.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/harmony_.pdf. That or pick it up for a quid or two from any charity shop.
- HRH Charles, T Juniper and I Skelly *Harmony: a new way of looking at our world* London 2010, p3.
- R Scruton *How to seriously think about saving the planet* Oxford 2012, p19.
- R Harris (ed) *The collected speeches of Margaret Thatcher* London 1997, p341.
- No actual membership figures are published nowadays, suggesting, for the moment at least, that it is something of a heritage organisation.
- See J Morrow (ed) *Young England* Leicester 1999.
- T Carlyle *Chartism* London 1840, p4.
- news.sky.com/story/cop26-prince-charles-tells-g20-world-leaders-the-future-of-humanity-and-nature-herself-are-at-stake-12456102.
- Anticapitalist statement: 'Why we back the Greens in Gorton and Denton by-election', February 5 2026 - anticapitalistresistance.org/why-we-back-a-green-in-gorton-and-denton-by-election.
- See *Manifesto for new time* London 1990, pp53-56.
- D Schneider *Our bloc: how we win* London 2022, p5.
- C Mouffe *Towards a green democratic revolution* London 2022, pp43-47.
- novaramedia.com/2026/02/03/the-green-party-is-great-but-its-not-enough.
- 'What we think' *The Socialist* September 11-17 2025.
- www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cd0d0d08jnjo.
- Why is SPEW obsessed with federalism? Psychoanalysis might possibly suggest that the answer lies in a collective desire to return to the comforting womb of Labourism ... and, as the Labour Party itself is now, wrongly, spurned as just another capitalist party, we have the repetitive, obsessive and self-destructive commitment to various 'Labour Party mark two' projects and elevating federalism into a cardinal principle (See S Freud *Beyond the pleasure principle* London 1961). Not that we would propose a course of therapeutic treatment. No, we would urge comrades to study, openly rebel and join us in the struggle for a mass Communist Party.
- See C Joyce 'Trotsky's transitional method: how to win workers and youth for socialism?' (www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/121337/21-02-2024/trotsky-transitional-method-how-to-win-workers-and-youth-for-socialism).
- For the last of my many critiques of the so-called 'transitional method' see 'Programmatic starting point' *Weekly Worker* February 27 2025 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1527/programmatic-starting-point).
- Gensec Hannah Sell and SPEW's exec should definitely not escape blame. We are told, after all, that the "editorial team works closely with the executive committee of the Socialist Party and others at the national centre to check the content of articles when necessary" (www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/27528/20-06-2018/how-do-we-produce-the-socialist). One presumes that includes editorials on the Greens and YP.
- P Ehrlich *The population bomb* New York NY 1969, pp66-67.
- Ibid* pxi.
- Ibid* pxi.
- Ibid* pp166-67.
- populationmatters.org/the-facts.
- 'Greens propose 20 million cut in population' *The Guardian* September 18 1989.
- Open Democracy* September 23 2016.
- populationmatters.org/our-patrons. This was as of 2023, since then there have been a few deaths, not least that of Ehrlich himself.
- Population Matters annual report, July 2018-June 2019, p9 (populationmatters.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/191126%20hyperlinked%20AR%20Population%20Matters%20AR%202018_19_ONLINE_final.pdf).
- P Ehrlich *The population bomb* New York NY 1969, pxi.
- See E Goldsmith and R Allen *A blueprint for survival* Harmondsworth 1972.
- green-history.uk/j3/library/doc-archive/file/25-dt0047-peoplemanifestoforsurvival1974.
- Ibid*.
- D Wall *The no-nonsense guide to green politics* Oxford 2010, p16.
- The Guardian* March 28 1991.
- www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2017-40003019.
- www.brightonandhovevents.org/2021/06/06/evidence-suggests-that-its-a-green-council-in-name-only.
- My emphasis - www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-58761003.
- www.indiegogo.com/projects/republish-in-parliament-campaign.
- electronicintifada.net/blogs/asa-winstanley/uk-green-mp-stops-motion-against-bogus-anti-semitism-definition.
- Socialist Worker* April 29 2026.
- greenpartytracker.co.uk.
- www.pollcheck.co.uk/polls/green-party.
- yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/49978-how-britain-voted-in-the-2024-general-election.
- donation.watch/en/unitedkingdom/party/GPEW/donors.
- The Guardian* September 7 2021.
- www.theflitterberlin.com/greens-germany-neoliberal.
- [www.greenparty.org.uk/assets/files/Elections/Green Party Manifesto 2019.pdf](https://www.greenparty.org.uk/assets/files/Elections/Green%20Party%20Manifesto%202019.pdf).

DISCUSSION



Humans and other animals

Can carnivorous capitalism be ended through moral appeals or alternative technology, or does it require something more fundamental? **Jon Hochschartner** explores the relationship between the exploitation of animals and the Marxist theory of base and superstructure

For some years, I have been interested in the Marxist concepts of base and superstructure - specifically what they suggest is necessary to achieve animal liberation, and, as a result, where animal activists should be focusing their efforts. I have come to believe protein alternatives, which are identical in taste and cheaper to produce than slaughtered meat, are likely a precondition of widespread animal liberation. Consequently, my activism has been focused on securing public funding for cultivated-meat research.

For those who do not know, the new protein is grown from livestock cells, without slaughter. The technology exists to create cultivated meat, but, for now, it is too expensive to mass-produce. My hope is that, as the base of society changes, as cellular agriculture becomes more efficient than incumbent practices, the superstructure will change as well, allowing broader swathes of the population to accept the ethical case against non-human exploitation.

Still, I am not an academic and a lot of theoretical discussion is over my head. I was curious how others interpreted the ideas of base and superstructure in the context of animal liberation. So I set out to interview various relevant thinkers on the subject. I am incredibly grateful to everyone who took the

time to answer my questions - all the quotations below are from those interviews.

While I do not agree with all of the arguments made here, I hope the different perspectives will spark further discussion of what I believe to be an important topic.

Marco Maurizi

Marco Maurizi has taught philosophy and history at the Lombardo Radice Institute and has held seminars in modern and contemporary philosophy at the University of Rome Tor Vergata. His research develops a materialist critique of nature, focusing on the historical and social conditions of domination and the human-animal relationship. His book, *Beyond nature: animal liberation, Marxism and critical theory*, has contributed to the international debate on Marxism and anti-speciesism, and his works have been translated into several languages.

"If we take the base/superstructure relation seriously, then animal exploitation cannot be understood primarily as an ethical failure or a cultural residue, but as structurally embedded in the mode of production," Maurizi said. "The use of animals is not an accidental feature of capitalism (or pre-capitalist class societies), but part of the material organisation of labour, food systems, and value extraction. This has two main consequences."

First, Maurizi did not believe animal liberation could be achieved

by ethical argument or individual consumer choices alone. He thought these might have some impact, but this would always be limited, so long as the economic base remained the same. Despite minor and precarious cultural shifts, animals would continue to be exploited, because conditions of the system required it.

Second, strategy must therefore "prioritise interventions at the level of the material organisation of production," Maurizi said. He added:

This does not mean waiting for a total systemic rupture, but it does mean orienting struggles toward transforming the economic structures that sustain animal exploitation. For example, this implies confronting industrial agriculture as a system of labour exploitation and ecological destruction, linking animal liberation to struggles over land use, food systems and workers' control, and challenging the commodification of living beings as such.

Therefore, he argued, animal liberation should be seen as part of a wider socialist transformation, not as a movement disconnected from others. Otherwise, Maurizi thought animal activists risked engaging in "ethical idealism", which would allow the base of society to remain unchanged and accomplish little.

"At the same time, the base/superstructure relation should not be read in a mechanically deterministic way," he said:

Superstructural struggles (ideological, cultural, legal) can play a real role in destabilising the existing order, especially when they articulate contradictions already present in the base, for instance the ecological unsustainability of animal agriculture. The key is that these struggles become effective when they connect to material conflicts, rather than remaining purely discursive.

Maurizi argued that animal activists should deprioritise consumer-focused strategies and ethical argument. Rather, in his view, they should ally with the labour and environmental movements and focus more on the economic support of non-human exploitation, like subsidies and supply chains:

More generally, let me add that the distinction between base and superstructure remains important, insofar as it helps to move the discussion beyond the ethical abstraction typical of bourgeois movementism and the empirical immediacy of certain anarchist tendencies; however, once this theoretical impasse is overcome, it should itself be problematised.

The later Marx no longer relies on these early conceptual pairs in the same way, but rather attempts to reformulate social analysis in terms of totality/universalism vs parts/particularism, and materialism vs idealism. At present, however, the level of debate on these questions remains too underdeveloped for this shift to be widely operative.

Emilia A Leese

Emilia A Leese is an author, rewilding and podcast host exploring the intersections of ethics, food and our relationship with the natural world. After a 20-year career as a corporate finance lawyer, she now channels her strategic insight into vegan advocacy and ecological restoration, the latter with the award-winning *Birchfield Highlands*. Leese is co-author of *Think like a vegan: embracing ethics in a plant-powered world* and hosts a podcast of the same name. She said:

If you take the base (economic structures like capitalism) as largely determining the superstructure (laws, culture and ideology), then achieving animal liberation requires first dismantling the capitalist base commodifying animals for profit. Consequently, animal activists should prioritise anti-capitalist strategies, such as building a broad, class-conscious, anti-speciesist vegan movement challenging animal agriculture as a core pillar

of the economic system... This means integrating anti-speciesist veganism into a revolutionary ecological framework, treating animal liberation not as a separate moral issue, but as essential to any genuine struggle against capitalist exploitation.

John Sanbonmatsu

John Sanbonmatsu is professor of philosophy at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts, where he teaches courses in ethics, political theory, existentialism and other topics. He is the author of *The omnivore's deception: what we get wrong about meat, animals and ourselves*. Sanbonmatsu is creator and curator of the CleanMeat-Hoax.com website, which raises concerns about cultivated meat technology. His writing has appeared in *Christian Science Monitor*, *CounterPunch*, *Huffington Post*, and *St Louis Post-Dispatch*, among other places. He said:

Capitalism is not just a system for producing material stuff: it is a total way of producing life. As such, the ideas, practices, and beliefs we find dominant in society are in some way given to us by the economic system. Because the latter is organised exclusively around the production of commodities for private profit, we find that cultural beliefs and norms, worldviews, philosophies, religions, and so on, mirror the economic 'base' or substructure. We thus grow up with the idea that capitalism is the best system, that free markets lead to free ideas, that anyone can become rich if they set their mind to it, that the state (government) is a 'neutral' or disinterested umpire (rather than an institution that serves the wealthy class), and so on. Not to understand this fundamental relation between the production system and our beliefs and values is not to understand society. And without a proper understanding of society, one cannot hope to change it.

Unfortunately, he believed most animal activists do not understand how speciesism is reinforced by capitalism. Under the current economic system, animals become commodities or raw materials of commodities. Further,

Sanbonmatsu argued, animal activists tell themselves stories about animal liberation which are influenced by capitalist mythology. He cited common activist beliefs, such as how individual diet change or private philanthropy can achieve non-human freedom, to support his view:

There is no prospect whatsoever that animals can be liberated under a system of general degradation, exploitation and cruelty, in which most of the human race is itself enslaved to a system of forced, meaningless and ecologically destructive labour; in which nature is commodified and destroyed; and in which every incentive for changing our values and way of life run the wrong way. Animal liberation therefore implies the abolition of capitalism as a mode of production, just as an ethical form of democratic socialism necessarily implies animal justice.

Vasile Stănescu

Vasile Stănescu is an associate professor in the department of communication at Mercer University. He is the co-founder of the North American Association for Critical Animal Studies and previously served as co-senior editor of the *Critical animal studies* book series published by Brill/Rodopi. More information about his research and podcast is available at winforanimals.org. Stănescu said:

I take base and superstructure seriously, but not as a simple one-way model. The economic base matters enormously: animal advocates should focus far more on ending the material supports that keep meat artificially cheap. But the superstructure matters as well, because those material arrangements only work when meat already carries cultural meaning as a sign of prosperity, status and a proper standard of living.

For example, he asked, what was the problem factory farming was invented to solve? Stănescu believed part of the answer was that it was used to 'buy off' the proletariat with low-cost meat. Workers received this instead of the higher wages their unions were demanding. He stated:

But here is the interesting part: the idea that meat, as a symbol, represents wealth itself operates at the level of the superstructure. In other words, the only reason the base strategy of making meat cheaper worked as a way of buying off the working class was because of a superstructural idea: meat itself signified wealth. The material strategy only worked because the symbol already had power.

Troy Vettese

Troy Vettese is an environmental historian and post-doctoral fellow at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the co-author of *Half-earth socialism: a plan to save the future from extinction, climate change and pandemics*. Vettese's writing has appeared in *Jacobin*, *Bookforum*, *n+1*, *The Guardian* and *Boston Review*. He wrote:

I think one should ask, why is capitalist society so carnivorous? If we think through rather basic processes of mechanisation, it becomes clear that certain foods offer more opportunities for relative surplus-value creation - namely factory farmed meat and grains: hence the strange capitalist diet of meat and processed carbohydrates. What people should be eating - organic legumes, vegetables, etc, that are grown nearby - offer fewer opportunities for mechanisation, hence capital is stuck, relying largely on labour rather than fixed capital.

To counter capital's carnivorous tendencies, Vettese argued vegan food needed to be subsidised at scale. He believed animal activists should support meat-packing unions and anti-trust measures as part of an effort to limit capital's drive to mechanise production further by deskilling labour and achieving economies of scale.

Katherine Perlo

Katherine Perlo PhD is the author of *Kinship and killing: the animal in world religions* and various journal articles - the most recent being 'What is the animal class?' in *Politics and Animals*. She is a long-standing vegan and animal-rights campaigner. She said:

Early humans, and today some humans in harsh climates, had to - or thought they had to - kill animals. This generated a whole mythical/religious/moralistic/social superstructure applied back onto the base, in such matters as, for example, rebirth (still attributed to slaughtered animals in Tibet's harsh climate), divine dominionism and the place of women. And, having got used to killing animals out of necessity, humans went on to do so by agriculture, as it was easier. The process might be summed up as: humans killed animals out of actual or apparent need (base), and then they made excuses for it (superstructure).

Perlo believed this ideological subterfuge was necessary because humans felt guilty about their exploitation of animals. She suggested activists should focus on addressing the moral superstructure by highlighting our common sentience with animals, and not being intimidated by accusations of sentimentality or anthropomorphism. Perlo likened god to a spin doctor of human supremacy and argued in favour of adopting a sort of interspecies 'golden rule'. She wrote:

As fellow sentient beings, [animals] merit every consideration that we in theory give to fellow humans.

All our superstructural morality, western and eastern alike, rests on the altruism derived from common sentience - but, until recently, only from that shared with fellow humans, with the help of the spin-doctor in the superstructure. Time for him to step down onto the base, recognise common sentience as the source of all morality, and join campaigners in urging the public to 'go vegan'.

Renzo Llorente

Renzo Llorente teaches philosophy at Saint Louis University-Madrid. He is the author of *The political theory of Che Guevara and Beyond the pale: exercises in provocation*, as well as many articles on political philosophy, ethics and Latin American philosophy. He is also the translator and editor of *The Marxism of Manuel Sacristán: from communism to the new social movements*. His new book, *The political thought of Fidel Castro*, will be published soon. Llorente asked:

Is animal liberation possible within capitalism - that is to say, within a system based on capitalist relations of production? I would argue that the answer to this question is 'no', in part because I believe that true, or complete, animal liberation requires true, or complete, human emancipation: just as capitalism disfigures and vitiates humans' relationships with their fellow humans, so too it disfigures and vitiates their relationships with non-human animals.

In the long term, he argued, animal activists should seek to achieve social control of the means of production, which would allow nonhuman-exploitation industries to be radically transformed. With the removal of an individual profit motive, Llorente believed at least one reason to use animals would disappear as well. Further, he suggested the liberation of human beings from capitalism would change us, perhaps leading to a new relationship with our fellow creatures. Llorente added:

As for the short term, or as regards more immediate objectives, animal-rights activists should focus on superstructural questions - our moral and religious ideas regarding animals, as well as the laws and political beliefs that govern our treatment of them. This proposal will only seem inconsistent with a Marxist approach to social transformation if we forget that, as Engels reminds us in some well-known remarks, the superstructure can 'react back' upon - ie, shape the development of - the forces and relations of production. In short, changes in people's moral and religious ideas, and the laws that apply to our treatment of animals, may lead to changes in the uses and development of the forces of production (and, thereby, to changes in the relations of production) ●

Jon Hochschartner is the author of a number of books, including *The animals' freedom fighter: a biography of Ronnie Lee, founder of the Animal Liberation Front*. He blogs at SlaughterFreeAmerica.Substack.com

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

Fighting fund

You did it!

Very good news at long last - we went soaring past our monthly *Weekly Worker* fighting fund target for May! As readers will know, that target is £2,750, but the £548 we received in the last four days took us up to £3,143. Just what the doctor ordered!

Top of the list of donors, with his fantastic £226 cheque, was comrade MB, while comrade JS made another one of his recent donations, this time for £155. Then we had four other standing orders/bank transfers - from AB (£20), IS (£17), MD (£10) and AR (£5). Four comrades contributed via PayPal - thanks also to TB (£60), DM (£25), MS (£20) and AC (£5). Finally, there was that familiar supporter, comrade Hassan, who handed his usual £5 to one of our team.

That £3,143 has completely eradicated the overall deficit of the last few months, so now our readers and supporters need to continue their good work and make sure May wasn't just a one-off! And I have to say, after just three days of June gone, as I write, we could well see a

repeat this month too. We've already received £618 in only three days!

Thanks very much to comrades MM and AC (£100 each), EW (£55), BO, TW and LC (£50), MM (£31), ST (£30), MS (£25), DL and MT (£20 each), CP (£16), AN (£15), RM (£13), MM (£11), RP (£12), DI (£10) and BG (£5). All these comrades donated by SO or bank transfer, while comrade TM (£5) was the only one to click on that PayPal button so far in June.

Anyway, £618 is a more than useful start to the month, so please play your part and help ensure we reach that very necessary target once again in June. The *Weekly Worker* relies on you to ensure we can continue to play our vital role in the fight for a principled, united, democratic-centralist Marxist party. You can do it! ●

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

weekly worker

Under
pressure and
all the more
dangerous

Looking for an off ramp

Tump is in trouble. Congress has voted to embarrass him, Israel is determined on aggression and, far from collapsing, the Tehran regime continues to resist. Meanwhile, as **Yassamine Mather** reports, ordinary Iranians are suffering terrible deprivation

War between the United States, Israel and Iran has drawn in Lebanon, the Gulf states and global energy markets. It has exposed not only the fragility of Middle Eastern security arrangements, but also the limits of American power. On June 1, Jeremy Bowen, writing for the BBC, summed up the current situation: "Trump needs this war to end, but Iran is not backing down."¹ A situation which has caused some considerable unrest in the ranks of the GOP.

Worried eyes are on November's mid-terms. Not only did the Senate vote to curb Trump's war powers in May. The House has just done the same by 215 votes to 208. But it is important not to be carried away by such developments. They are acts of symbolic protest, not the outbreak of peace. The president can simply use his veto and there is not the two-thirds majority needed to override it. So he is no lame duck - yet.

Nonetheless, it is clear that Trump is in trouble. He is caught between the possibility of military escalation on the one hand and the need for a diplomatic exit on the other. His administration had hoped that sufficient pressure on Iran would produce a rapid victory, or at least force Tehran into accepting American and Israeli terms. But, no surprise, Iran has not collapsed. Meanwhile, the Israeli government, led by Benjamin Netanyahu, continues to push for military action that threatens to derail Washington's attempt to regain control of the situation.

Furious reaction

The reported confrontation between Trump and Netanyahu captures all this. According to accounts from US officials, Trump reacted furiously after Netanyahu ordered preparations for major strikes on Hezbollah targets in Beirut's southern suburbs. For Trump, the timing was disastrous. Washington was attempting to preserve talks with Iran and reach a broader regional understanding that could reopen shipping routes. A major Israeli assault on Beirut was pushing Iran away from the negotiating table altogether.

Apparently the phone call between the two men became explosive. Trump is said to have accused Netanyahu of endangering US diplomacy, isolating Israel internationally and undermining the very American support that had kept his government afloat. Whatever the precise wording, the political meaning was clear: Washington feared that Israeli escalation in Lebanon could wreck its attempt to reach a new arrangement with Tehran. Netanyahu may still insist publicly that Israel's strategic position remains unchanged, but the reported pause in planned Beirut strikes suggests that, at least for now, American pressure has imposed limits.

This does not mean that the crisis has been resolved. On the contrary, the confrontation reveals a deeper problem. The US and Israel are



Strait of Hormuz: still under double blockade

allies, but their immediate priorities are no longer identical. Netanyahu's government seeks to maintain military dominance and prevent any political or diplomatic recovery by Iran and its allies. Trump, however, needs a visible success. He needs to claim that he has forced Iran into a deal, reopened Hormuz and protected the global economy. Any concession to Tehran risks angering Republican hawks and pro-Israel hardliners. Yet, without concessions, the war may continue, oil prices may surge and the claim of victory may become impossible to sustain.

The most urgent economic issue is the Strait of Hormuz. The global market survived the first months of the conflict, but only through a massive drawdown of strategic and private reserves. Some commentators have taken this temporary resilience as proof that the disruption was manageable. But that is misleading. The market did not absorb the shock because it was relatively minor. It survived because oil reserves were used on a historic scale. The loss of supply through Hormuz cannot be offset indefinitely. Nearly 15 million barrels a day cannot be permanently replaced through emergency releases or improvised rerouting. As summer demand rises in North America and Europe, the pressure will intensify. International organisations and energy specialists have warned that oil prices could spike again, with serious effects on inflation, transport, production costs and global growth. If prices continue to rise sharply, the result could be a renewed inflationary wave and possibly a global recession.

Paul Horsnell of the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies has argued that the scale of the current shock is larger than past oil crises. During 1978-79, the world faced a shortage of around 640 million barrels; during the first Gulf War, the figure was around 420 million. The present disruption, by contrast, is estimated to exceed 1.1 billion barrels. The fact that reserves initially softened the impact

does not mean there was no shock: it means the shock was temporarily hidden.

There is another danger. Government intervention in energy markets can buy time, but it can also distort the normal processes through which markets adjust. If prices are held down artificially for too long, demand does not fall enough. When reserves become too depleted to continue the intervention, the eventual price correction may be even more severe. The old saying that "the best cure for high prices is high prices" remains harsh, but relevant: if consumption is not reduced by price signals, the imbalance will eventually return in a more painful form.

Even if the war ended immediately, the global energy order would not simply return to its previous state. The assumption that energy trade can flow freely through chokepoints such as Hormuz has been shattered. Governments will now play a larger role in securing supplies, managing reserves and directing trade. This points towards a less globalised, more fragmented and more expensive energy system. Instead of an open market, the world is moving towards competing political blocs, strategic stockpiles and state-led intervention. Energy will become less efficient, more politicised and more costly.

Impact

The military dimension of the conflict has also expanded far beyond the first battlefield. Iranian strikes on US bases across the Middle East have shown that Tehran still has the ability to impose regional costs. Investigations using satellite imagery have reportedly documented attacks on US bases, or bases housing American personnel, in Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Iraq and Oman. The number of affected bases may be higher than has been officially acknowledged.

This is politically important. Before the war, Iran's leadership warned that any new conflict would become

regional. That has now become a reality. Iran and its allied groups have launched missiles and drones not only at Israel, but also at American military infrastructure across the region.

Satellite imagery, used by BBC Verify, shows damage to hangars, helipads and logistical facilities. Air bases such as Ali Al Salem and Camp Buehring in Kuwait have reportedly suffered visible damage. These attacks do not, of course, mean Iran can defeat the US militarily. But they do show that a war with Iran cannot be contained easily or fought without consequences for the whole region. The US can escalate its attacks against Iran. However, a state that believes its survival is at stake is unlikely to give in simply because more bombs fall. Each escalation creates new risks: attacks on US bases, deeper disruption to oil flows, pressure on Gulf allies, and growing international hostility to Israel's conduct. Trump needs a diplomatic way out, but any such arrangement will require some form of compromise.

That is where Iran's demands matter. Tehran has reportedly raised the questions of compensation, reconstruction funds, frozen assets and security guarantees. A figure of \$300 billion has circulated in discussions of a possible post-war reconstruction or investment programme. It is not always clear whether this is being described as formal war reparations, a reconstruction fund, sanctions relief or a broader package of economic normalisation. But, politically, the issue is clear: Iran wants to claim that it has not been defeated and that any settlement must include material concessions.

This creates a problem for Washington. If Trump agrees to reconstruction money, sanctions relief or the release of frozen assets, his critics will accuse him of rewarding Iran. If he refuses, Iran may refuse to reopen Hormuz or to resume full cooperation in negotiations. The gap between military rhetoric and diplomatic necessity is widening. The more Trump insists that he has won, the harder it becomes for him to make the compromises needed to end the crisis.

Inside Iran, there are those who argue the country should not accept any deal and 'pursue war until victory'. This is also an illusion. The economic situation is disastrous. The country's inflation report (April-May 2026 - published later than usual), shows a further deepening of an already severe crisis. For the third month in a row, the official 12-month inflation rate broke its long-standing record, rising by four percentage points from the previous month to 57.7%.

Yet even this figure does not fully capture the pressure households are facing. The report's detailed breakdown suggests that inflation is being felt far more sharply in daily life than the national average implies - roughly one and a half times the

official rate; in rural areas and in provinces such as Kurdistan, Ilam, Kermanshah and Lorestan, it is above 100%; food prices have risen far faster than other consumer goods; and some basic staples, including imported rice, chicken, eggs and cooking oil, have seen extraordinary increases over the past year.

Food prices give the clearest picture of the crisis. Over the past 12 months, food prices rose by an average of 130%, far above the overall rate for consumer goods and services. But even that average hides huge differences within the food basket itself. Potatoes rose by less than 20%, while imported rice increased by 223%, chicken by 287%, eggs by 343%, etc, etc.

Roaring inflation

The monthly pace of inflation has also become unusually fast. In April-May it reached 8.8% - roughly three times the rate seen in the same month in each of the previous four years. Even if this pace does not continue and price growth returns to the average of recent years, the official inflation rate would still likely pass 70% by the end of summer.

A rise in fuel prices quickly pushes up transport and food costs. A fall in the value of the rial can mean medicine shortages or higher prices for imported goods. Power cuts interrupt work, spoil food and reduce income for small businesses and agricultural producers. Inflation is not experienced evenly. It weighs most heavily on households with little or no savings, no access to foreign currency, no property and no secure employment. For low-income families, food takes up such a large share of income that rising prices directly reduce nutrition. For tenants, rent absorbs money that might otherwise go towards healthcare, education or transport. For pensioners and people with long-term illnesses, higher medicine costs can make treatment unaffordable.

Wages have not kept pace. Even where people remain employed, work no longer provides stable security. Nominal wages may rise, but they lag behind prices, rents and exchange rates. Many households now depend on several forms of income: formal employment, informal work, delivery jobs, home-based production, borrowing from relatives, selling possessions or relying on the earnings of children.

Informal workers - including street vendors, day labourers, construction workers, drivers, cleaners, workshop employees and home-based workers - are especially exposed. They often lack stable contracts, insurance or any protection against closures, shortages or transport disruption. In such conditions, even a short slowdown in local markets or a power cut can mean not only an immediate loss of income, but possible destitution●

Notes

1. www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cedp3lee059o.