

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity

weekly worker



Péter Magyar's victory is a blow to the Trumpist 'fascist international'. But he is from the far right and remains far right

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LETTERS



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

Pox on 'em

So the Scottish split from Your Party has happened. It's been on the cards since the February Dundee conference, which voted in favour of both party and national separatism, and was accelerated by crass, bureaucratic HQ manoeuvres.

Some, including members of the Democratic Socialists of Your Party and Grassroots Left, have put out statements of solidarity with the interim Scottish executive committee, whose members have resigned *en masse* and are now making plans for a new party. Whilst, of course, recognising the appalling anti-democratic behaviour of the Corbyn leadership, what they have done is to make the left nationalism that is rife up here even deeper-fried. Neither the national leadership nor what was the Scottish CEC has anything positive to offer the working class in Scotland and beyond, with both projects doomed to failure. I say, a pox on both their houses.

I think back to the hopes I had early in the year that the YP cultural bloc being planned, with comrades in Hackney and Haringey proto-branches, could take off as part of the election campaigns in May, working with and helping develop branches across the country. This was intended to be announced at the Dundee conference and put straight into action. But, once it became clear that there was to be an overt nationalist turn in Scotland, and that HQ had no desire for branches or an election campaign, all those hopes were dashed.

What a wasted opportunity.

Tam Dean Burn
Glasgow

OCF clarity

Donald Trump's decision to impose a blockade on the Strait of Hormuz has understandably surprised many observers, given his prior insistence that Iran ought to reopen it.

A small circle, however, appears less shocked: namely, those associates of the president who, by remarkable coincidence, have placed rather well-judged wagers on his 'unpredictable' turns. One is also reminded that Jack Conrad will doubtless be entirely unsurprised. He has long maintained that Trump, like any reliable servant of capital, will ultimately act in its interests.

In light of these developments, could the *Weekly Worker* clarify whether Sunday's Online Communist Forum will proceed as scheduled? Or should readers prepare for the necessary adjustment in start time to accommodate different time zones, with comrade Jack presumably addressing us remotely from a Maldivian beach (perhaps courtesy of a timely flutter on Polymarket)?

Carl Collins
Stamford

Red capitalism

Some comrades have expressed an interest in the inner workings of China, so the best place to go is *China's economy* by Arthur R Kroeber - a 30-year expert working for a think tank in China. As it's written for the generalist, any Marxist can cut through the book easily.

A segment of it will be of interest because of the differences with the Soviet Union in how the Communist Party of China

approached the economy. In 1979 the Chinese central planners controlled the allocation of 600 commodities, while Soviet central planners had allocated 60,000 commodities and set millions of prices. The USSR had 40,000 state-run factories, many directly run from Moscow. China had 883,000, of which 90% were run by city and country governance.

Although the Communist Party of China controls things, many foreign company enterprises have favourable access in 'special economic zones' and I aim to further critique the book, along with another called *Tiger head, snake tails* by Jonathan Fenby, for whom joining the Communist Party is not for any ideological reasons, but is "a good career move"!

So, as a nice contrast to Tony Cliff's 'state capitalism' in Russia, we have 'red capitalism' in China!

Frank Kavanagh
email

War opponents

Next to Mike Macnair's article last week ('Not a clean, but a dirty split', April) we see a famous group photo of the delegates to the 1910 International Socialist Congress held in Copenhagen; two women, holding hands in the front row, are claimed to be "Alexandra Kollontai and Clara Zetkin". That is not the case! In a 1910 issue of the *New York Call* Sunday magazine, they are positively identified as members of the American delegation to the congress. Unfortunately I can't find anything in my notes giving their names, and the microfilm reel has long since been sent back to New York.

I have no doubt that my memory is correct in this instance however, because standing between the two women is the unmistakable Morris Hillquit - a popular socialist orator in three languages, an author known even outside socialist circles, and perennially elected leader of the Socialist Party of the United States at home and its International representative abroad. He can be spotted in the front row of just about every international congress, from Amsterdam 1904, to Stuttgart 1907, to here at Copenhagen 1910. Besides Hillquit, the SPUS sent three women delegates.

Moving beyond that trivial matter, I'd like to supplement comrade Macnair's article with some contextual comments on how members of the Socialist Party of the US responded to the outbreak of World War I. As is fairly well known, the SPUS was one of the few major socialist parties not located within the Russian empire that could proudly say they opposed their state's entry into the war. This anti-war stance reflected the views of the overwhelming majority of the 'broad workers' vanguard' of politically active party members, which confirmed the programme of the 1917 emergency anti-war convention in a referendum with well over 90% in favour, despite draconian laws to crack down on dissent, like the Espionage Act already hanging over their heads.

What is not well known is that this anti-war stance by the broad workers' vanguard was made against the advice of an alarming percentage of the party's established writers and leaders, which (in reference to comrade Macnair's point) could not be categorised according to their politics before the war.

As you might expect, from the start a large number of the party's rightwing 'constructive socialist'

writers (but seemingly not their rank-and-file readers) abandoned the party to support the war: WJ Ghent, AM Simons and John Spargo as party intellectuals, joined by celebrity muckraking journalist Charles Edward Russell and 1916 Socialist presidential candidate Allan L Benson. What you may be surprised to hear, however, was that some of the leading voices of the party's mass-action left wing also argued for US entry into the war on the side of the Entente.

The three most famous were Frank Bohn, the theoretical co-author of Bill Haywood's plan for *Industrial socialism*; Robert Rives La Monte, long-running author of pithy and well-informed Marxist theoretical articles, who wasn't scared to be called a syndicalist; and William English Walling, the most prolific American socialist theorist of his day, who, if you can make it through his staid and congested prose, is revealed to be what Emma Goldman once called "the reddest of the red".

I don't want to make it sound like all the leaders of the left wing became pro-war - Marcy Fraina, Rutgers, Eastman, Lore, etc remained resolutely against it - but the fact stands that the US had a pro-war left, the same as continental Europe did. Unlike Europe, their arguments don't need to be translated for us. That makes their articles an overlooked field of study, ripe for critical dissection.

The most surprising case of all comes from the most powerful figure of the party's right wing: Victor L Berger. Leading up to 1914, he had made a name for himself as an open supporter of Eduard Bernstein's state-loyalist revision of Marxist political strategy (which didn't stop him from styling himself as the defender of 'Marxism' against pro-Industrial Workers of the World 'anarchists'). William English Walling rightly devoted several chapters of his 1912 book, *Socialism as it is*, to lambasting Berger's "opportunist state socialism" from the left.

When war erupted, however, while Walling had already begun to call for an Entente victory in the name of Luxemburg and Liebknecht, Berger established himself as one of the most vocal and visible opponents of the war - a war he maintained would never have started if the socialist parties had succeeded in establishing a citizens' militia (another socialist principle that both Bernstein and Berger deemed too important to compromise on). Berger was punished for bravely holding to his anti-war principles, with 20 years in prison for speech crimes under the Espionage Act - a sentence so appalling that the supreme court felt compelled to rescind it after the smoke had cleared in 1921.

I haven't fully figured out whatever theoretical common threads there are between these disparate pro-war renegades, or exactly which political lessons to draw. But this letter is already too long, so I'll sign off with these two points:

■ First, La Monte and Walling were both rich 'millionaire socialists', who were only able to write so much because they lived off dividends from capital.

■ Second, and more importantly, the socialist press in the US had an avowed and an actual culture of open debate that made it possible for the broad workers' vanguard to go against the advice of so many of their current leaders.

Key publications like the

New York Call, the *International Socialist Review* and the *New Review* were cooperatively managed and funded, which allowed for their vibrant letters pages to dismantle the arguments of any pro-war features that appeared. And, unlike the socialist press in Europe, they did not need to worry about the acute shock of losing advertising or trade union funding, because they barely had any to begin with (not that the right wing didn't still bend over backwards to solicit it).

As a result, the vast majority of the US socialist press stayed true to anti-war socialist principles in a way that most of the bureaucratized socialist press of continental Europe did not, and even continued to fight under a regime of state repression on a scale that may have been worse than the Kaiser Reich.

Bill Wright
USA

Bloomin' roses

To my comrades across the pond in the United Kingdom - I have been observing the quagmire of the radical UK left since the announcement of Your Party. Myself and every other American socialist I know were overjoyed at YP's political potential and its intervention into a political landscape that seemed like it had the momentum to stop the fascist Reform Party.

After that immense joy came the sinking feeling, ever growing, until all I could feel when I looked at Your Party was sadness, horror and a deep despair. What has been unfolding has been the genuine nightmare scenario we members of the Democratic Socialists of America have had in the back of our heads for years, and seemed possible with the 2021 term of the DSA national political committee. We have avoided this fate and our rightwing socialists are reasonable comrades that believe in coexistence.

You have not been so lucky: your political home is being taken from you before the windows are even installed. Despite best-faith efforts on your part, YP has been taken by an outdated politician, and his clique of bureaucrats, who fails to have an internal or external vision for the organisation where he is not 'God King'. Now the uncomfortable conversation starts - one, I suspect, many of you have already been having: what now?

To tell you the truth, as an American organiser and DSA member observing across the Atlantic, I do not think Your Party has a future. However, I do think you can have a future. Realistically I see you, the Grassroots Left and other disaffected elements have two paths forward, neither of which involve staying in the Corbyn sham:

■ Option 1: you dissolve your

organisations into the Green Party. ■ Option 2: you use the connections you have made, and go make Your Own Party.

Now many of you will sneer at the first option, and it is not my favourite personally, but it is what many American socialists will tell you though. And for the immediate, it's valid - push the party left, link with the left greens. But you have to dissolve your individual organisations, become an entryist force and end up tying yourself to a party that will potentially face great difficulty, when faced with structural and ideological limitations.

It is my opinion, and the reason I write this letter, that the best long-term option for the radical British left is to form their own democratic, mass socialist party. And make it with the expectation that it will not be a mass socialist party starting out: it will be small and it will be weak, but that's OK.

What you require is a decade-plus of party building. You will start with the disgruntled and sects, and you need to turn that into a foundation for a mass party - one where the sects put their shibboleths aside - and the earnest desire for a membership-based socialist organisation that you brought to YP initially. And let there be one split - the split from authoritarians at YP. Carry the spirit of political potential we saw when this started, when you organised for convention, and please build the multi-caucus democracy you fought for.

The DSA was an irrelevant social democrat sect from the 1980s till 2016. The Green Party was a joke for decades, but now they are in their strongest position ever. It will take a long time to bear the fruits of this project.

To succeed, you need to not only focus on internal democracy, but external power-building also. Build relationships with working class organisations, be a welcoming space to everyone who isn't a bigot. Running electoral campaigns, building up labour solidarity, bringing the moms and activists in, merging with the anti-war movement, etc. You get the point, but the key to success here is to shape your own party into a mass party. Your discourse, and your decisions as an organisation, whose politics are popular, should be based on results, not personalities - and not abstract theories, but concrete growth and development. You need experimentation and the honest examination of the ideas you believe to be true.

It will be hard, it will be lonely, and it will be difficult. You must cast aside dogmas and feelings of ideological superiority, and you must all work together as a Grassroots Left. But I believe that, if you do, a greater rose will bloom.

Nick Woodfin
USA

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CLIMATE

Trickle-down effect

Evidence suggests that the El Niño phenomenon is of increasing frequency and intensity, with the possibility of a 'super' event any time soon. Anthropogenic global warming could easily be a big influence, writes **Eddie Ford**

El Niño is a long recognised natural climate pattern that was first systematically remarked upon, so it seems, by fishermen off South America's coast in the 1600s - its name meaning 'The Little Boy' (or 'Christ Child') in Spanish. It is a climate event in which surface sea-water temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean are warmer than average, and the entire natural climate cycle is officially known as El Niño Southern Oscillation (Enso) - with the subsequent cooling phase known as 'La Niña' ('The Little Girl').¹

Basically then, when surface water temperatures are warmer than average in the eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean, you have El Niño - and when they are cooler than average, you have La Niña. It is important to note that Enso - an irregular pattern, but with some semblance of cycles - is *not* predictable in any certain sense and it effects the climate of much of the tropics and subtropics, and has links to higher-latitude regions of the world (or 'telecommunications', which in atmospheric science refers to climate anomalies being related to each other).

El Niño, more broadly, is associated with higher-than-normal air sea-level pressure over Indonesia, Australia and across the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic - while La Niña has roughly the reverse pattern: high pressure over the central and eastern Pacific and lower pressure through much of the rest of the tropics and subtropics. The two phenomena last a year or so each and typically occur every two to seven years with varying intensity, with neutral periods of lower intensity interspersed. Generally speaking, El Niño events can be more intense, but La Niña events may repeat and last longer. The relative frequency of both can affect global temperature trends on timescales of around 10 years. However, showing the planet is consistently warming, a La Niña year now is warmer than an El Niño year was just a few decades ago.

It is also important to understand that each country that monitors the Enso has a different threshold for what constitutes an El Niño or La Niña event, which is tailored to their specific interests, and, fairly logically, the countries most affected are developing states bordering the Pacific Ocean that are dependent on agriculture and fishing.

Powerful

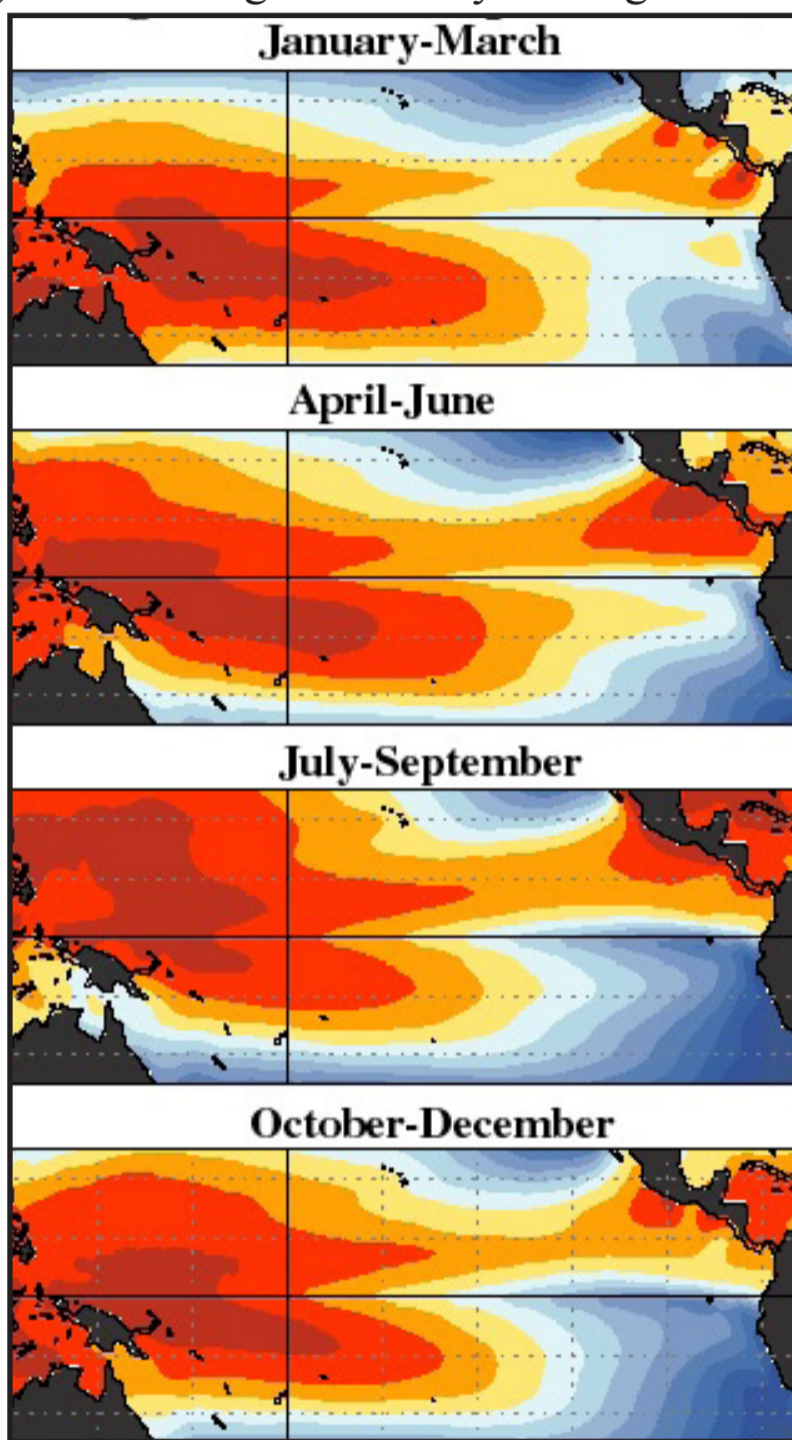
Many forecasters are predicting the possibility that a powerful, 'super' El Niño will take effect this year. This is not a formal term amongst climate scientists: it just means one that is stronger than normal - typically defined by sea surface temperatures spiking up by at least 2°C.² In fact, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, it could be the strongest El Niño in at least a decade, spurring punishing drought in some regions and severe storms in others - while also causing the Earth's temperature to rise even further, which is alarming, to say the least.³ Indeed, it is believed that a Mega El Niño actually instigated the end-Permian mass extinction, which occurred about 252 million years ago.⁴

The NOAA, for one, believes that El Niño could begin this spring or summer - meaning that sea surface temperatures are quickly changing in the equatorial Pacific, as most El Niño events typically begin in the autumn. Hence the latest report added that there is a 25% chance of a "very strong" El Niño and a 50% chance of a "strong" one, with Pacific Ocean temperatures rising to at least 1.5°C warmer than average. This phenomenon is "often characterised by chaos, because it shifts global weather and introduces new extremes", to further use the words of the report. We know all this by the use of satellites that track the ocean temperatures and an array of research buoys. They deploy probes more than 300 metres underwater to monitor the depths of warming. Warmer water underneath the surface rises over the course of several months to feed potential El Niño conditions. The larger the temperature increase, the stronger the El Niño could be.

Depending on its strength, naturally, El Niño's effects can be very far-reaching, influencing storm patterns, drought, wildlife populations, and even how fast the Earth spins. Warmer waters in the central and eastern parts of the tropical Pacific could mean more intense storms there - and, of course, those storms can influence weather across the globe. The impact of El Niño can have a trickle-down effect on wildlife populations, for example. A 2006 study in the journal, *Biological Conservation*, outlines the way the penguin population on the Galápagos Islands severely crashed after two strong El Niño events in the 80s and 90s.⁵ The warming oceans caused by the weather patterns reduced the number of macronutrients and fish in the water, which in turn may have starved the penguin population.

Perhaps paradoxically, Enso predictions - insofar as you can make them - can help people around the world prepare for coming shifts in extreme weather, so can be regarded as an essential tool in a warming world. As explained by Emily Becker, a research professor at the NOAA, El Niño influences the global atmosphere in such a way that "we have a greater chance of knowing where things are going to happen" - thus giving us the "capability of seeing potential outcomes that really gives us a nice advantage". We can also see this paradoxical or advantageous effect when we examine the relationship between El Niño and the Atlantic hurricane season. El Niño increases wind shear - strong vertical gusts that break apart storms as they form - and this, combined with the fact that parts of the Atlantic Ocean are not as warm as they were last year, could make for a less intense season. For this reason, Becker hesitates to characterise El Niño or La Niña as "good or bad" - rather, "they just are, and pretty much always have been".

Having said that, and, while it is not "a slam dunk" - as a leading climate scientist said in a briefing last week - *all* the ingredients for El Niño are there. Yes, forecasts in spring cannot account for unexpected changes that can happen over the summer, but the risks are high enough that it is only right to



Pacific temperatures: on the up

be worried. A strong El Niño would put 2027 in the running to break global heat records, boosting global temperatures by around 0.2°C, and could produce a series of devastating effects, ranging from supercharged rainstorms to drought, depending on the region of the world.

Uncertainty

In this vein, a BBC article on recent climate developments asks - "Is a 'Super El Niño' on the way?"⁶ The writer, Sarah Keith-Lucas, points out that La Niña is still weakly present in the Pacific Ocean, and has largely been in charge since December 2024 - leading to a temporary lowering of global temperatures, which meant that 2025 was a slightly cooler year than 2024 (the world's hottest year on record). But she quotes the Australian Bureau of Meteorology saying this current La Niña "is close to its end", and the NOAA is forecasting a "transition from La Niña to Enso-neutral" conditions in the next month, lasting until early in the northern-hemisphere summer - then between June and August there is a 62% chance that El Niño will emerge "and persist through at least the end of 2026".

In other words, there remains a lot

of uncertainty about the course things will take. But the BBC's Keith-Lucas believes there are "hints" that this upcoming El Niño could become a "strong" event. There were a few months of a strong El Niño in late 2023, but the most recent sustained period was during 2015-16 and this made 2016 the hottest year on record at that time (overtaken now by 2023, 2024 and 2025) - as well as seeing multiple other records broken and extreme weather events. We saw, for instance, 16 tropical cyclones in the central Pacific hurricane basin, including the first recorded instance of three Category 4 storms simultaneously across the central and eastern Pacific. Meanwhile, of course, global sea levels continued to rise, and Arctic sea ice extent was well below average.

As the BBC article reminds us, no two El Niño events are the same, but certain weather patterns are more or less likely when it develops. This can normally be found in places closest to the unusually warm Pacific waters like Australia, Indonesia and the Philippines, with drought and forest fires often becoming major problems. But on the other side of the Pacific, countries in South America such as Peru and Ecuador

can see much wetter weather, leading to devastating floods. You can also get flooding from winter rainfall in the south-west US.

As for the UK, Enso impacts can often lag behind the actual event - but the effect on the UK's weather may be stronger during the later winter months. El Niño years, say climate scientists at the Met Office, are "one factor that can increase the risk" of colder winters in Britain. This is on top of the warning that the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (Amoc), or 'North Sea drift' - which gives a country like the UK its famously moderate climate - could seriously weaken, or even switch off. This appeared to be the case about 12,900 years ago, when in North America the melting of the giant frozen Lake Agassiz caused large amounts of fresh water to flood into the sea - an event probably caused by a comet impact, which was followed by 1,300 years of freezing.⁷

Amplified

Is global warming responsible for this probable 'strong' or 'super' Enso? The link is not clear-cut or unambiguous. However, evidence strongly suggests that both El Niño and La Niña events may be increasing in frequency and strength.⁸ As the Climate Prediction Center puts it, this "amplified cycle" translates into more frequent Enso-linked droughts, floods, heat waves, wildfires and severe storms.

Three years ago, after looking at more than 40 models of the climate for five years, Dr Wenju Cai of Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation said that they showed a "human fingerprint" from 1960 onwards - meaning that climate change had likely made both El Niños and La Niñas "more frequent and more extreme".⁹ In the opinion of Cai, the research clearly demonstrates that "we are experiencing a vastly different climate to that of the distant past" and therefore Enso will change in the future, "given sea surface temperatures are continuing to increase".

Of course, not everyone agrees that greenhouse gas warming has influenced or shaped Enso. Some raise concerns about the reliance on modelling and others point to the fact that Enso is hugely variable, so the research can never be conclusive or definite. Science, after all, is based on the open clash of different and contending ideas, which is the essential premise of Marxism as well. The *Weekly Worker* exists to put that into practice ●

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Notes

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Ni%C3%B1o%E2%80%93Southern_Oscillation.
- theguardian.com/environment/2026/apr/13/el-ni%C3%B1o-explainer
- nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/super-el-ni%C3%B1o-extreme-weather-climate.
- science.org/doi/10.1126/science.ado2030.
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- climate.gov/news-features/blogs/enso-has-climate-change-already-affected-enso.
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HUNGARY

End of something special

Viktor Orbán's downfall is a blow to the Trumpist 'fascist international'. But Péter Magyar is no liberal. He comes from the far right and remains on the far right, says Paul Demarty

Defeat for Viktor Orbán and his Fidesz party in the Hungarian general election is undeniably an event of global significance.

It was quite a defeat, as well. On a very impressive turnout, the Tisza ('Respect and Freedom') party of former Fidesz trooper Péter Magyar comprehensively smashed the incumbents, just scraping past the two-thirds majority line, which allows the new government broad leeway to tweak the constitution. It wrought havoc in many of Fidesz's electoral heartlands.

Until this electoral cycle, Orbán had seemed one of the immovable objects of European politics. He was in power for 16 years, and in that time had shored up Hungarian society against challengers. Over time, the majority of the Hungarian media had conveniently fallen into the hands of his allies. The electoral system had been changed: a hybrid of first-past-the-post and proportional systems, designed to favour the incumbent. He seemed pretty comfortable, enjoying his role as a minor, but not inconsequential, statesman on the world stage. His description of Hungary as an "illiberal democracy" stuck, and proved attractive to many admirers internationally, especially on the post-liberal right.

Scandal

His downfall has a few explanations. Firstly, the Hungarian economy is stagnating. Orbán's efforts to imitate the 'Polish economic miracle', and build up a substantial domestic economy, have largely failed. Hungary remains a kind of sweatshop for especially German capital, which he seduced by passing draconian labour laws. Attempts at endogenous development resulted largely in scandalous handouts to his mates. With the European economy in general on the skids, Hungary has been hit hard. Investment is stagnant, and unemployment is up.¹

That corruption, and the general impunity of the Fidesz apparatchiks, has proven politically combustible on its own. Those outside the clientele networks have much to resent. Other kinds of scandals result from such cosy arrangements. One rather extended story in particular needs telling, since it is directly relevant, but also illustrative of the incestuousness of Orbánland. In 2019, the former director of a children's home in Bicske, near Budapest, one János Vásárhelyi, was convicted of serial sexual abuse of boys in his care. His deputy, Endre Kónya, also received a stiff sentence, as he had blackmailed one of the victims into silence.

In 2024, a political scandal erupted when press reports revealed that Hungarian president Katalin Novák (a largely ceremonial role) had pardoned Kónya the year before. Further reports alleged that pressure from Zoltán Balog - a bishop in the Reformed Church, mentor to Novák and former Fidesz government minister - was decisive. Novák resigned in disgrace, as did justice minister Judit Varga. Varga's recently divorced husband, another Orbánite operative, also resigned - but in disgust. His name was Péter Magyar. Small world, eh?

Beyond the economic woes, and the corruption and scandals, there is also the possibility that Orbán's international politicking may have backfired. He has persistently



Viktor and the Don

undermined European efforts to back the Ukraine proxy war, but Hungarian nationalism has a distinctly anti-Russian flavour, as is common in the former Eastern bloc. His support for Romanian far-right leaders in their recent battles with local and European courts has also rankled, since there are old enmities over disputed borders there too. His close alignment with Donald Trump, meanwhile, may have cost him in the same way it has cost many other co-thinkers, as Trump's comically colonial attitude to Europe has come to the fore.

There are more direct consequences, however: the EU has withheld post-Covid recovery funding, citing failures of democracy and the rule of law, but plainly in revenge for his obstinacy on Ukraine. The ailing Hungarian economy could badly do with the money, and Magyar has wisely promised to get it released.

Bogeyman

Though they are men of extremely different temperaments, Orbán was an important forerunner of Trump. Fidesz is not in origin a far-right party, but a party on the European Christian Democratic model, emerging after the fall of Hungarian 'goulash socialism'. Orbán was prime minister from 1998 to 2002, and he governed as such a party would be expected to, notably bringing Hungary into Nato.

It was a harder-edged figure who retook office in 2010, however, from the ailing Social Democrats (the neoliberal shell of the old 'official communist' ruling party). Under his rule, Hungary began to diverge from the standard-issue liberalism of EU politics. Fidesz promoted 'traditional gender roles', in a so-far-unsuccessful attempt to reverse population decline. The gay rights movement was steadily marginalised. When the Syrian migrant crisis of 2015 hit, Orbán led the charge against those urging a welcome.

This brought him admiration in many quarters on the European right, but also attracted attention on the American new right. Several well-known US pundits, like Rod Dreher and Gladden Pappin, showed up in Budapest and formed an outer circle of courtiers. Orbán set up the Matthias Corvinus Collegium (MCC), a conservative quasi-university, which later opened up a campus in Brussels, truly parking his tanks on the Eurocrat globohomo lawn. MCC Brussels set itself up as a kind of watchdog on the EU, publishing exposés on the organisation's funnelling of funds to pet NGOs in troublesome member-states, its interference in elections, its trans rights initiatives, and so forth.

In response, international liberal opinion sharply polarised against him. He became one of the great bogeymen of the day, the third name in the unholy trinity completed by Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump; and liberal opinion in our day could scarcely distinguish between them - three persons but one substance. He was talked of as an autocrat, though there were few signs of that early on the evening of April 12, when he graciously conceded defeat to Magyar. His position was never nearly as impregnable as Putin's at the head of the FSB state; nor did he enjoy the kind of unchecked power of initiative yielded to Trump by decaying American 'democracy'.

What is the programme of the new Magyar administration? Even a cursory familiarity with it should dampen the wild enthusiasm among western liberals for Orbán's downfall. Magyar is no more enlightened on the matter of immigration than his old idol - indeed possibly less (he promises to cancel the work visas of south Asians that Orbán recruited to ameliorate his labour shortages). Though it predates his membership, Tisza is basically Magyar's one-man band. Only he is allowed to speak for it. It is somehow a more centralised, personalist outfit than Fidesz. Assuming his objections to his old

party are sincere (and why not?), they are primarily ones of honour - the stain of corruption and scandal must be expunged. (Judging by what we have seen so far, we expect truly dismal failure on this front, but hope springs eternal.)

On international policy, things are more interesting. He promises to mend fences with the Europeans, which is broadly popular with the national mood (given, as noted, the anti-Russian sentiment), and keen for more 'European' living standards. That will presumably remove Hungary as an obstacle to European support for Ukraine. Even here, however, he is pragmatic. Though he has been happy to have chants of "Russians go home" at his rallies, Magyar is anxious to deny he will put Russian gas imports at risk, which are essential for the Hungarian economy. It is plain that senior European figures consider him a man with whom one can do business, but the fine details may still bring frustration.

Euro right

Tacking closer to Europe, at a time of rather frosty transatlantic relations, means taking some distance from the US. This should not be difficult, really; Hungary is far more integrated into the European economy than it is with the US. American support for Orbán under Trump was real, up to JD Vance's failed attempt to shore him up on the campaign trail, but the Americans have few real levers to stop Hungary from drifting away now.

The real cost is a symbolic one to the particular political project that found a home in both the Trump and Orbán regimes - what has been called the 'far-right international' or 'fascist international', a most peculiar phenomenon indeed. Following, as I have, gatherings like the National Conservatism conferences over the years, I have often been baffled by the fact that they can work at all. The America First crowd, and the Hungary

First crowd, and so on - all getting together to celebrate their agreement on the concept 'first'?

America's habit of exporting its culture wars via squabbling camps of NGOs and internet influencers gave some sense to it; thus a Romanian bigot might also live in horror of 'drag queen story hour' coming to Bucharest, or a French reactionary might denounce 'le wokisme'. But surely, I thought, this is just papering over the cracks. Now, with Trump revelling in his humiliations of subordinate powers, and Orbán defeated by another rightwing nationalist on partly nationalist grounds, perhaps my doubts are vindicated.

It is not necessarily a cause for cheer on the left, however. Rightwing politics may take a nationalist form, or alternatively a civilisational form. One can defend 'the Fatherland', or perhaps 'the west'. The mistake of the NatCon crowd was to suppose you could do both without friction. Perhaps what emerges in the current situation, however, is a Europeanised right, dedicated to rearmament in depth and progressive detachment of its alliance structure from American tutelage. It is already visible, in embryo, in the opposition to Trump's Iran war from the French National Rally and Alternative for Germany, among others.

Appearance

This would not be easy. Indeed, given the decisions made by the European elite this century, it is hardly clear whether it is even possible. However, even the *appearance* of multipolarity in global power (again, its reality remains doubtful, despite Chinese advances and American difficulties in the Middle East) puts it on the agenda. If the Gulf states could project power beyond their region, why not Europe? If the Canadian prime minister, of all people, is talking a big game about the opportunities for 'middle powers' in the post-American century, why not Europe?

In this scenario, Magyar's victory could be the beginning not of Hungarian adjustment to 'liberal' European norms, but the reverse: a new continental militarism, to defend not 'western', but *European* civilisation from vulgar American power and Asiatic (including Russian) 'barbarism' alike. (One civilisation, really, is as good as another.) Where this leaves the EU as it exists is unclear, but it is quite possible to replace a bureaucracy's governing ideology without much changing the bureaucracy. It would certainly be a better bet for the Germans, French and so forth than just trying to muddle on - if it is not too late.

Such a programme really would surely produce an international political coordination of rightwing elites - as neoliberalism did before it, and 'national conservatism' in the end did not. For the left, it would be a new source of danger - one which we, imprisoned as we are in our own separate national cages no less than the NatCons, are singularly unprepared to meet at present ●

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Notes

¹ Michael Roberts has a useful summary of the economic angle on the election: see thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2026/04/11/hungary-the-end-of-the-orban-era.

SPAIN

Combat social democracy

Donald Trump hates the Spanish government with a passion. That suits the Spanish government and has brought forth much praise from invertebrate peaceniks and goopy liberals, says Paul Davies

Spain's prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, has attracted much attention recently. After all, he has dared to do what most, if not all, of Europe's political leaders did not do: to publicly, clearly and unambiguously criticise Donald Trump and his administration's war with Iran. A "disaster", "unjust" and "bad for the world", Sánchez said a few days after the US began its bombing campaign. He used this to justify Spain not permitting US warships to dock at Rota, or its planes to land at Morón.

Of course, Sánchez's position of 'no a la guerra' ('no to war') has provoked torrents of verbal abuse and all kinds of threats from the US president. Clearly the Spanish government has rattled Trump: "Spain has been terrible," he said during a White House press conference on March 3. The country was "very uncooperative". He even threatened to "cut off all trade ... and all dealings" with it. However, Madrid remains resolute.

It is worth bearing in mind that this position is consistent with its stance towards the Middle East in general - something else that, unsurprisingly, has not exactly gone down well with Donald Trump or Benjamin Netanyahu. Indeed, Spain's political relationship with Israel has been frosty since the start of its Gaza genocide. In October 2025, the Spanish parliament, the *Cortes Generales*, introduced an embargo on armament exports to and many imports from Israel, particularly from its illegal West Bank settlements. The government also banned military transit destined for the Zionist state from any part of its sovereign territory.

For inveterate peaceniks and goopy liberals, the position Spain's coalition government has taken is commendable - Sánchez and his Socialist Workers Party of Spain (PSOE) are supported by Sumar, the Eurocommunist soft left, as junior partners. With the growing popularity of neo-Francoist parties such as Vox and SALF and the general rise of the far right in Europe, Spain's government appears to be holding out against the tide.

Is this something for the left to celebrate? Something to emulate? The likes of Jeremy Corbyn, Zarah Sultana and Zack Polanski are certainly within this frame. So is Owen Jones of *The Guardian*: he lauds the Spanish government for its "progressive" stance on international issues, Gaza in particular.

Principles

So why has Sánchez chosen to defy the American empire? After all, despite his party's socialist name, politically it is usually described by bourgeois journalists as 'centre-left'. In other words, both the PSOE and Sumar are committed to running capitalism ... albeit supposedly in the interests of ordinary Spanish people.

Recent opinion polls for the next Spanish general election, due in May 2027, show the PSOE trailing behind the mainstream conservative People's Party (PP).¹ A consistent picture since PSOE established its coalition after the 2023 general election. Corruption charges have not helped. The same goes for sexual harassment allegations within the PSOE. The country also faces an acute housing shortage along with skyrocketing rents.

Indeed December's regional election in Extremadura - in Spain's west - were disastrous. In what is



Pedro Sánchez ... believe it or not, singing 'The Internationale'

traditionally a leftwing stronghold, the PSOE lost 10 of its 28 seats. Vox leapt from five to 11 and is now in coalition with the PP. A not dissimilar outcome was also seen in February with Aragon: big gains for Vox, big losses for PSOE, and Unidas Podemos disappearing entirely from the regional parliament.

However, Sánchez is a canny political operator. He successfully tamed soft-left formations such as Podemos and Sumar, he bought off Catalan separatism by securing an amnesty law, and has adopted what has been called a pro-migrant stance. His plan to grant legal status to 500,000 undocumented migrants has caused a storm on the right, but allows him to present the PSOE as both a champion of human rights ... and the means to sustain Spain's relatively buoyant economic growth.

With that record in mind, Sánchez's stance on Gaza and the war in Iran may be another calculated move to save his skin. Polls show nearly 90% of the country believe Israel is committing genocide in Gaza and around 68% of the population support him against Trump. His position certainly stands out in stark contrast to that of Alberto Núñez, PP's president, and Vox, of course: both initially backed Trump's Iran war and are now finding it necessary to backtrack somewhat. So, on Iran, Sánchez has his two main opponents on the ropes. Whether or not that saves him at the next general election is another matter entirely.

Influences

Of course, the Spanish premier's perspectives and political manoeuvres are not only being influenced by opinion polls: forces within his coalition government also shape his

politics. Namely Sumar and its various components. Such components include Izquierda Unida, of which the 'official' Communist Party of Spain is the principal organiser, plus various fragmented and disjointed parties, including the reinvented Republican Left.

Initially holding 31 seats in the *Cortes Generales*, Sumar's fraction was reduced to 26 in 2024, when Podemos and its five deputies withdrew following a spat over speaking rights. But, given that Sánchez depends on Sumar to maintain his government, he wants to keep them on side. On the other hand, Sumar depends on the PSOE. If the Sánchez government falls, Sumar could easily face parliamentary oblivion.

So Sumar gets not a few crumbs from the table. Sumar's Yolanda Díaz, a PCE member who serves as second deputy prime minister and minister of labour, boasts of strengthening abortion rights and establishing a relatively significant rise in the minimum wage. Sumar also claims responsibility for successfully reducing the maximum statutory working week to 37.5 hours with no salary reduction. Such titbits are considered great achievements by many on the left - well, those who have abandoned any serious commitment to socialism. There is also pseudo-internationalist posturing. Much to her delight, Díaz is banned from entering Israel because of her statements objecting to genocide and ethnic cleansing. And then there remains Podemos. Despite finding itself on the opposition benches, it claims prime responsibility for steering Sánchez into granting legal status to the 500,000 undocumented migrants.

Of course, despite various media outlets attributing the positions of the Spanish government to Sánchez's 'socialist' convictions, there is nothing remotely socialist about the government or Sánchez. The PSOE has a name which dates back to 1879, true. But in reality the modern PSOE is the invention of the CIA, which engineered Spain's 'transition to democracy' and entry into Nato following Franco's death. Ideologically, therefore, it has long been committed to Atlanticism and rightwing social democracy.

What marks Sánchez out is not his 'socialism', rather it is his 'combat social democracy'. Instead of adapting to the far right, like Sir Keir's government, he adopts an aggressively rhetorical stance against the likes of Vox. Inevitably this is extended to Trump. A risky game, but it might just pay off. We shall see.

So-called left

Depending on the parliamentary arithmetic, Sánchez can reach out to the left rather than seeking a rapprochement with PP in some grand 'traffic light' coalition (as in Germany). But there can be no hiding the opportunist swamp that passes for the left. Far from refusing, as a matter of basic principle, to participate in what is a capitalist government, coalitionism is assumed, taken for granted. That way, so it is argued, comes influence and "making a difference".

In February, four largish leftwing organisations - Sumar, IU, Comuns and Más Madrid - agreed an electoral alliance that will fight under the sadly appropriately gradualist slogan, *Un paso al frente* ('One foot forward'). Given that the main components are Sumar and

Podemos it was not a surprise that the whole alliance is a top-down affair.

Despite originally opting to remain independent, Podemos has thrown in its lot with the alliance. For Podemos this effectively represents its road back to governmental benches and fat ministerial salaries. The first test will be the May 17 elections in Andalucía. Here, the alliance will wrap itself within another alliance, Por Andalucía.

Who will lead the election list remains to be seen and, not surprisingly, appears to be a bone of contention. Podemos still thinks it is the big beast on the left, while Sumar and Díaz believe they are on a roll with their ministerial portfolios and swollen body of staffers and hangers on. The PCE certainly views itself as the "backbone" and "cohesive force" within the alliance.² Podemos are considered fractious and irresponsible.

However, what Por Andalucía will be specifically campaigning upon remains unclear. As with the nationally focused *Un paso al frente*, much emphasis appears to be placed on a campaign to prevent the steady growth of Vox rather than the promotion of a transformative agenda. Hence, Podemos is banging the drum for 'bread and butter' issues: the severe housing crisis, its worsening health service and low wages.³

From nothing, nothing will come ●

Notes

1. See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opinion_polling_for_the_next_Spanish_general_election.
2. mundoobrero.es/2026/04/04/izquierda-unida-lidera-la-reunificacion-de-la-izquierda-andaluza-con-la-reintegracion-de-podemos-en-por-andalucia.
3. https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1Cn9Hj6L4t.

YOUR PARTY

Funeral games

Secret votes, gagging orders and hunting down whistleblowers. Yet, apart from rotten politics, there is nothing to hide. By imposing a needless bureaucratic dictatorship and purging the left, the Corbyn clique is killing what it imagines it is protecting. **Carla Roberts reports**

Jeremy Corbyn is a tragic figure. Having been at the storm centre of one of the biggest witch-hunts in British political history while he led the Labour Party, he is now conducting his very own witch-hunt in what will soon be a corpse. Thousands have already voted with their feet. Now the majority of the central executive committee (CEC) of His Party, meeting on Sunday April 12, has decided to simply overturn the December launch conference's decision to allow 'dual membership'. Members of left and socialist organisations are now banned. There is even a proscribed list.

As an aside, not only were all votes at this April 12 Zoom meeting held in secret, but CEC chair Jenn Forbes did not even announce how the vote went! Motions were simply declared as having "passed". Needless to say, all the motions moved by the 14 members of Corbyn's leadership faction, The Many, passed, while everything moved by the nine supporters of Grassroots Left was defeated. There was one rather amusing incident, however, where an amendment moved by GL CEC supporters miraculously passed, as Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi outlined in a meeting organised by YP Connections:

It's because the Zoom poll had the wrong section number on it. So, when the Zoom poll result was announced, our amendment had passed. And then the chair started saying, oh, um, I seem to have misled people I'm really sorry, we'll have to re-run that vote. And we said, hang on a minute, there's been a vote, you can't just decide to rerun it. What had obviously happened was that the people in the meeting were just voting according to a list that had been sent around, telling them to vote for this one and against this one, by number. And, although the content was actually in writing on their screens, and was read out and everything, when it came to voting, they all voted as if it was one of the amendments they're meant to approve. I thought that was hilarious.¹

That incident goes some way to dispel the idea that the Corbyn clique is trying ever so hard to act in a 'non-factional' way. CEC meetings are very clearly run and orchestrated by Corbyn's right-hand woman, Karie Murphy, who is planning things in great detail.

As a reminder, this is the motion on 'dual membership' that 69.2% of members who voted at the YP launch conference were in favour of:

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

But no such "approved list" was presented to the CEC - instead Murphy had drawn up a *banned list* of nine



Zarah Sultana: considering her options

socialist groups, who are "deemed not to be aligned to our party's values and [are] proposed as ineligible for the purposes of Your Party membership".

Although it was the Corbyn leadership itself that had drafted the various limited 'options' that members were allowed to vote on at launch conference, it now clearly feels no need to actually implement anything it now dislikes. The first move was to do away with 'collective leadership' by installing the position of 'parliamentary leader' - for Corbyn, needless to say. And now, dual membership has been effectively done away with.

Repeating history

Instead Your Party has followed in the footsteps of the Labour Party bureaucracy in the 1920s and drawn up a list of proscribed organisations. In the 1920s the prime target was very much the CPGB, and that remained the case up to and including the cold war. In the 1980s Militant Tendency was added to the list and in the immediate aftermath of Corbyn, the list was extended to include Labour Party Marxists, Labour Against the Witchhunt, Socialist Appeal and, strangely enough, the Alliance for Workers Liberty.

YP's proscribed list consists of "Socialist Workers Party, Alliance for Workers' Liberty, Socialist Party, Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, Communist Party of Great Britain (Provisional Central Committee), Scottish Socialist Party, Socialist Equality Party, Revolutionary Communist Party".² Why are they proscribed? "These organisations

maintain independent national political structures, membership organisations and internal discipline. Their internal organisational models and strategic objectives are distinct from and incompatible with the values and constitutional framework of Your Party. These organisations stand candidates in elections."

Of course, the YP proscribed list is a very mixed bunch. The Northite SEP would not touch YP with a barge pole. The Woods-Sewell RCP has long gone. But the others would have wished to openly stand candidates under a YP umbrella. In fact, the only group given a reprieve - probably temporarily - is due to stand almost 300 candidates in the May local elections: SPEW's electoral front, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. This decision, due to an amendment moved by Sam Gorst, makes little sense, of course, as many Tusc candidates will indeed be SPEW members. But then, rationality is usually the first victim of any witch-hunt.

As an aside, when Niall Christie wanted to take the SSP out of the banned list, Forbes insisted: "We cannot possibly discuss individual groups" - as GL CEC rep Sophie Wilson explained in a Zoom report-back meeting organised by Sheffield Left.³ There are very clearly different rules for different groups. GL supporter Mel Mullings moved an (unsuccessful) amendment to remove *all* banned organisations and another amendment proposed a 'six months' "amnesty" - of course, they were all voted down.

The CEC paper pushed through also contains the helpful addition that

"the list is not exhaustive" and, indeed, the next point states:

The constitution should also apply to any organisation that operates as a democratic-centralist party or organisation; maintains its own national political membership structure, requires political discipline and accountability to an external leadership or programme. Such organisations would automatically fall within the scope of the ineligibility rule.

It is pretty clear that the rules are written in such a way as to apply to *any* group - and would be implemented as soon as any members cause a problem or embarrassment. Funnily enough, Socialist Action, the secretive Stalinoid sect that political officer Louise Regan is a member of, is not on the list - and, perhaps, it never will be.

A pre-written email, sent out straight after the CEC meeting, is a masterclass in Orwellian newspeak: "Today, Your Party invites all socialists and socialist parties to join us in order to build a mass, democratic party where every member's voice counts. All those willing to join Your Party's mission are welcome!"

Of course, not a single "socialist party" has actually been approved as "eligible"! In fact, the email clarifies that YP only "welcomes approaches from socialist parties who *wish to merge into Your Party*, and we are establishing a process to make this possible" (my emphasis). In other words, dual membership has been overturned by the Corbyn clique

and there will probably never be a list of 'approved' organisations that conference could vote on.

Leaks

How then will this new witch-hunting rule be implemented? The email explains: "Every current member of Your Party affirmed they were not a member of another national political party when they signed up. The issue is therefore one of eligibility for membership, rather than a disciplinary matter. Those who knowingly broke this condition while signing up are simply ineligible for membership, and we wish them well."⁴

Put simply, Your Party does not have the money or staff for the kind of 'hot' witch-hunt that we have seen in the Labour Party, when the compliance unit was massively increased to actively go on the hunt for leftwingers and alleged 'anti-Semites', delving into thousands of social media accounts. Instead, the CEC paper outlines that implementation of the ban would be achieved through "self-declaration", "public political affiliation", "election candidate disclosures" or "information submitted by members"⁵.

In other words, this is going to be the time of the snitches. We would not be surprised if loyal Corbyn supporters - some of whom are probably still reeling from having been constantly outvoted by the left in their proto-branches - will have been happily taking notes on who is a member of this or that organisation.

Then there is the question of how somebody accused of being a member of, say, the SWP, could prove that they are not? How can you prove a negative? As one person quipped, "I might have to join the SWP first, then officially state that I'm leaving and request proof." We have seen it all before in the Labour Party, of course.

Ditto the 17-pages-long, very cumbersome and bureaucratic 'complaints procedure' pushed through by the leadership faction on April 12: "It's a complaints procedure which is designed to make complaints about people like us," as comrade Wimborne-Idrissi put it, and it is not there to hold "the officers and staff accountable", but protect them from the pesky membership.

The first test case might well be the *Weekly Worker*. Unfortunately, the majority of the GL supporters on the CEC explained in a statement that they had "agreed not to share the [CEC] paper [on dual membership] ahead of the full report and an open meeting next week", which will take place on Friday April 17 - ie, almost a week after the CEC meeting. That is a serious mistake, in our view. The comrades are still adhering to the Corbyn clique's demands for 'confidentiality' - even while the witch-hunt against their own supporters is being organised. In all seriousness, what is the worst that could happen to the GL CEC members? Maybe they would get suspended from the CEC for their bravery ... but so what? We hear that they themselves complained in the CEC meeting that "there seems to be very little point of us being here"⁶. Quite. Transparency really should have been the comrades' main weapon in their fight for a democratic party.

Long story short: When an anonymous source sent us a copy

of the paper on dual membership a few days before the CEC meeting, we naturally published it on X and Facebook, where it has been viewed and shared tens of thousands of times.⁷ Members are interested, naturally - it is supposed to be their party, after all. And if we are serious about socialism being 'the rule of the working class', then surely we have to act openly and in front of the working class.

At the CEC meeting, Jenn Forbes read out a pre-written lecture about "an unauthorised leak of CEC minutes and associated papers", which will now be "investigated through the complaints procedure". Apparently, publishing the paper "undermines the integrity of Your Party", because "we need confidentiality to operate in good governance". We dread to think what 'bad governance' or a 'lack of integrity' in YP would look like.

Departures

We should stress that *none* of these CEC decisions are borne out of "incompetence" - something we have heard quite a lot in the last few days. Or that Corbyn and his right-hand woman, Karie Murphy, seem to have "forgotten" or are "unaware" of the fact that those they are about to expel are actually the very same people who have been most active in Your Party. The vast number of proto-branches have been set up by members of the organised left - they have the experience, the contacts and the gumption to do it.

That is, of course, exactly the problem for the Corbyn clique. They never set out to build an active, members-led party, despite all the waffle pretending to. They were effectively bounced into setting up YP by Zarah Sultana, after she launched both the 'appeal for a party' in July 2025 (which was signed by over 800,000 people) and then, after Corbyn continued to dither, the first membership portal, in September.

But Corbyn does not want a real mass working class party. He remains at best a left Labourite, who still believes in the *British road to socialism* along the lines of the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain. He has no interest in building a party that organises an active working class in vibrant branches and with a healthy culture of discussion and debate - that kind of party would hold its leader to account. And Corbyn certainly does not believe in the need to build a revolutionary party. He thinks that

socialism can be introduced by a vote in parliament - and therefore you need another Labour-type party.

Active socialists are a problem for that kind of party - ex-Tories less so. Among the candidates endorsed for the May elections are three councillors who were Conservative Party members as recently as January 2026: Gaz Ali, Amo Hussain, Izzy Hussain - they all sat as Tories on Walsall council. First, they were featured on the published list of candidates endorsed by YP, then they were taken off again after *The Canary* reported on it - but the leaflets of the three, with a beaming Corbyn in the middle, have already been printed.⁸

We are neither 'disappointed' with Corbyn nor are we surprised. It was worth giving it a go - and it is worth staying and organising in YP until we are thrown out. It is, after all, an explicitly "socialist" party (leaving aside that there is no definition of the word), with probably still over 50,000 members. Marxists and communists should make every effort to engage with them and win them over to the vision of the kind of party we *actually* need.

But, of course, Your Party is now rapidly becoming little more than a Momentum-style shell of an organisation, with the occasional online vote, and little life in the real world. It will support this and that local independent grouplet, while trying to ride on Zack Polanski's coat tails, leaving Corbyn enough leisure time to make his pickled pumpkins.

Members are now leaving in droves. Counterfire - even though it is *not* on the list of proscribed organisations - made it particularly easy for the party leadership, declaring on the day before the CEC meeting: "Counterfire will not remain in a party that expels socialists and, if the motion should pass on Sunday, we will immediately leave."⁹ In a longer article, published after the vote, Preston councillor Michael Lavalette explains: "The decision to exclude the far left from YP will *automatically* mean that Counterfire, our members and elected councillors, will now leave YP."¹⁰

The SWP too seems to be all too eager to do the witch-hunters' work: "The SWP will not pursue a 'deep entryism', where we secretly maintain our own organisation inside Your Party. The key battles are outside the structures of Your Party," writes *Socialist Worker*

editor Tomáš Tengely-Evans - and then, rather incredibly, holds out his hand of friendship to Corbyn, in true opportunist fashion:

It is welcome that the Your Party statement said, 'This is not a condemnation of other socialist parties, many of which do vital campaigning work ... Your Party looks forward to standing alongside them on the many issues where we agree. Facing the threat of the far right, we must and will work together.' We too want to work with Your Party in movements and united fronts, such as Stand Up to Racism.¹¹

Bums on seats clearly trumps principled politics - and an ongoing relationship with Corbyn certainly delivers the former.

Then, on April 13, the whole Scottish interim executive committee resigned from YP,¹² including CEC member Niall Christie, an ally of the Grassroots Left, after the CEC majority had voted against all of his amendments, which he had presented under the title of the "Scottish exemption". The CEC basically confirmed that it had overturned pretty much every decision made at the Scottish launch conference in Dundee in February (which was organised by the ISEC, but was later officially recognised by YP - Jeremy Corbyn even spoke at it). For example, the launch conference voted to put up candidates in the Holyrood elections - but the Corbyn clique ran another email referendum which came up with the result that, actually, no, YP should *not* stand. That's exactly what email referendums and online plebiscites are for: to simply confirm what the leadership wants. That is why all democrats oppose such methods of 'decision making' - they only give the illusion of democracy.

On Friday April 10, an unsigned email to all members in Scotland simply announced that, instead of organising the election of a permanent Scottish executive in April (as agreed at conference), there will be a "Scottish working party, selected shortly through sortition (a random selection from across the full Scottish membership)", which would "develop governance arrangements, leading member engagement, shaping initial branch structures, and preparing for Scottish Executive Committee (SEC) elections." In other words, it wanted to kick the can further down the road and delay, delay, delay.

We do not agree with the ISEC's politics at all - they are self-declared Scottish nationalists and wanted YP Scotland to be "independent" from the rest of the party too. But the Corbyn clique's undemocratic manoeuvres will have driven many more Scottish members straight into the arms of petty nationalism.

Thousands had already left Your Party to join the shiny new Greens before Sunday's CEC meetings - and thousands more are now likely to follow. And it is easy to see why: with over 220,000 members, 17% in the latest polls and its media-savvy leader, Zack Polanski, it looks like a much bigger, much more successful and hugely more vibrant version of Corbyn's failing vanity project. The soft-left 'messaging' is almost identical, but the Greens do it so much better. On paper anyway. As we have reported, the membership appears to be extremely passive and just 700 Greens participated in their spring conference, which was open to all 220,000 members.¹³

Polanski will no doubt continue to play a game of posing left, all the while touting the idea of a European (capitalist) defence pact, as an 'alternative' to Nato. He will continue to talk about his support for the Palestinians, while conniving with

those in the Green Party apparatus who are against characterising Zionist settler-colonialism as racist. He is touring trade union conferences, while assuring medium and big business that he is no revolutionary - for example, with the amendment agreed at spring conference, which removed a previous commitment to nationalise "the five largest energy supply companies", replacing it with a plan for "diversity of ownership, including private, public, municipal and community schemes", so that "consumers will have a choice between diverse retailers operating with fair competition".¹⁴

He is, in other words, the prime example of a good politician on the make who is covering all bases. He is very much getting the party ready to enter government, albeit as a junior coalition partner. The Greens are and remain a petty-bourgeois formation (ie, they fight to reform capitalism in the interest of the petty bourgeoisie). They might soon enough become a *thoroughly bourgeois* party, especially if they get called into a potential anti-Reform coalition after the 2029 general election - not an impossible prospect. In other words, the Green Party is not an option for genuine socialists.

Members' Charter

There is understandable impatience among many on the left of Your Party. But impatience rarely produces anything of particular value or long-lasting. Take the so-called 'Members' Charter'¹⁵ produced by Sean Frank in Bristol and Richard Brenner, formerly a leading member of the Trotskyist sect, Workers Power. After many decades in WP, he left a couple of years ago, when WP would not agree with the 'gender-critical' theses he had produced. Being a proper sect, it would not allow him to openly discuss his differences on the trans question, for example, in their newspaper, and he was left with no choice but to quit.

He is now leading efforts to set up an "interim association or federation of socialist branches, individuals and groups within and outside YP, as a step towards organising the grassroots-led, socialist party we were promised". Some 500 have signed the charter in just over two weeks and 140 of those turned up to a first organising meeting on Zoom on April 15. And the eager observer will notice that it contains no politics at all - just these three demands: "Recognise our branches", "Start campaigning" and "Operate transparently - respect member-led democracy". That is followed by this 'threat': "Should the CEC fail to implement this Members' Charter by Sunday 10 May, we pledge to convene at a hybrid Member Conference in May to consider the outcome and the way forward."

It is a very odd set of demands, seeing as the CEC majority has made absolutely clear from the start that it will not implement any of them. For the first week after launching the charter, comrade Brenner was very keen to stress that there was absolutely no implied threat of a split involved ... how dare you suggest such a thing? Anybody stating that this was clearly the implied logic was told off for acting in "bad faith" and even accused of "toxic bullying". He has now changed his tune, arguing for a split and a "new party". Not having any kind of programme means, of course, that you can travel very lightly and change your tune whenever you fancy.

A number of GL CEC members, who have been working closely with Brenner over the last few months, also (quietly) support the charter - but have not put their names to it.

We really do not think such a diffuse broad-left network, which will have absolutely no politics to begin

with, is the right way to proceed. For a start, it is likely to blow up as soon as it is confronted by a difficult issue - say the trans question. Without developing and agreeing a culture of open debate, somebody like comrade Brenner himself would soon be hounded out as a 'transphobe'.

It is not as though there have not been enough examples of where such broad-left organisations lead: Respect, Left Unity, Transform, etc, etc. They all imploded or withered on the vine - and often pretty quickly. Pretending we all agree on the famous '80%', while ignoring the uncomfortable 20%, has been proven to be a recipe for disaster - not once, not twice, but numerous times. Those 20% include such important questions as what kind of socialism we fight for - and how. Should we just stick to 'common sense', easy economic demands along the lines of 'free bus passes' and 'rent controls' - or do we need the thorough democratisation of society, with a programme of extreme democracy, as developed by Marx, Engels, German Social Democracy and the Bolsheviks? These are not minor questions that can be solved 'later' - the programme very much determines the kind of party we build.

In stark contrast to this stands a potentially positive development in the Democratic Socialists of Your Party, which agreed last week to launch a "Campaign for a Democratic Socialist Party/Communist Party". This was - by far - the most popular of the various proposals presented on the way forward (which also included a proposal to dissolve the DSYP, one to join the Greens and/or Revolutionary Socialism in the 21st Century, and another one to simply rename the organisation Democratic Socialists of Great Britain - ie, declare itself yet another small party).

This campaign will now be fleshed out some more and the comrades are discussing a draft programme to present to other party organisations, branches and individuals. The aim is to set up a steering committee, which discusses and campaigns for a party "with a clear programme for socialism/communism and a thoroughly democratic and transparent culture, which must include the right to form open factions". This is to be accompanied by a "Zoom discussion and education series" that could discuss questions around 'what kind of party'.

It is all still a bit vague and it remains to be seen if the DSYP has the numbers to pull it off, but it is certainly a lot more concrete and welcome than a programmeless, loose 'federation'. Just 'bringing everybody together' and launching a pre-party formation without any programme will create one thing in particular: political confusion and, in no time, further demoralisation ●

Notes

- docs.google.com/document/d/1-2mrEysRPK-
- docs.google.com/document/d/1buHZW7PDX9vc
- youtu.be/fcyXGxIECbc
- www.yourparty.uk/dual-membership
- docs.google.com/document/d/1buHZW7PDX9vc
- youtu.be/fcyXGxIECbc
- x.com/Weekly_Worker/status/2042556887355277822
- www.thecanary.co.uk/analysis/2026/04/11/your-party-have-endorsed
- www.counterfire.org/article/reject-the-your-party-witch-hunt-of-socialists-counterfire-statement
- www.counterfire.org/article/your-party-a-squandered-opportunity
- socialistworker.co.uk/your-party/your-party-leadership-votes-to-ban-dual-membership-for-socialist-organisations
- x.com/NiallChristie1/status/2043650353455890557
- www.weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1579/getting-ready-to-govern
- www.thecanary.co.uk/news/2026/03/28/green-party-conference-votes
- actionnetwork.org/petitions/the-members-charter

Fighting fund

Need your help

With exactly half the month gone as I write, I have some bad news: we are well below the halfway mark for the *Weekly Worker* £2,750 monthly fighting fund target for April. To be precise, we have just £1,098 in the kitty.

It's true that we are nearing that time of the month when a few substantial standing orders come our way, but, unless our readers and supporters step in to help us out, we could be in serious trouble. True, we wouldn't collapse, but we'd have a major problem if we were several hundred pounds short.

Over the last seven days, a small number of comrades made really good donations: namely, TB, who made a bank transfer of no less than £95, PB, who contributed her usual £80 by standing order, and PM, who donated £50 via PayPal. Other standing orders/bank transfers came from TW (£25), OG (£24), not to mention CC and MD, who each donated £10.

Other PayPal donors were ST (£20), AB (£11), plus SO, AR and GP (£5 each), while another fiver came our way from comrade Hassan, who handed his usual banknote to one of our team. But, unfortunately, that's the lot - a weekly total of just £355, which is just over half the going rate.

So now we need to really step on the gas, so can you play your part? Why not donate by bank transfer or PayPal, or even send us a cheque - there's still plenty of time if you do that soon, with two weeks still to go. For more details on any of those ways, please visit our website (address below).

With your help we can do it! ●
Robbie Rix

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

OUR HISTORY

Possibilities and perceptions

Marking the centenary of the 1926 General Strike, **Jack Conrad** highlights the failure of the 'official' lefts both in the trade unions and the Labour Party. However, while there was betrayal, there were also objective limits to what could have been achieved



TUC special delegation to Downing Street to discuss the mining industry: (l-r) Alonzo Swales, Arthur Heyday, Edward L Poulton, George Hicks, Ben Tillett, John Marchbank, John Bromley and AG Walkden

A general strike can be dressed up as a purely economic dispute between workers and employers: its initiators can speak the language of reasonableness, compromise and negotiation. Yet, whatever the heartfelt wishes, orders and beliefs of those at the top, a general strike can never just be a routine trades dispute. It involves the working class organised as a class and can only but have a *political* dynamic that challenges the state ... therefore the state will respond *as the state*. The result? Class against class.

The necessity of safeguarding picket lines, turning out publicly, organising couriers to carry messages, decision-making, coordinating between different unions, ensuring that the vital needs of the population are met - all that leads to new, often unofficial and unconstitutional, answers. Initiative, inventiveness and latent energy are released from below. Above, conservative leaders find the situation slipping out of their hands. Workers think, debate, discover and gravitate towards revolutionary ideas.

Not that we should fall for the trap of *direct action* syndicalism and the 'one big strike'. The idea that the general strike "can stop the flow of profits and shut down the system" and thereby ready the working class for taking over the means of production.¹ A perspective originated by the likes of William Benbow, Mikhail Bakunin and César De Paepe - we dealt with them in the first of these articles.² The line of reasoning is naively appealing: since no society can exist for long if production stops, all that workers have to do is to stop working and that will

stop the capitalist system. The ruling class either humbly surrenders or unleashes the full might of the state and thereby forces workers to bring down the old society in its entirety. Except, of course, it does not happen.

Shortcuts inevitably prove illusory ... though that does not stop illusions being renewed with each successive generation. The fact of the matter is that general strikes have repeatedly been defeated by the *undiminished* ability of the state to protect the interests of collective capital - even strikes on a mass scale rarely "paralyse the state".³

Sometimes substantial concessions are given in the form of state subsidy. Trade union officialdom can thereby claim a victory and reassert its control over the sale of labour power by ensuring a smooth return to work. At other times, though, workers find themselves compelled to return to work through the state blocking strike pay, seizing trade union assets, withdrawing welfare benefits, etc. Then there is the last resort: the state unleashes unmediated violence - arrests, beatings, killings. This leading not to workers bringing the entire old order crashing down. How can they? They have no brigades, no divisions with ready access to, or training in, advanced weaponry.

Hence Marxists have always stressed the necessity of *political action*, not least using elections in order to agitate, educate and organise ... and thereby gain a demonstrable majority, and not only in big factories, mines and mills. Through organising the mass of class-conscious workers, including the unemployed, carers,

retirees, etc, into a disciplined, programmatically-based political party, a Communist Party, it becomes possible to *morally* split the existing state machine - most importantly, the armed forces.

The rank and file have friends, partners, siblings, parents who are in, or who are influenced by, the party. Indeed they themselves could easily be card-carrying members. When given unacceptable orders, they will therefore rebel and place commanding officers under arrest. Something greatly facilitated if the demand for the abolition of the standing army and replacing it with a popular militia has already been achieved. With us, therefore, winning the battle for democracy is strategically central.

Stage-managed

Of course, as we have amply illustrated, the 1926 General Strike had all the hallmarks of a stage-managed, bureaucratic affair. That explains how establishment historians can get away with portraying it as an example of the British people's moderate sensibilities and innate reasonableness.⁴ From the beginning the strike was consciously infused with religion, respectability and a daft TUC sense of 'fair play'. The general council rightly thought itself the epitome of law-abiding responsibility. Nor can there be any doubt that the mass of workers had no intention of breaking the law, let alone making social revolution. Yet with each day that passed things began to change.

The situation itself eroded and broke down the barriers that kept the parallel sectional strikes apart.

With every street corner debate and picket-line discussion, class solidarity hardened. The 400 or so councils of action helped overcome petty sectional divisions and, to a greater or lesser degree, secured a unified, horizontal approach. True, none of them experienced a sudden rush of calls from the rank and file, demanding their transformation into organs of insurrection. But then there was no fusillade of bullets to teach. Britain 1926 moved according to a slower tempo than Russia 1905. Workers were still reformist and the British state was infinitely more skilful, confident and resourceful than the visibly tottering Asiatic despotism of Russian tsarism. Nonetheless, there was an unmistakable tempo.

From the start the TUC faced demands that the strike be extended to *all* workers. Those who had not yet been ordered to strike clamoured to join the fray. Local officials telegraphed that they were having the utmost difficulty in keeping them at work. There were many reports of 'second line' workers coming out alongside the 'first line' in spite of the TUC schedule. This was no matter of a dozen here and a dozen there. In all, 50% of engineering workers struck before they were given the official call. Non-unionised workers - 'nons' - joined the strike too: another piece of evidence exposing as a lie the TUC claim that the strike was called off because it was collapsing. In point of fact there were 100,000 more workers out the day *after* the TUC had capitulated and 'ended' the strike than the day before.

The TUC called it off on the

ninth day, not from fear of failure, but of success. Throughout the strike surrender negotiations had been proceeding via all manner of circuitous routes. However, confronted by a government that showed not the least sign of compromise, and by increasing assertiveness and independence from below, the TUC was squeezed as if in a vice. To maintain its existence as intermediary between labour and capital and preserve union funds, the bureaucracy *had to* betray its own social base and end the General Strike with an *unconditional* surrender.⁵

If it lasted another week or fortnight, let alone the holy month, the bureaucratic straitjacket would have started to unravel and our Labourites would have been in real trouble. The mad dogs would have taken the lead and conceivably realised the "political revolution - the destruction of the constitution" (Stanley Baldwin's baseless accusation levelled against the TUC).

A note of caution is worth adding at this point of the argument, though. The union tops never wanted to go for a "political revolution - the destruction of the constitution". Nor had they accumulated the necessary funds to provide for strike pay for a 'holy month'. Similarly, trade union members had not been encouraged to stock up with the basics in order to survive a long strike. So, when venturing into alternative history, my interest is more about the logic of a general strike, rather than an alternative history of *the* General Strike.

That said, clashes between workers and the police, as well as OMS

specials, were becoming more and more frequent in the second week. Plymouth, Swansea, Southsea and Nottingham all experienced serious unrest. Five thousand besieged the police station in Preston in an attempt to secure the release of an arrested strike leader. In Edinburgh a football pitch was used to impound vehicles that did not carry trade union passes. Buses were overturned in Glasgow. The Flying Scotsman was derailed by striking Cramlington miners. The main Newcastle to Durham road was blocked. In Lambeth people erected a barricade across Vauxhall Bridge and the Elephant and Castle became a concentrated hub of picketing. Strike-breakers were forced out from 'black' vehicles. When the authorities organised a two-mile-long food convoy from the London docks - protected by 16 armoured cars, cavalry and mounted police - it was the target of bricks, flower pots, anything that came to hand from the windows ranged above. The Horse Guards were camped in Hyde Park and Royal Navy ships stationed on the Clyde, the Tyne and the Mersey.⁶

With a third week, events would surely have escalated into full-scale battles. The cosy tea-and-football relationship between strike committees and the local constabulary in the quieter, more backward, areas could not have survived that. Indeed, in the hurricane of self-activity that would have resulted as soon as the TUC's bureaucratic control slackened or began to break down, the councils of action would have begun to see themselves as alternatives to the existing state structure.

The intervention of troops might have momentarily driven the workers off the streets - that is probably true. But then, at the same time, the whole ideological apparatus of rule by consent in this country would have shattered. More, if there had been a serious fightback, then the minds of the workers in uniform would surely have been receptive to the revolutionary call - join your brothers and sisters, form soldiers' and sailors' councils of action.

Nowhere did things go anywhere near that far. Nevertheless, there were many, many examples of strike committees and councils of action beginning to show the signs of developing into organs of local power. Because most militant workers realised they were not only fighting against miners' wage cuts, but against a future attack on themselves, because they had gained a real sense of themselves as a class, they were increasingly willing to circumvent the TUC's pacifistic instructions.

Almost from the start certain councils of action began to exert tight control over their areas: deep social roots, militant politics, detailed planning and aggressive picketing were the decisive factors. Northumberland and Durham was particularly advanced, not least due to the sterling efforts of Robin Page Arnot. But it was far from alone. South Wales, Glasgow, Bristol, Manchester and Sheffield were all exemplary. Showing the value of working in the Labour Party - the Labour-run Stepney council not only allowed, but actively encouraged, the council of action to operate from the town hall and other municipal buildings. Because of its proximity to the Wapping, Shadwell and Limehouse docks, there were intense, often violent, struggles over the transport of goods.⁷

Everywhere lorries and vans carried stickers stating that they moved 'By permission of the TUC'. Councils of action had permit sub-committees. Quite rightly, food, coal, electricity, gas and other vital supplies were ensured to hospitals and other essential services. Capitalists would have to go 'cap in hand' to the council of action in order to be allowed to use



Stanley Baldwin: no concessions, no compromise

union labour. Even on the fourth day "the cabinet was told that the use of mass pickets and a shortage of police was seriously hampering the [official - JC] movement of supplies".⁸ A good case can be made for the Page Arnot argument that whoever was *seen to deliver* food, coal, electricity, gas and other vital supplies would win over wavering elements and middle class minds.⁹

Intervention by the police, OMS specials and the display of military force was answered by elementary measures of self-defence, ranging from pickets carrying walking sticks to full-blown workers' defence corps. Perhaps the most famous example being Methil, Fife. At the beginning the corps consisted of no more than a 150 men. But after police attacks on picket lines that rose to 700. The whole town was "patrolled by the corps, organised in companies under an ex-NCO, and there was no further interference by the police with pickets".¹⁰

From memory, a grainy photo shows the ex-NCO wearing a World War I helmet, sat upon white horse, marching his comrades in military formation. He was, I believe, a member of the Social Democratic Federation (the Hyndmanite National Socialist Party returned to the SDF name in 1920).

Centrist posers

The CPGB stood out as the only serious revolutionary force. Yes, the trade union 'official' lefts fancied themselves as red-hot *Bolsheviks* - a centrist pose. They supported the October Revolution, albeit at a safe distance, thereby gaining from the continued popularity of the Soviet Republic among class-conscious workers. But they refused to apply its lessons to Britain. Meanwhile, they had their everyday business calling: bargaining with capitalists over the commodity price of labour-power.

As for the Labour left, not least the Independent Labour Party, it was muddled, unstable, prone to sentimental twaddle and operated as a loose holding house, rather than a politically coherent class party. Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden, John Wheatley and a good few other Labour cabinet ministers were long-standing ILPers. And yet, despite their 'strategy of acceptability' being a monumental betrayal of even the most minimalist notions of reformist socialism, there were only token moves to disassociate from them. MacDonald was removed as editor of the ILP's *Socialist Review* in 1925. However, the ministerial traitors were not expelled. In fact, they were given *carte blanche* to dupe voters in the 1929 general election with the promise of delivering the "Socialist and Cooperative Commonwealth".¹¹

Nowadays, we inhabit the end game of that phenomenon. Labourism

is in profound decline. The 'strategy of acceptability' has become an end in itself. Neither the Labour leadership nor the great mass of Labour voters profess any longer to believe in reformist socialism. And yet, while the old is hollowed out, reduced to a zombie-like existence, the new cannot be born - hence, in the interregnum, all manner of morbid symptoms appear.¹² Not only Reform UK, Patriotic Alternative, Restore Britain and Tommy Robinson. There is George Galloway's Workers' Party, Zack Polanski's Greens, Jeremy Corbyn's Your Party and a whole host of other, smaller-scale, broad-front projects which effectively serve to divert would-be communist militants from doing anything worthwhile, anything serious. Clear lines of demarcation, discipline, robust debate and genuine commitment have certainly become an anathema in such circles. Hence, notions that such formations represent the future are themselves morbid symptoms.

True, after 1924 the ILP moved to the left, becoming the main *internal* opposition to the Labour right. At a grassroots level there was, especially during the General Strike, close cooperation with the CPGB. But leading ILPers, such as James Maxton, constantly vacillated and sought accommodation with the right. The ILP was certainly incapable of providing the single-minded leadership required to navigate the swirling currents, deadly rocks and violent storms encountered in any period of greatly heightened class struggle.

The state was acutely aware that the CPGB represented its main enemy in the working class movement. Orders were issued accordingly. During the nine days, out of the 5,000 arrests more than 1,000 of them were CPGBers. Something like 20% of our total membership. Party offices were raided, equipment confiscated, speakers harassed and news sheets banned.¹³ Even to carry a copy of the CPGB's *Workers' Bulletin* was to risk arrest. Yet, because of its outstanding role, the CPGB gained enormously in terms of respect and influence, particularly among the miners. They made up the bulk of the 5,000 recruits who joined the party during the General Strike and its immediate aftermath (a doubling of membership).

When on May 13 the TUC general council *unanimously* took the decision to call off the strike and leave the miners locked out, the CPGB damned the pack of them. It fought to maintain the strike through "emergency meetings" of all strike committees and councils of action and a campaign by the National Minority Movement to link key sections of the workers to the miners through advancing existing economic claims.¹⁴

Nevertheless, although it took some

time before the mass of workers were back at work, this was due not to the success of the Communist Party, but to employers bidding their time in order to weed out militants and impose harsh terms and conditions. The workers had been routed and were in no mood to fight on. Loyal and with a high sense of discipline, the ranks had done as they were asked, including by the CPGB. They had put their trust in the TUC and had been cruelly betrayed. It was right to complain that the "generals refused to lead". But that should have been expected and prepared for. Calling for the "sacking" of the rightwing generals in June 1926 was too little, too late ... after all, the leftwing generals were equally, if not more, treacherous.¹⁵

Having said that, nothing can take away from the selflessness and tireless hard work put in by CPGB members throughout the General Strike. During the seven-month lockout too the CPGB gave the miners unstinting support. Where the TUC and Labour Party accused the miners of wanting to tie them to a "mere slogan", the CPGB backed them and their refusal to accept savage wage cuts and an end to national bargaining. It demanded moral and financial support from the whole workers' movement and a coal embargo.

TUC and Labour Party right reformists saw the collapse of the General Strike as a vindication of their parliamentary cretinism. They had glimpsed the terrible prospect of civil war and recoiled in horror. NUR leader CT Cramp summed up the right's collective sigh of relief with his infamous "Never again!" speech. Most left reformists came to the same conclusion. Yet few dared openly admit it. However, between glowing socialist promises and the ugly reality of betrayal there was a chasm. Attempting to maintain their anti-capitalist image in the eyes of militants, but determined to stay united with the right, the left reformist majority on the TUC general council tried to brazen it out.

There had been no betrayal. They had *all* voted to call off the strike and desert the miners, but talk of a sellout was, so they said, completely unfounded: indeed the General Strike "has not failed".¹⁶ If every other section of society think otherwise - government, BBC, rightwing Labourites, intellectuals, bosses, rank-and-file workers, etc - then they must be deluded. Building workers' leader Alf Purcell wrote in the *Sunday Worker* of "more real working class progress" being made in a "few days" than "in as many years previously ... Those who talk about the failure of the general strike are mentally a generation behind the times in which we live."¹⁷ A similar diagnosis informed the article penned by another 'official' left, TUC president George Hicks:

Was the general strike a victory or defeat? I reply: who has gained the most from it? The working class has gained infinitely more from the general strike than has the capitalist class ... Of course, the general strike has been a success - a great victory. Those who talk about the general strike being a failure and of the uselessness of the general strike as a weapon must be living in a world of their own imagining.¹⁸

With the advantage of 20:20 hindsight, it is easy to see who was living in a fantasy world. Nonetheless, there are still those who refuse to face the facts. John Foster - once a Straight Leftist, but now an elder statesman of the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain - seriously claimed that "the general strike was also an epic victory for the working class - and one which can be said to have changed the course of history".¹⁹

The same official optimism saw Arthur Scargill consistently deny that the 1984-85 miners' Great Strike ended in defeat. No, it was some kind of victory: "the greatest victory in the strike was the struggle itself".²⁰ Peter Taaffe made similar claims on behalf of the Militant-led Liverpool council in July 1984, when it refused to fight alongside the embattled miners. Instead they took Tory *Danegeld* worth up to £60 ... Of course, this was no "surrender", he insisted, but a great "victory".²¹ Well, yes, for Liverpool as a city. But not for the working class as a whole. And, once the Tories were out of immediate danger, they inflicted a crushing defeat on Liverpool - in March 1987, 47 councillors were removed from office and surcharged.

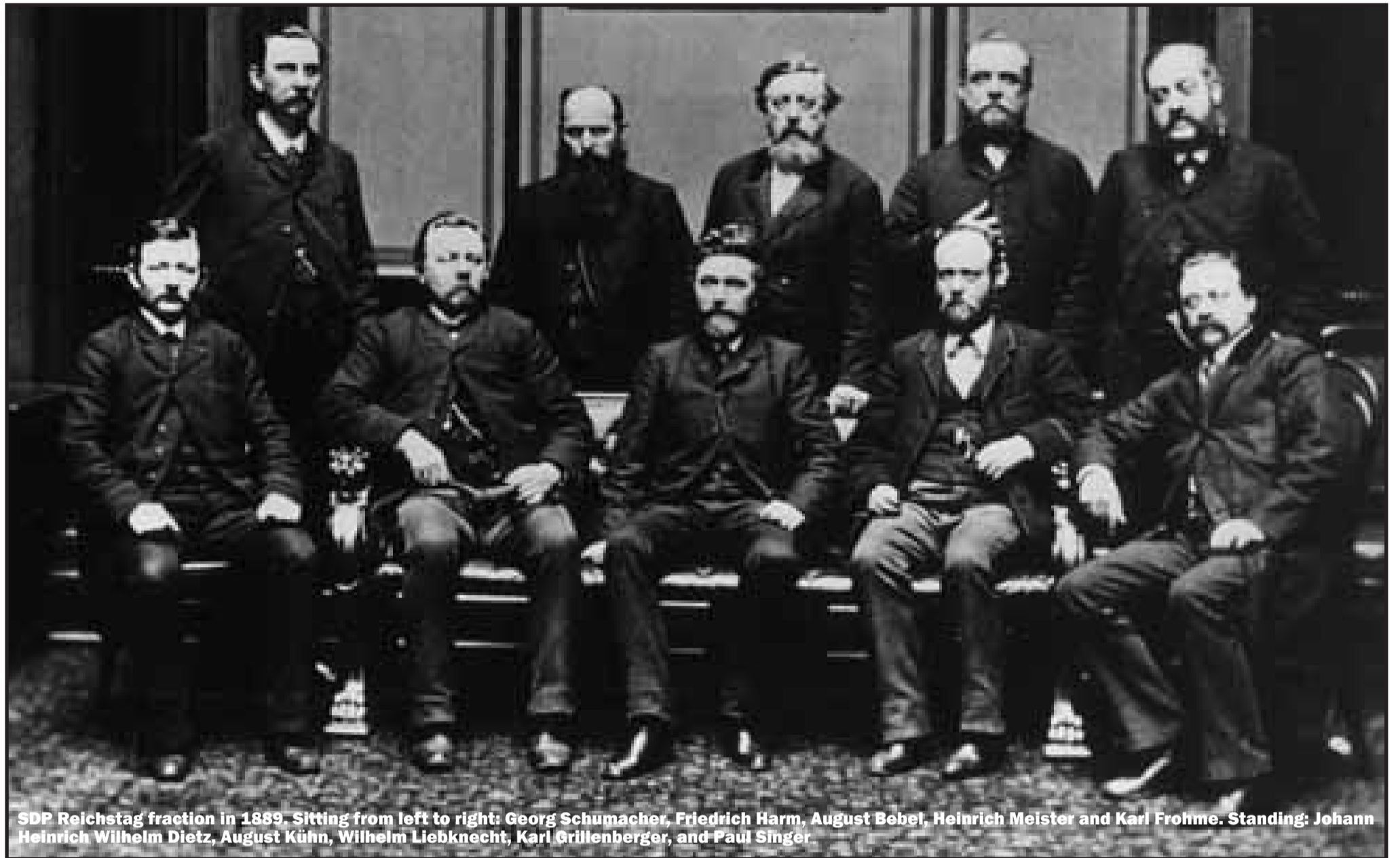
True, there can be defeats that are more valuable than victories ... However, first and foremost that is decided by what the mass of workers themselves think. Have they overcome sectionalist prejudices? Have they swept away their old misleaders? Have they made key programmatic demands their own? Eg, the democratic republic and a popular militia. Have they come to look to the communists for answers?

A mass Communist Party - with its ability to educate, educate, educate - can make defeats such as 1926 into a potent material force, no matter at what historical remove. Nonetheless, a defeat remains a defeat ●

Notes

1. Sadie Robinson 'Workers hold the power' *Socialist Worker* January 8 2021.
2. J Conrad 'Classical Marxism and the general strike' *Weekly Worker* January 29 2026.
3. Contrary to the assertion of the SWP's Sam Ord: "Strikes on a mass scale can paralyse the state" ("Mass strike - why do they matter" *Socialist Worker* July 2 2022).
4. Eg, WH Crook *The General Strike: a study of labor's tragic weapon in theory and practice* Chapel Hill NC 1931; J Symons *The General Strike: a historical portrait* London 1957; W Citrine *Men and work: an autobiography* London 1964; AJP Taylor *English history: 1914-1945* Oxford 1965; K Laybourn *The General Strike of 1926* Manchester 1993.
5. Except for the miners, most union members received strike pay during the General Strike. Trade union coffers ended much depleted and might have become exhausted if it had lasted for a whole month. The TGWU, the richest union, spent £600,000 during the nine days, the NUR over £1 million. In total the General Strike reduced trade union funds from £12.5 million to £8.5 million: ie, it cost the trade unions around £4 million (www.unionhistory.info/timeline/1918_1939.php).
6. In the months before the strike the government built up an unprecedented large home army and positioned a good part of the fleet around the coast. John Foster estimates that there were nearly 80,000 troops garrisoned in Britain, as well as a naval force of 11 battleships and cruisers and 58 other vessels (J Foster 'Imperialism and the labour aristocracy' in J Skelley (ed) *The General Strike: 1926* London 1976, p47).
7. The standard account of the councils of action was written by Emile Burns in 1926 for the Labour Research Department. See *The General Strike of May 1926: trades council in action* London 1975.
8. J Foster 'Imperialism and the labour aristocracy' in J Skelley (ed) *The General Strike: 1926*, London 1976, p46.
9. R Page Arnot *The General Strike, May 1926: its origin and history* London 1926.
10. E Burns *The General Strike of May 1926: trades council in action* London 1975, p143.
11. www.labour-party.org.uk/manifestos/1929/1929-labour-manifesto.shtml.
12. Yes, I am alluding to Antonio Gramsci's well known phrase - see *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* London 1971, p276.
13. The print unions did not help. Blinded by the most narrow-minded sectionalism, they refused to give exemption to the pro-TUC *Lansbury's Weekly*, the *Daily Herald* and the CPGB's *Workers' Daily*. Only one issue appeared - that on May 3 1926. Having made no provision for secret printing, the party had to make do with the *Workers' Bulletin* - a duplicated news sheet.
14. *Workers' Bulletin* May 13 1926.
15. 'Editorial view' *The Communist Review* Vol 7, No2, June 1926.
16. TUC statement quoted in A Hutt *The post-war history of the British working class*, London 1937, p161.
17. *Sunday Worker* June 13 1926.
18. *Ibid.*
19. J Foster 'Imperialism and the labour aristocracy' in J Skelley (ed) *The General Strike: 1926*, London 1976, p45.
20. A Scargill 'We could surrender - or stand and fight' *The Guardian* March 7 2009.
21. P Taaffe and T Mulhern *Liverpool: a city that dared fight* London 1988, pp154-55.

NETHERLANDS



SDP Reichstag fraction in 1889. Sitting from left to right: Georg Schumacher, Friedrich Harm, August Bebel, Heinrich Meister and Karl Frohme. Standing: Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Dietz, August Kühn, Wilhelm Liebknecht, Karl Grillenberger, and Paul Singer

Agreeing the best model

To stand or not to stand in elections has long divided the left. Marx argued for standing. But on what programme, around what issues? On April 11 the Netherlands Communistisch Platform held a day-school to discuss 'Marxism and electoralism'. **Mike Macnair** and **Rogier Specht** provided introductions

In the first session of last weekend's Communist Platform school at Utrecht, I spoke on the history and theory of Marxism and electoral activity. In the second, comrade Rogier Specht of the Communistisch Platform spoke on issues more specific to the electoral work of the Revolutionair Socialistische Partij, of which the CP is part, and specifically on RSP campaigns in the recent local elections in the Netherlands. This second session was conducted in Dutch, but comrade Jules helpfully provided me with simultaneous translation, which allowed me to follow things. That said, the report of this session below is based on comrade Specht's notes.

The meeting was well-attended (though it started late because of technical problems at the venue), and the discussions were lively. It was followed by an enjoyable informal social in a local bar - one of the benefits of physical, as opposed to online, meetings.

In my own opening, I began with Marx's arguments for electoral intervention against the Bakuninists and (surviving) Proudhonists in 1871, which I have cited before and quoted in my March 19 article replying to Vincent David.¹

Marx makes two arguments in these passages. The first is that the road to the abolition of classes lies through working class rule, the "political domination of the proletariat" ("la domination politique du proletariat" in the original French report²). Hence the proletariat as a class has to *learn to lead, or govern* the society as a whole - which requires electoral (and, as far as possible, parliamentary) activity.

The second is that in the absence of an independent political project of the proletariat, the working class inevitably becomes a political tail of one or other of the two great wings of capitalist politics: the nationalist-patriarchalist 'party of order' or the free-market liberal 'party of liberty'.

There are two further arguments which can be added to these. The first is that the strike weapon is, in fact, dependent on wider solidarity: *sectional* strength is not enough. This was an idea already familiar to Marx and Engels, following strike movements in the 1830s-40s. The mere ability to disrupt production, without wider solidarity, can be 'taken down' and, indeed, made into a ground of public opposition to strikers by the capitalist class's control of the judiciary, government, as well as the media and public platforms. Political solidarity can thus massively strengthen strike action.

Cooperatives

The second is that cooperatives under capitalism are driven towards functioning as capitalist firms. This is obvious enough. But as part of a movement tied together by a political party which seeks the *outright replacement of capitalism*, that tendency is weakened and, on the contrary, cooperatives may, as Marx put it, "practically show, that the present pauperising, and despotic system of the subordination of labour to capital can be superseded by the republican and beneficent system of the association of free and equal producers".³

We must not take Marx (or any of

the other classics of our movement) as dogma to be accepted unquestioningly. But in this case, Marx's arguments for electoral action of a workers' party, which aims for the replacement of capitalism *through* working class political rule, are corroborated by subsequent experience. It is not only a matter of the experience of the Second International. Powerful electoral parties of socialist opposition have also reinforced and promoted the growth of trade union, cooperative, mutual aid, workers' education and cultural institutions. Examples can be seen in Europe in the Communist Parties of France and Italy in the cold war period. More recently, the Brazilian Workers Party before its entry into government, and Rifondazione Comunista before its collapse, displayed the same dynamic.

This corroboration poses a further theoretical point. This is that the proletariat is the whole *social class* which is dependent on the *wage share of production* - including indirect dependence of home-makers and children on wage-earners, and dependence on state benefits as an aspect of the 'social wage'. The consequence is that Marx's 'political action' - electoral activity and campaigns for *general laws* in the interests of the working class as a class - more fully express the interests of the working class than the necessarily *sectional* activities of strikes, trade unions and cooperatives. It is for this reason that a movement with a political party which aims to replace capitalism at its core will create stronger trade unions, co-ops, and so on.

The next step is the debate between

the Marxists, on the one hand, and the Possibilists and the British TUC, on the other, at the time of the foundation of the Second International in 1889 and down to the exclusion of the anarchists at the London Congress of 1896 - a debate which has resurfaced in a variety of different forms ever since. The Possibilists argued, as much of the modern far left does, that adopting a minimum programme - and especially demands for political democracy - separated the Parti Ouvrier Français from the masses. What was needed was, then, a broad movement for immediate demands. In 1889 they allied with the British TUC against the Marxists. Then and in 1896, advocating broad unity including opponents of socialist electoral activity served the British trade union leaders as a political alibi for their *actual* intimate relations with the Liberal Party (like US trade union leaders' relations to the Democrats in the USA since the 1950s).

The essence of the Possibilist idea is to limit political proposals to ones agreeable to everyone: a politics of consensus or veto. This implies commitment not to *speak* of socialism as an alternative to capitalist rule as such, of the necessary antagonism of the exploiting to the exploited classes, or of the possibility of working class rule.

Possibilism allows organisational existence - at the price of political silencing. This, again, poses a matter of theory: that the point of a party and of electoral interventions is an independent working class *political voice*. Marx and Engels 'assumed', because it was 'just there', another

aspect of the problem of political voice: the workers' oppositional *press* whose growth in the 19th century Stanley Harrison chronicled.⁴ In Germany, the development of a working class press needed the support of the party, though only *Vorwärts* was directly party-controlled (and that only from 1904).

Electoral coalitions

The issue of silencing leads to that of electoral coalitions. It is clear that both the German SPD and the Bolsheviks used *stand-down agreements* where necessary to win representation in undemocratic electoral systems.⁵ What is unacceptable is, first, *government coalitions* without the workers' party having majority control and the ability to implement its minimum programme, which involves accepting political responsibility for the choices of the pro-capitalist parties. And secondly, coalitions which present themselves as *broad-front political unity*. What is objectionable here is that this is, again, to accept the line of the Possibilists: self-silencing for the sake of unity.

My last point concerned Marxists and local government. Engels in 1881 expressed support for socialist electoral intervention in local government; the Second International offered an (unduly optimistic) view of 'municipal socialism' in a resolution at the 1900 Paris Congress. The Bolsheviks in 1917 conducted extensive municipal Duma election campaigns. The Comintern in 1920, imagining the immediacy of revolution, argued for a policy of using local authorities to trigger confrontation with central

government; Trotsky in 1939 was considerably more cautious, while still urging participation.⁶

The discussion from the floor featured interventions from a 'Trotskyist' from the Spartacist tradition of Oehlerism (which rejects on principle voting for class-collaborationist parties, contrary to Lenin's arguments in *Leftwing communism* and to Trotsky's tactics urged for the French Trotskyists in the people's front period); and, more unusually, from a Eurocommunist, who argued that a more fundamental break with what had been called communism in the 20th century was needed, both because of Stalinism in the 'socialist bloc' and because today's politics has taken away the space for the sort of cooperative, workers' education, and so on, activities of the past because these are now embedded in the state.

More comrades were concerned with the issue of local government specifically. What tangible benefits could we offer for voting communist in local elections, having regard to the limits of legality? How can we raise such issues without reducing our election campaigning to them? Should we advocate the replacement of local government funding by indirect taxation with direct taxation? What would be the relationship of electoral work to the struggle for an independent media? How can we raise class consciousness in general? What if we won a majority in a municipal government - in Finsterwolde in 1951-53, central government simply overthrew the communist municipal government.

In my view a number of these issues resolve into questions of tactics, which are dependent on local knowledge (just for example, local government in England is only funded by indirect taxes in the form of central government subsidies). The problem of legal limits has, however, two aspects to it:

On the one hand, Comintern in 1920 was pursuing a policy *designed to lead to an insurrection in the immediate term*, and its 'confrontational' policy for local government reflected that policy.

On the other hand, law is more fluid than it appears, and the underlying issue is the political relationship of forces. What appears to be entirely legal may be suddenly illegalised by the government or the courts. Militant in Liverpool obtained concessions to stave off a confrontation while the 1984-85 miners' Great Strike was at its height; but the attempt *after* that to move to confronting the government made the organisation appear to be dumping on their own base - a policy exploited by the Tory government and by the Labour right wing.

RSP

Comrade Specht's introduction started with the point that the Communistisch Platform comrades had hoped for the session to be or include a debate with the Amsterdam broad-front electoral group, De Vonk ('The Spark') which the Amsterdam RSP is engaged with. But after keeping the possibility of a debate open for some time, in the end De Vonk said no. The CP had raised the issue for debate, because the RSP executive has adopted no national line, though discussion has begun.

The left's approach to electoral politics is characterised by a narrow focus on street and protest action. It is claimed that 'real change does not take place in parliament'. This is not just a far-left dogma, but is also asserted by the Socialist Party and by the new 'Progressief Nederland' unification of the GroenLinks (Green Left)⁷ and PvdA (Partij van de Arbeid - Labour Party)⁸. The result is that the radical left acts as the political tail of NGOs, the trade unions and established parties that set the political line. The left's electoral voting recommendations, because they are defined by the idea that 'consciousness arises in struggle', have the same tailist character and little practical influence.

In the recent local elections, the RSP stood as part of the De Vonk electoral coalition in Amsterdam, and in its own name in Nijmegen. In Nijmegen 837 votes (0.9%) were obtained. In Amsterdam, the 2022 DSA slate obtained 1,472 votes (0.45%); De Vonk represented a

substantial advance with 5,248 votes (1.6%), though still at a marginal level overall.

There is a faction that argues against electoral work in general as corrupting. But its arguments are incoherent. Corrupting influences exist in all forms of political engagement; and groups which have never engaged in electoral work or have not done so for decades are politically corrupted.

The real issue is about honesty: what we would do in the event of a victory. How do we translate a national programme into a local one? How can we be honest about what is possible within the existing levels of power?

De Vonk has explicitly included in their programme the point that they will make proposals that "push legal boundaries, strain budgets and make civil servants sweat. Not because we are naive, but because we know: every exception begins as a transgression." The strategy, therefore, is to provoke legal and budgetary disputes with the civil state (or superstate, in the case of the EU), in order to use "court cases and other pushback" from Brussels or The Hague as mobilising public campaigns. They themselves say on this matter that in such a situation we "must be ready to bring the whole city to a standstill. And ultimately the whole country".

But can you apply this model to smaller municipalities? Finsterwolde in 1951 did not lead to this dynamic of a general strike; but communists are more likely in 'normal times' to win majorities in smaller municipalities.

Testing legal boundaries in the hope of triggering the mass strike does not prepare the working class for the political choices that must be made. Rather, it merely invites state intervention, media witch-hunting, and so on. What is needed is clarity for the working class about what is possible within the framework of the political goal of dismantling the capitalist constitutional order. We reject coalitions with bourgeois parties, including at local level. Faced with these issues, the party needs its own means of communication with the mass of the working class - especially, its own extensive press, capable of formulating a consistent counter-narrative to that of the state and the bourgeois press.

De Vonk has created a membership-based electoral coalition without a shared programme or agreement on the accountability of any councillors elected: "For now, we have decided that we do not want a rigid, dogmatic line."⁹ But this approach is not workable for a political party which gets MPs or councillors elected. Based on our programmatic vision, we want to curtail the power of the capitalist state and expand the power of the working class. How do we deal with proposals that, for example, increase benefits, but also increase the control mechanisms of benefits agencies? How do we deal with the right to demonstrate? Are we prepared to allow the capitalist state to curtail that? Anti-discrimination measures that increase the power of 'human resources' departments? These are daily political choices, for which you must be prepared with a coherent political programme.

Equally, communists need to pursue strict control over individual elected representatives. They are, after all, under constant pressure to act in the interests of the ruling class. We can only resist high salaries, cushy jobs and the social pressure to 'take responsibility', as a collective. Elected representatives and parliamentary groups need to be subordinate to the party executive and the congress, or at local level to the branch executive and the members' meeting. The accountability mechanism and recallability are not merely organisational measures, but prefigurations of the minimum

programme - they embody the principle that representatives are subordinate to their electors, in contrast to the bourgeois notion of the 'free mandate'. Again, accountability of this sort depends on political debate on the party's political programme and strategy, which is unlikely within a diplomatic unity. De Vonk, in contrast, seeks to *avoid* debate as tending to blow up the diplomatic unity: claiming debate is "more damaging than attacks by fascists".

The general discussion which followed was, again, largely addressed to the limits on the powers on local government. One speaker made the point that 'impossible' demands can become 'possible' with sufficient political pressure. Comrade Specht responded that what was at issue was, rather, leftists creating an illusion of what is possible at local council level, and strategically gambling that the working class will not lose faith in the party when confronted with those limits, but will instead move towards a general strike and revolution. This is pulling the wool over people's eyes. Another raised the issue of standing for neighbourhood councils, which have merely an advisory capacity. A speaker from the floor replied to this one that you can stand for elections to bodies you want abolished, while comrade Specht added that the Bolsheviks stood for various undemocratic and merely advisory bodies.

Another issue posed: given the criticisms of De Vonk, should communists support the RSP's withdrawal from it? Comrade Specht's view was that this would not be right; the RSP is still, in effect, a propaganda group. The mistake of RSP Amsterdam is putting forward De Vonk as the *best model* ●

Notes

1. 'Syndicalist quackery *Weekly Worker* March 19 2026 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1577/syndicalist-quackery). The Marx references are www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/09/politics-speech.htm (September 20 and 21 1871 speeches at the London Congress of the First International), www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/09/21.htm (alternative report of September 21) and www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/letters/71_11_23.htm (November 23 letter to Friedrich Bolte).
2. www.marxists.org/francais/marx/works/00/parti/kmpc073.htm.
3. www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1866/08/instructions.htm (1866).
4. S Harrison *Poor men's guardians* London 1974.
5. M Macnair, 'Electoral principles and our tactics' *Weekly Worker* April 13 2011 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/861/electoral-principles-and-our-tactics); 'Principles to shape tactics', April 20 2011 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/862/principles-to-shape-tactics); 'Propaganda and agitation' April 27 2011 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/863/propaganda-and-agitation).
6. F Engels, 'Two model town councils' *Labour Standard* June 25 1881 (*CW* Vol 24, pp394-96); the 1900 resolution is at www.marxists.org/history/international/social-democracy/second-international-resolutions-book/ch05.htm, headed 'Municipal socialism'. See also WG Rosenberg, 'The Russian municipal дума elections of 1917' *Soviet Studies* Vol 21 (1969), pp131-63; Comintern Second Congress, *Theses on the Communist Parties and Parliamentarism* www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/2nd-congress/ch08a.htm [#v2 p49]; L Trotsky, 'Nationalised industry and workers' management' (May 12 1939) in *Writings 1938-39* New York 1974, pp326-29.
7. Originally a 1989 fusion of the Eurocommunist Communist Party of the Netherlands with several left-Christian groups.
8. Not a party with a trade union-based history, like British Labour, but a post-1946 Nato artefact, fusing the old Social Democratic Party with a left-liberal group and the Christian Democrats.
9. Interview in *De Telegraaf*.

What we fight for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Blockade, another blockade and a U-turn

Two irreconcilable positions

Will the current ceasefire lead to a lasting peace deal, or is it merely a tactical breathing space from one phase of an unresolved war to the next? **Yasmine Mather** looks at the complex issues involved

The first round of US-Iran talks was never likely to produce a settlement. The gap between the two sides was not a technical difference that could be bridged by clever diplomacy, but a political and strategic antagonism rooted in decades of conflict and irreconcilable interests. Washington entered the talks demanding an unambiguous capitulation on the nuclear question. Tehran entered determined not to emerge looking defeated after a devastating conflict and a fragile ceasefire. Under those conditions, collapse was not an accident. It was the most probable outcome from the start.

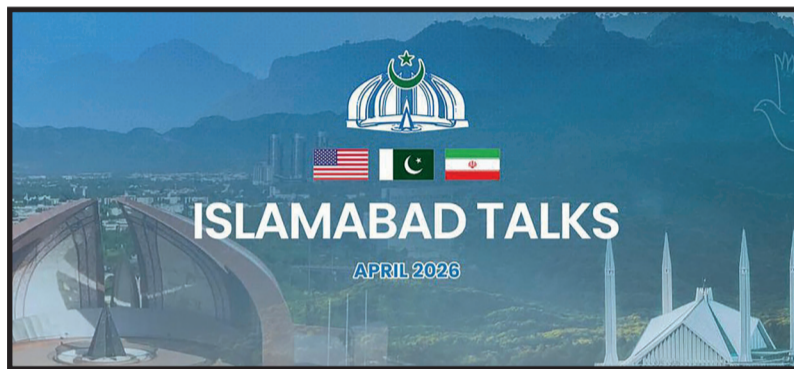
The US position was clear: it was willing to discuss de-escalation only if Iran gave a clear commitment on the issue claimed to be the most significant: the nuclear programme. Iran's position was broader and more political. Tehran did not approach the talks as a narrow nuclear negotiation. It sought to tie them to the wider war settlement: ceasefire guarantees, sanctions relief, the unfreezing of assets, regional security arrangements, the status of the Strait of Hormuz, and the broader balance of forces in the Gulf. Iranian officials also signalled that a full agreement in the first round of talks was never realistic, because major differences remained on every decisive issue.

Sovereignty

The US needed a result that could be sold domestically and internationally as a coercive success. For Tehran, the priority was sovereignty, survival and regime legitimacy. Iran could not walk into talks after war, destruction and loss, then hand over a one-sided nuclear concession under direct pressure from its enemies. What Washington needed in order to claim victory was precisely what Tehran could not concede without appearing humiliated.

The composition of the Iranian delegation in Islamabad reflected that tension. It was no mere technocratic team designed to haggle over technical details. It was a political delegation, bringing together figures from different currents and institutions: parliamentary leadership, foreign ministry officials, elements linked to 'reformists', and very likely representatives of harder-line security tendencies, whether formally acknowledged or not. That matters, because no delegation of that kind could act as if Iran had suffered an unconditional defeat. The ceasefire was mutual, not a unilateral Iranian plea for mercy. From Tehran's perspective, that distinction is politically decisive.

There was also a severe timing problem. The negotiations took place under the cover of a shaky two-week ceasefire brokered through Pakistan, while the wider regional confrontation remained unresolved and tensions around oil routes were still active. That produced immense pressure for a quick breakthrough. But quick breakthroughs are least likely when



Second round of talks talked about

the opposing sides do not even agree on the purpose of the negotiation. After the talks, both sides also signalled that they were not closing the door entirely. That is not surprising. The combination of maximalist rhetoric with tactical openness is part and parcel of such talks, especially when both sides are preparing at once both for further talks and further escalation.

It is now likely the negotiations will resume some time soon, but there is no serious political basis for believing that Iran will accept a complete halt to nuclear enrichment. Enrichment is not merely a technical matter. It is bound up with questions of sovereignty, deterrence, scientific prestige and internal legitimacy. No faction within the regime can simply return home and announce total surrender on that question.

This is where perception and ideology intersect with material interests. The US political class, and Trump in particular, want to frame the war as a decisive victory. But the actual results are far more limited. Iran's military capabilities have been damaged, but not destroyed. Regime change, hinted at by sections of the US and Israeli right, has plainly failed. Most importantly, the central objective of permanently neutralising Iran's nuclear ambitions has not been achieved. Iran still retains capabilities, material and leverage. The nuclear issue cannot be solved by bombing alone.

The costs of the war have also been substantial. American casualties, immense financial expenditure, intensified domestic political division, strains with allies, and rising global energy pressure - all these questions complicate the triumphalist narrative. War has not produced a clean settlement. It has produced a more dangerous contradiction: Iran has been weakened, but not broken; the US has escalated, but has not resolved anything.

Strait of Hormuz

There is also a deeper strategic logic often missed in western commentary. Sections of the Iranian establishment view control over the Strait of Hormuz as a more immediate and effective deterrent than a nuclear bomb. The ability to threaten, regulate or disrupt one of the world's most critical energy routes gives Iran leverage that is concrete, immediate and consequential. From that standpoint, US insistence on zero enrichment

As is his wont, Trump presented the blockade in predictably tuggish language. Iran, he suggested, would be prevented from exporting oil, and attempts to interfere with the US fleet would invite even greater destruction. This follows in the aftermath of the threat to 'bomb Persian civilisation back to the stone age'.

The broader geopolitical setting sharpens these tensions further. There may be frictions within the US-Israel relationship over tactics or blame allocation, but such differences should not be exaggerated. They do not alter the underlying strategic drive to contain and weaken Iran. Nor should Iranian internal politics be read in crude caricature. The Iranian state is not monolithic, but neither is it collapsing into paralysis. The fact that senior US officials engaged directly with the Iranian delegation shows that the system still has functioning channels, coordinating mechanisms and political centres of decision making.

Likewise, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps should not be understood as a purely irrational ideological machine. It is a political-military institution capable of adaptation, strategic calculation and factional complexity. That does not make it progressive: it means only that western fantasies of a simple split between 'mad hardliners' and 'reasonable moderates' are analytically useless. The same applies to claims that the Iranian president has somehow lost all control. Internal tensions are real, but the structure of rule remains intact enough to block surrender and absorb punishment.

At the same time, there is a domestic 'axis of resistance' within Iran itself: a configuration of forces deeply hostile to US power and suspicious of any compromise. These elements do not determine everything, but they exert real pressure on the state and narrow the room for diplomatic manoeuvre. In periods of siege, coercion tends to strengthen them, not marginalise them. That is one of the basic illusions of the maximum-pressure strategy. External assault does not automatically break a regime.

The coming period is therefore unlikely to be defined by swift breakthroughs. More probable is a repeated oscillation between negotiation and escalation, with each new diplomatic opening shadowed by sanctions, blockade, military threats and regional brinkmanship.

Normal life

Inside Iran life is currently a mix of deep exhaustion, economic collapse and a tenuous ceasefire that began last week, yet many reporters arriving in Iran are surprised by how normal things can still appear. Essential services, including hospitals, some government offices and basic food shops, remain open. However, the ceasefire seems to have produced psychological relief more than real hope. The pause in bombing has reduced immediate fear, but many people remain sceptical, because the

agreement is temporary and widely seen as fragile.

In Tehran at least, there are clear signs of ordinary urban routines resuming: people are back in bazaars, cafes, bakeries, barbershops and parks. At the same time, this is not a return to normality. People in Tehran describe more foot traffic in the Grand Bazaar after the ceasefire, but still weak sales and a deeply worried public mood.

Nearly 50% of Iranian jobs - around 10 to 12 million - are currently at risk due to the destruction of infrastructure and the collapse of the rial. Damage to major bridges and power facilities has disrupted travel and made daily business operations harder in certain sectors.

In the Caspian region of northern Iran, including Mazandaran, Gilan and Golestan, daily life has also been affected by the arrival of large numbers from Tehran. There is, meanwhile, an ironic contrast in air quality. On the one hand, pollution from traffic and industrial activity has decreased, because economic activity has slowed. During periods of reduced activity, Tehran's air quality has improved, mainly because there are fewer cars on the roads and lower industrial output. At the same time, damage to oil depots and refineries has created new environmental risks, including soot, chemical pollution and contaminated rainfall. So, while ordinary smog may have eased somewhat, other forms of pollution remain a serious concern.

Managed conflict

What emerges, then, is not a path to peace, but a more unstable and militarised form of managed conflict, where violence is calibrated rather than concluded. This ceasefire is a tactical breathing space, not a resolution. It masks an ongoing war of attrition, where both US imperial strategy and the Iranian state seek to regroup, not retreat.

Washington remains trapped in a paradox: it cannot demand total capitulation without risking a global economic crisis it cannot contain. Conversely, Tehran's survival is not a strategic victory: it is merely the persistence of a besieged elite. The result is a permanent emergency, where sanctions, blockades and 'surgical' escalations become normalised. For the Iranian working class, this 'peace' is a pincer movement: workers are squeezed between internal domestic repression and the crushing weight of external imperialist assault.

In this context, a mere 'anti-war' stance is insufficient. What is required is revolutionary defencism. The working class must take the lead in defending the country from being bombed into submission or dismembered by internal and external actors. This defence cannot be outsourced to the Iranian state. True defence of the country belongs to the people, and it is inseparable from the struggle to overthrow the very regime that uses 'national security' as a pretext to crush trade unions, break strikes, deny women's rights and suppress democratic dissent of all kinds •