

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity

# weekly **worker**



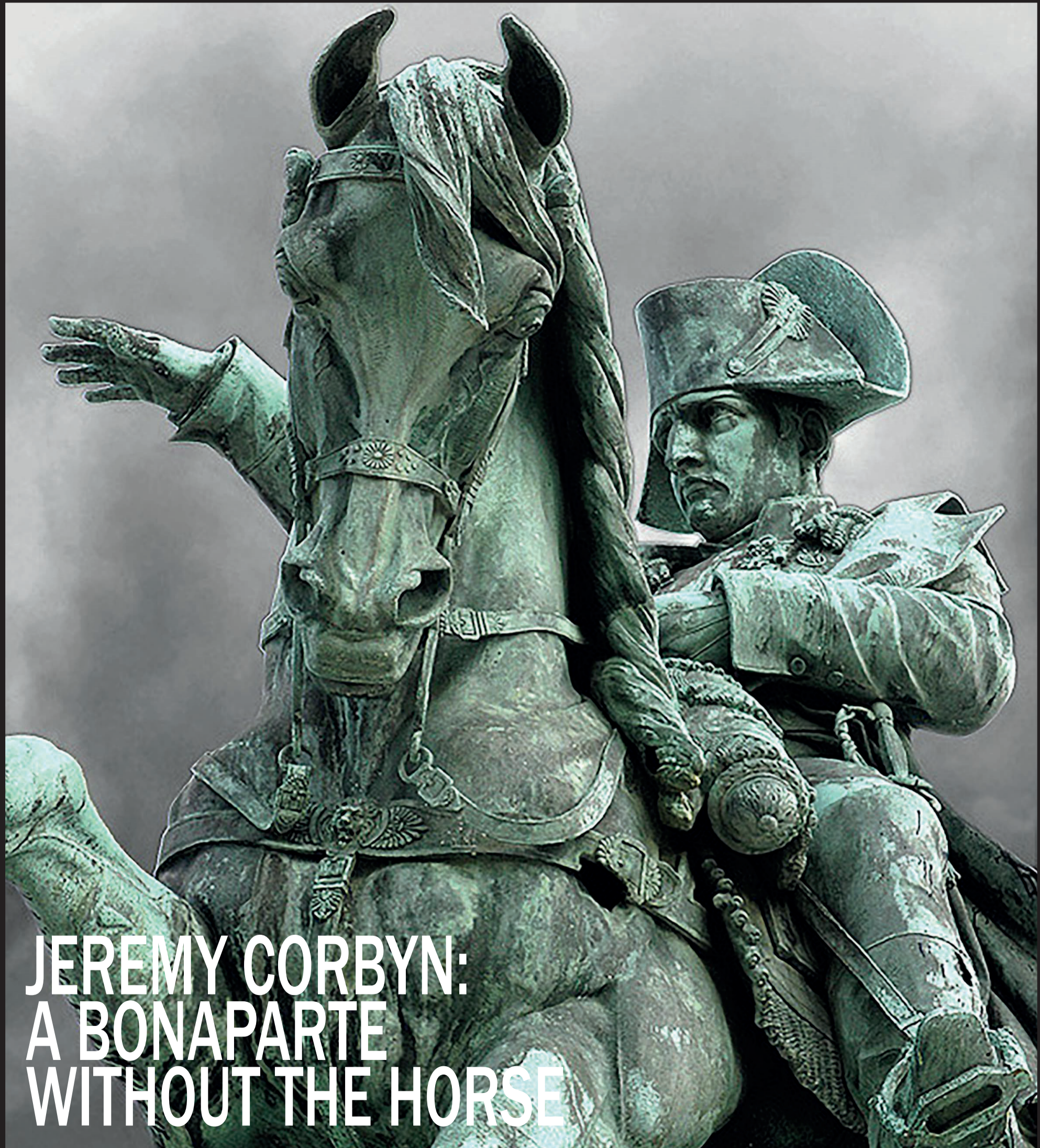
**Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu clear the way for a Zionist final solution in Gaza**

- Letters and debate
- CPGB aggregate
- Class composition
- George Orwell

No 1550 August 28 2025

Towards a mass Communist Party

£1/€1.10



**JEREMY CORBYN:  
A BONAPARTE  
WITHOUT THE HORSE**

# LETTERS



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

## Spart leopard

Both comrade David Passerine of Australia's Revolutionary Communist Organisation in last week's letters page, and comrade Ian Spencer in his report of Communist University ('Fighting spirit renewed', August 21) make what seem to me to be historically questionable claims about the Spartacists.

Comrade Passerine writes: "Since the death of Jim Robertson, and the broad failure of their long-time strategy of going straight to the masses, the Spartacists globally have moved away from the sectarian positions they are most commonly known for." For his part, comrade Spencer states "There were interesting contributions from the Spartacist League, which nowadays is far more open to actual discussion with other groups."

I personally encountered the Spartacists in relation to their entry operations in the Oxford-based Workers Socialist League and in the International Marxist Group/Socialist League around 1980. The Sparts were *not*, as far as I could tell, committed to going straight to the masses; rather they had a conception that, as a "fighting propaganda group", they would win forces from the existing far left by a process of splits and fusions.

This approach was not (and is not) in itself invalid, but the problems were three. The first was the Spartacists' 'Oehlerism' (from Hugo Oehler, 1903-83, who led a split from the US Trotskyists opposed to entry in the Socialist and Labour Parties): that is, the belief that there can be no principled opposition without an immediate aim of splitting.

The second was (paradoxically) their 'Cannonism' - following Trotskyist leader James P Cannon's 1930s approaches to the Workers Party led by AJ Muste and to the Socialist Party USA. This was to practice *short-term raiding entry* to destroy 'centrist obstacles', even if the result was not significant growth for the Trotskyists, rapidly pulling forces out.

The third was that - also following Cannon - Jim Robertson was a heavy drinker and identified being 'proletarian' with bullying those around him and with certain aspects of Anglo-Saxon-American nativism. The result was a bizarre cult round Robertson.

I understand that the reconstituted International Communist League has at least partly broken with Robertsonism. It is certainly the case that some of their contributions at Communist University were seriously worth engaging with. But *how far* they have broken with Robertsonism needs, I think, further exploration; misrepresenting what their past weaknesses were does not assist this.

Mike Macnair  
Oxford

## What name?

Recent suggestions for the name of the Your Party movement have been concerning. 'Patriotic Taxpayers Party', 'Family Futures' and 'Peace and Science' have been suggested and keeping the Your Party moniker is a good outside bet. 'Anything But Socialism' could be another.

Whilst 'Left Party', backed by Zara Sultana, looks like the odds-on favourite, neither she nor Corbyn seem very keen to involve themselves too much. Given that online phenomena can generate unusual outcomes (the Corbyn surge, similar processes in the Greens/SNP, etc)

anything could happen. 'The People's Party', more normally associated with rightist formations, looks like another strong possibility.

It's important that communists push for a democratic delegate conference to discuss both the name and the politics of the new party. The wildcard of atomised E-voting may well provide a series of dopamine hits, but it doesn't bode well in terms of functioning or generating crank outcomes and cementing the control of leadership factions!

Paul Cooper  
email

## Don't vote!

I have signed up to Your Party, but here is why I will not submit a suggestion on what to call the new party. Yes, it sounds harmless enough, even rather democratic. It's nice Jeremy Corbyn wants to know my view, right?

Well, call me a cynic, but I suspect there is more to it. That this is something like an experiment by the YP leadership to see how many people will get involved in the Zoomocracy. A test case. If tens of thousands of YP supporters get involved, making all sorts of weird and wonderful proposals, it would be very easy to present this as a very successful first try at 'online democracy'. Why not carry on? How about we have an online vote on the actual name, too? And why not extend that to the constitution and programme of the party too?

'One member, one vote' (OMOV) sounds very democratic and, of course, that is indeed how we should operate on a local level. But on a national level, this would in reality mean the opposite of democracy: it means alienated, isolated, individual members sitting at home, choosing between options selected by somebody, somewhere. It does not build collectivity. There is no space for real discussion, no meaningful debate, no accountability - and, in reality, no actual party. It would be a shell.

And this method is very much open to manipulation from above, even on such a seemingly banal question as the name. Zarah Sultana, for example, has already stated that she prefers 'Left Party'. Now imagine Jeremy Corbyn starts making noises in that direction too - or just does not say anything on the question. What do we think the result of such a poll will be? Can there be any doubt which option will win - all the while fooling the members that they had a real choice in the matter?

Yes, this is 'just' about the name, for now. But this does remind me of the Lansman coup in Momentum, when a majority of the members voted via an oh-so-democratic online referendum to abolish all democratic structures in the organisation - because Corbyn had sent them an email, urging them to do so. Yes, he was probably being played by Jon Lansman, but that's not much of an excuse. We really must avoid those undemocratic methods of decision-making - and learn from the mistakes of our very recent past.

I fear that, once we start with plebiscites and making decisions merely by clicking 'yes' or 'no' at home - and it is relatively successful - then it will be seen as a starting signal to carry on just like that and on far more important questions. For example, I can easily imagine a vote on whether the party's manifesto should contain lovely, simple platitudes like 'for peace and justice'? Or should we have a more complicated, long programme that explains how capitalism works - and how it could actually be defeated. It would be very hard to make the case for such a programme, when the voters are sitting at home on

Zoom (or doing whatever while the meeting is running). This would not be the *opposite* of the bureaucracy of the Labour Party, which many people hope for - it would actually be *worse*.

If, however, only 500 proposals or so come in, that might act as a brake on the plans to further expand online voting. These plans will look very attractive to *both* factions currently quibbling over YP (the difference between Sultana/Feinstein, on the one hand, and Murphy/Schneider, on the other, seem rather marginal). Branches could be sidelined or reduced to mere talking shops, instantly solving the problem of groups like the Socialist Workers Party and Counterfire currently going into and running many of the branches. It would be a good way to avoid cumbersome motions and long-winded debates over this and that formulation.

This kind of decision-making - atomised, unaccountable, without real debate and discussion - is a bureaucrat's wet dream and a democrat's nightmare. Say no to online voting and boycott this charade. The fewer people vote, the better.

Tina Becker  
Sheffield

## Your Partying

God! A meeting on a Friday night, when I should be partying. Well, I thought I'd better go - duty calls.

But, wow, it was different. As I arrived, I saw that it would be packed. It was a room as full of energy as lots of parties of the other kind. This is dozy Devon, but there were 80 people, and 40 more on Zoom. For those in cities, think about the distances, the lack of public transport and the conservative nature of Devon life. The world is changing fast!

The meeting got going with an emphasis on DIY - if the world is to change, we, the mass of ordinary people, must do it. Palestine and anti-fascism were emphasised by the key speakers. We will ensure that MPs and councillors are the members' servants, not their masters.

There was not much discussion of policy - I think this was right for a 'party' that is not yet a party. We broke up into constituency groups - that was revealing - members in small villages, as well as the larger towns.

I was pleased that I did not know most of the people present. We old hacks look forward to merging with members from a wide variety of backgrounds. How do we come together to move forward from this diversity? A small part of that coming together will be the magazine we will set up to discuss our politics, and I hope much more. I suggested the idea and the team so far is people I never knew and from various parts of Devon.

I'm sure that the old political class are more frightened of us than they let on. After last night I think they have reason to be fearful.

Geoff Barr  
Exeter

## CWO message

With airstrikes, controlled explosions and bulldozers Gaza is being razed to the ground. What still remains of it in the ever-shrinking "humanitarian zone" is now a shooting gallery, where starvation and disease rule the day. The Israeli military does not distinguish between military and civilian targets. The real death toll won't be known for years to come - if ever.

And, in the background, Israeli settlers seize their opportunity to grab more land in the West Bank. There is no doubt about it: Palestinians in the Levant are reduced to a dispossessed mass, facing extermination and

displacement.

As Netanyahu's administration prepares yet another escalation, it appears that nothing will stand in his way to create a 'Greater Israel', no matter the human cost. Warnings from non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations about the dire situation on the ground have simply been ignored. Protests - not just in Israel and Palestine, but all over the world - have been met with repressions. Sanctions, embargoes and boycotts have failed to undermine the military and economic siege. Having the green light from the world's still dominant superpower, the US, counts for more than all of that.

Why has the international world order been so ineffective at preventing mass killings? The legal framework intends to demarcate what is and isn't allowed during conflict. However, in the imperialist era there is a tendency for conflicts to become total wars, in which both constant capital (means of production) and variable capital (labour-power) become 'legitimate' targets. In the context of pre-existing ethnic and national tensions - some of which predate modern capitalism to tribal and colonial times - the result is the increased likelihood of atrocities taking place, an ever-present possibility of genocidal acts being perpetrated, both by state and non-state actors.

Furthermore, capitalism is a predatory system, it has not developed evenly across the globe, and as a result there exist imperialist centres and capitalist peripheries. The latter often make up the battlefields for the interests of the former, meaning conflicts are often asymmetrical.

The sight of a defenceless population being gradually slaughtered, without ramification, by a regime armed to the teeth has rightly caused moral indignation across the world. But the only way to truly end genocide is to put an end to a system and the social relations which naturally breed it. As workers we remain powerless in the face of this descent into capitalist barbarism until there is a real class movement able to impose its interests on the warmongers, exploiters and oppressors of the world.

To this end, we have to go beyond protests and the actions of small groups. The working class must become an independent social force that sides with no national flags or imperialist camps. By exposing the link between the attacks on our working and living conditions at home and capitalist preparations for war abroad, we can set the foundations for a wider fightback. On this basis, the 'No War but the Class War' initiative seeks to unite genuine internationalists from various tendencies in order to bring the internationalist message to the struggles happening in the here and now. Join us - no war but the class war!

Communist Workers' Organisation  
email

## Inheritance tax

Last week presenter Lewis Goodall caused a stir on LBC radio when, tongue in cheek, he called for inheritance tax to be levied at 100%.

There's normally no inheritance tax to pay if either the value of your estate is below the £325,000 threshold or you leave everything above the £325,000 threshold to your spouse, civil partner, a charity or a community amateur sports club. While inheritance tax is currently levied at 40%, communists support Lewis Goodall's call for it to be raised to 100%.

Opinion polls show that 43% of people support the scrapping of inheritance tax. This is in spite of only

four percent of the population having to pay it when they die. Mark Twain famously said that in life only two things are certain - death and taxes. That's why the Labour government, instead of tweaking inheritance tax, should levy it at 100% on estates valued above the £325,000 threshold.

At the same time, taxes on earned income for working class and middle class people should be made as low as possible. These demands are concrete expressions of the CPGB's *Draft programme* when it refers to tax.

John Smithee  
Cambridgeshire

## Fly the flag

It seems flying the flag is once again *en vogue*. I recall the first Thatcherite government was very keen to unfurl the butcher's apron, as it ran roughshod over workers' rights. We've had several such administrations since, but I struggle to remember one so performative in draping itself in the red, white and blue as the current Labour government.

While it may not yet be rampant, the hard right certainly feels the wind in its sails. 'Patriots' have rallied, demonstrating their national pride by hosting the union flag and the banner of the saintly - Turkish - George up lampposts across the nation.

Some have even grabbed their paintbrushes and spray-cans, daubing George's red cross on the humble mini-roundabout and zebra crossing. (Odd, considering that standing on a flag is generally seen as an insult.) And, of course, we have seen angry demonstrations outside asylum hotels across the country, calling on us to 'save our children' from whomever lurks inside.

So how did we get to this point? The UK economy is heavily reliant on migrant labour. Stagnant living standards and a shrinking social wage have made having children a rather expensive enterprise. Average birth-rates across Europe continue their long-term downward trajectory, with fewer women choosing to become parents. Importing ready-made workers fills the gap quickly and cheaply, and further reduces the cost of labour power to capital; outsourcing the raising and educating of the next generation of workers to another country can be very cost-effective.

But where to house them? While the right, in the main (the recent riots in Ballymena being something of an exception), has focused on asylum hotels, many migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees - bar the rich - will end up in poorly maintained housing, or sleeping in unfit rooms above commercial kitchens and other workspaces. They have become fundamental to the political economy of the UK, working in low-paid twilight sectors, reducing the cost of the basket of wage goods and further lowering the cost of labour power.

The response of the workers' movement must move beyond demonstrations of solidarity, important as these very clearly are. We need to start organising these communities - yes, in trade unions, but also politically, linking this to the struggle against capitalism. The small boats will not stop coming, certainly not while the imperialist powers offload the current crisis onto weaker states and seek to reset geopolitical realities.

There should be *red* flags flying from lampposts up and down the country; for that to happen we will need to build a mass Communist Party.

Hannah Phipps  
email

# GAZA

## Corporates are complicit

Firms such as BCG and Microsoft are up to their necks in Israel's genocidal crimes, writes **Eddie Ford**. Unsurprisingly workers are expressing their outrage

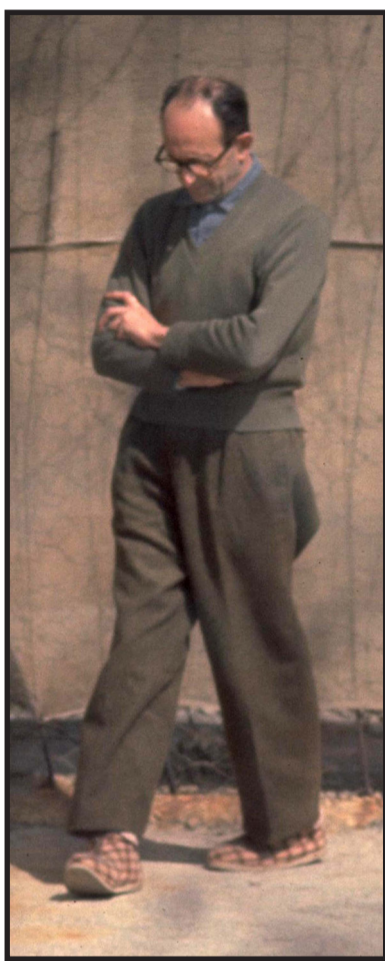
**H**annah Arendt famously wrote about the "banality of evil" regarding Adolf Eichmann and his 1961 Jerusalem trial - though, of course, Eichmann was no mere bureaucrat, as he made out in his defence, but a committed Nazi who took part in the January 1942 Wannsee conference and was an active participant in the genocidal Final Solution. As we are seeing right now, the parallels with Israel are undeniable - but the big difference is that it is committing genocide in real time that everyone can see for themselves and appears to have no intention of stopping until the job is effectively completed.

There are, therefore, plenty of corporate Eichmanns operating in full view, even if some now, because of public outrage, would like to distance themselves from their crimes. We saw this recently with the Boston Consulting Group, one of the world's big three management consulting firms. On July 4 the *Financial Times* ran a major story about how it had modelled the costs of "relocating" Palestinians from Gaza, and entered into a multimillion-dollar contract to help launch the hideous Gaza Humanitarian Foundation - which, as the world knows, was deliberately created so that Israel could boot out the UN Relief and Works Agency, with its 400 distribution sites, and replace them with four 'food aid hubs' - making the GHF integral to the Israeli genocide.

And a month later, on July 5, the *FT* ran a follow-up story about the nauseating involvement of the Tony Blair Institute with the BCG by taking part in a 'post-war' Gaza plan that actually envisaged resuscitating the strip with a "Trump Riviera" and an "Elon Musk Smart Manufacturing Zone" - spearheaded by Israeli companies under a redevelopment programme called the 'Great Trust'. Keeping in line with the Trump agenda, it raised the possibility of paying half a million Palestinians to leave the area and attracting private investors to develop Gaza. According to "sources familiar with the effort", Israel and the US were interested in resettling Gazans in regions of Puntland and Somaliland - both of which expressed willingness to enter discussions on the matter in exchange for diplomatic recognition. There was no concern for the Gazan people, of course, who were totally expendable.

But the *FT* ran a further story at the weekend, which offers at least some small degree of encouragement, about how the BCG has been "confronted with an outpouring of anger and disappointment" within their Middle Eastern office following its role in setting up the horribly misnamed GHF.<sup>1</sup>

An unofficial WhatsApp group was set up by outraged BCG staff and alumni to support Palestine, and it became a forum for expressing their disgust, with one worker writing: "I don't know how are we supposed to go back to work and our normality, knowing how much pain and suffering is still happening and that our organisation was part of a horrific plan". There was also a comment by Ihab Khalil, a BCG partner who works with Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund and has been described as "one of the region's most powerful consultants". Khalil wrote on the same WhatsApp group that "I ran out of shoulders to cry on. I feel betrayed!!!"



**Adolf Eichmann: in jail 1961**

- adding "sorry for this emotion", but "for once I am ashamed".

Getting desperate to dampen down the escalating scandal, two executives who knew about the "relocating" project have been stripped of their management roles, though BCG claims they were "misled" by the partners involved. BCG also disavowed the modelling work, alleging that the lead partner was "told not to do without input from the local population". Unsurprisingly, this did not satisfy the rising concerns and the *FT* details that by mid-July employees were gathering signatures for a proposed letter to the chief executive demanding stronger action, including greater accountability and donations to support humanitarian causes for Palestinians. Separately, a BCG alumni group organised a letter of protest to Christoph Schweizer, the chief executive, that attracted more than 100 signatures - calling the GHF and its modelling work "a staggering ethical failure" and "a collapse in judgment, process and responsibility at multiple levels of leadership".

As further revealed by the *FT* (this would almost be amusing if it was not so serious), Schweizer's attempts to ease tensions over Gaza totally backfired at a July 17 town hall meeting that was held at three locations, with executives presenting from Riyadh and Doha alongside Schweizer in Dubai, where around 370 people attended. Amazingly, while the sites were connected, no livestream was made available for people who could not be there in person - then things got even worse when Schweizer began the meeting by saying that he "would not comment on the conflict" in Gaza or "the politics of the region", going on to say that BCG, in common with other firms, seeks to maintain an "apolitical stance" and would not compromise that position - a stupendous exercise in hypocrisy. Then, when one questioner described Israel's government as a genocidal regime, surely a statement of fact,

Schweizer said that genocide was a "big word" - a remark that angered some members of the audience, who left the room.

Since then, some staff in the Middle East have argued that BCG should take a public stance against Israel's genocidal offensive or shut down the firm's office in Tel Aviv. For all the efforts by BCG to stop the internal tensions spilling out into the open, workers, most highly paid, are determined to voice opposition to the genocide.

A similar story happened on August 26 at Microsoft's headquarters in Redmond, Washington.<sup>2</sup> At least two current and three former employees, as well as two other tech workers, were arrested after staging a sit-in demonstration at the company president's office, urging that Microsoft should cut ties with the Israeli government. Other employees, former staff and supporters also gathered outside the HQ. Police placed the protestors in full-body harnesses and carried them out of the building, but Abdo Mohamed, a former Microsoft worker who helped organise the demonstration, declared that "no arrests, no violence will deter us from continuing to speak up".

The demonstration was part of a series of actions organised by current and former staff over Microsoft's cloud contracts with the Israeli government. It arose after a joint investigation by *The Guardian*, Israeli-Palestinian publication *+972 Magazine* and Hebrew-language outlet *Local Call* revealed earlier this month that Israel's military surveillance agency, Unit 8200, was making use of Microsoft's Azure software to store countless recordings of mobile phone calls made by Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza.

The company, of course, said it was not aware of "the surveillance of civilians or collection of their mobile phone conversations using Microsoft's services", and was supposedly launching an independent investigation into the use of its Azure software. But activists wanted to escalate action, as they know the company is lying through its teeth, seeking help from the FBI to track protests and working with local authorities to stop their activities.

Microsoft is completely involved with Israel on all sorts of levels, as one of the protestors powerfully pointed out - "You continue to try to bury your head in the sand, so we are here today outside your blood-soaked thrones, to continue pulling your baby-killer necks out of your sand holes and continue to force you to confront your complicity, until you stop powering the murdering of our people."

The same is true in the UK, it goes without saying. Flagship companies like Rolls Royce, BAE and GE Aviation are the second biggest source for parts and components for the F-35, the top-rung fighter in the Israeli airforce. These and other companies are helping to strengthen Israel's killing machine, making Britain fully complicit ●

eddie.ford@weeklyworker.co.uk

### Notes

1. ft.com/content/89399790-b349-4112-ad2c-d6b27442889f.
2. theguardian.com/us-news/2025/aug/26/microsoft-employee-sit-in-israeli-military-ties.

## ACTION

### Glasgow Living Rent manifesto

**Saturday August 30, 10am:** Open meeting, Ibrox Parish Church, 65 Clifford Street, Glasgow G51. Discuss renters' demands ahead of the 2026 Holyrood elections. Topics include more and better social housing and more affordability and quality in the private sector. Organised by Living Rent: [www.livingrent.org/open\\_meeting\\_on\\_living\\_rent\\_manifesto\\_glasgow](http://www.livingrent.org/open_meeting_on_living_rent_manifesto_glasgow).

### Resist the world's worst arms fair

**September 1 to 12:** 12 days of protest outside the DSEI arms fair, Excel Exhibition Centre, Western Gateway, London E16. Business is booming for the arms industry. Thousands of exhibitors will be dealing in equipment to cause untold death and destruction. Join the discussions, training and actions - themed events every day. Organised by Stop the Arms Fair: [caat.org.uk/events/stopdsei2025](http://caat.org.uk/events/stopdsei2025).

### We refuse: saying no to the army in Israel

**Friday September 5, 7pm:** Book launch, Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1. Author Martin Barzilai discusses his book of interviews with conscientious objectors and dissidents who have refused to join Israel's conscription army, the Israel Defence Force (IDF). Tickets £4 (£1). Organised by Housmans Bookshop: [housmans.com/events](http://housmans.com/events).

### National march for Palestine

**Saturday September 6, 12 noon:** Assemble Russell Square, London WC1. March to Downing Street. Stop starving Gaza; stop arming Israel. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: [palestinecampaign.org/events/summer-of-action-for-gaza](http://palestinecampaign.org/events/summer-of-action-for-gaza).

### Stand up for choice

**Saturday September 6, 2pm:** Counter-protest. Assemble at the Millicent Fawcett statue, Parliament Square, London SW1. Oppose anti-abortion groups and stand up for the right to choose. Organised by Abortion Rights: [abortionrights.org.uk](http://abortionrights.org.uk).

### Remember Burston Strike School

**Sunday September 7, 10.30am to 4pm:** Rally, Diss Road, Burston, Norfolk IP22. Commemorate the longest strike in history. Free entry. Organised by Unite the Union and the TUC: [burstonstrikeschool.wordpress.com/2025-rally](http://burstonstrikeschool.wordpress.com/2025-rally).

### Fight Starmer's cuts - lobby the TUC

**Sunday September 7, 1pm:** TUC rally, Old Ship Hotel, 32-38 Kings Road, Brighton BN1. Urge the TUC to call a national demonstration against Starmer's cuts. Organised by National Shop Stewards Network: [www.facebook.com/events/1361950818235603](http://www.facebook.com/events/1361950818235603).

### Welfare, not warfare - lobby the TUC

**Sunday September 7, 2pm:** Rally outside Conference Centre, Kings Road, Brighton BN1. Demand trade unions join calls on the government to put wages and welfare before warfare. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: [www.stopwar.org.uk/events/welfare-not-warfare-lobby-the-tuc](http://www.stopwar.org.uk/events/welfare-not-warfare-lobby-the-tuc).

### Stop arming Israel - stop Starmer's militarism

**Tuesday September 9, 6pm:** TUC fringe meeting, Friends Meeting House, Ship Street, Brighton BN1. Starmer's government is hiking up military spending, while cutting back on education and welfare. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: [www.stopwar.org.uk/events](http://www.stopwar.org.uk/events).

### Marx Memorial Library open day

**Saturday September 13, 11am:** Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London, EC1. Explore the historic building, which includes the office where Lenin edited *Iskra*. Organised by Marx Memorial Library: [www.marx-memorial-library.org.uk/event/510](http://www.marx-memorial-library.org.uk/event/510).

### Wigan Diggers festival

**Saturday September 13, 11.15am to 9.30pm:** Open-air, free festival, The Wiend, Wigan WN1. Commemorating Gerrard Winstanley and the 17th century Diggers movement with music and political stalls. Organised by Wigan Diggers Festival: [www.facebook.com/events/1178446303737306](http://www.facebook.com/events/1178446303737306).

### March against Tommy Robinson

**Saturday September 13, 12 noon:** Assemble Russell Square, London WC1. The TUC and many affiliated trade unions are supporting this demonstration against the far right and racism. Organised by Stand Up to Racism: [www.facebook.com/StandUTR](http://www.facebook.com/StandUTR).

### Tommy Hepburn memorial lecture

**Saturday September 13, 7pm:** Public meeting, Tyneside Irish Centre, Gallowgate, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1. Speaker: George Galloway. Organised by Follonsby Wardley Miners Lodge Banner Association: [www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=2020287222049136](http://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=2020287222049136).

### Social movements in Iran

**Sunday September 14, 1pm:** Public meeting, Groene Loper 5, Eindhoven, Netherlands and online. With insights on the recent attacks by Israel in Iran, Syria, Lebanon and Gaza. Speakers: Yasmine Mather and Iman Ganji. Followed by questions and discussion. Organised by Accountability Without Borders: [www.eventbrite.nl/o/accountability-without-borders-114884242501](http://www.eventbrite.nl/o/accountability-without-borders-114884242501).

### Trump not welcome

**Wednesday September 17, 2pm:** National demonstration. Assemble Portland Place, London W1. Protest against Starmer's Labour government for inviting Trump on a second state visit. Trump's support for Israel has facilitated the genocide in Palestine. Organised by Together against Trump alliance: [stopwar.org.uk/events/trump-national-demonstration-against-state-visit](http://stopwar.org.uk/events/trump-national-demonstration-against-state-visit).

### CPGB wills

Remember the CPGB and keep the struggle going. Put our party's name and address, together with the amount you wish to leave, in your will. If you need further help, do not hesitate to contact us.

**GAZA**

# Declaration of the obvious

After nearly two years of inflicting industrial-scale violence, the Zionist state now stands officially accused of presiding over a genocidal famine, writes **Ian Spencer**

**G**aza is now in a “state of famine”. That declaration of the obvious by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) makes clear to the bourgeois press what anyone with eyes to see has known for a long time. A carefully engineered famine is preparing Gaza for either ethnic cleansing, a second Nakba, or genocide.

The IPC classification of famine requires three critical thresholds to be passed: extreme food deprivation, acute malnutrition and starvation-related deaths, all of which have been visible in Gaza for some time, but now even the IPC cannot ignore it:

Half a million people in the Gaza Strip are facing catastrophic conditions, characterised by starvation, destitution and death. Another 1.07 million people (54%) are in Emergency (IPC Phase 4), and 396,000 people (20%) are in Crisis (IPC Phase 3).

Between mid-August and the end of September 2025, conditions are expected to further worsen with Famine projected to expand to Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis. Nearly a third of the population (641,000 people) are expected to face catastrophic conditions (IPC Phase 5), while those in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) will likely rise to 1.14 million (58%). Acute malnutrition is projected to continue worsening rapidly.

Through June 2026, at least 132,000 children under five are expected to suffer from acute malnutrition, double the IPC estimates from May 2025. This includes over 41,000 severe cases of children at heightened risk of death. Nearly 55,500 malnourished pregnant and breastfeeding women will also require urgent nutrition response.<sup>1</sup>

Inevitably, Israel has accused the IPC of being manipulated by Hamas, but that lie is refuted by the sheer scale of data coming from a whole variety of sources, including the United Nations and aid agencies on the ground. UN secretary general António Guterres said: “... it is a man-made disaster, a moral indictment - and a failure of humanity itself. Famine is not about food: it is the deliberate collapse of the systems needed for human survival.”<sup>2</sup>

That the UN should express its condemnation in moral terms with its implication of a failing of “humanity” is predictable enough. Guterres went on to state that, “As the occupying power, Israel has unequivocal obligations under international law - including the duty of ensuring food and medical supplies to the population”, ignoring the fact, of course, that neither Israel nor the US give a damn about international law. We are living in a period where any appeal to the legal basis for international action is being treated with contempt.

## Double strike

As if to make the point, on August 25 it was reported that the IDF had bombed the Nasser Medical Centre in Khan Younis. Then, after health personnel and journalists rushed to the area to rescue the wounded and bear witness, they bombed it again (recorded in real time by a cameraman operating the Reuters live-feed). At least 21 were killed, including four medical personnel and five journalists, including one from *Al Jazeera* and another from Reuters. In a separate act in Khan



**Reduced to dust and rubble**

Younis a sixth journalist was killed by the IDF, bringing the death toll on journalists to over 270.

On August 25, IDF attacks killed 61 in Gaza. According to the Gaza Health Ministry, Israel has killed at least 62,819 people and wounded 158,629 since October 2023. We know that the figures compiled by the GHM consistently underestimate the death toll by as much as 41%, partly because of all those unreachable under the rubble and the logistical difficulties of accounting for all the deaths.<sup>3</sup> This is an estimate that has been broadly supported by more recent evidence in the June 2025 edition of *Nature*, which suggests a death toll closer to 84,000.<sup>4</sup> Leaked documents show that even the IDF estimate that 83% of those killed are civilians.<sup>5</sup> These estimates, of course, do not take into account the many thousands of non-violent deaths directly attributable to the war.

The ‘double tap’ of a hospital is an act so heinous that even foreign secretary David Lammy felt it necessary to go on record to say that he was “horrified” by the strike - but not so horrified that he was willing to do anything to reduce the UK support for the IDF, such as the reconnaissance flights over Gaza by the RAF, the supply of military hardware by Israeli arms manufacturers operating in the UK, or the use of RAF Akrotiri as a staging point for US airforce flights bringing in war material for the IDF.

Live on TV, Donald Trump invited people to believe that he was unaware of the attack, until briefed in real time, but then went to on say: “I think that within the next two to three weeks you’re going to have a pretty good, conclusive ending.” It’s tempting to regard this as typical Trump braggadocio, but it must be taken in the context of the growing offensive against Gaza city. Tanks, planes and artillery have already been bombarding the city in preparation of the onslaught. At least 300 were killed on August 26.

Israel has called up 60,000 reservists and the military has stated that they plan to evacuate the entire

population of the city to “shelters” in the south before troops move in.<sup>6</sup> Whether this is the ‘humanitarian city’ - a concentration camp, mooted by defence minister Israel Katz on the ruins of Rafah - remains to be seen. However, Netanyahu was widely known to support the idea. Videos, verified by *Al Jazeera* show Palestinians fleeing southwards to ‘concentration zones’.<sup>7</sup>

The likelihood is that famine will intensify in the coming months, even though food aid is stockpiled outside of Gaza, but is simply prevented from entering the strip by Israel. Netanyahu, naturally, has repeatedly denied that starvation exists. Where there is hunger, he says, it is the fault of aid agencies (as well as Hamas).

Israel introduced a total food blockade in March. Following international pressure, a limited amount of aid was allowed in from late May, when Israel and the US took over food distribution, using the so-called Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, which has four food distribution sites in militarised zones that Palestinians must walk long distances to reach. These have replaced the 400 distribution points previously administered by the UN.

The UN has recorded 994 Palestinians killed in the vicinity of GHF sites since late May - just some of the 1,760 killed trying to access aid - the majority shot by Israeli troops, but also by contractors and an armed gang employed by the GHF. This has been condemned by Médecins Sans Frontières as “slaughter masquerading as aid”. Some have even been killed by air drops of food aid - a distribution method condemned by humanitarian organisations as inefficient and dangerous and a distraction from the urgent need to transport large amounts of aid quickly. Around 600 trucks of food a day are needed to meet the most basic needs of Gaza. Israel allows in less than half of that. Meanwhile the price of a kilo of flour has shot up to the equivalent of \$85.

The GHF is led by executive director John Acree, a former USAID manager. His executive chairman, Johnnie Moore, is an American

evangelical leader, Christian Zionist and businessman, who had previously praised Trump’s proposal to take over the Gaza Strip.<sup>8</sup> The plan to take over aid distribution began in 2023, when Israeli officials worked with private American security contractors - primarily CIA veteran Philip Reilly, who launched the security company, Safe Reach Solutions, in January 2025 and was given the task of securing food distribution sites in Gaza.<sup>9</sup> SRS is owned by a trust based in Wyoming, whose beneficiary is McNally Capital, a private equity firm, founded in 2008 by Ward McNally.

## Humanitarian?

The Boston Consulting Group was also involved in setting up GHF, with multiple contracts with McNally to assist SRS, and was responsible for setting prices for contractors. It later withdrew, but not before submitting invoices of over \$1 million a month!<sup>10</sup> Such is the behaviour of ‘non-profit organisations’ initiated by Israel and supported by the US!

While the GHF does not release information on its funding sources, on June 6 Reuters reported that the US state department was considering sending \$500 million, released by defunding USAID.<sup>11</sup> Possibly one of the reasons USAID was defunded was that it had reported that there was no evidence of Hamas stealing aid - as I have said, the principal justification that Israel used for the establishment of GHF.<sup>12</sup>

While evidence that aid is being systematically stolen by Hamas may be weak, it seems possible that some is being snatched by the so-called Popular Forces (al-Quwwat ash-Sha’biyya), an anti-Hamas militia group led by Yasser Abu Shabab, which is armed and controlled by Israel, and responsible for killing at least some people at GHF sites.<sup>13</sup>

On November 16 2024 Abu Shabab’s group raided a convoy of 109 UN trucks and looted 98 of them.<sup>14</sup> Israel not only knows who the looters are: it arms and pays them! Most of the Popular Forces are based near Rafah, which is tipped to be the concentration camp of southern Gaza,

with the collaboration of the United Arab Emirates, which seems likely to provide some of the infrastructure for the project.

‘Operation Gallant Knight’ was ordered by the UAE’s Sheik Muhammad bin Ziyad al-Nahyan in November 2023, ostensibly to deliver aid to Gaza. However, the most recent plan is to provide desalinated water to southern Gaza and this appears to be coordinated with Israel. It has chosen the same area earmarked for Israel’s concentration camp. So the UAE will provide the water, Abu Shabab’s Popular Forces will provide ‘security’ and the GHF will deliver the ‘aid’.

Those in Gaza who do not relocate will be subject to extermination by Israeli bullets, shells, drones, bombs and missiles!<sup>15</sup> ●

## Notes

1. www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-website/countries-in-focus-archive/issue-134/en.
2. news.un.org/en/story/2025/08/1165702.
3. www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jan/10/gaza-death-toll-40-higher-than-official-number-lancet-study-finds.
4. www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-02009-8.
5. www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2025/aug/21/revealed-israeli-militarys-own-data-indicates-civilian-death-rate-of-83-in-gaza-war.
6. www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cvg478y8109o.
7. www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/8/26/israel-pushes-further-into-gaza-city-killing-and-displacing-palestinians.
8. edition.cnn.com/2025/06/03/middleeast/gaza-aid-distribution-deadly-what-to-know-latam-intl.
9. www.nytimes.com/2025/05/24/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-aid-plan.html.
10. web.archive.org/web/20250603174953/www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2025/06/03/gaza-humanitarian-fund-bcg.
11. www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/us-mulls-giving-millions-contravention-gaza-aid-foundation-sources-say-2025-06-06.
12. www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/usa-id-analysis-found-no-evidence-massive-hamas-theft-gaza-aid-2025-07-25.
13. www.timesofisrael.com/israel-providing-guns-to-gaza-jihadist-gang-to-bolster-opposition-to-hamas.
14. www.middleeastmonitor.com/20241111-israel-army-allows-looting-of-aid-convoys-in-gaza.
15. mondoweiss.net/2025/07/is-the-uae-involved-in-israels-gaza-concentration-camp-scheme-heres-what-we-know.

# Put politics in command

Comrades in Jeremy Corbyn's Your Party, especially branch activists, are busy debating various forms of representation. All have their advocates and supporters, not least sortition. Jack Conrad is neither an advocate nor a supporter

Using all manner of unofficial channels and platforms, members - actually proto-members - of Your Party (otherwise known as the Jeremy Corbyn Party or JCP) have been drawing up proposals, debating and taking sides over what sort of structure the nascent organisation requires. Understandably, particular attention is focused on the promised launch conference in November.

Rumour has it that Corbyn and his court circle are contemplating a conference/rally - say, filling the Albert Hall. Invitees, the great and good, MPs and councillors, trade union tops, current and former, well-known actors of stage and screen, chart-hitting musicians, Premier League footballers, celebrities of all kinds, will be arrayed in the front rows for TV and press cameras.

Meanwhile, sat at home with their PCs, laptops and smart phones, the atomised membership watch the star turns and spot the famous faces. More ... they will be able to choose the leader, the party name, the rules, the code of conduct, etc. To save them getting bored by disputes over 'minor details' - and logging off - they will be given easy, prepackaged, 'one, two or three', options. Everything being carefully worded, slanted and orchestrated by Corbyn's interim executive, centrally Karie Murphy (conference and events planning organiser).

That is what Zarah Sultana's much vaunted OMOV Zoomocracy would amount to ... fatally setting the pattern for the future? Largely passive members get to vote on selected issues every once in a while, but - and this is the great virtue for the JCP's elite - conferences and debates and blocs of leftwing delegates are sidelined or swamped in an avalanche of clicks.

OMOV appears as the epitome of democracy. We certainly support 'one member, one vote' for branch committees, conference delegates, etc. However, there were good reasons why the Blairites introduced OMOV by atomised members in Labour Party elections during the 1990s. It gave Tony Blair and his clique a "vice-like grip" and reduced annual conference to a "rubber stamp".

Doubtless comrade Sultana does not have the Blairite ascendancy as her model. More likely she takes inspiration from Spain's Podemos (for a brief moment *à la mode* on the flotsam-and-jetsam left). As a 'horizontalist' organisation, its local circles exercise no effective power; however, all Podemos members get to vote online. The result is, though, thoroughly Blairite. It gave Pablo Iglesias Turrión a "vice-like grip" over an extraordinarily vertical organisation (well, from 2014 till his resignation in 2021). He became second deputy prime minister in 2020 and Podemos served as a left parliamentary prop for the 'progressive', pro-monarchy, pro-Nato, pro-capitalist government of Pedro Sánchez.

Fearing such an outcome - but surely also fearing the potential strength of the organised left - Max Shanly has drawn up detailed plans for a lottocracy at November's founding conference<sup>3</sup> ... and in the case of Ed Griffiths there on in after that.<sup>4</sup> We are told that RS21's Marxist Unity Caucus



Corbyn is a Bonaparte without the horse ... just a bicycle

backs a lottocracy too. Foolish, to put it mildly. Turkeys voting for Christmas.

## Numbers

Instead of an OMOV Zoomocracy, where atomised members get to vote in a click plebiscite, comrades Griffiths, Shanly and co champion this or that version of sortition (either temporarily or permanently). Members are chosen at random and get to deliberate for a limited time span and then finally cast their deciding vote.

While both comrades have circulated their proposals far and wide, using social media, it surely has to be admitted that, in the last analysis, what they rely on, in terms of getting their pet project implemented, is persuading the shadowy interim executive - courtiers such as Karie Murphy, James Schneider and Amy Jackson - and, of course, Jeremy Corbyn himself. Effectively both comrades act, whatever their subjective intentions, as *aspiring* courtiers.

Comrade Shanly argues that for the outcome of November's conference to have "any democratically [sic] legitimacy", it must be "representative of the near 800,000 people who have registered an interest in the party by signing up to its mailing list". Comrade Griffiths provides the populist spin. Lottocracy means, he says,

giving up the idea that political decisions should in general be taken by the people who are 'best' at taking them (because they are the most popular, or the best educated, or the richest, or the mouthiest, or anything else). A random sample is statistically representative of the whole membership. Subject to some not-too-big margin of error, it will vote the same way as the whole membership would - if there were a way of getting everybody in the room and letting them debate the question together.<sup>5</sup>

Logistically, sortition is more than feasible. My understanding is that to represent 800,000 people with a confidence level of 95%, albeit with a  $\pm 5\%$  margin of error, all you need do is randomly select 384 of them.<sup>6</sup> So you do not need to fill the Albert Hall. No, instead crowdfund, book a *discounted* conference hall, book

*discounted* coach and train tickets, book *discounted* hotel rooms ... and let them come to their decisions (comrade Shanly has thought it all through and provides all manner of wonderful details).

My bet, however, is that if this happened (not impossible) Jeremy Corbyn, and crucially his courtiers, along with their carefully chosen experts, would provide the agenda, plenty of helpful advice and, if need be, give a strong-arm steer.

Incidentally, with sortition, especially under present-day, historically determined circumstances, this is practically unavoidable. Letting each 384 randomly selected individuals draw up their own version of the party programme and rules and then choosing between them would be a recipe for years of impossible wrangling. Letting 384 randomly selected individuals debate and vote upon 384 different versions clause by clause would take more than a lifetime. Even if they only have a severely limited range of options before them, there is every chance of utterly contradictory and unworkable results. In the real world there would have to be a ready-made version of the party programme and rules drawn up well in advance by a committee of experts.

## Reasoning

Likely some will be unwilling, or unable, to serve as one of the 384, so alternatives would have to be chosen. Frankly, a minor problem that can be easily overcome. What seems pretty certain, though, is that, while there is a good chance of a tiny handful of the organised left finding themselves amongst the 384, it would, as a whole, find itself utterly marginalised (my calculation is based on giving the organised left groups 10,000 out of the 800,000 sign-up figure).

The reasoning is as follows: the statistical probability of any one person being selected is  $384/800,000 = 0.00048$ . With 10,000 we arrive at  $0.0125 = 1.25\%$ . Hence the expected number in a random sample of 384 is  $384 \times 0.0125 = 4.8$ . So, on average, about five comrades from the organised left would find themselves included amongst the 384 decision-makers.<sup>7</sup>

A tiny number which is a big problem for a communist militant such as myself ... and any serious comrade

on the left for that matter. We positively want to see the clash of competing left programmes, resolutions, factional blocs and rival leadership slates along the lines witnessed at the last, Chicago, convention of the Democratic Socialists of America.<sup>8</sup> That happened because of the STV election of branch delegates ... exactly what we advocate. What matters after all, is *actively* lifting the political culture of the vanguard ... and thereby *actively* lifting the political culture of the average. Passively representing the average lowers the *general* political culture (which is today, the vanguard included, appallingly low).

Yes, comrade Shanly has made the call for "organising around the democratic maximum programme of a Party Republic/British DSA". Something we very much welcome ... if by that he means a minimum-maximum Marxist programme and *fighting* for a mass Communist Party. However, *in practice*, his advocacy of sortition for November's founding conference sells the pass to those who want a Bonapartist Party/British Podemos. Remember, comrade Max: "*Form is function, and function is form*. The two are intrinsically linked, *the ends are the means, and the means are the ends*."<sup>9</sup>

## Prefiguration

Not that we are against sortition as a matter of principle. Far from it. When it comes to juries and 'guilty'/'not guilty' verdicts, sortition is something to defend ... and extend. Infinitely better than a cobwebbed, gouty old judge, who by professional training is committed to handing out savage sentences and interpreting the law according to the books.<sup>10</sup>

Twelve randomly selected men and women good and true are not tied to the letter of the law. After hearing the evidence, conferring - if necessary at considerable length - they finally pass judgement over one of their equals. The legal advice of the bench can be, and often is, defied. Certainly juries are more likely to bring in 'not guilty' verdicts than judge-only trials in political cases, such as climate crisis protests. No wonder the right, not least Sir Keir's ghastly government, wants to roll back, restrict or axe jury trials.

Looking back to the ancient world, communists can have a definite admiration for the peasant-citizen lottocracy of Athens. Following the 508-07 BCE revolution, decision-making in the polis was vested in the large, randomly selected, popular assembly (the Ekklesia).<sup>11</sup> Meetings were held in the Agora, then the Pnyx. Usually around 6,000 attended (a daily allowance was paid). A 1:5 or a 1:10 citizen ratio depending on the total census count.

True, the bulk of the population were excluded: women, slaves and resident foreigners. True, aristocratic orators took the lead in debates. True, Athenian democracy rested on extracting tribute from the imperialist exploitation of nearby colonies and allied (vassal) states. Nonetheless, in this past, there is, perhaps, something of the future. CLR James wrote his 1956 essay, 'Every cook can govern', with exactly that in mind.<sup>12</sup> So maybe under fully developed communism, where everyone does their civic duty and everyone takes their Buggins' turn in the administration of things, elections can be dispensed with and sortition will become the ruling principle. That

said, English juries elect a foreman and the Athenian assembly elected nine presidents to preside over proceedings and roles requiring particular expert knowledge, eg, military commanders, were likewise subject to election (and, if need be, recall).

Comrade Shanly rightly stresses that any working class party should be rooted not "in the blind trust of or the slavish loyalty to the self-appointed few, but the democracy of the many". Good politics and, by the way, good rhetoric too. What follows is not bad in terms of style either. However, this time the politics are questionable:

It is thus of supreme importance, above all else, that such a party reflects in its structures, practices and modes of behaviour not the society it developed inside of, but the society it aspires to build. It must practise what it preaches, for all involved to believe that socialism demands democracy, precisely because democracy demands socialism.

In other words, he is making a case for prefiguration. There can, of course, be an element of that in our political practice: eg, 'from each according to their abilities'. But we should frankly admit the severe limits. We operate within capitalist society and that means doing capitalist things like raising money, paying bills and taking into account existing laws.

With that in mind, there is, to say the least, the possibility that the state might decide to declare us illegal under the Terrorism Act 2000. For the sake of the argument, we then move our core leadership team abroad and operate underground. Surely that would curb our ability to practice the democracy that we preach. Eg, instead of branch secretaries being elected from below, they might have to be appointed from above.

What really is of "supreme importance" though, whether we are legal or illegal, is being free to combat the ideological influences that are inevitably generated by living within capitalist society: social-imperialism, reformism, centrism, etc. Towards that end communists join the battle of ideas - something, if it is to be effective, that needs our *best* writers, our *best* conference speakers, our *best* educators, our *best* organisers. To suggest otherwise is to disarm our side and thereby play into the hands of our class enemies ●

## Notes

1. *Novara Media* July 28 2025.
2. A Seldon and D Kavanagh (eds) *The Blair effect 2001-5* Cambridge 2005, p115.
3. [medium.com/@maxshanly/born-for-life-or-marked-for-death-a12d87220e42](https://medium.com/@maxshanly/born-for-life-or-marked-for-death-a12d87220e42).
4. [x.com/EdmundGriffiths/status/1956426422509088993](https://x.com/EdmundGriffiths/status/1956426422509088993).
5. *Ibid.*
6. [www.calculator.net/sample-size-calculator.html](https://www.calculator.net/sample-size-calculator.html).
7. Calculation courtesy of Yasmine Mather. My maths are rather primitive, to say the least.
8. See comrade Revmira's Online Communist Forum talk, August 24 2025: 'Report from the MUG delegation': [www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVdf7tLCKw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVdf7tLCKw).
9. [medium.com/@maxshanly/born-for-life-or-marked-for-death-a12d87220e42](https://medium.com/@maxshanly/born-for-life-or-marked-for-death-a12d87220e42).
10. To paraphrase George Orwell - see S Orwell and I Angus (eds) 'The lion and the unicorn' *The collected essays, journalism and letters of George Orwell* Vol 2, Harmondsworth 1970, pp81-83.
11. See J Ober *The Athenian revolution: essays on ancient Greek democracy and political theory* Princeton NJ 1996.
12. [www.marxists.org/archive/james-clr/works/1956/06/every-cook.htm](https://www.marxists.org/archive/james-clr/works/1956/06/every-cook.htm).

## AGGREGATE

# Political clarity vital

Engage in Your Party to fight for the type of organisation our class really needs. Farzad Kamangar reports on our discussion, disputes and factional differences

Debate at the August 24 CPGB members' aggregate revolved around how to approach the new Jeremy Corbyn party (JCP or, for the moment, Your Party). The 'Build Your Party now!' motion adopted was proposed by the Provisional Central Committee, outlining our general position. There were, too, a series of amendments and a substantial additional 'action' proposal by a faction of four or five comrades.

Jack Conrad opened with an assessment of the significance of 800,000 people signing up to Corbyn's new venture. He stressed that, even if only a fraction of them become members, it represents a force far larger than similar projects in the past, like Left Unity. For him, this moment is, effectively, the pro-Palestine movement "taking party form": instead of people simply returning home after demonstrations, there will now be an organisational container to capture their energy.

However, comrade Conrad said he regarded the current leadership of the JCP as deeply uninspiring. He recalled the mass influx into Labour under Corbyn as a major step forward for the working class, but lamented that the Labour left squandered the opportunity. Momentum became hollow, groups like the Labour Representation Committee did little, and Corbyn himself presided over witch hunts rather than radical structural reforms and taking the war to the right and the Parliamentary Labour Party. Despite this history, Conrad argued that new opportunities to shift class forces should not be ignored: the task is to engage with the masses and to fight politically within the JCP.

Comrade Conrad criticised the conservatism of both Labour's left wing and other socialist groups during Corbyn's leadership. Organisations such as the Socialist Workers Party mocked working in committee meetings and mocked parliamentary activity. Politics, for them, is strikes and streets. The Socialist Party in England and Wales, with its Tusc project, was no better. They too refused to send members in. He saw this as emblematic of the left's inability to seize transformative moments.

## Next to nothing

The result, he noted, was that Corbynism changed next to nothing. Blair's clause four remains unaltered, rule changes were minimal and Corbyn himself urged on the 'Anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism' witch hunt to decimate the left. Thus, while the JCP should be viewed as a great opportunity, comrade Conrad warned against illusions: it is essentially a "Bonapartist movement" built around a single, rather weak, dithering and undynamic leader figure.

Comrade Conrad emphasised that the JCP is not the outcome of 800,000 people deliberating together, but of a "call by the great man". Despite being uncharismatic, Corbyn occupies the role of the Bonapartist leader around whom atomised leftwingers rally. For Conrad, the correct orientation is to treat Corbyn's or Sultana's leadership as nominal - to comply with the legal requirement for a party to have a leader, while stripping the post of real authority. The main task is to politicise the JCP and transform it into a revolutionary party based on solid programmatic foundations.



Palestine movement takes party form

A large part of the debate was devoted to amendments on how our intervention in the JCP should be organised. One point of contention was over whether we should refer to the new initiative as the JCP, the YP or something else. Carla Roberts argued that 'JCP' is confusing, since the party is not officially called that, suggesting that we should stick for now to 'Your Party' until its official name is decided. Andy Hannah warned that labelling it around Corbyn risks reinforcing a "cult of personality". Others, the majority, including comrade Conrad, saw polemical value in calling it the 'Jeremy Corbyn party' precisely as a way of highlighting its Bonapartist character.

Jack Conrad urged comrades who had jointly supported amendments to declare themselves openly as a faction, with a clear platform, rather than hiding behind technical proposals. While factions are not inherently bad, he warned against trading programmatic clarity for vague unity with others. He described those moving various amendments as risking being viewed as a "rightwing and liquidationist" faction. Why? Not least because of the proposal that "the editorial team could consider cooption and providing structured access to pages for comrades outside our ranks, always ensuring we retain full control". The "editorial team" is, in effect, the PCC, so this amounts to saying that the PCC should coopt non-CPGB members.

No potential cooptees were named. But that is clearly not a partyist way to proceed. Non-CPGB members are,

by definition, not under our discipline. And the names we suspect the comrades have in mind are, in fact, far from being co-thinkers. Indeed they are centrists who seem quite happy to have a live-and-let-live relationship with socialist-imperialists who have actively backed the 'anti-Semitism' witch hunt in the Labour Party and support our own ruling class with their 'arm, arm, arm Ukraine' line.

In reply, comrade Roberts defended the comrades' work in drafting common amendments, adding that there is no political faction: "We can say there is a 'faction for action'", but it was not at all opposed to the politics of the current PCC of the CPGB.

## Fundamental

Other comrades claimed that differences between the PCC and the group proposing the amendments are not fundamental. Comrade Anne McShane, a close CPGB supporter in Ireland, noted that the main difference seems to be timing - whether to act quickly to intervene in the JCP or wait for a fuller discussion. In my opinion, she is mistaken. The differences are more fundamental, even if the supporters of the "action faction" do not realise it. Personally I think the comrades' intention is to recruit a larger number of comrades.

A comment by comrade Roberts expressed frustration with the slow pace of the PCC and the failure of the party to become a much larger organisation: "there are people who are saying they have become politicised" by reading Mike Macnair's *Revolutionary strategy*.

Some are "treating it like a bloody Bible ... It is a bit sad, and a bit pathetic, that they won't join the CPGB."

The comrade and her co-thinkers believe that a less aggressive tone in the *Weekly Worker* and a more "movementist" approach will resolve the issue and bring significant numbers into the CPGB. Unfortunately, she is mistaken. Being inspired by a book is very different from joining and becoming a militant activist of an organisation that requires discipline, where members and supporters must follow the principles of democratic centralism, and where the weekly publication owes its reputation to presenting a coherent political line - even if many disagree with that line. The time and effort it demands are very different from contributing occasionally to some online publication with no timetable, no restrictions on content beyond a broad political direction, and no responsibility for the articles published.

The author, Mike Macnair, is, of course, a member of the PCC and supports its current line, along with the very policies some of these comrades disagree with. On the paper's style, Mike Macnair expressed himself very clearly in the aggregate:

The *Weekly Worker* because of its style choices sounds weird to the majority of the far left ... do we capitulate on this? Obviously not ... this is the common package, the common views of the far left and, going along with that, you

have the difference between what is said in public and what is said in private.

So you have internal discussion bulletins, which are fully separate from any public discussion, and it is for that reason that the majority of the far left - some of our co-thinkers and other comrades in the Marxist Unity Caucus in RS21 - think that the *Weekly Worker* has a bad culture: because it publishes internal discussions of other left organisations, because it is 'rude' about people we want to work with, people we want to be friends with. Because it insists on putting forward the CPGB's programme, and not some cut-down version adapted to particular circumstances.

In the proposed amendments, the attempt to make only a very brief reference to our programme ... and replace it with a sub-minimum programme is part of the same concept.

Here there is a fundamental difference between comrades who have been persuaded by pressure from people who are in some respects close to the CPGB, but who cling to the dominant culture of the left, saying we should water down aspects of the paper's language and culture to grow in numbers, and those who believe that would mean a denial of our politics.

During the debate Jack Conrad touched on "halfway house" parties like Podemos, Die Linke, Syriza and Rifondazione Comunista. They are, he argued, not simply left reformist, but ex-'official communist' projects that failed to deliver fundamental change. He predicted the JCP would likewise fail unless transformed into a genuine Communist Party.

## Ultimate goal

Many comrades argued that Corbyn must be criticised, not shielded. Stan Keable, for example, insisted that people must be reminded of "Corbynism first time". Hopes were raised, then dashed. He urged the left to expose illusions in Corbyn's leadership, particularly around concessions on false accusations of anti-Semitism and the subsequent witch-hunt, which weakened the movement. For comrade Keable, rebuilding the workers' movement and unions is essential, rather than chasing electoral quick wins.

The meeting voted on the proposed amendments, and the slightly amended PCC motion was passed unanimously. It was agreed we need more frequent meetings/aggregates at present, to discuss our interventions in the JCP/YP. The PCC is currently considering our approach and comrades will be kept informed.

Across the debate, certain themes recurred:

- Engagement is necessary: even if the JCP is flawed; ignoring it would be a mistake, given the scale of its support.

- Corbyn must be critiqued: blind loyalty is dangerous; his leadership is both uninspiring and structurally conservative.

- Programme before form: political clarity, not gimmicky democratic structures, is the key to building a genuine party.

Our ultimate goal is, of course, a Communist Party that can genuinely challenge capitalism, not another electoral halfway house ●

# Make the party now!

Resolution unanimously agreed at the August 24 aggregate of CPGB members and invited supporters

**1.** Some 800,000 people have signed up to Your Party, otherwise known as the Jeremy Corbyn Party. Even if only a quarter become members, that is a very considerable force. Effectively, what we are seeing is the pro-Palestine movement taking party form - something we communists have long called for and very much welcome.

**2.** As a mass opposition party - that actively encourages and relies on the self-activity of its members - the JCP gives the left a real chance to fundamentally change things in Britain. The balance of forces can be radically shifted in favour of the working class. Achieving such a positive outcome is, however, only possible if we have bold, genuinely transformative, political goals.

**3.** At present, too much of the left is mired in narrow-minded conservatism/economism, and/or it is simply fearful of its own shadow. Every organisation, apart from the irredeemably sectarian, has told its members to sign up. Nevertheless, typically, the aim is simply to win the next round of recruits for the confessional sect - that and promoting this, that or the other extraordinarily limited pet project. Eg, the SWP seems to want little more than a loose electoral alliance based on a minimalist set of minimal demands. The SPEW is no better. Though it has put the Tusc coalition on the back burner for the moment, it is still committed to the principle of federalism and the futile aim of a Labour Party mark two. This sees it calling for trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party and affiliate to the JCP. If that happened - though it is highly unlikely - it would be a disaster. Union bloc votes would see the JCP yanked to the right and lead to nothing more than yet another round of demoralisation. Not that we dismiss the Labour Party as a site of struggle. It remains, no matter how attenuated, a bourgeois workers' party. The JCP should not be seeking an electoral alliance with the Greens (James Schneider has called for joint primaries to choose candidates). Instead, we should seek positive ways to support and challenge the Labour left, not least from within the affiliated trade unions.

**4.** Others on the left, usually sects of one, see only the negative side of the larger organised left groups. Various devices are thereby lighted upon, or are hatched anew, in the attempt to either keep them out or to neutralise them once they are in. Some, like Tony Greenstein, have called for bans and proscriptions. That would mean a witch-hunt from day one. The same effectively applies to Anticapitalist Resistance and calls for 'speech controls' to prevent the 'ultra-left' raising 'crazy' demands such as a popular militia or the communist programme for revolutionary change. Another guarantee, if implemented, of disaster.

**5.** With the same essential view in mind, Zarah Sultana has called for an OMOV Zoomocracy, where generally passive members vote on chosen issues from the comfort of their homes. Meanwhile, some like Ed Griffiths and Max Shanly recommend sortition: ie, decision-making by randomly chosen juries. Any such arrangements, if institutionalised, would serve to



**Zarah Sultana: calls for OMOV Zoomocracy**

lower the political culture of the JCP to the average and put effective political power into the hands of a self-appointed elite, who get to choose or frame the questions. Once again, the result would be a disaster - this time of the kind that wrecked Momentum (note, at the prompting of John McDonnell, Diane Abbott and Jeremy Corbyn).

**6.** We oppose all attempts to silence or marginalise the left in the JCP. We favour a culture of open, honest and robust debate. No compromise on this can be permitted. We also reject 'codes of conduct', which - no matter the reasons for establishing them - restrict free speech and are almost inevitably used to silence those with minority views on important political questions.

**7.** Our party requires democratic structures at all levels. Branches must be free to elect their own committees and delegates to regional and national conferences. A democratic party requires the right to form temporary or permanent factions and political platforms. Our officers at all levels should be elected, accountable and recallable by the relevant party committee. The same applies to our councillors and MPs. They should represent and be accountable to the party, not their conscience or their atomised constituents. They should be paid no more than the average wage of a skilled worker, with the rest of their salary going to the party. The party leader/s, required to comply with electoral law, should be elected by the party leadership and only have a symbolic and nominal role. We oppose bonapartist leaders and leadership cults.

committee. Choose election candidates. Establish online and print publications. Make the party now!

**9.** While organisational structures are important, politics are vital.

**10.** We agree with, and will seek to work closely with, those who want a complete break with Labourism, broad frontism and all varieties of reformism. Historically, not only has Labourism predictably failed to produce socialism: the halfway houses, such as Die Linke, Podemos, Syriza and Respect, have proved next to useless too. The same has to be said of Corbynism and Corbyn's *capitulationist* leadership of the Labour Party between 2015 and 2020. Given escalating trade wars, the climate crisis, the bloodbath in Ukraine, genocide in Gaza and the danger of the US-China conflict culminating in a generalised nuclear exchange, humanity faces a stark choice: barbarism or socialism.

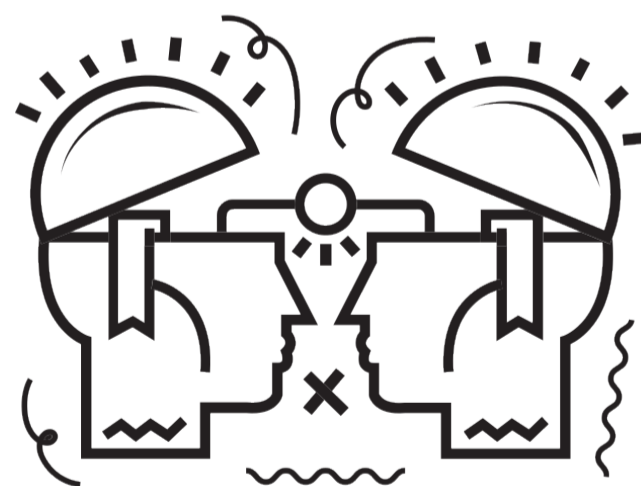
**11.** Therefore, we openly seek to transform the JCP into a Communist Party. Fundamentally that means equipping the JCP with a Marxist minimum-maximum programme. The minimum programme is the maximum we can achieve under capitalist conditions and the minimum we require if the JCP is to enter or form a government; eg, abolish the monarchy and the House of Lords, a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, Irish unity, replace the standing army with a popular militia, oppose all imperialist wars, alliances and occupations, proportional representation, go beyond carbon neutral, free movement of labour, work at full trade union rates of pay, abolish anti-trade union laws, health care for all, genuine equality for women, end discrimination against sexual minorities. With state power, albeit in the form of a semi-state, secured, the maximum programme of transitioning to full communism and the principle of 'from each according to their ability

and to each according to their needs' begins. Something which, of course, has to be international in scope. There can be no local or national socialism.

**12.** Towards that end we shall promote political education: official/unofficial, local/national, online/face-to-face. We shall combine this approach with drawing sharp lines of political

demarcation. Immediately, that means establishing a firm line against those who favour, or who are soft on, Zionism. In terms of basic political economy, Israel is a genocidal project. The same goes for those who side with our own ruling class when it comes to the Ukraine war. Such a process of differentiation brings clarity and strength ●

## Online Communist Forum



Sunday August 31 5pm

**Your Party - what should the left be saying and doing about the first steps to the promised foundation conference in November?**

**Max Shanly debates Jack Conrad**

Use this link to register:  
[communistparty.co.uk/ocf](http://communistparty.co.uk/ocf)

Organised by CPGB: [communistparty.co.uk](http://communistparty.co.uk) and  
Labour Party Marxists: [www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk](http://www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk)  
For further information, email Stan Keable at  
[Secretary@labourpartymarxists.org.uk](mailto:Secretary@labourpartymarxists.org.uk)

A selection of previous Online Communist Forum talks can be viewed at: [youtube.com/c/CommunistPartyofGreatBritain](https://youtube.com/c/CommunistPartyofGreatBritain)

## SOCIETY

# Class composition in a snapshot

Britain is a very large offshore financial centre with a moderately sized productive economy attached to it. What does this mean for class and class consciousness? Mike Macnair completes his two-part study

Last week I attempted to make a very rough assessment of the relative sizes of social classes in the UK analysed in Marxist terms - that is, in terms of the relations of class members to wages, rents and profits.<sup>1</sup> This week I approach the problem from a different angle. I begin with what people do for a living - drawn from the Office for National Statistics 'Jobs' data for March 2025.<sup>2</sup>

This dataset finds just above 37 million jobs - significantly more than the data used last week, probably because it counts jobs (reported by employers) rather than self-reported workers, so includes large numbers of part-time jobs. The data is classified into 20 heads, some of which involve rather arbitrary linkages: for example, "Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply" or "Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles". Others are so general as to have limited informative value: for example, "Professional scientific and technical activities" or "Administrative and support service activities".

Having noted the limits of the categories: the largest sector is "Human health and social work activities" with over 5.1 million jobs (13.9%). Next comes "Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles" with 4.7 million (12.7%).<sup>3</sup>

Below 10% of jobs, but above 5%, are seven categories. "Professional scientific and technical activities" has 3.5 million (9.5%). The primary common element of this category is 'social status': it includes lawyers, accountants, corporate head offices and management consultants, architects, civil engineers, scientific and social-scientific researchers, advertising and market research, specialist design consultants, professional photographers, translators, environmental consultants, quantity surveyors and related professions, and vets.<sup>4</sup>

"Education" has over 3.1 million (8.4%). "Administrative and support service activities" has just over three million (8.1%). This miscellaneous category includes vehicle, machinery and household goods leasing; intellectual property licensing; employment agencies; travel agencies; private security and private investigation; office cleaning and other forms of office support; call centres; trade shows; landscaping; debt factoring and related activities.

"Manufacturing" has 2.6 million (7%); "Accommodation and food service activities" (in other formulations in news stories, 'the hospitality industry') has the same approximate number and percentage. "Construction" has 2.25 million (6%); and "Transport and storage" 1.9 million, just above 5%.

Below 5%, but above 1%, are "Public administration and defence; compulsory social security" with 1.74 million or 4.7%;<sup>5</sup> "Information and communication" (1.6 million, 4.4%); "Financial and insurance activities" (1.17 million, 3.16%); "Arts, entertainment and recreation" (1.15 million, 3.1%). "Other services" has 984,000, 2.66%. This category includes employment by membership organisations, including trade unions, and by churches; ICT and household goods repairs; and various services such as laundry and dry-cleaning, hairdressing, funeral services, etc. "Real estate activities" has 731,000 (2%).

At 1% or below are "Agriculture, forestry and fishing" (348,000, 1%);



William Hogarth 'Prentices at their looms' (1747)

"Water supply, sewerage, waste and remediation activities" (248,000, 0.67%); "Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply" (139,000, 0.38%); "Private households" (primarily domestic servants) (61,000, 0.16%),<sup>6</sup> and "Mining and quarrying" (51,000, 0.4%).

### Implications

This data has not passed without recent leftwing comment. *Notes From Below's* 2022 pamphlet, *Class composition in Britain*, though mainly based on the group's 'signature method' of workers' inquiries (the responses are not numerous enough to be representative, so as to base any serious argument on them), contains a useful chapter on the LFS and ONS Jobs data, displaying what has changed since 1981.<sup>7</sup> The solution offered is, of course, *a priori* the 'survey method' as a road to organising.

"Raymond (Haringey)" has a much shorter piece in the Socialist Workers Party's *Pre-Conference Bulletin* No3 for November 2024, looking at changes over 1971, 1984, 1995, 2008, 2023 from the Business Survey of Employment, at occupational groups in 1994-95, 2009-10 and 2023-24 using the LFS, and at nominal and real wage movements 2009-23. Union density has fallen, while wages have also fallen, and a survey by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development found 25% of respondents had experienced workplace conflict. His proposed response is in the first place to recognise that "The idea that working class revolution is the answer to the crises [meaning, chronic problems - MM] they [protestors] see requires a fair degree of abstraction. It's not like 1972 when the power of workers was plain to see."

Secondly, his proposal is to carry the SWP's political priorities - eg, Palestine - into the workplace, "not necessarily through the unions or by union members, as neither exist in their workplace, but by providing the materials and guidance for building workplace solidarity groups".

In essence, both comrades recognise that the conditions that supported the mass syndicalism of around 1970 are gone. *NFB's* solution is at the end of the day to do consciousness-raising work among

workers in the *currently* dominant employment sectors: their pamphlet contains chapters on healthcare, education, the charity sector (this seems to be merely 'where we have contacts' rather than actually a major sector of employment) and retail, and hope that syndicalism will reappear. SWPer Raymond's proposal is merely to extend what the SWP is already doing to 'workplace' groups.

At one level what the data shows us is merely the common observation that services have displaced manufacturing - or, in the bourgeois economists' and geographers' bullshit, that the economy naturally moves from dominance of the "primary" sector (agriculture and mining - today in Britain 1.4% of employment) or the "secondary" sector (construction and manufacturing - 13%), to the "tertiary" sector (services).<sup>8</sup>

I say "the bourgeois economists' and geographers' bullshit" because in the *early* development of capitalism services - transportation and related finance - dominated the "secondary" sector. Further, the alleged shift depends on methodological nationalism. It is certainly true that in some industries high levels of capital intensity and correspondingly high levels of labour productivity radically reduce employment *within the country*. In others, however, production is 'offshored' and production within the country replaced by imports. At the level of the closed economy - which is the globe - this aspect is *not* a transition that marginalises primary and secondary sectors in favour of the tertiary.<sup>9</sup> And, indeed, locally, deindustrialisation as a result of offshoring produces large areas dominated not by the tertiary sector, but by mere decline and welfare dependency.

Secondly, however, the picture shows part - only part - of why trade union density has declined and the morale of the working class as a class is at a relatively low ebb. USDAW has 360,000 members, a membership density of 8%. It has been recognised all the way back to the 1950s that union organising in retail is seriously difficult due to small workplaces and numerous employers. The same is true of the hospitality industry. The reorganisation of employment since the 1980s has meant not only that retail is a higher proportion of

employment, but also that this form, of small workplaces and numerous employers (though behind the numerous employers stand a much smaller number of shadowy 'private equity' operators and so on), has been reproduced across the private sector.

### Productive

In itself, this is merely a return to the patterns of before 'Fordist' mass production, World War II and the cold war. But there is an additional demoralising element. Talking About Socialism comrades' draft programme for the Forging Communist Unity discussion insisted that workers produced all the goods in the world. CPGB comrades polemicalised against this as a mistake, among other reasons because it attempts to marginalise micro-businesses and family farms.<sup>10</sup> It has nonetheless to be said that the working class's self-consciousness of its own *dominant* role in production has been an important element of class consciousness. Going back to Marx's late summary of 'Marxist' politics in the 1880 *Programme of the Parti Ouvrier*, the core claim is:

That the emancipation of the productive class ("*la classe productive*" in French) is that of all human beings without distinction of sex or race;

That the producers ("*les producteurs*") can be free only when they are in possession of the means of production (land, factories, ships, banks, credit);

That there are only two forms under which the means of production can belong to them:

(1) the individual form, which has never existed in a general state and which is increasingly eliminated by industrial progress;

(2) the collective form, the material and intellectual elements of which are constituted by the very development of capitalist society;<sup>11</sup>

Self-consciousness of *being the producers* of goods and services that people need, that society needs, is a substantial element in the basis of working class political, as well as trade union, self- and class- consciousness. Domestic servants are now marginal, but in the 17th-19th centuries were very numerous; they have never given rise to persisting trade unions, where building workers did so as early as the 1420s.<sup>12</sup> People who live by begging or small-scale theft are both propertyless and oppressed by the society - but, again, have not tended to form effective collective organisations.<sup>13</sup>

What does 'productive' mean for this purpose? Marx pretty clearly in his political-economic work treated "productive" work as work that produced profit for capital.<sup>14</sup> However, in the present context, of "productive" versus "unproductive" as affecting class-consciousness, the mere fact of producing profit for capital is not enough. What is involved is the sense of producing something useful to society. The 'something' can be a service (eg, hairdressing, teaching or medical treatment) as much as a physical product; but it does need to be a use value.

People in managerial positions include *some* who contribute to the production process - for a single example, quantity surveyors in construction - but also many in one or another sort of what David Graeber called "bullshit jobs".<sup>15</sup> The morale issue - can I think of myself and my fellow-workers in the same sort of job

as doing something useful to society? - poses itself not only in relation to these, but also, for example, in relation to quite a lot of workers in retail (compare Gerald Ratner's 1991 comment that products sold by his high street jewellery chain were "total crap";<sup>16</sup> how many more humble retail workers must have similar opinions about what they are selling?<sup>17</sup>).

A secondary issue is that a job may be *productive* of use values, but ones supplied only to the exploiting classes. For example, gamekeepers, or workers in firms producing executive jets or Lamborghini sports cars, are *dependent on the extraction of profits elsewhere*, and this is perfectly visible to them.

This question is larger than at first sight appears. The *Notes From Below* comrades draw attention in their pamphlet (p8) to the fact that the Covid lockdown exposed a difference between work that *had* to be carried on, in spite of the risk of infection, and work that could be 'furloughed'. (I noted last week the related point that lockdown exposed the large extent of 'sham self-employment'.) What is involved is *degrees* of utility of use-values. For example, it is indispensable that food should continue to be supplied. It is agreeable, but not *necessary*, that there should be coffee shops (and so on).

The consequence is that we need to try to 'unpack' the statistics, starting with the core necessities (food, clothing, housing, power/fuel, water/sewage provision, childcare, health services ...) and derivative necessities (transport, warehousing, sufficient education and training for skills to operate these ...) to ask the question, *how the UK population gets these*, before moving on to the 'agreeables': because it is the *material* surplus product over 'necessities' that allows for the 'agreeables', as well as for the unproductive jobs. Some are domestically produced; some are imported; how are the imports paid for?

As with the discussion last week, all I am capable of is to attempt very rough approximations and impressions, and it is to be hoped that someone else can do a better job. In addition, the sheer range of relevant information means that it is only possible to discuss a limited sample of sectors even at this very superficial level.

### Imports

In 2020, the UK imported 46% of the food it consumed.<sup>18</sup> The source of this information, the *UK food security report 2021* (updated to 2024), is a mine of detailed information. It is unlikely that there is much space for further expansion of UK food production, since 71% of UK land is in use for agriculture; the largest element is grazing for livestock, but a lot of land used for grazing (Scottish and Welsh hilltops, and so on) could not be practically diverted to arable. The UK has not been self-sufficient in food since around 1750, when the population was under eight million.<sup>19</sup> (Tractors, incidentally, are mainly imported.<sup>20</sup>)

Less than 3% of clothing worn in the UK is domestically manufactured.<sup>21</sup> This again has a long history. The rise of the British cotton industry, starting in the 18th century, was already a shift into import-dependence, since cotton will not grow in Britain.

The construction industry is by its nature primarily domestic. However, building *materials* are extensively

imported: as of the fourth quarter 2023, £5.3 billion in imports, and £2.05 billion in exports - the imports principally electrical gear and timber; the exports principally electrical gear and paints.<sup>22</sup> Construction also depends on immigration for workers, with 10% of construction workers immigrants as of 2019.<sup>23</sup>

Water and power are both low-employment sectors because of very high levels of production automation. Water and sewage is notorious for its present problems. Water treatment involves the use of chlorine, which is partly dependent on imports.<sup>24</sup> As to waste, which falls under this head in the jobs statistics, it should be noted that the UK is said to be the world's third highest waste exporter.<sup>25</sup> Power and fuel involves substantial importing. Domestic oil production was down to 31 million tons in 2024, while net imports (imports minus domestic production) rose to 20 million - mainly from the USA.<sup>26</sup> Gas is also dominated by imports.<sup>27</sup> In the second quarter 2024 20% of electricity demand was met by imports from Europe.<sup>28</sup>

Like construction, health work is by its nature primarily domestic. But it is inescapably engaged in international trade. Pharmaceuticals is one area in which UK exports outweigh imports.<sup>29</sup> As far as medical instruments are concerned, exports of £2.5 billion are outweighed by imports of £4.6 billion.<sup>30</sup> The NHS is, like construction, dependent on immigrant workers, with around 18% of NHS staff not holding British nationality as of June 2023.<sup>31</sup>

I have limited these examples to core necessities. I can add as a mere observation that in transport, road transport is (obviously enough) dependent on oil imports; and car exports 2024-25 amounted to £26.9 billion, car imports to £45 billion. Imports of rail equipment exceed exports by £5 billion as of 2023-24. There are a very wide range of imports beyond these sectors.

## Exports

How are the imports paid for? UK trade in the 12 months ending in June 2025 showed £888.5 billion in exports and £931.7 billion in imports - a deficit of £43.2 billion. Exports of goods were £360.1 billion and of services £528.4 billion. Top categories of goods exported were diesel electrical generator sets (£34 billion), cars (£30 billion), medical and pharmaceuticals (£24.5 billion), non-ferrous metals, primarily from scrap recycling (£15 billion), and aircraft (in reality mainly aircraft parts - £12.4 billion).<sup>32</sup>

The top category of services exported were "other business services" at £191.8 billion. This category "comprises professional and management consulting services, including legal, accounting, management consulting, public relations, advertising and market research; technical and trade-related business services, including architectural, engineering, and scientific services; and research and development services". Second is financial services at £107 billion. Then some way behind come "travel services" at £69.3 billion; IT services at £46.7 billion; and transport services at £33.8 billion.

These figures are showing us a picture in which goods imports are primarily paid for by the supply of financial and management 'services'. Putting architecture, engineering and scientific services into this category is fairly plainly a 'cover': for example, architecture's export income was £524 million or 0.3% of the total in the category.<sup>33</sup>

Even so, there is still a £43.2 billion deficit. This is also reflected in a different form in balance of payments deficit - rather lower. The ONS

website comments that:

A current account deficit, which the UK has experienced each year since 1984, places the UK as a net borrower with the rest of the world. This indicates that overall expenditure in the UK exceeds national income. The UK must attract net financial inflows to finance its current (and capital) account deficit. This can be achieved through either disposing of overseas assets to overseas investors, or accruing liabilities with the rest of the world.<sup>34</sup>

Put another way, the UK is (a) selling assets to overseas investors (like someone who has capital assets, but is making persistent losses, who sells his home furniture, and so on, in order to stave off short-term bankruptcy); and (b) borrowing on a large scale. The borrowing on a large scale is feasible because the UK is an attractive place to 'park' money, for two reasons: low taxation and light regulation; and in addition because the UK 'offers' unwillingness to devalue the pound by borrowing further than the level acceptable to financial markets. It was a threat to break this last requirement that destroyed Liz Truss's government in 2022.

## Subsidies

The other difficulty with the perception of jobs as productive is the extent of public subsidy, which indirectly gives us the same picture of dependence on finance.

Some examples: agriculture is subsidised with about £2 billion<sup>35</sup> and in addition is exempted from business rates. The freehold-mortgage housing regime was subsidised from the 1940s by mortgage interest relief in the tax system. As soon as mortgage interest relief was tapered out, domestic property ceased to be revalued for local tax purposes (last valuation 1991).<sup>36</sup> Since average house prices have quadrupled since 1991, the result is that central government funding paid to local authorities to keep council tax down subsidises homeowners (as mortgage interest relief did before it). This subsidy indirectly supports demand to the benefit of developers. Private landlordism is subsidised by housing benefit - £26.8 billion in 2021-22.<sup>37</sup>

The water companies were sold off free of debt (allowing the asset-strippers to load them up with debt to pay themselves back) and continue to be subsidised, and - as is clear with Thames Water - the government is 'on the hook' for their insolvency. Power supply is subject to a ferociously complex pseudo-market, whose purpose is to prevent gas-fired power stations going bust.<sup>38</sup> Transport is subsidised to the tune of around £20 billion in revenue and £20 billion in capital expenditure in 2024-25 estimates.<sup>39</sup>

A more complicated story is that of benefits - as of 2023, £265 billion in the budget, with 22.6 million or 33% of population in receipt.<sup>40</sup> These are, of course, in a certain sense for our benefit as pensioners, as the sick, as housing benefit recipients, and so on. But, just as housing benefit is a subsidy to landlords, if we ask what would happen if benefits suddenly stopped being paid altogether, the answer is that before the death of lots of people, a great many small businesses who have significant numbers of customers on benefits would go bust, as would a good many employers who rely on paying wages below the reproduction cost of labour-power on the basis that the employees will be able to claim benefits. So benefits are not merely a subsidy to (smaller) businesses relative to what a pure free-market regime would produce.

Where do the funds for these

subsidies come from? The answer is partly taxation and partly government borrowing. Borrowing I have already discussed. As for taxes, the Office for Budget Responsibility's 2025-26 forecasts are available 'tax by tax'.<sup>41</sup> Aggregating these produces £650.2 billion of income taxes (income tax and national insurance; capital gains tax, which is actually a special lower rate of income tax on speculation in stocks and shares and in land; onshore corporation tax; North Sea oil and gas taxes; 'bank levy'); £253.6 billion in consumption taxes, (mainly VAT, but there are eight others); and £106.8 billion in property taxes (council tax, business rates, stamp-duty land tax, inheritance tax). There is also "other income" (for example, "interest earned on its assets, such as foreign exchange reserves and student loans, while public corporations generate some income") - in 2024-25 £125.5 billion.<sup>42</sup> The income from consumption taxes obviously depends on the maintenance of domestic demand,<sup>43</sup> and therefore on the subsidy regimes.

The Revenue's figures for 2020-21 show that the top 50% of income tax payers were liable for 90.5% of the total tax paid, and the top 1% were liable for 29.1%.<sup>44</sup> In other words, the British state already does 'tax the rich' (and in 2020-21 under a Tory government). It just does so less than other countries, thereby attracting 'hot money'. The City of London claims, plausibly, that financial services in 2023 contributed £110.2 billion in taxation.<sup>45</sup> In FYE 2022 "London raised the most revenue (£194.3 billion) and the South East raised the second largest (£148.8 billion)."<sup>46</sup>

As with the story of imports and exports, the story of the subsidies and their funding is one of the UK productive economy being supported by financial and related managerial and professional services sold abroad, and by sale of capital assets to overseas investors and borrowing. The subsidies produce multiplier effects in the economy, but are based ultimately on the inflow of revenue from London skimming on overseas.

## Trends

As I said at the beginning of last week's article, what I am offering is no more than a snapshot of UK class composition in the mid-2020s; the radically changing world order means that trends cannot be projected forward with any confidence.

I posed at the end of that article the question of how the UK economy could support large unproductive classes (managers and petty rentiers). The first part of this article posed the same question in relation to productive and unproductive sectors. I asked how far this was merely an effect of the absolute productivity of labour increasing (the argument of believers in natural movement from primary to secondary, to tertiary sectors), and how far it was a matter of the 'offshoring' of material production. The evidence of the role of imports and the trade balance, and of the system of subsidies and tax income, is that it is to a considerable extent the latter.

The UK is at the end of the day a very large offshore financial centre (and coordinator of a network of offshore financial centres<sup>47</sup>) with a moderately sized productive economy attached to it. The inflow of surplus value from the offshore financial and related operations does not in an absolute sense pay for the productive economy. But it inputs subsidies to productive activities, both directly and by demand multiplier effects, which allow them to continue in spite of the fact that they are internationally

uncompetitive.

This context imposes savage limits on the policy of British governments - seen in the failure of Liz Truss and in the 'immobilism' of both Tory and Labour governments. As far as the working class is concerned, the problem is that - as I have argued before - it is hard for it to become fully conscious as a 'class for itself' without at least symbolic internationalism.<sup>48</sup> This is all the more the case for the British working class, precisely because the extent to which the class is enmeshed in structures of subsidy built on British financial income makes it hard to self-perceive as "the producers".

The return of the mass syndicalism of the 1940s-70s is not impossible, but it is unlikely. That is not to say that there will be no unions or strikes; merely that circumstances have changed adversely to this sort of struggle. Political action of the working class can, potentially, mobilise very large numbers; but to pose a real strategy it will need to break with the illusions of 'national roads to socialism' and of the 'law of uneven development' and national revolutions 'maturing in their own time' in a country utterly dependent on international production.

mike.macnair@weeklyworker.co.uk

## Notes

1. 'Class composition in a snapshot', *Weekly Worker* August 21 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1549/class-composition-in-a-snapshot).
2. See www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/workforcejobsbyindustryjobs02. The Labour Force Survey data (www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/employmentbyindustryemp13), though a quarter more recent, is plainly unreliable and acknowledged as such at the site.
3. Motor vehicle repair is around 246,000 or 5% of the total in the category: www.reportlinker.com/dataset. The only justification I can see for its inclusion is that car dealerships commonly offer both sales and service/repairs, so that it would be inconvenient to disaggregate sales and service employees; however, this is also true of ICT and domestic appliance repairs, which are classified among "other services".
4. The classificatory structure in general is available at www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/ukscic2007.
5. A footnote (un)helpfully tells us: "This series is not exclusively a public sector series, as it includes some private sector jobs." It appears from the general rules (see *UK standard industrial classification of economic activities 2007* (see the pdf at note 3 above), that the point is that the administration of private pension schemes is included, because participation is required by the state on social security grounds. It should follow from the application of the point that forms of compulsory liability insurance (motor, employers) would also be included. But they are not; in reality, this is an arbitrary inclusion.
6. The definition also includes what remains of smallholding production for self-sufficiency, reflecting the fact that this is a common EU scheme of categories. Most of the very small numbers of UK smallholdings are market-facing, not for pure self-sufficiency: www.gov.uk/government/publications/73rd-annual-report-to-parliament-on-smallholdings-in-england/73rd-annual-report-to-parliament-on-smallholdings-in-england.
7. Online at notesfrombelow.org/issue/class-composition-project.
8. About 29 million hits on Google for "primary secondary tertiary sectors". "Quaternary" and "quinary" sectors are obvious bullshit, because looking up only a few hits shows that there is no agreement among promoters of the categories on what is part of either of them.
9. See the recent and very useful discussion by Michael Roberts: theextinction.wordpress.com/2025/08/14/intangibles-does-it-change-things.
10. Discussion, with quotations, in J Conrad, 'Nature's goods and services' *Weekly Worker* July 24 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1548/natures-goods-and-services).
11. www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/05/parti-ouvrier.htm; French from materialisme-dialectique.com/le-programme-marxiste-de-jules-guesde.
12. Domestic servants: a short-lived example is discussed by L Schwartz, "What we think is needed is a union of domestics such as the miners have": the domestic workers' union of Great Britain and Ireland 1908-14'. *Twentieth Century British History* vol 25 (2013), pp173-98. This, of course, existed at

the high point of British syndicalism before World War I. Building workers: shown by the very early anti-union law, the Confederacies of Masons Act 1425.

13. 'Beggars' guilds' appear to be mainly fiction.

14. Eg, elaborate discussion in the 1864 draft chapter 6 of *Capital*, at www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1864/economic/ch02b.htm. There is a very extensive literature on the issue, which I do not propose to explore here. It cannot have this meaning in the *Programme of the Parti Ouvrier*, because "the producers" can be emancipated either through peasant and artisan possession (dying out) or through collective appropriation of the means of production (communism), and the production of surplus value for capitalists is relevant to neither. The underlying point is that, in Marx's political economy writings, the object of study is the source of surplus value; hence a narrow use of "productive" adapted to this question.

15. D Graeber *Bullshit jobs: a theory* London 2018.

16. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerald\_Ratner.

17. Googling "selling a shit product" produces 57.6 million hits ...

18. www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2021/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2021-theme-2-uk-food-supply-sources.

19. Self-sufficiency: www.agr.kyushu-u.ac.jp/foodsci/4\_paper\_Colman.pdf. Population: 6m in England (www.campop.geog.cam.ac.uk/blog/2024/10/31/urban-society); 1.26 million in Scotland (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographic\_history\_of\_Scotland); 500,000 in Wales (www.bbc.co.uk/wales/history/sites/themes/guide/ch13\_early\_modern\_wales.shtml), making a total of 7.76 million. This, of course, excludes the Six Counties.

20. blog.howdeninsurance.co.uk/tractors-where-are-they-manufactured.

21. www.fashioncapital.co.uk/insights/the-state-of-uk-fashion-manufacturing-a-sector-poised-for-resurgence.

22. www.gov.uk/government/statistics/building-materials-and-components-statistics-february-2024/construction-building-materials-commentary-february-2024.

23. www.citb.co.uk/media/4utpt25/migration\_uk\_construction\_2020\_summary.pdf.

24. www.wcs-group.co.uk/wcs-blog/one-stroke-at-a-time-addressing-the-chlorine-shortage-for-uk-pools.

25. www.letsrecycle.com/news/uk-is-third-highest-exporter-of-waste-says-cleanhub.

26. assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/688a0827a1f859994409228/UKES\_2025\_Chapter\_3.pdf.

27. assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/688a0938a1f85999440922e/UKES\_2025\_Chapter\_4.pdf.

28. www.drax.com/press\_release/power-surge-uk-spends-250-million-each-month-importing-record-volumes-of-electricity-from-europe.

29. www.abpi.org.uk/international-trade-and-international-trade.

30. oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-product/medical-instruments/reporter/gbr.

31. commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7783.

32. This and the next paragraph from www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-trade-in-numbers/uk-trade-in-numbers-web-version.

33. committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/124578/pdf.

34. www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/balanceofpayments/bulletins/balanceofpayments/januarytomarch2025.

35. capreform.eu/agricultural-policy-reform-in-england-and-the-2024-uk-budget.

36. ifs.org.uk/sites/default/files/output\_url\_files/Summary-Revaluation-and-reform-bringing-council-tax-in-England-into-the-21st-century.pdf.

37. www.bigissue.com/news/housing/housing-benefits-government-spending.

38. assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67e569c66078e12e2c8c9b5d/Final\_report.pdf.

39. researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2025-0139/CDP-2025-0139.pdf. This omits road policing and non-trunk road repair costs charged to local government, and road accident costs charged to the health budget.

40. www.bbc.co.uk/news/explainers-63129705.

41. obr.uk/forecasts-in-depth/tax-by-tax-spend-by-spend.

42. obr.uk/forecasts-in-depth/brief-guides-and-explainers/public-finance.

43. VAT on exports is generally zero-rated, while on intermediate production it will just be transmitted into consumer prices.

44. www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-tax-liabilities-statistics-tax-year-2020-to-2021-to-tax-year-2023-to-2024-summary-statistics.

45. www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/supporting-businesses/economic-research/research-publications/total-tax-contribution-of-uk-financial-services.

46. www.ons.gov.uk/economy/governmentpublicsectorandtaxes/publicsectorfinance/articles/countryandregionalpublicsectorfinances/financialyearending2022.

47. N Shaxson *Treasure islands* London 2012.

48. *Revolutionary strategy* London 2008, pp138-40, 154-55; and the last part of t-k-p.net/yurukoglu/lectures/fortress\_the\_west.pdf (2006).

## ORWELL

# The road from Eton College

Seventy-five years after his death and eighty years after the first publication of *Animal farm*, Paul Flowers introduces his seven-part exploration of George Orwell's life, works and politics

"Have you read this book? You must read it, sir. Then you will know why we must drop the atom bomb on the Bolsheviks!" With these words, a blind, miserable news-vendor recommended to me 1984 in New York, a few weeks before Orwell's death. Poor Orwell, could he ever imagine that his own book would become so prominent an item in the programme of Hateweek?<sup>1</sup>

George Orwell was a radical socialist until he died. Yet his last two novels, *Animal farm* and *1984*, are far more famous for having been used as cold war propaganda. Isaac Deutscher's tale is a poignant example of this. In the decades since his death in 1950, Orwell has suffered the indignity of being probably the only unrepentant radical socialist who has been championed by large numbers of conservative and liberal thinkers, and whose works have been regularly used to oppose the very ideas he fought for until his death.<sup>2</sup> This extended essay aims to explain this paradox.

Like many who went through the British educational system in the 1960s and early 1970s, I read both *Animal farm* and *1984* as part of an O Level syllabus. Although Orwell was described as a socialist, the books were interpreted in an anti-socialist manner, that any attempt to introduce socialism would lead inexorably to 'Big Brother' and brutal interrogations in the 'Ministry of Love'. Only when I became a socialist in the late 1970s did I start to learn the truth about Orwell.

This is the first instalment of a seven-part Marxist analysis of Orwell's politics. This opening part investigates Orwell's conception of socialism, as it formed in the 1930s, and the basis of his hostility towards Stalinism. The second part shows how these two factors were developed by his experiences in the Spanish Civil War. The third part looks at the way in which he attempted to develop a strategy for socialism that could prevent a drift into totalitarianism.

The fourth and fifth parts investigate Orwell's *Animal farm* and *1984*, showing how the novels have been interpreted, and explaining how they could be used as anti-socialist propaganda. The sixth appraises Orwell's conception of totalitarianism, and asks how well it has endured, particularly in the light of the collapse of the Soviet bloc. The seventh part looks at the revelations about Orwell's links with the foreign office's Information Research Department (the anti-communist propaganda organisation set up by Clement Attlee's Labour government in 1948), and relates this to his overall political approach.

## Anti-Stalinism

Although Orwell's experiences as an imperial policeman in Burma were to propel him towards radicalism and a lifelong antipathy towards the power of the state over individuals, his first overtly political work was *The road to Wigan Pier*. Published in 1937, the first part of the book is a series of vignettes of the industrial north of England. The second part is a credo of Orwellian socialism, and there are clear indications of his feelings and fears that would assume a full-blown dimension in *Animal farm* and *1984*.

The book outraged many, including its publisher, Victor Gollancz, by its scathing attack on the socialist movement in Britain.



A prolific writer

Amidst the well-known epithets - "nancy poets", "vegetarians with wilting beards", "earnest ladies in sandals", "every fruit-juice drinker, nudist, sandal-wearer, sex-maniac, Quaker, 'Nature Cure' quack, pacifist and feminist in England", to mention just a few - Orwell aimed a few barbs at the official communist movement, pointing to "Bolshevik commissars (half-gangster, half-gramophone)" and "shock-headed Marxists chewing polysyllables". For him, socialism in Britain no longer smelled of "revolution and the overthrow of tyrants": it reeked of "machine-worship, and the stupid cult of Russia".<sup>3</sup> Orwell's full-blooded antipathy to Stalinism - something that was most unusual during the late 1930s, when even many anti-socialist commentators had something appreciative to say about the Soviet Union - is clear.<sup>4</sup>

Orwell's hostility to Stalinism was based upon three factors. Firstly, he held all forms of socialist theory in contempt, and dismissed Marxism, stating that the left could not afford to be "a league of dialectical materialists". He showed little patience with the "doctrinaire priggishness" and "party squabbles" of the left. This was aimed at the Marxian left, with its penchant for polemics and theoretical constructs, of which the Communist Party of Great Britain was by far the largest component.<sup>5</sup>

Secondly, his description of "Bolshevik commissars" as "half-gangster, half-gramophone" was based upon his experience of those in and around the CPGB, but can also be seen as a criticism of the regime in the Soviet Union. Orwell read widely, and was acquainted with a wide range of critical writings on the USSR. He reviewed three informative books in the late 1930s on the Soviet Union and the official communist movement: namely *Assignment in utopia* by Eugene Lyons, a disillusioned American fellow-traveller; *The Communist International* by Franz Borkenau, a former member of the German Communist Party, who was to

become a friend and an influence upon him; and *Russia under Soviet rule* by Nicholas de Basily, a well-informed Russian exile.<sup>6</sup> He had also read Ante Ciliga's *The Russian enigma*,<sup>7</sup> and Max Eastman's *The end of socialism in Russia*,<sup>8</sup> and owned a sizeable collection of far-left pamphlets.<sup>9</sup> He was also in contact with a wide range of leftwing individuals, and, as anyone active on the leftwing scene will readily understand, he would have come across people's ideas - interpreted, to varying degrees of accuracy, by a third party - even if he had not actually read any of their writings.

## Industrial growth

Thirdly, he disliked the hailing of Soviet industrial growth. This was a part of his general suspicion of industrialisation. Orwell condemned the technocratic concept that 'progress' was essentially the emancipation of humanity through the development of technology and industry. He recoiled at the vision of the "huge glittering factories of glass and concrete" of the future. He recognised that the machine age was here to stay, but he was deeply uneasy about it. Industrialisation was leading inexorably to "some form of collectivism", but it need not be of a socialist form:

... it is quite easy to imagine a world society, economically collectivist - that is, with the profit principle eliminated - but with all political, military and educational power in the hands of a small caste of rulers and their bravos. That or something like it is the objective of fascism. And that, of course, is the slave state, or rather the slave world... It is against this beastly possibility that we have got to combine.<sup>10</sup>

The development of industry would be a major factor behind the rise of a collectivist ruling élite, running an *étatist* society without a profit motive. Orwell was worried that, if

the socialist movement could not win over the middle classes, they might be attracted towards such a society.<sup>11</sup>

## Ethical

Orwell's conception of socialism was essentially ethical, and he summed it up in the words, "justice and liberty". Central to it was the call for decency in one's political activities, and he subsequently harshly condemned leftwingers who wrote off "common decency" as mere "bourgeois morality".<sup>12</sup> Orwell's socialism was, as Warren Wagar stated (citing Julian Symons), "of the heart rather than the slide-rule", and Wagar made the accurate observation that Orwell was amongst the socialists who were "drawn to the cause by compassion or guilt or nostalgia for simpler ages, rather than by hard-boiled socio-economic analysis and theory".<sup>13</sup> Orwell's biographer, Bernard Crick, added that he "demanded publicly that his own side should live up to their principles, both in their lives and in their policies, should respect the liberty of others, and tell the truth" - a stance which he considered to be "remarkable".<sup>14</sup>

Orwell called upon leftwingers to unite and build a socialist party as "a league of the oppressed against the oppressors". Here, however, he ran into a problem that was to dog him throughout his career as a socialist. Claiming that workers were predominantly concerned with the bread-and-butter issues of the day, and were not interested in socialist theory (indeed, he stated that "no genuine working man grasps the deeper implications of socialism"), he implied that workers who did educate themselves would automatically be corrupted by becoming union or Labour Party officials, or by squirming their way into the literary intelligentsia and the radical middle class - the very people whom Orwell considered were predominant in the socialist movement, and whom he deeply distrusted.<sup>15</sup>

If, however, the socialist movement was "invaded by better brains and

more common decency", then he felt that the "objectionable types" would no longer dominate it. So if the untheoretical workers could provide the "common decency", who would provide the "better brains"? It could not be the workers, because they would most likely be corrupted if they did educate themselves. Although he assumed that the leadership of any revolt would tend to be from the middle class, he considered that socialists from a bourgeois background at bottom still despised the class that they claimed to champion.<sup>16</sup>

Orwell was effectively tying a Gordian knot, and it was one which he was never able to disentangle or cut ●

## Notes

1. I Deutscher '1984: the mysticism of cruelty' *Heretics and renegades* London 1955, p50.
2. The latest in this lengthy parade is Masha Karp's *George Orwell and Russia* (London 2023); see my 'Review essay', *George Orwell studies*, 9.2, 2025: orwellsociety.com/feast-of-orwellian-writing-to-dip-into.
3. G Orwell *The road to Wigan Pier* (Harmondsworth 1983), pp30-31, 152, 160, 189-90. Orwell also took aim at those strong admirers of Stalin's Soviet Union, Sidney and Beatrice Webb and George Bernard Shaw, with their idea of socialism as "a set of reforms which 'we', the clever ones, are going to impose upon 'them', the Lower Orders" (*The road to Wigan Pier* p157).
4. The industrial growth under the five-year plans and the introduction of extensive welfare and educational measures were praised by many western academics, politicians and journalists who firmly rejected the repressive aspects of the Soviet regime. See my *The new civilisation? Understanding Stalin's Soviet Union, 1929-1941* London 2008.
5. G Orwell *The road to Wigan Pier* pp89, 195. The CPGB's membership rose steadily in the late 1930s, from 6,500 in 1935 to 17,750 in 1939; see N Branson *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1927-1941* (London, 1985) p188. This was many times the total membership of non-Stalinist Marxian groups in Britain.
6. E Lyons *Assignment in utopia* London 1938; N de Basily *Russia under Soviet rule: 20 years of Bolshevik experiment* London 1938; F Borkenau *World communism: a history of the Communist International* London 1939; Orwell's reviews appeared in *New English Weekly* on June 9 1938, September 22 1938 and January 12 1939.
7. A Ciliga *The Russian enigma* London 1940.
8. M Eastman *The end of socialism in Russia* London 1938.
9. See the list in Orwell's *Collected works* Volume 20, London 1998, pp259-86. However, Alex Zwerdling's assertion that Orwell had learnt a lot from Trotsky's *The revolution betrayed* must be treated with scepticism, because he claimed that Goldstein's 'book' in *1984* is based on it. Even a cursory glance at *The revolution betrayed* and the relevant sections of *1984* proves that this assessment is quite inaccurate (see A Zwerdling *Orwell and the left* New Haven 1978, pp86-87).
10. It is remarkable that Isaac Deutscher, with his great knowledge of Trotsky's writings, could declare that Goldstein's 'Book' is "an obvious, though not very successful, paraphrase of Trotsky's *The revolution betrayed*" (I Deutscher *Heretics and renegades* London 1955, p47). Irving Howe, who also should have known better, claimed that Goldstein's 'Book' is "clearly a replica of Trotsky's *The revolution betrayed*" (I Howe *Politics and the novel* New York 1957, p239. If anything, Goldstein's 'Book' more resembles Deutscher's strangely fatalistic, uncharacteristically un-Marxist schema of the rise of post-revolutionary elites: see I Deutscher *Stalin: a political biography* London 1949, pp173-76).
11. G Orwell *The road to Wigan Pier*, p189.
12. *Ibid* pp186-87.
13. G Orwell, 'The English people' *Collected essays, journalism and letters* Volume 3, Harmondsworth 1984, p22. Stephen Ingle correctly stated that "general principles of conduct" interested Orwell "more than political programmes" (S Ingle, 'The politics of George Orwell: a reappraisal' *Queens Quarterly* Spring 1973, p32).
14. W Wagar, 'George Orwell as political secretary of the *Zeitgeist*' in EJ Jensen (ed) *The future of 1984* (Ann Arbor, 1984), p180.
15. B Crick *George Orwell: a life* Harmondsworth 1982, pp17-18.
16. G Orwell *The road to Wigan Pier* pp154-55, 189-95.
17. *Ibid* pp44, 117, 193.

# REVIEW



# Documentary gem

Carlos Underwood (director) *No-one is illegal; every day tomorrow* limited release

**R**ecently premiering in Cardiff, *No-one is illegal; every day tomorrow* is a gem of a documentary that highlights the plight of migrants and asylum-seekers from outside the EU, as they attempt to escape poverty, war and persecution from their respective countries throughout the world. And Carlos Underwood's 90-minute showing cuts a bleak and sombre, as well as a down-to-earth and honest, portrayal of that plight, delivering an effective counterpunch to

the distorted, yet common, perception of the image and agenda of immigrants frequently cultivated by many mainstream and rightwing politicians.

"The right and the far right seek to blame the most vulnerable sectors for the mistakes of governments," Carlos told the *Weekly Worker*. "The documentary aims to show facts, real situations, so that people understand that individuals migrate, because they have no choice ... There is no 'migration crisis': there is a 'crisis

of human values'," he added.

Containing comprehensive footage of the dire conditions refugees face when attempting to cross a border, the documentary starkly highlights not only the human cost of immigration, but also the brutal repression and the use of state force to combat border movements. The plight and death of asylum-seekers at the English Channel; the daily 'clearances' of migrant camps at Calais and the removal of people from there to locations literally hundreds of miles away; the exposure of conditions in Norway's asylum detention centres - all are given prominence. Particularly noteworthy is the serious analysis given to the correctly named "massacre" of 37 immigrants in June 2022, whilst attempting to cross from Morocco into Spain via the Spanish enclave of Melilla in north Africa.

What is also commendable is the documentary's exposure of the political hypocrisy and spin lauded by politicians who claim a "responsible" management of immigration. Politicians "manipulate people with fear", Carlos states. "Migration is not a problem: the problem is having people in power like Trump, Meloni, Viktor Orbán or Sebastian Kurz ..." Footage of the likes of ex-British home secretary Priti Patel blaming smuggler gangs for migrant deaths, whilst emphasising the use of (non-existent) legal routes, stands out. Italian prime minister Giorgia Meloni is seen swearing she will not let Italy become Europe's "refugee camp". She states: "All the deaths in the Mediterranean, and no politician does anything." Throughout, we are told by various politicians that refugees are not welcome despite their often desperate attempts to flee from terror precisely because of the involvement in or support for war from western governments in the first place.

It is to the documentary's credit that there is also an attempt to politicise the question of immigration. "It is important to make it understood that there are political decisions that affect the lives of thousands of people," Carlos points out. "Politicians can make decisions to help humanity. Unfortunately, they do not," he says. It is useful that the need for free movement and open borders is given prominence by one activist. We hear speeches from campaigners as to why immigrants are being used as scapegoats for a failing capitalist economy and its need for a supply of cheap labour. One ex-leftwing Spanish politician correctly points out that, if there is social inequality and war throughout the world, migration is a perfectly natural phenomenon. Indeed! Although stopping somewhat short of the need for an internationally and democratically planned approach to the issue, the message is clear - people will flee war, persecution and poverty to improve their lives. Until these issues are tackled, no end of laws and state control will prevent the movement of people.

The team behind *No-one is illegal; every day tomorrow* is planning its screening at various community cinemas throughout the UK. It is also keen to stress its availability for educational use by political organisations and charities.

Recommended! ● **Bob Davies**

## Fighting fund

### Four days to go!

**E**ven though just 11 comrades contributed to the *Weekly Worker* fighting fund over the last seven days, their commitment and generosity saw our August running total rise by £604 to £2,412.

That means we're now just £338 away from that £2,750 monthly target - but a word of caution: there are, as I write, only four days to get there, including Saturday and Sunday! So speedy action is now required if you want to help us make it.

I'll come back to that in a moment, but first of all let's give our thanks to those 11 contributors from last week. First, there was comrade JM, who decided to round up his annual £96 subscription cheque - not to £100, but to £150! In other words, a handy £54 for the fighting fund.

Then there were a number of bank transfers/standing orders, including two three-figure donations from LM and JC. Then there was RL (£60), JT (£25), RN (£20), JM (£15) and TT (£10). On top of that comrades JB, GD and DB each

donated £50 via PayPal, so, all in all, it was a pretty good week.

But now we need some rapid contributions to make sure we get there before Monday. The best, most speedy ways are via PayPal and - even better - bank transfer (because there's no charge deducted). And, you never know, we might get one or two cash donations handed to members of our team!

To find out any necessary details about the above payment methods, please look in the box below. Please play your part in ensuring the *Weekly Worker* continues to play its essential role in helping to create the mass Marxist party that is vital in replacing capitalist exploitation with working class rule and socialism - not just in Britain, but worldwide! ●

**Robbie Rix**

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

# What we fight for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ISSN 1351-0150

Sign up to CPGB news




[bit.ly/CPGBbulletin](http://bit.ly/CPGBbulletin)

# weekly worker

Steel, cement  
and copper  
cables



## Intangibles rely on tangibles

Do we live in a capitalist world without capital, where intellectual property is more important than steel, cement and copper cables? **Michael Roberts** is not convinced

A recent article in the *Financial Times* got very excited about the rise of intangibles.<sup>1</sup> The author, Tej Parikh, said: “Fifty years ago, the assets held by the top 500 US companies were predominantly ‘tangible’ - factories, equipment, inventory, etc. But today it is estimated that most of their assets are ‘intangible’: ie, intellectual property (knowledge and software), branding value and marketing networks.”<sup>2</sup> In the US, spending on intangible assets surpassed tangible investments as a share of gross domestic product in the late 1990s and the gap has widened ever since.

Actually this news is not new. Way back in 2017, Jonathan Haskel of Imperial College and Stian Westlake of Nesta wrote a book entitled *Capitalism without capital: the rise of the intangible economy*. They showed then that investment in intangibles had started to exceed tangible investment by the mid-1990s, at least in the US.

Haskel and Westlake argued that the main impact of intangible investment like intellectual property rights (IPR) had led to increased inequality between capitalists.<sup>3</sup> Through IPR, the leading companies were monopolising the development of ideas, research and design and blocking any ‘spillover’ to others. This explains the rise of the ‘magnificent seven’ tech giants and big pharma, which gain super-profits and protect them by monopoly (intellectual property) rights at the expense of the profitability of others.

Parikh presents the latest evidence for this. The World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) finds that intangible assets make up 90% of the total enterprise value of the 15 largest American companies - considerably higher than that of the broader US corporate sector.

In his *FT* piece, Parikh excitedly argues: “... this transformation

helps to explain four prevailing themes in the US stock market: high concentration, exceptionalism, volatility and bubble-like valuations.” He suggests that the US stock market may not be overvalued, compared to productive investment, if intangibles were properly accounted for. Kai Wu, chief investment officer of Sparkline Capital, is quoted in the *FT* article as estimating that accounting for intangible assets would cut any perceived overvaluation by about 25%-50%: “While the market is by no means cheap, once firms are given credit for their intangible assets, valuations look far less frothy than the headlines imply,” he says.

Also - most importantly - not accounting for intangibles means that US productivity growth is probably underestimated. The WIPO calculates that “unmeasured intangibles” amounted to around \$2.7 trillion in current terms last year in the US, and would have added over 0.2 percentage points to America’s average labour productivity growth rate between 2010 and 2024 if included in GDP.

But the conclusion that intangible investment will alter the mode of accumulation in capitalist production (Haskel and Westlake), reduce stock market overvaluation (Parikh) and raise productivity (WIPO) seems highly exaggerated to me.

The key point is that investment in intangibles requires investment in *tangibles* to deliver more profit. As Ed Conway put it in his recent book,

For all that we are told [that] we live in an increasingly dematerialised world, where ever more value lies in intangible items - apps and networks and online services

- the physical world continues to underpin everything else ... Pretty much everything, from social networks to retail to financial services, is wholly reliant upon the physical infrastructure that facilitates it and the energy that powers it. Without concrete, copper and fibre optics there would be no data centres, no electricity, no internet. The world, dare I say, would not end if Twitter or Instagram suddenly ceased to exist; if we suddenly ran out of steel or natural gas, however, that would be a very different story.<sup>4</sup>

The vast bulk of the world economy is still built on the production of things - ‘stuff’ that can be commodified from the labour of billions.

Conway goes on:

It is a rather lovely place, a world of ideas. In the ethereal world we sell services and management and administration; we build apps and websites; we transfer money from one column to another; we trade mostly in thoughts and advice, in haircuts and food delivery. If mountains are being torn down on the other side of the planet, it hardly seems especially relevant here in the ethereal world.

Conway points out that in 2019 the world mined, dug and blasted more materials from the earth’s surface than the sum total of everything we extracted from the dawn of humanity all the way through to 1950: “Consider that for a moment. In a single year we extracted more resources than humankind did in the vast majority of

its history - from the earliest days of mining to the industrial revolution, world wars and all.” While materials consumption is certainly falling in post-industrial nations like the US and UK, on the other side of the world, in the countries from whence Americans and Britons import most of their goods, it is rising at a breakneck rate.

Moreover, much of the value of intangibles is not productive at all. Branding and marketing are merely means of shifting profits from the small to the large, not creating new value. So the claim that intangible investment will replace tangible investment, reduce costs and raise profit margins to justify stock market valuations and boost productivity growth is not proven. Indeed, if it is true that intangible has overtaken tangible investment in the major economies, then the data show that this is not altering the nature of capital accumulation and profitability. The rate of profit in the major economies is generally lower now than in the late 1990s.

US net investment (after depreciation) is lower and productivity growth is also lower. Intangible investments may have increased the concentration and centralisation of capital towards the mega-companies, but the overall decline in profitability, investment and productivity growth has continued ●

Michael Roberts blogs at [thenextrecession.wordpress.com](https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com)

### Notes

1. See [legal60.com/intellectual-property-vs-real-property-a-comparative-analysis](https://legal60.com/intellectual-property-vs-real-property-a-comparative-analysis).
2. [www.ft.com/content/38c3ccd8-3aa0-4d8b-a832-00177c40996c](https://www.ft.com/content/38c3ccd8-3aa0-4d8b-a832-00177c40996c).
3. See [thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2017/12/10/capitalism-without-capital-or-capital-without-capitalism](https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2017/12/10/capitalism-without-capital-or-capital-without-capitalism).
4. E Conway Material world: a substantial story of our past and *future* London 2024.

Michael Roberts:  
stuff still matters

