

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



# weekly **worker**



**Your Party: code of conduct is a bureaucrat's dream. Opposition is to be gagged and silenced**

- Letters and debate
- Iran talks and oil
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- CPGB AGM

No 1578 March 26 2026

Towards a mass Communist Party

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Is Trump  
a fascist?



# LETTERS



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

## Union influence

I was quite pleasantly surprised to find no real disagreement with Jack Conrad's comprehensive reviews of the lead-up to the 1926 General Strike and initial testing of the waters with calls for earlier political, overt class actions.

Notwithstanding ignorant and cynical comments about "syndicalist quackery" made by another contributor (March 19), and resisting the temptation to rise to the bait, I think we must remember certain things about the period. In the first place the 'revolutionary movement' was the trade union movement in all its contradictory and counterrevolutionary elements, as well as its strengths and potential. The influence of syndicalists and industrial unionists was profound. The Industrial Workers of the World and its *Industrial Union Bulletin*, and syndicalists as such, formed much of the strategy and proto-structures of the miners and the shop stewards movement, and this was reflected in the councils of action and to an extent in the trades councils and community networks.

The miners' call for a general strike in support of revolutionary Russia, the blocking of armed intervention, earlier calls for the creation of a working class militia and much else were made to and through the union movement. Indeed, many of the forces which went on to form the Communist Party had their visions of a socialist country and world built on the ideas of democratic workers' committees, trade union branches, shop stewards governing directly as workers and not through the later distortion of 'the party'. In this they had preceded and then absorbed the ideas of the soviets. An idea such as one of their respective parties taking over and ruling on behalf of the workers would have been seen in these early years as quite perverse.

Incidentally the proletariat - ie, the industrial workers, the actual 'manufacturers of things', the nuts and bolts of industry and society - was seen as the crucial ingredient, along with class consciousness, for being able to take over and run society without capitalism. Obviously, workers in services and other associated roles were important, but, if you wanted to take over the restaurant, you first had to ensure the involvement and role of the chefs. Which is why Margaret Thatcher and every government since has been so determined to wipe us out and export those crucial roles abroad - largely to third-world, non-union or weak-union countries.

**David Douglass**  
South Shields

## Genuine debate

The CPGB's Online Communist Forum is a weekly Sunday Zoom discussion that talks about the latest political events and other things of urgency - often with comments written in the chat by an endearing comrade, with slogans of "No war but the class war" and other similar veined vexations, but all with a communist perspective in mind.

Panelled comrades often engage in complicated and nuanced discussions that are multi-dimensional, such as how the working class in Islamic or supposed communist countries are supportable, but not the leaders in these autocratic or kleptocratic regimes. So nothing is ever black or white, but what is clear is the class question. It's probably always tempting to use heuristics or short cuts to save time and no doubt sloganeering can be very

useful on strikes and demonstrations, but they don't really help understand the world from a dialectical Marxist point of view.

In the communist videos from 2020, 'Our Socialism', featured on YouTube, Mike Macnair explains that the CPGB's Marxism is not repeated as "sacred texts", but rather a more up-to-date version is preferable. So trapping yourself by repeating ad nauseum aphorisms, however desirable, isn't really getting to the nub of today's problems. Using such terminology may seem attractive to one or two comrades, but it isn't communicating to the working class the responsibility of leadership and building strong roots for a future expansive Communist Party.

It probably goes without saying that capitalism is in decline, competition for the crumbiest jobs are fierce, students have severe debt problems and most people can't really see much of a future for themselves. So what's the solution? If the left doesn't acknowledge that what is really needed is a programme that explains what has happened in the past and attempts to reorganise ourselves with a future active working class in mind (not shouting 'get rich quick' sayings that are rote-learned and only patronise members of the class we want to join us), then we'll be screaming till we're blue in the face.

**Frank Kavanagh**  
email

## YP or Greens

What follows is a letter sent to Your Party's central executive committee:

"Dear comrades in the CEC,  
We write to you collectively as Your Party Youth Cambridge (YPYC). This letter is born out of frustration and exhaustion with the state of the party and the CEC's conduct thus far.

As YPYC, we began in November 2025 with the goal of organising youth in the Cambridgeshire region to support their local communities and combat the rise of the far right. Since then, we've run a weekly food drive, now in its 16th iteration, ran an independent candidate for the CEC, supported strike action, and hosted numerous vibrant, politicised, cultural and educational events.

Over these past five months, our membership and impact in our community has greatly enriched our lives; we've become a steadfast and regular presence in our local streets. We were eagerly anticipating the formation of the CEC as a chance to concretise the promise of the party and formally establish the structures we'd built.

However, we're running out of steam. We've felt incredibly disappointed with the lack of action, communication and comradeship from the CEC. When we read out the CEC reports in our weekly meetings, we find them increasingly uninspiring - a dead weight, hanging in the air. The pre-conference divisiveness has only worsened with the elections; we've seen no attempts to resolve this and move forward productively. Materially, we cannot keep asking our comrades to continue paying for meeting rooms, banners and flyers out of their pocket. Finally, we've been frustrated about the lack of progress towards branch formation - a topic which, while instrumental to the party's success, does not seem to be prioritised whatsoever. We tell our peers that things will get better, but, as each month passes, feel increasingly ashamed to bear the party's name.

The ideological commitments we hold in our hearts can only carry us so far. We write to you now in a time of failing hopes: your response to what we say here will determine whether we remain committed to Your Party. As experienced organisers, we will

continue the struggle regardless: the only question is whether it's under this party's banner or that of the Greens.

We are not asking for anything new. In general, we want clarity, productivity and confidence in our leadership. Specifically, we want timelines for (1) branch formation, (2) branch accounting units (so that branches can be funded) and (3) youth section formation. Branch formation should have been the CEC's first priority, not left last on the agenda. The uncertainty surrounding these developments has driven local conflict and sapped our spirits. Timelines are the bare minimum you can provide us with at this stage in the party's development, and should not be beyond your capabilities.

But, ultimately, we need you to do better. We need to see you doing better - we need to feel it. The reports must not continue along their current trend: thinly-veiled factionalism that leads nowhere (that we're bored of); rushed decisions; lack of real dialogue; deferral to the officer group over the collective leadership (that we voted for). We expect official minutes from here on out, as a matter of basic democratic practice and transparency.

We are not alone in this. We know that groups all across the nations feel similarly and are facing the same decision as us. Young people in particular are leaving the party in droves; without young people, the party has no future. It is only out of one last gasp of faith in the promise of the party that we even reach out to you today. Fundamentally, what happens now comes down to you.

For us. For the Party. For the people and the planet. Courage to you, comrades."

**Your Party Youth**  
Cambridge

## Universalism

In his letter last week (March 19) David Rüper lays out how the "bureaucratic clique surrounding Jeremy Corbyn" outmanoeuvred all opposition to assert control of Your Party in England and Wales, which is now supposedly "done for good".

He sees YP in Scotland in a very different light and advocates a complete split and name change. If done with speed, this could apparently still fulfil the niche for a "functional, pan-leftist, left-of-Labour party in Scotland". This ignores the fact that the YPS conference decision to adopt a pro-independence position obviously makes for a left-of-SNP party and flushes any possibility of pan-leftism down the nationalist pan.

We now see the Corbyn clique aiming to outmanoeuvre the other fatal Scottish conference decision of creating a sibling relationship. CEC chair Jenn Forbes has just announced plans for 'working parties' in Wales and Scotland, chosen by sortition, apparently to "support developments in the devolved nations". This appears to tie in with what Jim Monaghan raised in the debate on it at conference - the likelihood of two parties emerging from that decision. As a close ally of Corbyn and Karie Murphy, he was in a position to see just the sort of scenario that's being put into play now.

Rüper fails to recognise that the left nationalism dominating YP Scotland is the major obstacle to the sort of party he claims YPS could have been. It has sown the divisions that kept comrades in Scotland aloof from the struggles against the Corbyn clique, claiming to be above such "factional squabbling".

As I write, a further email from Forbes has just arrived with a ludicrous offer to vote on whether or not YPS should stand in the May Holyrood elections - a rerun of that conference vote. The deadline for this vote is March 27 and the deadline for standing

candidates for Holyrood is April 1! Yes, YP HQ is treating the membership like fools, but the anger it has caused has ignited across WhatsApp groups and exacerbated the desire that Rüper has - to split now.

It appears to be a Murphy move like the one about the CEC formation over Christmas - get the passive, isolated membership voting and that negates the complaints of activists and lends legitimacy to the overturning of conference decisions - especially as it's likely that there will be a greater percentage of the Scottish membership voting than at conference, when there was a 12.5% turnout in favour of standing by close to 70%.

All in all, another sorry stage in the YP disintegration process with little sign of anything but further left nationalist splintering across Scotland. It's vital that those comrades in Scotland, who recognise the need for an internationalist party across these islands to fight the British state, unite and fight such nationalism. It can offer nothing of the universalism that the world's working class so desperately needs.

**Tam Dean Burn**  
Glasgow

## Lab stocktake

Soon after I came across the *Weekly Worker* in 2014 (and then made sure I continued reading it on a regular basis, as part of freshly educating myself with 'hard' leftwing politics), Jeremy Corbyn appeared like a poltergeist from within the House of Commons in his bid to become the next 'leader' of the Labour Party.

The *Weekly Worker*, in line with its ideological fountainhead, the CPGB, avidly encouraged critical, nonetheless the *fullest*, support for this development. Despite extensive reservations - based not least upon having experienced the dire trajectories of Harold Wilson and James Callaghan - I complied with this appeal to back Corbyn's rise up the global ranks of social democracy.

As everyone now knows, a flaccid and vicar-like Jeremy ended up being manoeuvred out of Labour, so next proposed and floated Your Party, which - again with well-stated Leninist principles - the *Weekly Worker*/CPGB insisted was representative of a 'not to be missed' chance for political engagement with working people, as the most ideologically justified pathway to achieving traction from the current starting point for Marxist revolutionary politics of invisibility (otherwise either being regarded by the vast majority of population as a laughing stock or held with vitriolic contempt).

Given the outcome of the *WW*/CPGB's policies in this specific arena - as it were, in a 'real' world, as things actually have panned out (and notwithstanding the often not only highly amusing, but also helpfully factual commentary on all these matters from Carla Roberts) - maybe a deep stocktake is required of those Leninist ideas: ie, here, in these very different times, with their very different forces and vastly changed sub-forces and associated socio-political and psycho-cultural settings in operation.

Some comrades will no doubt accuse such a response of being not firmly rooted in class politics, as not dialectical and, most pointedly, as not seemingly 'Leninist'. In fact it's an iteration of all those attributes in nigh-on *pristine* condition - although in updated and modernistic formulation. It's dealing with historical development, with objectively observable substantial change, with a 'whole' view rather than myopically outdated comprehensions as part of subjective staleness and consequently a terrible sterility.

By considering there's a need for entirely *independent* organisation by Marxists to the sly treacherousness of Labourite Corbyns and US Democrats like Bernie Sanders and Zohran Mamdani, those perspectives of mine represent not revisionism or indeed a pigeonholed 'Trotskyist' position, but instead are ideas around the only *valuable* futurism: ideas for the building in all practical, tactical and strategic terms an authentically *communist* future. That's to say, categorically not one with even the slightest whiff of Stalinist mentality - that *searingly destructive* historical tragedy from which we all continue to suffer profoundly.

All in all, surely the adage, 'the best laid plans of mice and men', comes flooding back to mind - along with the somewhat celestial harmonics cascading down, plus how, 'if you find yourself in a hole, it's best to stop digging'; how 'banging your head on brick walls' is not an ideal example of dialecticism. Most obviously, of course, it's just not that *clever*.

**Bruno Kretzschmar**  
email

## Biblical Kippers

We had assumed that Ukip had dishonourably disappeared after the nicotine-stained frog, Nigel Farage, had abandoned that project and created Reform UK Ltd. But no, a smattering of the knuckle-dragging mouth-breathers are hanging around like a fart in a lift.

Like much of the far right globally, they have now adopted Christian nationalism in an attempt to stay relevant and give them moral cover for their repugnant rhetoric. They've swapped the swastika for a cross, *Mein Kampf* for the *Bible* (although we can safely assume that neither gets read apart from the bits that can be typed in CAPS on social media). Worth remembering that when someone tried to pin down Donald Trump to specify his favourite part of the *Bible*, he replied after a long pause, "All of it!"

One thing remains the same about the 'Kippers': their *modus operandi* involves evoking false memories of a United Kingdom that never really existed - the 'back in my day' brigade, when everything was apparently better, happier ... and whiter.

Take the so-called 'Walk for Jesus' they helped organise in Liverpool. This is actually a rehash of an actual event held in the past, where Christians would take part in a genuine liturgical procession known as 'kenosis'. This was supposed to be an "emptying of self" to lift up Christ, seeking the "peace of the city" (according to Jeremiah xxix:7). Ukip instead turned it into a white supremacist demo. A fascinating exercise in interpretive theology - less Sermon on the Mount, more a GB News comments section (hymns interspersed with complaints about dinghies).

The 'greatest hits' of Christian teachings are still preached, but now they come with clauses. Love thy neighbour - unless they are from another country. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you - but keep in mind that white people are superior and so are entitled to hold certain powers and privileges. 'Turning the other cheek' is rebranded as 'weakness'. Welcoming the stranger is completely edited out - somewhere between Leviticus and the OpEd of the *Daily Mail*. You get the idea.

Under no circumstances should you highlight that the Jesus they're supposed to be marching for was a Middle Eastern refugee who preached kindness and acceptance and had a bit of a soft spot for outsiders. Woke nonsense!

**Carl Collins**  
email

## IRAN

# Talks, bluff and oil

Doubtless negotiations are happening, but certainly not directly. Those negotiations might be about quickly ending the war, or about bringing down the price of oil and reassuring markets. **Yasmine Mather** explains what is probably going on

**D**onald Trump's claims of ongoing negotiations with Iran and an impending "present" from Tehran should be viewed as strategic political signalling. Not a factual account of real diplomatic progress.

The rumoured 15-point US ceasefire plan follows the same approach as seen previously. It reportedly demands that Iran fully dismantle large parts of its nuclear programme, stop uranium enrichment, limit or end its missile development and scale back support for allied groups across the region. In return, the US offers to lift sanctions and possibly allow a tightly monitored civilian nuclear programme - this is presented as a reward rather than a basic condition for fair negotiations. Iran, meanwhile, claims the US is talking to itself, adding that any deal must provide compensation for past economic damage.

As a result, the situation remains stuck. Public claims of diplomatic exchanges hide the reality that the two sides are far apart. This dual approach - threatening force, while claiming to pursue peace - makes a real agreement less likely and keeps the conflict unstable. Although I believe Iran's categorical denial of direct talks, there are reports of indirect contacts through various intermediaries (more on this later).

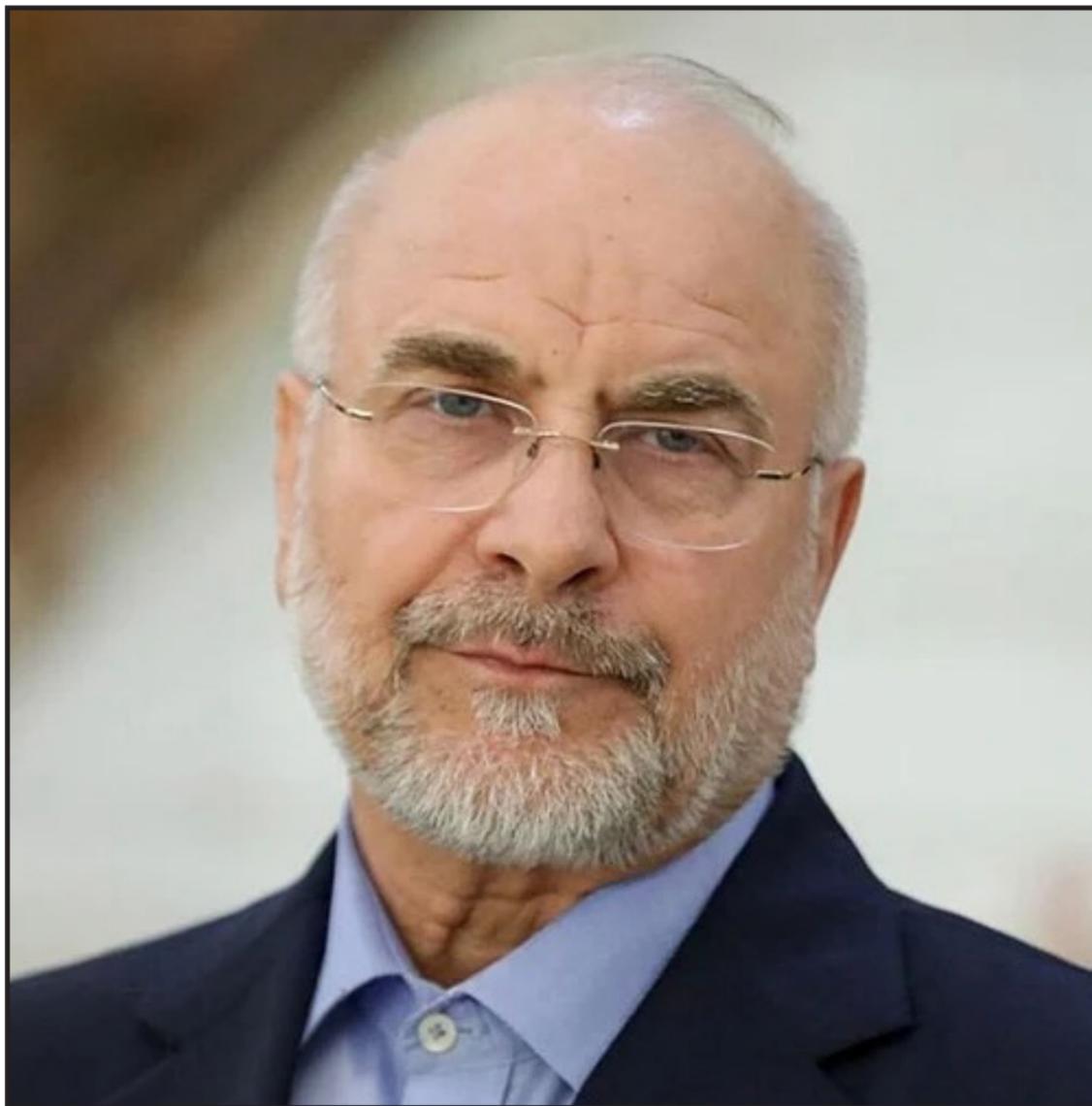
### Political pattern

The outcome is not just a contradiction, but a distinct political pattern: war and diplomacy are separate stages of a single process, operating at the same time in tension with each other. Military attacks continue - missiles are launched, infrastructure is damaged or destroyed, civilians are killed, industries crippled, medical supplies disrupted and markets thrown into uncertainty. This is not confusion or inconsistency: it is deliberate policy. Coercion and negotiation are fused into a single tool of imperial strategy, aimed in part at stabilising and reassuring volatile markets.

Trump's threats on March 21 marked a qualitative escalation in the nature of US war aims. Earlier phases of the conflict focused on nuclear facilities, missile systems and military infrastructure. Now the targets expanded towards civilian-linked systems: power stations, energy grids, industrial zones, and the broader infrastructure that sustains everyday life - exerting systemic pressure on society itself. It is no longer simply about weakening Iran's armed capacity: it is about undermining the material basis of social reproduction.

Warnings have included the possibility of "massively blowing up" major features of Iranian gas infrastructure, such as the South Pars field, which Israel has already hit. The US has itself conducted strikes on Iranian military facilities on Kharg Island, with reports even suggesting the possibility of American marines landing as part of a limited ground operation.

However, the attacks of the last four weeks go well beyond 'strategic' military sites. In Qom province, an entire lightweight concrete factory, employing over 100 workers, was destroyed, leaving all workers unemployed. In Qazvin, at least 12



**Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf: is he Trump's man?**

workers were injured in a strike on the Abgineh glass factory. In Isfahan, 15 workers were killed in an attack on an industrial plant. In Naqadeh, at least 11 more workers were killed in a single factory strike.

These are not isolated incidents. They are part of a pattern: the extension of war into the sphere of production itself. The strategic logic is clear. If a state cannot be rapidly defeated militarily, pressure is extended into economic life, labour and infrastructure. Factories are destroyed, workers are displaced and supply chains collapse. This follows the logic of systemic degradation.

The risks are equally clear. On March 21, Iran targeted the city of Dimona in Israel's Negev Desert - an area linked to its undeclared nuclear programme. This attack followed Israeli strikes on Iranian energy infrastructure near Bushehr, the site of Iran's own nuclear power plant.

It also emerged on March 21 that Iran fired two missiles toward the joint US-UK base at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, approximately 3,800 kilometres from Iran. Although these missiles did not reach the atoll, the incident has sparked fresh concerns regarding Iran's capabilities. Previously, it was widely believed that Iran's missile range was limited to roughly 2,000 kilometres.

Whether this reveals a previously undisclosed capability or one developed during the heat of the

conflict, the conclusion remains the same: military pressure has failed to force Iran to capitulate. On the contrary, Iran is now threatening retaliation against energy infrastructure across the Persian Gulf. The Strait of Hormuz - through which a good percentage of oil flows - has already been effectively blocked, producing a tremendous lurch in global prices.

### Five-day pause

Arguably that produced the sudden shift and Trump hailing the "very good talks" with Iran and that a deal might be close. He declared that negotiations had made significant progress, suggested agreements had already been reached on key issues. He even announced a five-day pause in planned strikes to allow talks to proceed.

On the surface, this produced a contradiction: the threat of devastation as well as the claim of imminent peace. The proposed 'deal' is not just diplomacy - it is about spectacle, messaging and economic signalling. These have many purposes. For the domestic audience, wary of this war, Trump can present himself as both strong (willing to bomb) and reasonable (seeking peace). In terms of global markets, the very suggestion of talks lowered oil prices, calmed markets and reassured global capital - at least temporarily. The announcements also contain deliberate strategic ambiguity. By

claiming it is pursuing negotiations, the US obscures its intentions and creates space for the continuation of war aims, including the potential use of marines.

Then we have Iran's denials. The regime refuses to play along with Trump's narrative of a 'negotiated peace'. Iran's responses have been unequivocal. The foreign ministry explicitly rejected Trump's statements, adding that there has been no communication since the bombing campaign began and asserting that negotiations under attack are impossible. The Iranian regime is also claiming that any pause reflects US weakness.

Here we do not just have disagreement, but a battle over public perception. If Iran admits to talks, it will appear that it has been forced to bend under military pressure. While there are strategic benefits for the US to conclude the conflict, admitting this risks appearing weak. The Trump administration is hesitant to look as though it is backing down against a country already destabilised by decades of sanctions and domestic unrest.

Despite the denial of direct talks, reports suggest possible indirect channels involving Oman, Pakistan, Egypt and Turkey. At the same time, rumours have circulated around the current speaker of parliament, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, suggesting possible backchannel

negotiations.

These rumours are not new. Similar speculation previously surrounded former parliamentary speaker Ali Larijani. Such stories encourage western and diaspora media to construct narratives of internal fractures within the Iranian state: the ministry of foreign affairs was kept in the dark, while the US has found its 'strong man'. Qalibaf's clear denial undermines these claims. Either they are speculative projections or they function as part of a broader ideological strategy: to produce the appearance of division.

Following the recent killing of Ali Larijani, Qalibaf has taken a more central role and may be seen as a possible interlocutor. In the past Qalibaf was sometimes referred to as the 'perpetual candidate', having presented himself frequently as a presidential contender, running in 2005, 2013 and 2024 (and briefly in 2017, before dropping out). He is a former mayor of Tehran (2005-17). His legacy as mayor is polarising: while he was praised for modernising the wealthy northern districts, critics say he ignored the city's poorer southern neighbourhoods. Meanwhile, The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps commander, general Ahmad Vahidi is apparently in charge of the actual tactical war effort, while president Masoud Pezeshkian remains focused on the day-to-day functions of the government. So far there are no obvious signs of rupture at the top.

### Social devastation

The most decisive evidence of the war's character lies in its social effects. The World Health Organisation confirmed that at least 18 medical centres were hit in the first 10 days of attacks, including Gandhi Hospital in Tehran. WHO has also warned of disruptions due to the breakdown of medical supply chains. Care centres for children, the elderly and patients have also been damaged or shut down. This reveals a deeper logic: the production of crisis through what can be described as indirect killing. Exactly like Gaza, deaths are not only caused by bombs, but by lack of medicine, collapse of healthcare systems, unemployment, poverty and disruption of essential services.

Even before the war, Iran faced severe shortages of medicine due to sanctions, currency shortages and policy changes. Inflation had reached around 60% and large sections of the population lived below the poverty line. Under these conditions, the destruction of pharmaceutical infrastructure risks producing a cascading humanitarian crisis: reduced access to essential drugs, incomplete treatments, worsening chronic illness, rising mortality over time and, at the end of the day, systemic healthcare collapse.

At least 40% of the population were already below the poverty line before the war. The current trajectory suggests further deterioration. At the same time, state resources are being redirected towards the military, further reducing the capacity for social support. Workers are not the agents of this conflict, but, of course, they bear its consequences ●

**YOUR PARTY**

# Thou shalt not criticise Karie

CEC members may not 'misrepresent' or 'publicly oppose or undermine a decision'. Nor may they pass on 'confidential' information or 'personally attack' officers. The CEC's code of conduct is a bureaucrat's dream. It is designed to silence all and every opposition. **Carla Roberts reports**

**W**e must admit that we thought meetings of Your Party's central executive committee would be few and far between. But no - they now take place every two weeks. Instead of sidelining the CEC, Karie Murphy (*de facto* general secretary) has chosen another avenue: stuff the agenda of the two-hour meetings with so much business that only minutes can be spent on each item. The real decisions have been delegated to the 'officers' group - all members of Corbyn's leadership faction.

The CEC is there to give the mere illusion of democracy. Crucially, CEC members have now been muzzled with a draconian 'code of conduct' (more below). It remains to be seen if Grassroots Left supporters on the CEC will submit. In the meantime, we are pleased to see that GL comrades have started to publish all motions and amendments.<sup>1</sup> Full transparency and openness really are the best weapons they now have.

For example, at the latest, March 22, CEC meeting, chair, Jenn Forbes, decided to simply not table the six motions submitted by GL supporters, including one that would have initiated a process to quickly recognise branches - officially for reasons of "capacity and governance". According to the standing orders pushed through in the previous meeting on March 8, Forbes alone is in charge of the agenda. Most of the amendments submitted were brushed aside too. And, since the chair's ruling cannot be overturned without a two-thirds majority, that was the end of that.

All this took some truly bizarre forms. For example, we hear that a YP member had emailed all CEC comrades with a serious complaint involving a staff member, and requesting an investigation. As Forbes had not put the item on the agenda, this was brought up as a point of order. But, instead of discussing how to deal with the actual complaint, Forbes immediately went on the attack - against the CEC member who had allegedly passed on the CEC's email addresses to the complainant! A classic case of diversion.

Of course, there is actually no other method for members to contact the YP leadership - all communication has to go through the official email address, which is monitored by Murphy and her sidekicks, among them press officer Angus Satow (both present at the latest meeting). However, the CEC was told there was "no way" that YP staff could answer all (any?) emails - or, for that matter, put events up on the website portal. Apparently, there are "capacity and technical issues". But we are very relieved to hear that there is now a full-blown "action plan" to deal with both issues!

The complaint by the YP member itself was brushed aside as "inappropriate" and full of "unsubstantiated allegations" by Forbes, who announced that she would not be taking "any questions or discussion from anybody". Case closed!

And in this undemocratic vein it went on. Maria Carroll Donnellan presented a "paper" about Wales, which, like all documents, is pretty boring (though we hear she was very worried about it "appearing in the *Weekly Worker*" - not if it's boring, it won't!). More worrying was the fact that Forbes simply decided not to table an amendment presented by Niall Christie, CEC member in Scotland.



**Elected CEC members are being gagged**

We do not agree with the comrade's politics at all, of course: he is a self-declared Scottish nationalist and wants YP Scotland to be "independent" from the rest of the party too. He proposed to delete references to Your Party being "federal" in Donnellan's paper. Not that we believe Your Party should be "federal" either. It is a nonsense to split up our forces into smaller and smaller sections, considering that we are fighting against the *British state* - and, of course, the *global system of capitalism*.

## Branches

YP political officer Louise Regan gave a very short update on the May local elections. Apparently, of the 22 groups previously pre-selected for possible endorsement, only 15 are still in the running. We know that a number of additional local groups have applied, but - surprise, surprise - have not heard back. Forty individual candidates are being considered, too. Whether an official Your Party endorsement would actually help or hinder their candidacy is another matter.

As an aside, we hear that Regan is still a member of the secretive, brown-nosing sect, Socialist Action, which latches onto Bonapartist leaders like Corbyn and Ken Livingstone, often acting as their praetorian guard and being rewarded with lucrative jobs in return (pretty much Livingstone's entire operation as mayor of London was run by well-remunerated SA members - chief among them Simon Fletcher, Redmond O'Neill and John Ross). We suspect Regan would be the person in charge of deciding which organisations could apply for 'dual membership'. A clear conflict of interest there, one would presume - but this issue, like so many others, has been parked.

For now, the witch-hunt against the organised left has cooled down a bit. If members of left groups keep their head down and do not stand for any positions, they will be left alone. But the witch-hunt has already had the desired effect, with the Socialist Workers Party in effect walking out of YP (though individual members still turn up to meetings with copies of *Socialist Worker*).

Things might well heat up again, when it comes to 'official' branches

being formed. Not that this will happen any time soon. The issue was - again - the last item on the agenda and less than 10 minutes were dedicated to it. The motion by the Corbyn clique outlined that "self-organised groups of members, sometimes called 'proto-branches', have in many instances done great work", but they "will not be recognised as official branches". You see, the new, shiny, official branches will be very different from "the exclusionary and managerial culture of older party models".

We have seen in action over the last two years what the Corbyn clique wants instead: randomly sortitioned conference attendees instead of accountable delegates; online voting instead of real collective decision-making and branches entirely sidelined: a tame and easily controllable formation like Momentum or Podemos to suit Corbyn's twilight years - not the kind of vibrant, mass working class party we actually need.

Obviously, ignoring the structures that our working class movement has developed over hundreds of years and coming up with new nonsense takes time: "It is proposed to explore innovative organisational forms to establish branches as organising hubs embedded in their communities." The meeting elected two "co-leads", Sam Gorst and Cath Davis, to help membership officer Cassi Bellingham kick the can further down the road. There will be "consultations", which will include "surveys" and holding more dreaded "regional assemblies".<sup>2</sup> No doubt they will once again be non-voting, because voting, accountability, delegates - all of that is so very old-fashioned and boring.

To make matters worse, we are told that treasurer Fadel Takroui announced that before any branch structures could be decided upon, there would also need to be a "financial structure that is approved by the electoral commission" and that "there is not much we can do before then about recognising branches". A question on the "proposed timeline" of this plan was (very rudely) brushed aside.

The most worrying section of the meeting was the proposed code of conduct for CEC members. The

alleged purpose is to "protect the reputation and integrity of Your Party". But, unsurprisingly, most of the formulations have clearly been designed to *protect those in charge from being criticised*. This is, of course, the point of the vast majority of codes of conduct, which is why communists reject them.

## Forbidden

There is the usual waffle that "members must treat all individuals with dignity and professionalism. Members must act in a professional, respectful and collegiate manner." Forbidden are bad things like "harassment, bullying, discrimination or personal attacks".

The question, as with all such codes, is who decides? Is it really "respectful" for example, to not table any of the motions presented by more than a third of CEC members? Is it "professional" for the chair to simply rule that she would "not be taking any questions or discussion"? What about forcibly muting participants? We hear that Forbes's behaviour could well be described as "bullying" - but, because there is an inbuilt majority for the Corbyn clique on the CEC, she will never be found guilty. But those complaining about her heavy-handed chairing might well now be accused of 'harassment'. Young people call that 'crybullying': the bully plays the victim.

Another chunk is devoted to stopping "confidential information" from being published - a speciality of Murphy, of course, who regularly leaks stuff to bourgeois media outlets. Nobody else is allowed to share anything - not until they drop dead. "Confidential information must not be disclosed without express authorisation of the CEC. The obligation of confidentiality continues during and *after* a member's term on the CEC."

There might well be *some* information that should be marked as confidential - for example, to protect members from being wrongfully accused of something or other by the authorities. At the height of the anti-Semitism smear campaign in the Labour Party, there were regular briefings against members like Jackie Walker, Marc Wadsworth and Chris

Williamson. Of course, those leaks emanated from Corbyn's office itself - in the futile hope that they might appease the right wing and the pro-Zionist lobby. To no avail (and, of course, in the end they came for Corbyn himself).

Needless to say, protecting 'normal' members is not what the Corbyn clique has in mind. For example, the entire agenda for the last CEC meeting on March 8 was marked "confidential"!

Another section is designed to stop any reports coming out before a sanitised version is published: "Chair's report of CEC meetings will be shared within 48 hours of the meeting. To avoid misrepresentations, CEC members may not publicly disclose details of CEC meetings before the chair's report is published."

All these points are further detailed. CEC members may not "misrepresent" or "publicly oppose or undermine a decision of the CEC in a manner that frustrates implementation of that decision". Again, who decides whether such implementation has been 'frustrated'? Well, we know. Karie Murphy incidentally has got her own rule: "Public criticism of staff is prohibited" - this has already been dubbed the 'Karie clause'.

There is also a section that bans CEC members from organising internal opposition: members may not "encourage, coordinate or facilitate internal disruption of the party's democratic processes". We would well imagine that normal democratic practices - for example, proposing a challenge to standing orders, as we saw at the launch conference - might be interpreted as "disruptive". The penalties include suspension and removal from the CEC.

After it was voted through by The Many bloc, Forbes pointed out "that there have already been numerous breaches of this code of conduct" by CEC members, including "in the chat of this meeting", which she thought was "incredibly disappointing". We wonder when Murphy *et al* will start enforcing it - probably as soon as the GL CEC members present any sort of challenge.

We hope they do - and take some inspiration from groundbreaking radical MPs. Parliament used to treat its debates as 'private', prohibiting the publication of speeches and debates as a "breach of privilege", as they did not want to be bothered by public scrutiny. Peter Wentworth MP was famously imprisoned in 1576 for defying these restrictions. When in 1771 several printers and publishers were imprisoned for the same 'crime', the radical MP, John Wilkes, protected these printers and challenged the House of Commons' right to arrest them. This resulted in a major constitutional battle, in which transparency eventually won out.

In this spirit, we also hope that the GL CEC members who had proposed a - not entirely dissimilar - code of conduct for the 'advisory committee' of the Grassroots Left will now drop that plan. Thousands of members have already left YP, because they are so fed up with the secrecy and the lack of transparency imposed by the Corbyn clique. If we want to save anything from the wreckage, surely we have to discuss openly and in front of the members ●

## Notes

1. [bit.ly/4rVOM1k](http://bit.ly/4rVOM1k).
2. [bit.ly/4dCViEL](http://bit.ly/4dCViEL).

## FAR RIGHT

# Secularism means mutual toleration

Communists oppose the scurrilous attacks on Muslim public worship. Eddie Ford says it is all part of the right's culture war designed to promote white nationalism and a particularly bigoted version of Christianity

If you are a regular *Daily Telegraph* or *Daily Mail* reader, you cannot have failed to notice the explicitly anti-Muslim campaign they have been running. This undeniably intensified with Eid, the festival at the end of Ramadan, where Muslims have a well-deserved blowout, having endured their month of fasting.

This year the London mayor, Sadiq Khan - who is Muslim, of course - featured an Eid celebration in Trafalgar Square (organised by the Ramadan Tent Project charity).<sup>1</sup> Telling us where our politics are heading, this celebration previously happened five times before in central London without causing the slightest controversy. But the rightwing press got the story they wanted - along with the photographs they needed. Several hundred Muslim men bowing in the direction of Mecca at prayer time. Apparently, this praying by Muslims in a well-known public space is all about them taking over Britain and attempting to push aside our Christian culture.

This half-crazy narrative is not just being promoted by the *Telegraph* and the *Mail*, it hardly needs saying. We also have the Tory front bench in the form of shadow lord chancellor Nick Timothy, who had an article in the *Telegraph* basically decrying Eid as a sinister alien implantation by Islamic fanatics.<sup>2</sup> Thus he seriously contends that the domination of public spaces is "fundamental to the modus operandi of radical Islam". Pretending to be a scholar, he claims that the *adhan* - the Muslim call to prayer - makes "the theological claim that there is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is his messenger", and therefore it is "a repudiation of other beliefs" by definition! Unlike good old Christian church bells, of course, which "simply ring out" and "do not assert any theological message or criticism of other faiths".

Even if these "facts" were not true, Timothy generously concedes, we must understand that Christianity holds a "different place" to other religions in Britain - which cannot be denied, of course, seeing how it is the established *state* religion, with the monarch residing as the head of the church (or "supreme governor" of the Church of England).<sup>3</sup> Christianity is "the foundation of our way of life", expressed in laws and our cultural inheritance, whereas the *adhan* is an "expression of power", linked apparently to the "politics of communalism". This is already "corrupting" institutions like the police, as revealed by "the scandal of the ban on Israeli supporters from a football match in Birmingham", Timothy tells his readers, and "we are likely to see it at the ballot box in the local elections in May".

In the same paper, Charles Moore - the former editor no less - weighs into the debate. He agrees with Timothy that public Muslim gatherings are all about domination.<sup>4</sup> He sternly writes that "rituals" like mass Muslim public prayer were "all right" in mosques, but most certainly "not welcome in our public places and shared institutions".

Fancying himself as a theologian, Moore then lectures us: "long before Islam itself was born or thought of", Jesus himself "addressed the subject of public prayer". He quotes from Matthew 6:v-vi, which is part of the Sermon on the Mount, inviting us to "not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men" (curiously, Moore does not



Public prayer: hardly a big deal

mention the synagogues in his 'non-communalist' *Telegraph* version).<sup>5</sup>

Such public prayer is a "bad idea", he argues, while parliament apparently "follows Jesus's advice", as "prayers are the only proceedings in both Houses which are private". He remarks that, in a country such as Britain, a large number of Muslims praying in public is a "collective action" that "resembles a demo, except that the participants are on their knees, not their feet" - meaning it must have "an element of political intent". This, for him, was verified by the presence of Sadiq Khan, which means that the Labour Party "must be inextricably entwined with that intent".

### Hypocrisy

Nigel Farage has jumped on board, saying that a Reform government would ban such a display, when it comes to well-known public spaces - in that way we will be "defending our - mainly Christian - values". Kemi Badenoch has come out in support of Nick Timothy too, stating that any public expressions of religion should "fit within the norms of a British culture" - and, when asked whether she agreed about Islam in particular being an issue, or the main worry was prayers being separated for women and men, she replied, "They are both correct".

Well, this is anti-Muslim bigotry plain and simple. As the Labour Party said, would you raise a hue and cry if this was public worship by Jews, for example? You ask the question, you know the answer. Whatever Charles Moore may say about Jesus telling his followers to worship in private, there is a passage in the New Testament about his followers going up to the temple and putting on an overt display of Yahweh worship and all the rest of it - surely this had "an element of political intent"?

Obviously, we live in an officially Christian culture, no-one can deny. All maintained schools are legally required to have a daily act of collective worship "broadly Christian in nature".<sup>6</sup> Today, admittedly, there is widespread non-compliance with that legislation. Nowadays most schools do some sort of secular version - a nice liberal take on things, where if Jesus appears, he is a bit of a pacifistic, anti-racist hippy.

Nevertheless, the Church of England remains the *established* church and the current head of the church is King Charles. There are, by

automatic right, bishops in the second chamber, and Christian celebrations feature prominently on TV and radio. As for the debate around public worship, the 18th century Methodists were famous for their 'field preaching'. The likes of John Wesley and George Whitefield drew huge crowds. There was much praying, singing and ecstatic chanting. So the idea that Christianity is just private and discreet is nonsense on stilts.

When it comes to religion and state, it is worth looking at the Green Party - especially as its recently declared membership now stands at 220,000. Do the Greens want to disestablish the Church of England? Well 'yes', but ... Repeatedly questioned on this by the rightwing media, the Greens became defensive - okay, we formally have that position, but it is not a *priority* for us. It is similar with many Labour politicians (or Jeremy Corbyn for that matter). Personally they claim to be republicans, but do not want to make it an immediate demand in the here and now. Rather, they prefer to concentrate on so-called 'bread and butter' issues. In other words, their republicanism is platonic.<sup>7</sup> So, somewhere buried in their mountain of conference resolutions, the Greens have separation of church and state - but they are not going to make a fuss about it.

But it is worth making a fuss about. Read Henry Mance, chief feature writer for the *Financial Times*. He has written a relatively lengthy article - 'Is Britain ready for US-style religious politics?' - where he discusses how Christian groups are playing an increasingly "prominent role" on the UK right, fuelled as they are by "new funding and transatlantic links".<sup>8</sup>

Mance singles out two particular individuals, James Orr and Tommy Robinson. Orr is Reform UK's head of policy and Nigel Farage's senior advisor. A Cambridge professor of politics and philosophy, he is notoriously 'post-liberal': anti-abortion, anti-migrant, anti-Muslim. Then there is Robinson. He claims to have undergone a Damascene conversion while in prison. Out of jail he held a very public carol service this Christmas. Many crosses too featured on his 'Unite the Kingdom' march in London last September, which drew up to 100,000 people.

Mance draws a link between the United States and the far right in Europe - but particularly in Britain. True, this is not having a *mass* impact - at the moment. He does not buy into

the oft-told story of Generation Z flocking to church to find spiritual solace. Actually, church attendance has not recovered to pre-Covid levels and we definitely still have a situation where the Church of England is in secular decline (pun intended).

But what is going on amongst the *elite* is a different picture. Mance's essential argument is that you have all sorts of extremely well-financed foundations that are sponsoring politicians, conferences, think tanks, etc. They are militantly Christian.

### Secularism

The CPGB's position is quite straightforward. We are for secularism, not least the separation of church and state, which obviously means the disestablishment of the Church of England, and a situation where all religions have full, equal rights. This is something to their eternal shame that the comrades in the Socialist Workers Party abandoned when they led Respect alongside with the Christian, George Galloway and the Muslim Association of Britain. They used their members to vote down the principle

of secularism when proposed by the CPGB. It supposedly puts off religious people.

Except it doesn't. We asked Anas Altikriti of MAB about secularism. Having explained what we meant by it, he declared himself in favour. Ask other Muslims. Ask Hindus. Ask Jews. Ask Christians whether or not the Church of England should be the state religion, whether its bishops and archbishops should be appointed by the government?

Non-believers and believers should have equal rights and no privileges. We do not argue for an atheist constitution. True, most communists are atheists, of course, and will happily put forward what they think about religion in terms of history, philosophy, etc. Crucially, though, we want *toleration*. This requires the free expression of ideas, including those of all religions, as well as open debate in all spheres.

The SWP neatly illustrates the political cowardice of so much of the left. They are often afraid of putting forward a principle, when it comes to traditional left positions like republicanism, open borders, a skilled worker's wage for MPs, extending abortion rights, etc. Absurdly, most left groups actually find themselves outflanked by the Greens, on the demand for a popular militia.

Communists and revolutionary socialists ought to have the courage of their convictions - why can't we go out and win Muslim voters to secularism? Indeed, why can't we win over Church of England members or supporters to secularism as well? Surely having the morally dubious King Charles III as the head of their church is an *insult* to their religion ●

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### Notes

1. ramadantentproject.com/open-iftar.
2. telegraph.co.uk/news/2026/03/19/islamic-domination-of-public-sphere-is-unacceptable.
3. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supreme\_Governor\_of\_the\_Church\_of\_England.
4. telegraph.co.uk/news/2026/03/20/public-prayer-not-just-devotion-islamists-domination.
5. biblehub.com/kjv/matthew/6.htm.
6. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collective\_worship\_in\_schools.
7. weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1203/the-royal-wedding-and-platonic-republicanism.
8. ft.com/content/ffc85800-1daa-4ea6-959b-0856b0553db7.

## Fighting fund

# Just days left

As I noted last week, we were expecting a few large donations over the next seven days - and, thankfully, my anticipation turned out to be justified: we received no fewer than four *three-figure* contributions. Comrades SK, PM, LM and JC, I can't thank you enough!

They all came in the shape of standing orders, while other SOs or bank transfers came from comrades DR and RN (£20 each) and TT (£10). But would you believe it? There was not a single PayPal donation. However, comrade PB did hand £16 in cash to one of our team.

All in all, despite the small number of contributions, those four extra-large ones paid dividends: this week's total came to a more than useful £817, taking our running total for March up to £2,099, with, as I write, six days left to make sure we get the £651 the *Weekly*

*Worker* still needs if we're going to reach that essential £2,750 fighting fund target.

So please do your bit, if you haven't already played your part this month. To make sure we receive your donation in time, please make your contribution either by bank transfer or PayPal. For more details on that, along with other ways of contributing, go to the web address below.

Let me emphasise once again: our readers and supporters play an essential role in ensuring the *Weekly Worker* is published week after week. That's why the fighting fund target needs to be reached each and every month ●

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

**CPGB**

# Through the Slough of Despond

Things have changed here and there, but not positively. Israel's war on the Palestinians has become a US-Israeli war on Iran, YP proved stillborn and the climate crisis gets worse. **Mike Macnair** reports

**W**e held our annual general meeting online on March 22. The day was primarily occupied with discussion and amendment of the 'Assessments and perspectives' document, which we will publish in the next issue of this paper.

Jack Conrad introduced it. He said that comparison with last year's document<sup>1</sup> shows that relatively little has changed in our assessment of the situation: what has changed has been the continuation of a worsening situation. This year we decided to put the climate crisis upfront. This is not to diminish the evident war threat - these are the two ways in which humanity can be destroyed in the near future.

However, we should be looking to make climate a major theme of this year's Communist University and we also need to work on the CPGB minimum programme on this issue. Nicolai Bukharin made the point that socialism does not take over from capitalism in a smooth way, the process of overthrow having unavoidable negative effects. The effects of human-induced climate change have already reached the point that working class rule will inherit a significantly degraded world, and we need to work on proposals to deal with the problems.

On the threat of war, he thought we were right to judge that, contrary to common liberal views, Donald Trump is not an 'isolationist'. The USA itself remains the global power and there was always an iron fist within the velvet glove of the post-1945 arrangements. Equally, Trump is not a 'fascist': fascism was a response to a real threat of proletarian revolution. Today there is no such threat. On the contrary, though far-right politics is on the rise, the left clings to weaker and weaker forms of popular frontism, the latest version being the Together Alliance, with the slogan, 'Love'. The far right is on the rise globally, with clear support from the Trump administration - even the 'pink tide' in Latin America has receded in the last year, and Trump has pulled a spectacular 'decapitation' deal in Venezuela and now threatens Cuba.

The only thing that can stop this trend is the working class beginning to organise itself as a potential ruling class. But the left continues to peddle illusions in liberalism and nationalism - George Galloway's latest adoption of Scots nationalism is only a step further from his previous Brit nationalism. By promoting these popular front projects the left taints itself as part of the political establishment, and by doing so lends indirect support to the far-right populists.

Referring to the Corbynistas last year, we said, "We should expect nothing worthwhile coming from this quarter". We have, in fact, seen *something* from them: Your Party. But this is almost certainly a stillbirth, due to Corbyn and his immediate associates' determination to keep tight bureaucratic control, at the expense of mobilising the ranks. Some 800,000 initially expressed interest, but only 25,000 confirmed their membership in order to vote in the recent leadership elections. Meanwhile, the party that is growing radically is the Greens.

The present world is one in which people are blown very easily from one fashion to the next. The Corbyn campaign for leadership of the Labour Party and his victory produced a wave of euphoria, but the mass influx



**Planet Earth: facing a catastrophe**

into Labour did not survive the first constituency meeting confronting many of the new members. Both the Labour membership surge and Momentum were killed by the Corbyn leadership's fear of self-activity among the ranks and the possible influence of left groups. So it is in Your Party too.

But we should not break with engagement in YP. The Grassroots Left is clinging on by its nails, but is threatened by the visceral reaction against freedom of speech of Richard Brenner and other 'code of conduct' advocates: the standard far left leaders' fear of openness (the labour bureaucracy writ small). We previously fought this conception in Left Unity, and in the Socialist Alliance, where the Socialist Workers Party's *first* proposal after it joined was to try to expel us for public reporting.

Last year we had some hope in the 'Forging Communist Unity' process. Comrade Conrad confessed to having been "up one week and down the next" in this process; by July it was clearly dying, but we were right to drag it out to the jointly sponsored Communist University in August. Talking About Socialism has clearly 'blown it' as a party-building project.<sup>2</sup>

There exists a vague element on the

left that appears to talk our language, but comrade Conrad does not hold out much hope in this tendency. As Marx put it, "The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living". The basic ideas of today's left go back to 'official communism' and bureaucratic socialism of one sort or another, stretching back to the non-Marxist left of the later 19th century: Bonapartist leaders, commitments to coalitions with liberalism or nationalism, and so on; these are absorbed with their mothers' milk by left social democrats, 'official communists', Maoists and Trotskyists alike. All we can say for our alternative approach is that we think this is the best possible way forward.

The Green surge looks like the latest superficial left fashion, with Zack Polanski as the latest 'man on a white horse' to be followed. The party is capable of seeming very left: a few years back, its manifesto included the people's militia. But precisely because it is not a party of proletarian socialism, it is potentially 'buyable'. We should compare them with the Green surge in Germany in the 1980s: today the German Greens are the most warmongering Atlanticist party in the Bundestag, and the recipient of big donations from capital. A small

symptom: pressed by the Tory press on the Greens' policy of disestablishing the Church of England, Polanski responded that this policy "will not be a priority in the coming elections" - the usual sort of evasion that displays entry of 'contender parties' into the regime of capitalist control.

Comrade Conrad ended his introduction by responding to some of the proposed amendments, which will be discussed further on in this report. We went on to a general discussion of the document, followed by specific discussion of the amendments that had been proposed.

## Debate

In the general discussion, comrade Andy Hannah said there was a problem, in the first part of the text, of 'catastrophism', which the left had repeatedly used to argue for short-cut politics; particularly in point 4, where it is suggested that capitalism has reached its absolute limits. Lenin somewhere says that there are no inescapable crises for capitalism; these are solved, every time, by destroying large numbers of human beings and productive resources.

Comrade Carla Roberts said the document was good, but had no easy answers. As for YP, it has turned out to be a disaster: there will be no branches

and there is a lot of demoralisation among left comrades. An initiative from Zarah Sultana might offer some hope. Might it still be possible for the Democratic Socialists of Your Party to project something? We should try to invite some of the relevant people to Communist University to discuss the possibilities; otherwise all that will emerge is more demoralisation.

Comrade Martin Greenfield, a visitor from Australia, made three points. First, in relation to comrade Hannah, the first part may look 'catastrophist', but it is actually a realistic assessment of the future facing humanity. The Trotskyists committed themselves in 1938 to 'catastrophe is coming: the solution is to fight for higher wages and that will lead to communism'; this is the root of 'shortcut-ism'. Secondly, it is not quite true that everything is moving to the far right. The Democratic Socialists of America now has over 100,000 members; the election of Zohran Mamdani as New York mayor points in the same direction; Die Linke in Germany moved to the left and survived; the Mélenchon movement in France is a significant opposition. He said the perspectives document needed to flag the fact that YP is a site of struggle - the *Weekly Worker* is always most effective in

intervening in such 'sort of party' projects. Third, it would be desirable to have something about how to organise sympathisers of the CPGB; and how to argue at a lower theoretical level without wasting resources.

I argued, in response to comrade Hannah's point, that the 'catastrophe' problem consists in the fact that the USA has a *military* interest in the oil-driven model of warfare: military aircraft, tanks and trucks are not about to be replaced by electric ones. Through military dominance, the dollar is the reserve currency and the USA holds the rest of the world in economic subordination. Solving the climate crisis therefore requires the overthrow of the *military* power of the USA. That can only happen either through global nuclear exchange (leading to a quicker human extinction), or through a political project capable of reaching into the US armed forces, as the anti-Vietnam war movement did; meaning a universalistic one (communist, not nationalist). On comrade Roberts' points, it seemed to me that, if Zarah Sultana broke with the Corbynists to project an alternative, it would be most likely in order to join the Greens.

Comrade Jim Nelson agreed with moving climate to the front of the document. The Iran war had entailed a dramatic surge in carbon emissions; British politicians were arguing for the reopening of drilling in the North Sea. On 'catastrophism', millions can see catastrophe everywhere. But Corbyn and Polanski were merely recent examples of a succession of left illusions in 'great leaders'. The Greens are able to talk left because they are far from power; if we look at their role in local government, they are more like the Lib Dems; so it is in Germany with their role in government.

Jack Conrad, replying to the general discussion, expressed disagreement with my view that the overthrow of the military power of the USA was needed to revolve the climate crisis. At the end of the day we all have to live on the same planet, so that capitalism would be driven to some form of authoritarian 'climate socialism' like German

*Kriegssozialismus* in 1914-18. I was also mistaken on the link between oil and the military, he said: we see in Ukraine a revolution in warfare - a shift into missiles and electric drones. "Drill, baby drill" was a sign of capitalist irrationalism - so too with the arguments for opening up the North Sea that comrade Nelson had mentioned, which would take many years and have absolutely minimal effects on fuel prices, which are set globally.

On comrade Hannah's point, if Lenin said capitalism had no limits, he was wrong. And Lenin was prepared to recognise catastrophes: thus his October 1917 pamphlet *The impending catastrophe and how to combat it*.<sup>3</sup> Comrade Nelson is not quite right that we are actually *at* catastrophe, but, said comrade Conrad, 'tipping points' are coming quite soon.

He agreed with me on Zarah Sultana: but suppose she *did* call an initiative of left forces within YP - the London YP conference displayed the lousy economic and intersectionalist politics on offer. He was sceptical, as compared with comrade Roberts, on the future possibilities of the DSYF; the underlying idea of a British equivalent of the Democratic Socialists of America was always delusional. On comrade Greenfield's points: we never had great expectations for YP, so we were never plunged into demoralisation. We are not quite at the end of YP, but coming to the end of it as a vehicle for hope.

Comrade Anne McShane, a visitor from Ireland, thought that the document's insistence on the politics of power, as opposed to the politics of protest, underestimated the importance of the continuing Palestine solidarity movement, and it should have more on our attitude to this movement. Secondly, it would be useful to relate the climate question to the disasters of the war in the Middle East. Third, both war and climate are connected with the issue of migration as 'push factors' driving migration from the global south. Finally, on the left in Britain, working with the equivalent of the SWP in Ireland in

the Palestine movement, she said, had made it transparently clear that their ostensible Marxism is not, for them, a guide to action; hence they commonly 'like' the *Weekly Worker*, but find it 'not relevant to day to day work'.

## Amendments

We went on to discuss and vote on 11 separate amendments. Some of these were on points of detail or drafting, and were mostly either accepted, or accepted with some alterations, by the movers of the 'Perspectives' document. The differences of substance that were discussed concerned points 21 (the grounds of the characterisation of Russia as not an imperialist power), 23 (the relation between Russia and China), 26 and 29 (the Labour Party and the Labour left) and 38 (practical tasks in building relations with sympathisers).

On point 21, the original text read: "... Russia is, of course, in no way an imperialist power - ie, the export of capital and the extraction of surplus from abroad play only a marginal role in its economy." Comrades Baris Graham, Lars Radov and Julian Harris proposed to delete all after "power" in this sentence, on the ground that the theory of imperialism as consisting in essence of the export of capital was not an agreed CPGB position (and might be false; there is also 'debt imperialism'). The PCC proposed as an alternative to replace "ie" with "eg" - the point being that the export of capital for the extraction of surplus from abroad is one of the forms of capitalist imperialism. Comrade Radov proposed in the meeting the alternative formulation: "in no way an imperialist power, by any Marxist definition".

Comrade Jack Conrad objected to this, because - for example - the SWP *does* regard Russia as an imperialist power, and so does Andrew Murray; the fact that Russian money is spent in the UK on buying football clubs or big houses is an example of the export of *money*, but not to be set in motion as capital. That Lenin characterised pre-1917 Russia as imperialist was a mistake, he argued; Boris Kagarlitsky's *Empire of the periphery* is a better approach.

Comrade Hannah agreed that the objection to focussing on the export of capital was too narrow; there was also, for instance, surplus extraction through technical rents. He proposed the formulation "in no way an imperialist power: eg, the capitalist extraction of surplus value from abroad plays only a marginal role in its economy". This formulation was accepted with no-one against; but it was generally agreed that we should carry on a discussion of the question of the nature of modern imperialism.

On point 23, comrade Baris Graham had proposed two amendments, which were designed to deal with the danger that he saw in the existing text of overstating the closeness between Russia and China, and understating the degree of ability of the Russian state to act autonomously and its ambition to *become* imperialist. Comrade Conrad opposed these. "No limits" was a quotation from Putin and Xi (in February 2022), he pointed out.<sup>4</sup> Russia's arms industry is dependent on Chinese chips. Point 23 is about what serious rivals the USA has - only China, not Russia, the EU or Japan. I argued that the relation between China and Russia was like that between Germany and Austria-Hungary in the run-up to 1914, while comrade Conrad proposed that we needed to continue the discussion at the level of analysis that is more concrete than in this summary document. On this basis comrade Graham withdrew the amendments.

On points 26 and 29, comrade Jim Moody proposed a group of amendments that were designed to combat what he saw as potential

illusions in the Labour Party and the Labour left. He quoted a passage from Lenin in which Lenin described Labour as a reactionary bourgeois party, which aimed to fool the workers. Our attempt to do work with Labour Party Marxists (beginning before the Corbyn period) had been totally unsuccessful. There was now a negligible chance of a revival of the Labour left.

Comrade Stan Keable argued that this approach was misconceived. In relation to projects like the Socialist Alliance, Left Unity or Your Party, we argue that they could potentially be *turned into a Communist Party*. This is not at issue in relation to the Labour Party: we argue that it should be *turned into a united front* (by abolishing the regime of bans and proscriptions). I argued that the Labour Party retains a contradictory character, by self-advertising as a party of the working class and of socialism. Hence the repeated failure of efforts to create a left-of-Labour party on the basis of Labourite politics. This remains true. Jack Conrad pointed out that the Lenin speech comrade Moody had cited was urging the original CPGB to *affiliate* to the Labour Party. 'Bourgeois workers' party' is still an accurate characterisation. Comrade Moody's amendments were taken together, and were defeated by a large majority vote.

On paragraph 38, comrade Tam Dean Burn proposed an amendment to add: "We should explore recording audio versions of these and our other publications." Both I and comrade Conrad were initially opposed to this on grounds of practical feasibility, given our limited resources, but after other comrades offered arguments for the usefulness and potential demand for audio publications, we dropped our opposition and the amendment was accepted with no-one against.

Finally, comrade Paul Cooper proposed a late amendment to add at the end a new point: "The PCC, working with appropriate cells, will explore the creation of a supporters network(s) and reading circles to extend the influence of our ideas and look for ways to recruit and give sympathetic *Weekly Worker* readers an opportunity to be actively involved in developing our work organisationally." This was accepted, again, with no-one against. The document as amended was then put to the vote and carried unanimously.

By now we were running out of time. There was a brief discussion of elections to the Provisional Central Committee, which ended with a decision to temporarily extend the existing PCC till the next aggregate meeting. The financial report was also postponed until then ●

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## Notes

1. 'CPGB perspectives for 2025' *Weekly Worker* February 27 2025: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1527/cpgb-perspectives-for-2025.
2. Since November 2025 TAS appears to have become merely a blog by Nick Wrack (talkingaboutsocialism.org); the 'pro-talks wing' of *Prometheus* has evaporated as a trend, and *Prometheus* itself has fused with *Ebb* magazine on the basis of very clearly 'intersectionalist' - that is, popular-frontist - politics: prometheus-mag.com/2026/02/21/ebb-and-prometheus.
3. www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/ichtci/index.htm.
4. Reaffirmed in February 2025: www.reuters.com/world/xi-putin-hold-phone-call-ukraine-war-anniversary-state-media-says-2025-02-24.

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## Online Communist Forum



Sunday March 29 5pm

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# What we fight for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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ISSN 1351-0150

# weekly worker

## Poll shows Reform UK losing ground

# Reform at the crossroads

Have we reached 'peak Farage'? Perhaps, argues Paul Demarty. But, whatever the fate of Reform, the drift to the right is likely to continue. Lining up with the centre is no answer - independent working class politics is needed

A strange spat broke out last week between Nigel Farage and the polling wonks at YouGov.

Most opinion polls are reporting Farage's wholly-owned subsidiary, Reform UK, at about 30% support in general election voting intentions - a commanding lead over an increasingly-fragmented chasing pack. YouGov, however, is an outlier, and its most recent polls have Reform on 23%-25%. This was enough for Farage to accuse YouGov of a dodgy polling methodology - deliberately doing down Reform at the behest of persons unknown.

As it happens, there is a significant methodological difference at play here, as YouGov explained. It asks respondents to tell them how they plan to vote *in their constituency*, rather than a more general prompt about which national government they prefer. The intention here is to capture the dynamic of tactical voting - which does not seem unreasonable, especially given how recent by-elections in Gorton and Denton as well as Caerphilly played out.

As is well known, the Labour Party's strategy seems to be to set up a direct lesser-evil contest between Reform and itself, with Labour as the only sensible choice to prevent a Farage imperium at the next general election. The apparent success of tactical voting campaigns in these recent elections, which returned Green and Plaid Cymru MPs, has been a source of great embarrassment to Sir Keir Starmer and his decimated kitchen cabinet. It presents deeper problems for Reform, however, since it seems to suggest that anti-Reform votes can be successfully coordinated - perhaps well enough to deny them significant numbers of seats.

As a compromise, YouGov has promised to publish both general and constituency-specific numbers henceforth. Yet Farage's testiness on this point tends to confirm that this is a real worry for him. Reform's rise in the polls since Labour's victory in 2024 has been the best argument that it, and not the beleaguered Conservative Party under the largely anonymous Kemi Badenoch, is the real opposition party on the right. Reform's relatively meagre parliamentary presence tends to undermine this, so opinion polls matter all the more in projecting that all-important image of success.

## Percentages

Yet the prospect for Nigel and his merry men is not quite so sunny as it once was. A steady rise after the 2024 election peaked in October 2025, with a simple trend line over the different polls suggesting a Reform share of a little over 30%. That has noticeably dropped since (it is now hovering at around 27%) and, while YouGov's lowballing is part of the story, it is not the whole story. Is 30% really the ceiling for Reform? Have we quietly passed 'peak Farage'?

That is highly uncertain, of course. Nonetheless, we can think of reasons why it *might* be true. The first is the



American connections and finance

extreme incumbency bias of Britain's comically undemocratic electoral system. It is designed, roughly, to alternate power between two main parties and marginalise everyone else. Only once in this country's modern history has there been a changing of the guard, when Labour displaced the Liberals as the main 'left' contender in the 1920s; that had been unthinkable before the extension of the franchise to all men and most women in 1918.

No comparable change in the composition of the electorate has happened recently, though the effects of deindustrialisation on the class structure of the country are significant and should not be downplayed. Moreover, mid-cycle opinion polling has a tendency to inflate the appeal of would-be challengers to the duopoly. The Social Democratic Party breakaway from Labour looked, at times, on course to eclipse Labour, but nothing of the sort happened, when the general elections of 1983 and 1987 rolled around. Much-trumpeted breakthroughs for the Liberals and then Liberal Democrats have likewise failed to emerge. The one significant exception here is the Scottish National Party breakthrough in 2015; but, of course, only the 50 or so Scottish seats are in play there.

Secondly, Reform has entered politics as a radical, quasi-populist, 'outsider' force. It claims to stand for all the things that 'ordinary decent Brits' believe, but which have been betrayed by an aloof political class. The trouble is, of course, that, once you spell it out - basically Thatcherism with an especially nasty anti-immigrant culture-war edge - the political programme is not, in fact, universally believed by 'ordinary decent Brits'. Ours is a heterogeneous country with a complex political geography.

For all the projections of insurgency and "Youth triumphant" (as the *Daily Mail* headline on Hitler's victory in 1933 famously put it), Reform voters

remain substantially old, white (of course) and suburban. Where many such voters live in Gorton and Denton, Reform did well; in the more typically Mancunian part of the constituency, they were crushed. Perhaps 30% is actually the proportion of Brits who would possibly welcome, or even tolerate, the presence of an ill-disciplined paramilitary border force modelled on ICE?

## Conventional wisdom

The conventional bourgeois political wisdom, then, would be to 'moderate', on something or other. Yet that will tend to degrade Reform's ability to pick up votes from the true-believer *enragés*. It is noticeable that the recent decline in its fortunes coincides with a series of high-profile defections to Reform from the Tories - many of whom are rather shop-soiled figures from the farcical fag-end of the last period of Conservative rule. Are you *really* that much of a populist if you are palling around with Robert Jenrick and Nadhim Zahawi?

Finally, there is the international dimension, and specifically the matter of Donald Trump and his cronies in the US. These people have made plain that the backing of America in Europe, including Britain, is to shift towards the far right, be it Reform, Rassemblement National or Alternativ für Deutschland. Farage's links to Trump and the American new right are, even in this scene, extremely obvious. His loyalty to Trump is unbecomingly slavish for a purported patriot: he has spent the whole period of the present war on Iran demanding greater British involvement.

Trump, however, is deeply unpopular in this country; and his latest military escapade is unpopular *in America*, let alone here. If he should overshoot the local appetite for Trumpism, Farage would hardly be the first. The Canadian Conservatives looked on course for a crushing general election victory last year under

the leadership of the thoroughly-Trumpified Pierre Poilievre, with the incumbent Liberals in disarray. But then Trump started to float the idea of annexing Canada. Mark Carney, the new Liberal leader and former Bank of England governor - the greyest of grey eminences - was thus able, improbably, to run a strongly *nationalist* campaign, all but daubing his face with woad, forcing the Canadian Tories into an embarrassing defeat.

## Fusion

If this is 'peak Reform', then the question becomes - what next, and what do we do about it? One scenario often mooted in the political press is some kind of pact between Reform and the Tories. The upside is clear: the story of the 2024 election, after all, was exactly what Rishi Sunak said it would be: a story of Reform splitting the rightwing vote and handing an enormous majority to Labour. The by-election results have seen, for the most part, swings from the Tories to Reform, and from Labour to the Greens and nationalists. A formal electoral pact would prevent this.

Moreover, since Boris Johnson's purge of the 'remainer' wets in 2019, the political differences between front-bench Tories and Farage and his various political outfits have tended to disappear. It required no great recantation on matters of substance for Jenrick, Zahawi, Suella Braverman *et al* to cross over, and indeed Farage stood down his Brexit Party in the 2019 election - all but ensuring an outright Tory victory. It might be a difficult pill for Phil Hammond to swallow, but not as difficult as losing his seat.

It would not even really be unprecedented. The Tories' official name is the Conservative and Unionist Party - a relic of the fusion of the Conservatives with the Liberal Unionists (a breakaway from the Liberals who opposed Irish home rule). The two parties governed Britain and Ireland in formal coalition from 1895 to 1906, and finally fused in 1912. That was a long old process, of course, but then there was a serious political division, over tariffs and free trade, to be dealt with first. Is there an equivalent, really, for the Tories and Reform?

Whether or not this precise scenario unfolds, the tectonic forces we have mentioned - the structure of the British political system, and the radical subordination of the UK to the US, combined with American support for the far right - will *tend* to reconstitute a single, large party of the right. It will be a party *further* to the right than the last Tory government, never mind that of David 'hug a hoodie' Cameron, which will sell international irrelevance and ever more humiliating servitude to the US by packaging them with pogromist national chauvinism and 'law and order' authoritarianism.

The leftwing response to the threat of the far right tends to be 'presentist', and to focus on the malevolence of the particular enemy we face at this

particular moment. In talking down Reform, we do not intend to suggest that the threats posed by far-right ideology - terrorism against migrants, reversal of gains on questions like gay and women's rights, assaults on civil liberties, and militarist insanity, above all - are not real. We want to zoom out, and think strategically about where the threat really comes from, and how it relates to the other principal actors in British politics.

In this respect, the role of the US, already mentioned, must be emphasised. Its current strategic orientation - carried through by at least the Obama, Trump and Biden presidencies - is the much-ballyhooed pivot to Asia. This entails the radical subordination of Europe, in order to prevent it from emerging as a third competitor for hegemony. (Interestingly, this falls out of both the Biden administration's backing of the Ukraine proxy war, and Trump II's listless attempts to offload responsibility for this endeavour onto Europe.)

A Europe largely under the control of fractious groups of irridentists is ideal for its subordination, ensuring the paralysis of the EU and its steady decomposition into easily controlled puppets, entirely reliant on the US for military tech. Britain, thanks to Farage and friends, is rather further down this road.

Secondly, there is the real mass support base for this kind of politics - notably stronger in regions hardest hit by deindustrialisation. A coalition of provincial petty bourgeois and deproletarianised workers is quite open to the 'beggar thy neighbour' politics of national revanchism, and to the message that all their social maladies may be laid at the door of the treacherous and manipulative 'elite' in London.

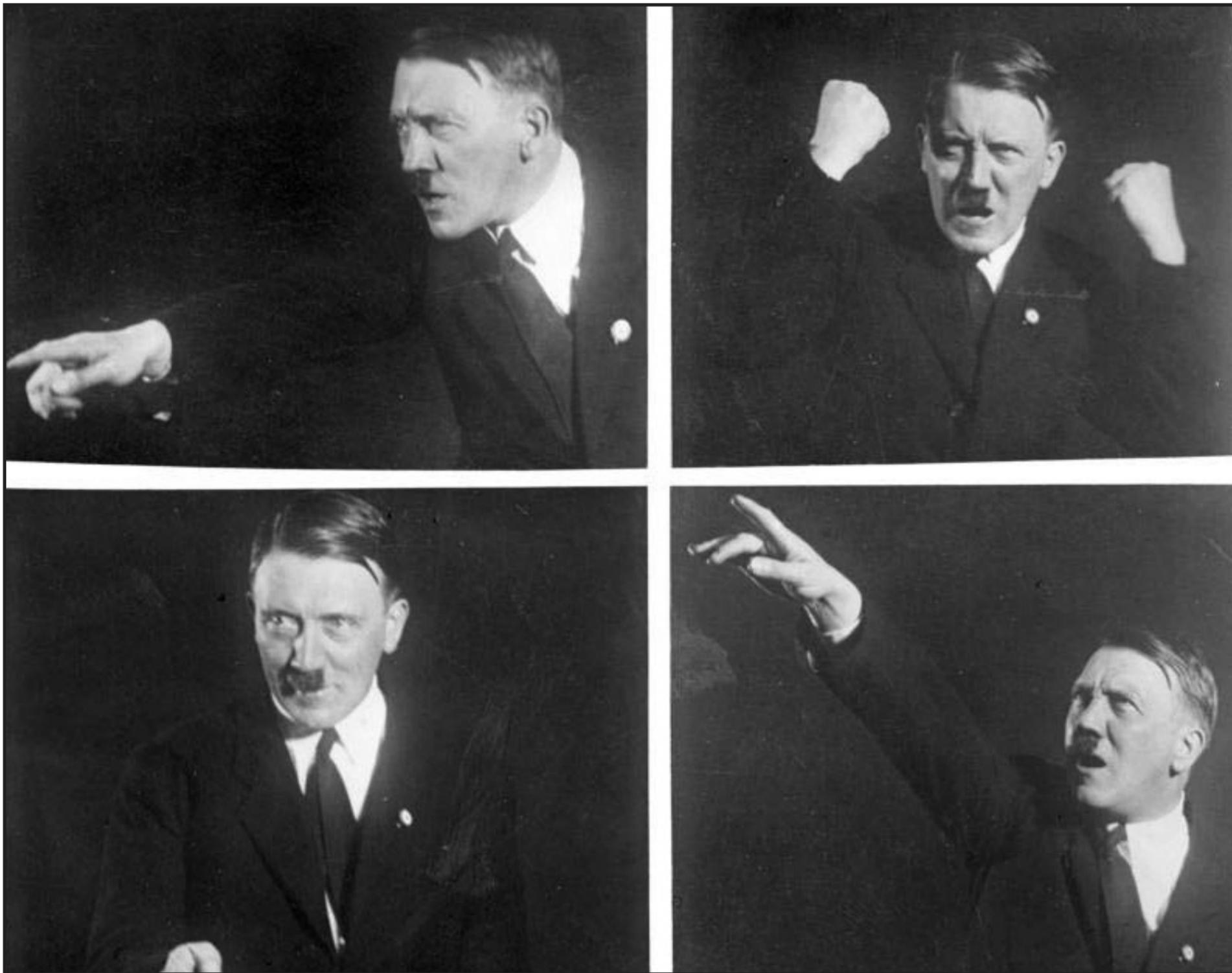
If we take it to be our main political role to stop the rise of the far right, that pushes us into alliance with the sensible politicians of the centre; but, of course, these are, precisely, the hated 'elite', and moreover - at least in the specific case of the bourgeois political parties and the main bourgeois media - the main agents of subordination to US imperial dominance.

On paper, however, stopping the right is not the central objective, but rather the achievement of socialism. To be sure, that *entails* fighting the right, since it can only be achieved by action in solidarity across national borders and promoting class rather than national consciousness. We must face facts, however: *all the bourgeois parties* promote fake solidarity between British workers, petty bourgeois and capitalists; all are willing tools of American imperialism.

We can be as tough as we like on the far right, but we can only be tough on the *causes* of the far right if we build our own party, independent of the parties of the state, sharply politically opposed to class collaboration and the promotion of the interests of 'UK plc' ●

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# SUPPLEMENT



# Misusing the F-word

To effectively combat the far-right menace we need clear definitions, sound historical analysis and militant class politics, says **Jack Conrad**. The broad-as-possible strategy of Together Alliance is worse than useless

**L**iberal and left opinion has been part horrified, part dumbfounded, by the repeated electoral successes of the far right: Giorgia Meloni and Fratelli d'Italia, Viktor Orbán and Fidesz, Alice Weidel and Alternative für Deutschland, Marine Le Pen and Rassemblement National, Geert Wilders and PVV, Riikka Purra and the Finns Party.

Nor should we forget India, Israel, Russia, Japan, Turkey ... and then there is what is going on here in Britain. The June 2016 Brexit referendum came as a bombshell for the liberal establishment and continues to send out ghastly aftershocks. Though only securing five MPs in the July 4 2024 general election, Nigel Farage's Reform accounted for 14.3% of the vote (ahead of the Liberal Democrats). Today the polls have Reform running ahead of all other parties.<sup>1</sup>

Undoubtedly the immediate driver is anti-migrant suspicions, worries and visceral hatreds. Egged on by the rightwing media, people blame migrants for undercutting wages,

strains on health services, crime, the loss of national cohesion, etc. Pogromist riots erupted during the summer of 2025 in 27 towns and cities across the UK. The 'flag war' followed. And, on October 26 2025, Tommy Robinson fronted the 100,000 mobilisation onto the streets of central London. Presumably, at some point, from within this nebulous mass, he intends to fashion a tightly disciplined, Tommunist, street-fighting force. Meanwhile, the Tories bleed former cabinet ministers, MPs and councillors to Reform and simultaneously echo Reform.

## Donald Trump

Above all, however, there was, is and remains Donald J Trump. With "every week" of Trump "we've got a decade",<sup>2</sup> says an exuberant Steve Bannon (in a claimed reference to Lenin<sup>3</sup>). There is, though, a profound truth here. Trump's presidency has radically changed America and radically changed the world.

Unlike his first term, which was dominated by Democrat lawfare, Trump came off the blocks in his

second term with an unstoppable, pre-planned barrage of executive orders. Project 2025, note, advocated just that: there is an "existential need for aggressive use of the vast powers of the executive branch".<sup>4</sup> There being two main strategic objectives: one, defeat the 'enemy within'; two, shred the 'rules-based' post-World War II global order.

At home that means ICE, banning antifa, rescinding environmental protection and attack after attack on working conditions, women, sexual deviants and civil rights-era gains. Once again, states are able to ride roughshod over 'diversity, inclusion and accessibility'.

Trump's language has been incendiary. He accuses migrants of being an infection that is "poisoning the blood of our country".<sup>5</sup> This has seen hundreds of Venezuelans flown off to El Salvador's notorious CECOT mega-prison using the 1798 Alien Enemies Act, 1.9 million self-deportations and around 600,000 enforced deportations.

In the name of stopping fraud, voters in federal elections are now required to produce documentary

proof, such as a passport. This disproportionately disenfranchises black, poor and female voters. Fewer than half of Americans have a passport and 69 million women who have changed their names will struggle to find the necessary documentation.<sup>6</sup> A frontal assault on the Democrats and their rainbow coalition.

Abroad, the Trump administration imposed swingeing tariffs on friend and foe alike, claimed Greenland, kidnapped Nicolás Maduro, urged Israel to 'finish the job' in Gaza and launched two unprovoked wars against Iran. Moreover, there has been the active policy of "cultivating resistance" in Europe. High profile meetings with Nigel Farage and Alice Weidel, "total endorsement" for Viktor Orbán and a state department intent on promoting white nationalist think tanks, conservative religious foundations and Maga-friendly parties.<sup>7</sup> Soft-power tools deployed to spread rightwing social democracy during the cold war and then, following that, neoliberalism, are being repurposed with a view to refashioning Europe in America's

image - project "civilizational alliance".<sup>8</sup>

Trump has long been accused of being a fascist.<sup>9</sup> Joe Biden did it. Kamala Harris did it. In that exact same spirit, Zohran Mamdani, the 'socialist' mayor of New York, did it too. He branded Trump a "fascist" and a "despot" just days after their cordial White House meeting.<sup>10</sup> This providing a double opportunity for the Northites to denounce (a) Mamdani for his pledge to "work with" the "fascist president" and (b) the "fascist president" himself.<sup>11</sup> Even amongst the US top brass, there are those who have branded Trump a fascist (eg, former chief-of-staff, general Mark Milley).

## Past and present

According to the Socialist Workers Party, and also, one might guess, simply because of their antecedents, its Counterfire and RS21 breakaways too - this is the 1930s in "slow motion".<sup>12</sup> "Fascism is resurgent across Europe. We face a radicalisation of the traditional right, far-right parties and fascist forces," declared its central committee.

# SUPPLEMENT

True, the SWP recently admitted, the picture today “doesn’t exactly mirror the fascist movements of the 1930s”.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, according to Tomáš Tengely-Evans, *Socialist Worker* editor, there supposedly exist “powerful political forces and social dynamics driving the development of fascism in the US”.<sup>14</sup>

Predictably, the SWP’s answer to the growth of the far right - and what it claims to see as the imminent danger of fascism - is to bland its politics to the point of gloom: eg, “Love, unity, hope”.<sup>15</sup> That, and constructing a popular front that embraces knights/dames of the realm, well known OBEs, critically acclaimed musicians, award winning actors and politicians of almost every spice and variety: Your Party, Labour, Greens, SNP, Plaid Cymru, Liberal Democrats, even hard-core Zionists (the presence of these racists on anti-racist demonstrations has, rightly, created an almighty stink, not least with pro-Palestine activists<sup>16</sup>). Of course, given the SWP’s claimed continued loyalty to the tradition of Leon Trotsky, all such popular fronts are dubbed ‘united fronts’. Nonetheless, there can be no hiding that the Together Alliance is a popular front.

For the sake of clarity, historically - that is, from the time of the third and four congresses of the Communist International - the *united front* was, in general, designed as a tactic to be employed by *real* communist parties, not small confessional sects, to expose reformist misleaders before the great mass of the working class. By offering a limited platform, an agreement of some kind, to defend or advance immediate working class interests, communist parties would seek to become the majority. Naturally then, communists would *not* refrain from criticising their united front allies: no, on the contrary, they would retain their “freedom in presenting their point of view”. We shall come to popular fronts anon.

Our intention, in this article, is to try to bring some clarity, when it comes to the use, and over-use of ‘fascism’, to excuse, to justify, the most abject opportunism. Firstly, by insisting upon a definite, logically consistent, historically informed definition. Secondly, by showing why repeatedly crying wolf over the “fascist” danger and courting the “widest possible” forces to organise the “biggest possible” street demonstrations is ultimately self-defeating. Thirdly, what might be called the 19th century precursors of *real* fascism are discussed. Fourthly, fascism is then put in its proper historical and socio-economic context. Fifthly, we examine fascism through the prism of how it is theorised and explained away by the bourgeois establishment. Sixthly, on the basis of all this, our principles and perspectives are presented.

The term ‘fascism’ has certainly been subject to all manner of different definitions since it was originally coined (Benito Mussolini adopted the fasces - a bundle of sticks with an axe at their centre, the symbol of state power in ancient Rome - as the emblem of his movement). For the record, Mussolini formed the Italian Fascisti of Combat in March 1919, when 54 people - demobilised soldiers, pro-war former syndicalists and extreme social chauvinists - signed up to his programme. Fascism, in the immortal words of *Il Duce*, stood opposed to liberalism, the “exhausted democracies” and the “violently utopian spirit of Bolshevism”.<sup>17</sup>

Nowadays, of course - and not only on the left - the word ‘fascism’ is too often little more than a political swear word. London’s Met police are regularly dubbed ‘fascist’

by overexcited protestors; the guerrillaist left in Turkey describes *all* the country’s governments as fascist since the foundation of the modern state by Kemal Atatürk in 1923; fascism is also casually equated with bigoted prejudices, restrictions on civil liberties and any and every manifestation of national chauvinism. So, for many, fascism is not a future danger: it is a past which thoroughly permeates the present.

The F-word certainly provides emotional catharsis for the user and provokes a rewardingly spluttering response from the target. Yet that hardly helps reveal the true danger of fascism - not least how it emerged historically and functions as a counterrevolutionary weapon in capitalist society.

This is not a matter of pedantry or semantics. Shearing fascism of history, reducing fascism to a cuss word denoting something hateful, regressive or threatening, an object of opprobrium - means one cannot methodologically distinguish between state oppression imposed by fascism during the 1920s, 30s and 40s, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, *normal capitalism*: eg, the 1794 suspension of *habeas corpus*, the banning of the London Corresponding Society and the regular use of yeomanry to suppress ‘Jacobinism’ by William Pitt’s Tory reaction.

Then there is America’s late 19th century Jim Crow legislation; Woodrow Wilson’s 1918 anti-sedition laws; the 1950s McCarthyite witch-hunting; the 1956 Federal Constitutional Court ban on the Communist Party of Germany; the barrage of anti-trade union laws introduced by Margaret Thatcher’s government and her defeat of the miners’ 1984-85 Great Strike. All, despite their wide variations, normal capitalism.

Needless to say, giving fascism a clear, definite meaning by rooting it in history has nothing to do with any softness towards the Pittite Tories, a penchant for senator Joe McCarthy, admiration for the Turkish state or fondness for Thatcherism, etc. On the contrary, labelling fascist what is not fascist muddles, weakens, disorients the workers’ movement.

## Everywhere

In the late 1920s and early 30s, ‘official communism’ dogmatically insisted upon classifying everything and everyone from the Labour left to Ramsay MacDonald’s national government, and from German social democracy to Franklin D Roosevelt, under an ever expanding rubric of fascism ... or “social dynamics driving the development of fascism”. Eg, Roosevelt’s New Deal was described by R Palme Dutt - Britain’s foremost ‘official communist’ political thinker - as a “transition to fascist forms, especially in the economic and industrial field”. Fascism was supposedly “growing organically out of bourgeois democracy”.<sup>18</sup>

According to Dmitry Manuilsky - a trusted member of Comintern’s presidium - in his report to its executive committee, only a liberal “can accept that there is a contradiction between bourgeois democracy and fascism”.<sup>19</sup> Stalin had already provided the cornerstone for this approach. Social democracy and fascism are not “antipodes”: they are “twins”.<sup>20</sup>

This ‘third period’ theory led the Communist Party of Germany to reject making any serious united front proposals to the “social-fascist” Social Democratic Party. Not that the SDP tops were ever going to willingly accept any offer of uniting in elections, in parliament and in self-defence units - leaders such as Rudolf Hilferding, Otto Wels

and Arthur Crispian wanted an “antagonistic line”. They feared that the communists were just about to “obliterate” them electorally.<sup>21</sup> Their determination was to defend the Weimar republic and fight the Nazis and the communists alike - all within the bounds of the 1919 constitution and established legality. The rank and file *might* have proved to be a different matter. In other words, a united front from below could have forced a change of course above. We will never know. But we do know what actually happened.

Despite the Nazi vote falling by 4%, Adolf Hitler - supposedly not especially dangerous - got himself lifted into power with the reluctant help of president Paul von Hindenburg. The chosen course of a big-industry, big-finance and big-agriculture coalition. The Nazis were generously financed.<sup>22</sup>

After January 1933 both communists and social democrats were subject to eviscerating Nazi terror: firebombings, beatings, assassinations, arrests and killings ‘while attempting to escape’. A legal ban quickly followed. In March 1933 Hitler was able to get an enabling act passed through the thoroughly purged Reichstag - in effect that gave him dictatorial powers, all within the bounds of the 1919 constitution.

In 1934-35 Stalin’s Communist International ‘corrected’ its analysis of fascism - first at the 13th plenum, and then at the 7th Congress. Georgi Dimitrov delivered a new formulation, which was universally adopted by all ‘official communist’ parties thereafter. Dimitrov redefined fascism as the “open, terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist and most imperialist elements of finance capital”.<sup>23</sup> His cure was, though, not much better than the original ‘social fascist’ disease. Fascism was still viewed as an outgrowth of capitalism. But overcoming fascism was now completely divorced from the revolutionary class struggle against capitalism. It had to be fought as a unique phenomenon in and of itself - an existential threat which had to be overcome by putting socialism on hold.

Besides blessing cooperation with social democrats, the door was held wide open for *popular fronts* in every country - Britain, India, the US, France, Spain, Chile, etc - which saw communists attempting to align themselves with all-and-sundry ‘others’, including the less terroristic, less chauvinistic and less aggressive representatives of the bourgeoisie.

The idea was to rely on simple arithmetic. Together the communists, social democrats, radicals and liberals added up to a greater sum total than the fascists. The popular front, therefore, promised bigger street demonstrations, a higher vote in parliamentary elections and a lot more MPs. After that there would come anti-fascist coalition governments committed to achieving reforms *within* the existing social system ... sold to the rank and file as a ‘step in the direction of socialism’. Predictably, those who dared criticise the line were denounced, not only as ultra-left sectarians, but fifth column agents of fascism.

To keep allies, actual and intended, onside the ‘official communists’ had to stress unity, had to suspend, forget or disown previous criticisms and potentially divisive political positions. Broadness became the ruling mantra. However, inevitably, abandoning anything resembling working class political independence led not to stunning success, but defeat - first in Spain and France in the 1930s ... and then, eventually, on a global scale in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The SWP takes the same approach,

except on a far, far smaller scale. So, whereas the ‘official communists’ envisaged governments, the SWP concentrates on single-issue campaigns and the next big street demonstration - all in the hope of bringing in enough recruits, so that, one day, it can break into the ‘big time’: Anti-Nazi League, Stop the War Coalition, Respect, Stand Up to Racism and now Together. The break-through never happens, but the fundamental problem is exactly the same as it was with the popular fronts of the ‘official communists’.

It is the right which sets the programmatic limits. Neither establishment celebs nor British-Asian businessmen, neither Labourite exiles nor petty bourgeois Greens will fight capitalism - well, except rhetorically. However, to keep such allies from simply walking, socialist principles are put aside: in Respect it was republicanism, international socialism, secularism, free movement ... even woman’s rights. Hence the result of the SWP’s little popular fronts is not greater strength: rather programmatic liquidation.

During the 1930s Trotsky damned the ‘fourth period’ as a headlong descent into naked class collaboration. He ranked Comintern’s new line on a par with social democracy’s abject failure, faced with the challenge of inter-imperialist war in August 1914. In his phrase: *The Marseillaise* is drowning out the *Internationale*. The Communist International had entered the “social patriotic camp”, he declared.<sup>24</sup> Instead of abandoning, putting on hold, the struggle for socialism, he was of the view that, on the contrary, only the struggle for socialism, aggressively, confidently pursued - using tactics such as the united workers’ front - could bring over wavering social democrats and even those workers who, in desperation, looked to fascism as a solution to their many problems.

Trotsky’s writings on the rise of fascism and its coming to power count amongst his best and retain much relevance today. Fascism, Trotsky argues, is a product of capitalist crisis and capitalist loss of control over society. Fascism, as a system of government, sees the effective removal of the bourgeoisie from political - not economic - power. Strutting thugs, psychopathic murderers and rabble-rousers take over the leading offices of state. True, military dictatorships can see liberal and conservative parties disbanded or reduced to mere decoration. But army generals are unmistakably members of the ruling class. The same cannot be said of Mussolini or Hitler (though it can of Oswald Mosley).

However, for the capitalist class - or at least key sections - the loss of political power is a price worth paying. Fascism organises, militarises and unleashes a mass plebeian force - the crazed petty bourgeoisie, the lumpenproletariat, embittered former soldiers - against the parties and organisations of the working class. This is surely the key defining characteristic that marks out fascism. Not only is the communist vanguard annihilated: the mass of the working class is held in a “state of forced disunity”.<sup>25</sup>

## Precursors

Doubtless fascism’s intellectual origins lie in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Social Darwinism, the pseudo-science of race, state worship, romantic national history, anti-Semitism, and the vilification of international socialism and the organised working class were the dominant ideas of the European ruling classes prior to the outbreak of World War I. Colonial empires

found justification in racial theory. Romantic national history bound masses of people at home together in the imagined community of the state. Social Darwinism served to reconcile them to the ‘natural’ hierarchy.

Nevertheless, though fascist leaders and their publicists freely deployed such ruling ideas, they did so in an entirely demagogic fashion. The intention was to carry out a (counter) revolution. Clearing the path to power always took priority. Any ideological manoeuvre, any pose could be justified. Hence with fascism there is no logically sustained reasoning of the kind found in Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, Hegel and Marx. Read *Mein Kampf*, Mussolini’s *My autobiography* or Mosley’s *My life*. Leave aside the lies and half-truths, the writing is banal and full of contradictions. In fact, no fascist leader has ever written anything of any worth. Take Tommy Robinson’s *Manifesto*. A long rant against the 1% and their financing of Black Lives Matter, transgender surgery, jihadists and the Nazi-inspired Azov forces in Ukraine. The central idea is the elite’s ‘great conspiracy’ to replace the ‘white race’ in Europe with Muslim migrants.<sup>26</sup> And, no surprise, he combines such mind-rot garbage with being pro-Israel. Dumb, or dumb?

According to Franz Neumann, fascist ideology “is constantly shifting”: “Every pronouncement springs from the immediate situation and is abandoned as soon as the situation changes.”<sup>27</sup> Fascism holds to certain vague beliefs - leadership, the force of will, manly responsibility, womanly subservience, national salvation - but there is no fascist theory systematically linking proposition to practice. Irrationalism is the defining characteristic.

By the same measure, however, attempts to brand Marine Le Pen a fascist because of her father’s “fascist roots”,<sup>28</sup> describing Viktor Orbán’s regime as “soft fascism” due to the demonisation of Muslim refugees,<sup>29</sup> or claiming that Narendra Modi’s BJP government in India is “fascist” because of the “arrest of leftist intellectuals” and “overturning the country’s constitution” is to indulge in more than hyperbole.<sup>30</sup> It is irrationalism, albeit of the liberal variety.

It is certainly true that the lineage of many of today’s far-right parties can be traced back to fascist organisations operating in the 1920s and 30s. And yet - and this should matter - hard-core holocaust-deniers, non-state fighting formations and unrepentant Hitler fans are often shunned, cold-shouldered, even suppressed. Marine Le Pen expelled her own father in an attempt to cultivate a less toxic image. Modi’s split with the RSS has “widened to become a deep chasm”.<sup>31</sup> Orbán’s Fidesz government pushed through the state ban on Magyar Gárda Mozgalom. It is a similar tale with Reform: as Nigel Farage has repeatedly maintained, “bigots” and “extremists” are not welcome.<sup>32</sup>

Not a few Marxists have drawn an analogy between Louis Napoleon Bonaparte’s movement and fascism. While perhaps pushing his case too far, August Thalheimer - a former top leader of the Communist Party of Germany - did just that in his 1930 essay ‘On fascism’. Thalheimer took as his “starting point” the profound insights he found in Marx’s *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* and *The civil war in France*. There is, in these two works, besides “the analysis of the social and historical class roots of Bonapartism”, a recognition of “not only the presence of specific classes in a given society, but also a specific relationship between these classes in a specific historical situation”.<sup>33</sup>

In 1848 the “citizen-king”, Louis

Philippe, was overthrown. A popular, working class-led revolution restored the republic. However, neither the workers nor the bourgeoisie proved strong enough to establish their rule. The Cavaignac dictatorship could arrest Auguste Blanqui and suppress the workers, but could not establish a stable order. There ensued an inherently unstable revolutionary-counterrevolutionary stand-off between the two classes. Under these circumstances the French bourgeoisie surrendered "its political existence in order to save its social existence and abandons itself to the dictatorship of an adventurer and his gang", Charles Louis Napoleon Bonaparte - nephew of emperor Napoleon I - seized his moment.

Bonaparte and his henchmen gathered together an amorphous layer of decayed elements - those whom the French call *la bohème*. Backed by this volatile, but manipulatable, social base, he skilfully constructed a grand coalition. Before the proletariat and the lumpenproletariat he spun out well-crafted revolutionary phrases; he won over the peasants with traditional family values and grand promises of renewed national glory. Meanwhile, he quietly aligned himself to high finance. Clearly Charles Louis was no "grotesque mediocrity". In December 1851 he seized power with the help of the French army in a self-coup. The Bonapartist state, thereby, decisively raised itself above society and made itself into an "independent power". Yet, while bourgeois political power had been destroyed, bourgeois economic power had been saved from the working class threat.

Trotsky, it should be added, likewise thought that there "is an element of Bonapartism in fascism". State power is raised above society in both cases. However, for Trotsky, "pure Bonapartism" is associated with the "epoch" of the rising bourgeoisie; fascism with "imperialist decline". Therefore, to say that fascism is a mere "repetition of Bonapartism" would, he said, be "very muddled and stupid", to say the least.<sup>34</sup>

The Boulangist movement was also something of a prefiguration. General Georges Boulanger was the model of the man on horseback appearing before a society which longed for a saviour. A social demagogue controlled by the reactionary right, he could though appeal to the working classes. He shot to fleeting prominence during the late 1880s. Mixing strident nationalism with mass agitation against parliamentary corruption, influential members of the French Workers' Party - including Marx's son-in-law, Paul Lafargue - succumbed to the illusion that the Boulangist third way represented a "genuine mass movement", which could, if encouraged, develop a socialistic character. Like so many impatient leftists, Lafargue tried to swim with an alien tide.

We see the exact same phenomenon today. Championing petty nationalism - Scottish, Irish, Cornish, Catalan and Québécois - immediately spring to mind. But there is just about every other 'ism' though. From feminism to pacifism, the soft, the broad, the impatient left adapts to and in the final analysis adopts politics which are those of the bourgeoisie. Working class political independence is abandoned for all practical purposes, that is for sure. 'After them, us' is the unacknowledged slogan. Friedrich Engels, for his part, would have none of it. He urged the French comrades to "fight under their own flag" - against both the bourgeois political establishment and the Boulangists.<sup>35</sup>

Action Française, established in 1899, has for good reason been

called the "thesis" of fascism (Ernst Nolte).<sup>36</sup> It combined anti-Semitism with nationalism and dynastic royalism. Of key importance, though, here we have the first 'shirt movement': ie, rightwing fighting squads. The Camelots du Roi began as Action Française's street goons and in 1917 became a full-blown mass, counterrevolutionary militia.

In February 1934 it was part of a royalist-fascist bloc - armed with revolvers, clubs and razors - which invaded the parliament building in Paris and put "the smiling, somewhat senile" Gaston Doumergue into power as prime minister.<sup>37</sup> Financed by big capital - including tycoons such as Ernest Mercier, director of one of France's biggest electrical and oil trusts - the Camelots du Roi fought to end the third republic in the name of 'France for the French'.

The Union of Russian People, formed in 1905, likewise mobilised declassed elements into fighting squads - assisted by tsarist officialdom. In the name of tsar, god and country, the Black Hundreds launched vicious pogroms against striking workers, revolutionaries and Jews - "Beat the Yids, save Russia" ran their "famous slogan". Russia's 'pre-fascist fascists' wanted to "encourage" Jews to "emigrate to Palestine".<sup>38</sup>

### Turning point

World War I marked an epochal turning point. Capitalism morphs into state monopoly capitalism. The law of value, competition and other essential laws decline and can only be sustained through organisational measures, such as state ownership, state regulation and the state's arms economy. Market forces are partially demystified: they are exposed as political. Socialism is imminent. When it must, collective capital puts off the transition by elevating state power above the immediate interests of profit.

Official Europe, especially in the defeated countries, emerged from the mayhem of World War I thoroughly discredited, weakened and riven with internal divisions. Our class was presented with an unprecedented historic opportunity. Bolshevism brilliantly led the way. Tragically, elsewhere the organisations of the working class either proved inadequate or wretchedly backed away from the task and sought an accommodation with capitalism. Bourgeois society was exhausted and chronically split, but the working class lacked the necessary leadership with which to deliver the final, revolutionary blow. Fascism erupts as a counterrevolutionary movement under these conditions.

Following World War I, virtually every country in Europe spawned its clutch of fascist groups and grouplets. At first they were entirely marginal. Mussolini secured not a single MP in the 1919 elections. Polite society looked down on them with barely concealed contempt. Hitler was dismissed as a crank. However, unresolved class struggles and economic crises produced a constitutional disjuncture. The malign aura of fascism vanished. Mussolini's Blackshirts and Hitler's Brownshirts appeared before the ruling class as saviours ... albeit not riding on a horse.

Mussolini took power in 1922 at the invitation of king Victor Emmanuel III - with the active encouragement of various capitalist tycoons and the benign neutrality of the army, church and state bureaucracy assured. The famed March on Rome was pure theatre. Mussolini knew beforehand that the establishment would give him a hero's welcome. A decade later, in the aftermath of the 1929 crash, Hitler formed his coalition government



Very much part of state machine

with the conservative right.

Not surprisingly, the initial response from Marxists was somewhat confused. At Comintern's 4th Congress in 1922 - the last attended by Lenin - the victory of fascism in Italy was blamed in part on the inability of the communists to resolve the revolutionary situation positively - which had in 1919 seen the widespread seizure of factories by workers. "Primarily", however, fascism served "as a weapon" in the "hands of the big landowners", or so went the argument. Italy presumably was going backwards down some fixed evolutionary ladder from capitalism to feudalism.

The bourgeoisie escaped blame in this clumsy schema. They were said to be horrified by Mussolini's "black Bolshevism". Crucially though, Comintern failed to come to terms with the fact that, with fascism's triumph, the working class had suffered a strategic defeat. Fascism was dismissed as a passing terror, a revenge exacted upon the working class, and, as such, could not hold for long. A renewed rising by the working class must occur - and very soon at that.

Inevitably there were those who merely imitated Mussolini and his hamming dramatics - eg, the National Romanian Fascia founded in 1923 by Titus Panaitescu Vifor and Rotha Lintorn-Orman's British Fascisti of 1924. However, the global failure of the working class to extend and deepen the revolution begun in Russia, plus the continued grip of a profound capitalist crisis, stimulated the growth of *serious* fascist movements. These fascisms were rooted in the national chauvinist ideologies of *their own* countries and involved "broad social strata, great masses which reach down into the proletariat" and, therefore, argued Clara Zetkin, fascism will not be quickly vanquished "merely by military means". No, "we must also overcome it politically and ideologically".<sup>39</sup>

So Hitler's National Socialist German Workers Party was no mere clone of Mussolini's fascism. The same goes for the Austrian Heimwehr, Hungary's Arrow Cross, Spain's Falangists, the ABC and Falanga in Poland, and the Croix de Feu and Solidarité Française.

Naturally the German conquest

of much of continental Europe after 1939 created not only quisling collaborators, but an allure for Nazification amongst fascist groups. Only in Poland did the native fascists resist for any time. In general, however, the Germans did not elevate their fascist impersonators into governing satraps. They preferred to absorb them. Many were packed off to serve on the eastern front with units such as the Waffen SS.

A vague anti-capitalism was sometimes advocated. Gregor Strasser's wing of the Nazi Party dreamt of a return to pre-monopolistic conditions and a kind of feudal national socialism. Suffice to say, the organised working class - trade unions and leftwing political parties - along with the ideas of Marxism and international socialism, were always the real enemy, not capital.

Having obtained power, fascism is obliged to restrain or even silence its mass base. Capital has no fondness for rampaging extra-legal armies. The Blackshirts were incorporated into the state by Mussolini. Hitler massacred untrustworthy Brownshirts. Gregor Strasser was murdered during the Night of the Long Knives on June 30 1934. Fascism is thereby bureaucratized and becomes what Trotsky calls "Bonapartism of fascist origin".<sup>40</sup>

But, if you think about it, that definition is inadequate. There is more to fascism *in power* than its origins. Fascism in power surely needs to be categorically distinguished from Bonapartism in power. Though Napoleon III imposed rigorous press censorship, suppressed socialist newspapers, imprisoned large numbers of red republicans and sent thousands more into exile, nonetheless he presided over what has rather generously been called a regime of "reasonable freedom": eg, he introduced the constitutional right to strike, re-established universal male suffrage and allowed opposition parties to run in elections, albeit to an emasculated national assembly.<sup>41</sup>

Fascism in power has shown itself to be qualitatively different. Communist and social democratic activists were ruthlessly hunted down, strikes banned and trade unions dissolved. Nor is oppression eased with the consolidation of the regime. The iron heel is never

removed. The whole unmediated power of the state machine remains directed against any manifestation of working class independence. Those found circulating communist or socialist democratic literature were immediately imprisoned. Even telling the wrong type of joke could lead to the same fate.

Simultaneously, fascism suppresses contradictions within the ruling class - if need be, using state force too. Property is usually left untouched, but the traditional parties of the bourgeoisie are turned into mere husks, dissolved or incorporated into the body politic of the fascist movement. Elections, when they took place, were mere referendums/plebiscites designed to legitimise the fascist regime and its leader. Moreover, when German fascism was combined with total war, it organised an elaborate system of racist exterminationism within the borders of its newly acquired empire: Poles, Russians, Roma and above all Jews in the 'final solution'. Fascism then is a terroristic, absolutist and, in Germany, a deranged form of counterrevolution.

### Explaining away

Not surprisingly, once fascism moved from the obscure fringes to the storm centre of big-power politics, it had to be explained - and urgently. A wide range of theories have been produced - most of which are deeply flawed and deserve to be dismissed out of hand.

Christian apologists see fascism as the direct result of secularisation. By rejecting god, humanity is visited by evil. The antidote is obvious - take up the cross and restore religion. Conservative aristocrats paint fascism as a revolt by immature masses, the common herd, who have been freed from the constraints and responsibilities of a properly ordered agrarian society. Forlornly they yearn for the days when they constituted the natural class of governance.

Liberal-leaning evolutionary biologists put fascism down to the aggression and pack instincts supposedly hard-wired into the male brain by the harsh conditions of a largely imagined African Palaeolithic some 1.5 million years ago - a viewpoint shared by some radical feminists.

Psychologists have sought to locate the rise of fascism either at the level of some mass psychosis or in the warped personalities of its leaders. Wilhelm Reich argued that humanity is "biologically sick" and should free itself by discarding sexual repression.<sup>42</sup> Most Freudians disagreed. They insisted on entirely speculative clinical examinations of fascism's leaders - Mussolini, but most of all Hitler. Raymond de Saussure believed Hitler exhibited a strong Oedipus complex and needed to channel his sexual energies in order to conceal his impotence from the public: the German Reich was a penis substitute. Obvious bullshit.

An altogether more insightful, semi-Marxist, psychological approach is to be found in Erich Fromm's *Escape from freedom* (1941). Fromm sought to understand how millions of Germans were captivated by Hitler. Capitalist alienation and the reduction of the human subject to a mere cog in the production process is blamed. Fascism answers the need in the human soul for a sense of belonging. The fact that the working class in Germany never reconciled itself to Nazism seems to run counter to the thesis. Worse, Fromm can offer no effective solution, no escape from the dilemma.

Theodor Adorno, amongst others in the Frankfurt school, claimed to have discovered the 'authoritarian personality', which was apparently

# SUPPLEMENT

rife amongst all classes in Germany. This was an integral part of a general theory of the period. Liberalism was in decay. Capitalism and mass culture were producing an overarching totalitarian society. The Soviet Union was essentially no different. Herbert Marcuse believed that fascism was the almost inevitable result of monopoly capitalism - a view he subsequently modified by claiming that, although post-World War II western capitalism still maintained a democratic outer shell, the tendency was towards a grey conformity and complete subordination of the personality to the needs of capital: ie, a totalitarian society. New Left radicals in the 1960s US gleefully denounced 'fascist Amerikka'!

Establishment figures such as Hannah Arendt and Zbigniew Brzezinski readily adopted totalitarian theory. Its great virtue lay in the fact that it directly linked Nazism and Stalinism. However, they gave the theory a none too subtle twist by disaggregating capitalism from totalitarianism. Capitalism, in this rightwing version of the totalitarian theory, is equated definitionally with freedom, democracy, choice and personal liberty. That capitalism flourished under Mussolini and Hitler is guiltily ignored.

As the reader will know, mainstream bourgeois society now propagates this intellectually barren explanation for fascism over the electronic and print media and in schools and colleges. What began as a leftist critique of existing conditions has been thoroughly colonised by the right and turned into its opposite.

Joining together fascism and bureaucratic socialism into a single phenomenon admirably suited the needs of the cold war. Capitalism was excused of all blame and the Soviet Union was made into a culprit. In the hands of Karl Popper, totalitarianism became truly superhistorical. Sparta, Ch'in China, the empire of Diocletian and Calvin's Geneva are all classified under that heading, of course, along with Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Plato, Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche form a totalitarian human chain that joins the periodic culling of the helots to the gas chambers.

Such a philosophy was vital for the capitalist system, above all in Europe. Fascism was beaten not only by the armies of the Soviet Union, the USA and Britain: there were communist partisan movements and popular risings throughout the German empire: Yugoslavia, Greece, Albania, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Poland, France, etc. Equally to the point, the capitalist class was deeply compromised. Almost without exception, the bourgeoisie collaborated with fascism, often with great enthusiasm. For example, in France it welcomed the German invasion. Since 1936 the working class had made huge gains at the expense of capital. The forces of the left were feared and hated, but could not be crushed by the upper classes - the Nazi jackboot would do that job for them though.

The situation in other countries was substantially the same. Hence after 1945 bourgeois Europe was forced to reinvent itself. The fascist past had to be denied and turned into 'other'. World War II became our finest hour, a crusade for freedom. The motive was to save the Jews, not the British empire. Hence totalitarian theory, the holocaust industry and the anti-racist, anti-fascist declarations of Unesco - such as the July 1950 declaration on race, which scientifically supported the "ethic of universal brotherhood" and the warning that "men and nations alike" can "fall ill".<sup>43</sup>

Donald Trump, Marine Le Pen, Giorgia Meloni, Viktor Orbán

and Nigel Farage are reactionary rebels against the carefully constructed post-World War II consensus. The mainstream liberal bourgeois establishment reacts with such hostility, because their crude chauvinism, rejection of multiculturalism, demonisation of migrants, etc, reminds capitalist society of its shameful, pre-1945 past. Few establishment historians or other paid persuaders care to recall how mainstream bourgeois opinion promoted social Darwinism, race theory, anti-Semitism and arrogantly upheld their 'civilised' rule over their 'immature' colonial subjects. And how these ideas were blessed from the pulpit and enforced, using police batons, salvos of army bullets and judges imposing stiff prison sentences.

At this present juncture, we have neither a revolutionary nor counterrevolutionary situation. There is no working class threat, no rising working class movement ... no, not even in "slow motion". Sad to say, the working class exists as little more than a slave class. Yes, Trump, Le Pen, Meloni, Orbán and Farage have definite sympathies for fascists and have fascist admirers, allies and outliers. However - well, at least for the moment - their prime focus is on elections. Fascist fighting formations are not assuming anything like a mass-scale, let alone being unleashed to crush the organised working class. Tomorrow, of course, all that might change.

A necessary aside. The 1920s and 30s show that fascism does not originate from the far right alone. Mussolini adhered to Sorelian direct-action socialism and general strikism. He edited the Socialist Party's paper, *Avanti*. In Britain Oswald Mosley served as a Labour minister - one of the first recruits to his New Party being AJ Cook, the famed miners' leader. Józef Piłsudski made a similar journey: he went from Polish left nationalism to carrying out his "revolution without revolutionary consequences" rightwing coup.<sup>44</sup>

## Fifteen theses on fascism

- Besides garbled populist propaganda denigrating foreigners, corrupt establishment politicians, migrants, communists, greedy capitalists, religious, ethnic and other minorities, etc, fascism launches physical force, primarily against the organised working class.
- Fascist groups, movements and parties form counterrevolutionary fighting squads *separate* from the state - this is the *essential and defining characteristic* of fascism, a characteristic that distinguishes it from other forms of counterrevolution.
- Fascism objectively acts in the interests of the capitalist class. Fascist organisations are often manipulated, financed and directed by sections of the state and the monopoly bourgeoisie.
- Fascism grows into mass proportions when capitalist society is mired deep in crisis, but the working class lacks the necessary organisation, determination or leadership with which to deliver the final revolutionary blow.
- Fascism clears its own path. But, once in power, fascist parties and fighting formations inevitably undergo a process of bureaucratisation. The upper layers merge with the ruling class. The lower elements are simply merged into the state machine or, failing that, are mercilessly crushed.
- Under present circumstances in Britain, there is no immediate danger of a mass fascist movement,

Today, doubtless, we have similar candidates, but none are at all obvious. The former Revolutionary Communist Party/*Spiked*, the various British red-brown 'national Bolsheviks' and the social-imperialist Alliance for Workers' Liberty could all be mentioned. However, each appears, in its own unique way, to be an evolutionary dead end. Extinction, not glory, beckons. George Galloway comes to mind as a possibility. He does, after all, talk of a corporate alliance between managers and workers, how his Workers Party of Britain are "patriots" and the "globalists" are "traitors".<sup>45</sup> But there are a thousand different ways Gadfly George could go. So to call him "a wannabe fascist" is vastly premature, to say the least.<sup>46</sup>

As for Trump, he did indeed summon, fire up and unleash gangs of boogaloes on January 6 2021. Not that we should categorise him as a fascist either. No, he was an aspiring Bonaparte, who was willing to flatter, promote and use America's third-rate fascist groupies. None of the Proud Boys, the Three Percenters, the Oath Takers, etc, etc were remotely near coming to power. No, the storming of the Capitol was about Donald Trump remaining US president - presumably through imposing a state of emergency and the willingness of key actors in the army, the police, the secret state to back him. An unlikely scenario.

Naturally, with January 2025 his Bonapartist ambitions have been renewed with a frenetic intensity. If foreign adventures sour, if the mid-terms look set to be a loser, if the economy nosedives, then we might well expect another self-coup. Yet much is lost in translation. Although an alumnus of the New York Military Academy, Trump is no Napoleon. Whereas the first Bonaparte was a military genius and fought 60 (still much studied) battles, Trump avoided the draft for Vietnam five times - once pleading bad feet, four times pleading college studies.

let alone such a movement coming to power. There is no revolutionary situation.

- It is essential to distinguish between individual fascists and fascist organisations. People may openly or privately admire and/or seek to emulate Nazi Germany, Mussolini's Italy or Oswald Mosley's Blackshirts. But what makes a fascist organisation is the intention, or reality, of forming counterrevolutionary fighting formations.
- The theory of killing fascism 'in the egg' is completely illusory. When it comes to the far right, it is a diversion and has led either to the leftist futility of squads or the quagmire of popular frontism.
- Destroying the extreme right using force and attempting to silence it through terror has patently failed. Ditto popular fronts, which join the left organisationally and politically with the bourgeois establishment.
- Unlike social democrats and anarchists, communists do not view any tactic as a matter of principle. Eg, parliamentarism or anti-parliamentarism. Indeed, when it comes to tactics, the only principle we recognise is that nothing is automatically ruled in and nothing automatically ruled out.
- Tactics employed to counter organisations such as the British National Party, National Front, Britain First, Ukip, etc have to be concrete. Therefore they have to be flexible and constantly changing.
- We consider the tactic of no-platforming opponents perfectly

So with Trump, Bonapartism takes a strictly American form. A blue-blooded redneck, Trump uses his enormous presidential powers to stoke culture wars against all manner of enemies, real and imagined: woke ideology, invading illegal migrants, antifa activists, pro-Palestine campaigners, trans people. That way he has already made himself the uncrowned emperor of the GOP: almost two-thirds of Republican voters "now identify as Maga supporters".<sup>47</sup>

After all, there exists a profound disenchantment with the old, liberal order. For millions, the American dream has long turned into an American nightmare: zero hour contracts, the gig economy, massive social inequality, squeezed incomes, student debt, opiate addiction and above all fear ... fear of ill health, fear of unemployment, fear of crime, fear of homelessness, fear of competition from migrant labour, fear of using politically incorrect terms, fear of elite conspiracies, fear of national failure.

Turning and turning  
in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear  
the falconer;  
Things fall apart;  
the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed  
upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed,  
and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence  
is drowned.

WB Yeats *The second coming* (1919)

Our task is not to unite with the despised centre - Gavin Newsom, Kamala Harris, Emmanuel Macron, Olaf Scholz, Keir Starmer - against a senile Bonapartism. No, instead we must provide positive answers to the growing spiral of insecurity, war, climate change and turn disenchantment into mass communist parties that uphold working class political independence and fight for global socialism through winning the battle for extreme democracy ●

legitimate. Ditto force and violence. Against fascist fighting formations it is absolutely correct to defend ourselves, using whatever means are necessary.

- By the same measure, peaceful tactics, debate and persuasion are also legitimate under other circumstances. We do not seek a 'civilised' relationship with the extreme right (or with the mainstream bourgeois parties, for that matter). But communists are determined to take away from the extreme right what popular base it might possess. That primarily means a battle for hearts and minds. Not that we consider those who vote BNP, NF, Britain First, Ukip or Reform UK as our 'natural' constituency.
- At all times we recognise that it is the capitalist state and the capitalist class which is our main enemy. It is the failures, the malfunctioning of declining capitalism which give both ammunition and sustenance to the extreme right.
- Communists are champions of democracy and free speech. We are against state bans on political parties, including outright fascist parties. State restrictions on what can and what cannot be said in political debate must also be vigorously opposed. Any such bans or restrictions would inevitably first and foremost affect the advanced part of the working class. Free speech and the widest democracy provide the best conditions for Marxism to grow and flourish, and for the formation of the working class into a future ruling class ●

## Notes

- Reform 25%, the Greens 19%, the Tories 17%, Labour 17% and the Lib Dems 14% - yougov.com/en-gb/articles/54328-voting-intention-15-16-march-2026-ref-25-grm-19-con-17-lab-17-ld-14. Figures, it should be added, that are highly unlikely to be repeated in an actual general election.
- Steve Bannon, Trump's former chief of staff, interviewed by Katy Ball in *The Times* October 24 2025.
- "There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen" - almost certainly an apocryphal quote. A pity.
- R Vought 'Executive office of the president of the United States' in P Dams and S Groves (eds) *Project 2025: mandate for leadership* Washington DC 2023, p44.
- abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-compares-political-opponents-vermin-root-alarmer-historians/story.
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deportation\_in\_the\_second\_Trump\_administration.
- www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/emerging-us-influence-threat-british-democracy.
- US State Department Agency Strategic plan: fiscal years 2026-2030, goal four.
- See T Snyder *The road to unfreedom* London 2018; CR Sunstein (ed) *Can it happen here?* Cambridge MA 2018; M Albright *Fascism: a warning* New York NY 2018; J Stanley *How fascism works* New York NY 2018.
- The Guardian* November 23 2025.
- www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/12/19/rinb-d19.html.
- A phrase repeatedly used by Tony Cliff, the SWP's founder-leader since the early 1990s. He writes: "The 1930s were a decade of extremes. Anyone sitting on the fence was only helping the reactionary forces. The fact that the film of the 1930s returns, but in slow motion, means there is much greater opportunity to stop the film and direct it in the way we want" (T Cliff *Marxism at the millennium* London 2000 - see www.marxists.org/archive/cliff/works/2000/millennium/chap14.htm).
- SWP *Pre-conference Bulletin* October 2024, pp8,10,12.
- Socialist Worker* March 20 2026.
- www.togetheralliance.org.uk.
- Its formulation is that "it is right not to make anti-Zionism a ticket of entry into the movement" (*Pre-conference Bulletin* October 2024, p12). Interestingly, despite that, no overtly Zionist organisations appear on Together's 140 list of sponsors, as far as I can see.
- B Mussolini *My autobiography* London, undated, but 1938, p65.
- R Palme Dutt *Fascism and the social revolution* London 1934, pp251,299.
- Quoted in M Kitchen *Fascism* London 1983, p5.
- JV Stalin *Works* Vol 6, Moscow 1953, p294.
- D Harsch *German social democracy and the rise of Nazism* Chapel Hill NC 1993, p219.
- See D Guerin *Fascism and big business* New York NY 1973.
- G Dimitrov *The working class against fascism* London 1935, p10.
- L Trotsky *Writings 1935-36* New York NY 1977, p129.
- L Trotsky *The struggle against fascism in Germany* New York NY 1971, p144.
- Manifesto: free speech, real democracy, peaceful disobedience* is written jointly with Peter McLoughlin. Published in October 2024, and despite costing just a tad under £25, the 'Communist manifesto' briefly became Amazon's No1 best-seller - before, that is, being withdrawn by the transnational retailer. Serving, of course, to confirm charges of suppressing 'free speech'.
- F Neumann *Behemoth* London 1942, pp39-40.
- J Orr, 'The many faces of Marine Le Pen' *International Socialism* 2020.
- vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/9/13/17823488/hungary-democracy-authoritarianism-trump.
- Arundhati Roy interview: dw.com/en/arundhati-roy-were-up-against-a-fascist-regime-in-india/a-45332070.
- National Herald* June 1 2024.
- Reform statement quoted in *The Guardian* June 24 2024.
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