



weekly **worker**



**Vote for Palestine, vote Zack Polanski
on October 8 ... but have no illusions
in the petty bourgeois Green Party**

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Towards a mass Communist Party

£1/€1.10

WEAPONS IN SPACE



LETTERS



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

Vote ... er

I listened to Jack Conrad's arguments regarding the Holborn and St Pancras by-election. As a resident of Camden, he's got an inside edge and raised some good points, with the deciding issue in this case to be Gaza.

I very much appreciate the difficulties the Palestine Solidarity Campaign in Camden is having trying to get the local council to disinvest, but the brush-off is no worse than that given by other Labour councils. Bexley, where I live, is a no-hoper in this regard, being a Tory council (along with so much more that's wrong with it). I tried. I haven't checked, but I'm sure we'd have heard if the Green-run Lewisham council has made any progress, but somehow I doubt it.

Of the two individual candidates in Holborn, both, I think, are chancers and careerists, singing very similar tunes. Polanski is all over the place with respect to Zionism. I have no idea what he means by saying he is anti-Zionist and yet also saying that Zionism means different things to different people:

(1) He is sort of correct. Zionism cannot be reduced to whatever shit is carried out for and by Israel. Its roots are way back to the time of Abraham and the covenant with Yahweh. In Genesis, god makes a unilateral and eternal promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to give their descendants the land of Canaan. While the ownership of the land was viewed as an eternal divine promise, the right to live in it was conditional on keeping god's laws (the *Torah*). When the people failed to do so, the prophets explicitly warned that god would cast them out, which happened during the Babylonian exile and later under the Romans.

When the Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE, the Jewish people entered the long exile (Galut). For 1,900 years, scriptural Zionism was maintained entirely through prayer, memory and ritual. It was not an activist political movement: it was a daily spiritual posture. The defining feature of scriptural Zionism, and the reason it clashed so severely with Theodor Herzl later on, is its radical passivity. Scriptural Zionism is entirely metaphysical. It views the Jewish connection to the land not as a right of national self-defence, but as a holy, conditional lease granted by god. In this framework, the only legitimate 'return' is one initiated by divine miracles and accompanied by universal spiritual redemption, not by secular parliaments, passports or treaties.

Polanski is correct when he says that Zionism means different things to different people and that what the Israeli government is carrying out in the name of Zionism - the genocide and displacement of Palestinians - is racist.

(2) I was convinced by Lubna Speitan, the Palestinian author of the 'Zionism is racism' motion, that, other than a two-state solution, it would be more appropriate for Palestinians that there be a single Palestinian state instead. It was telling that she stated it wasn't necessarily to be a secular country, but a form decided by Palestinians. Polanski goes further and, in my view, correctly states that the British government or a British political party such as the Greens should not imperialistically decide what type of state the people in the region will have. It's up to them.

3. His bit about Jewish supporters

of Palestine in Zionist-identifying synagogues is a bit strange. I figure that if I was in disagreement with the synagogue elders, I'd leave it and join another. But maybe that's not so easy.

With respect to Zionism, the issue I have with Polanski is his timing. Why didn't he say all this earlier this year? It's quite likely that he's trying to appease possible Jewish voters as well as Palestine supporters in the Holborn and St Pancras by-election, chancer that he is.

If there was another Green Party member running in the by-election I might have a different view. Furthermore, Polanski will be insufferable if he wins, as would his party, and undoubtedly will go so far as saying they are the left's best hope.

Labour candidate Sagal Abdi-Wali is certainly a careerist, but I do like the fact that she is a Muslim woman from Somalia, rather than a former actor and hypnotist (boob whisperer). If she wins, the boat won't be rocked and the status quo will be maintained - though I wouldn't vote for her either.

Stephanie David
email

Vote Galloway

It's a long way from 'Victory to the IRA' to calling for a vote for the Nato-supporting friend of Israel, the 'end coal, gas and oil' cult of the Green Party. It's both sickening and tragic. It marks the total absorption of the CPGB PCC into the liberal lefty London swamp.

Then there's the Sparts' abandonment of even a mild defence of secularism and individual liberty with their support for the niqab, the burka and the hijab. For most women and girls in Islamic communities these are not voluntary choices, but socially compulsive straightjackets. The Sparts too have travelled a long way from defence of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, even sending their comrades into the fray to defend Afghan women from the medievalist, theocratic tribesmen of the Mujahidin.

We remember that the full-scale counterrevolution started when the PDPA abolished the 'veil price' - the deposit paid by rich men to secure the purchase of young girls, after which their lives in terms of education, social freedom and relationships end. The PDPA wanted to guarantee education for women and girls, but the niqab ensured they would have none. Since their victory, the mujahidin and the Taliban have degenerated further - the lives of females are a living hell of torture and repression. In Iran we have seen teenage girls die or face brutality and jail for resisting the hijab. Communists stand with this progressive force rather than reactionary rules and practices.

Of course, as an anarchist, I defend the right to believe in any daft pixie or god you want, so long as the rest of us don't have to. Neither should we be called upon to respect such beliefs. I defend in general your right to wear whatever you wish, if you have a choice, but there must be no 'right' to impose it upon your kids or young adults.

The hall of mirrors that is the largely the London liberal left see only themselves. The working class is no longer visible to them. The working class is now the London liberal left itself. You think when you talk to yourselves that you're addressing the class; you think the responses are from the class. They're not - it's still only yourselves.

Truly hopeless - at a time when we all have to mount a defence against the war they are determined to push us into. We need serious opposition now, and 'Gorgeous George' is the only credible candidate on the list standing in the Holborn and St Pancras by-

election.

David Douglass
South Shields

DSA democracy

Something I've found mysterious, since joining the Democratic Socialists of America, is that the national leadership seems wildly out of step with the membership as a whole. Admittedly, this belief rests on an assumption on my part, because the national leadership has opposed non-binding polls of its membership, but I think it's reasonable. As someone who believes in the DSA's big-tent, internally-democratic model, I'd like to figure out the reasons for its failure.

For context, one of the organisation's two co-chairs belongs to the Red Star caucus, which identifies as Marxist-Leninist. The label, in case readers are unfamiliar, refers to those who support Stalinism and its authoritarian, descendant ideologies, like Maoism. In contrast, my guess is the average member of the DSA, for better or worse, is essentially a New Deal Democrat. They were likely inspired by candidates like Bernie Sanders, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez or Zohran Mamdani and don't even believe in the long-term, fully democratic socialist programme I'd like.

So how did this incongruence arise? Part of the problem seems to be that caucuses have a level of power within the DSA that is absurdly disproportionate to the number of members they actually represent. Caucuses effectively call all of the shots in the organisation. And yet, when I asked those who might know what percentage of DSA members were caucused, the estimates were in the range of one to five percent. Unfortunately, there don't appear to be hard numbers here.

The information is kept secret for whatever reason, but individual caucuses are widely assumed to have membership in the low hundreds. In July of this year, the DSA as a whole had more than 120,000 members! To be clear, I'm not saying caucuses shouldn't exist. Rather, I think the level of influence this small minority has reflects a significant degree of democratic insufficiency that members should take steps to rectify. I don't pretend to have all of the answers, but I believe the organisation's governing structure plays a role in this.

First of all, the DSA does not operate on the principle of 'one member, one vote'. Different chapters have different rules, but frequently, those who have a say in the organisation's directions are those who can attend specific meetings at specific times. For example, as someone with three kids, attendance is a struggle for me and, while I can make some meetings, I can't make them all. Some of those who oppose 'one member, one vote', like members of the Red Star caucus, cite technological or financial limitations for their stance.

I'm open to the idea that internet voting is insecure or mail voting is too expensive, but what I've found, while debating the issue on the DSA's internal forums, is that many opponents of 'one member, one vote' actually think it's a good thing that so-called 'paper members' aren't given a voice, regardless of initially stated technological or financial concerns. They believe that keeping members who don't know enough or aren't able to donate a requisite amount of time from voting separates the wheat from the chaff.

Beyond this, the national leadership isn't voted on directly. Local chapters elect delegates to a biennial convention, which then

selects the national leadership. All of these barriers to straightforwardly assessing the will of the membership seem to work together to empower disciplined, minoritarian caucuses. This is how I believe the DSA has come to have a co-chair representing a faction that lauds China and other authoritarian countries as positive examples of real-world 'socialism'.

Jon Hochschartner
Connecticut

Cynical sideliner

I leave it up to any *Weekly Worker* readers, following my exchange with Lawrence Parker in these columns lately, to decide where they think the "barrage balloon of waffle", as he puts it, is emanating from (Letters, September 24). But I do want to offer an apology to the comrade that I recently encouraged to read the paper and who faced facile denigration from Parker in the same letter: Darko Suvin.

Comrade Darko is a 96-year-old Marxist polymath from Yugoslavia who took part in Communist University this year and is a driving force behind our plans for a Diderot Gesellschaft Movement. He is perhaps best known for his theory of cognitive estrangement in relation to science fiction literature. This theory is closely drawn from the philosophy of another great Marxist cultural figure of the 20th century, Bertolt Brecht. I make no bones about honouring both Suvin and Brecht by applying their essential usefulness to what we are attempting today in seeking forms of communist culture.

Far from all the charges levelled by Parker, such as "putting on a pedestal" and "a 'groovy gang' method of clique-building", we have been finding ways to work with the Brecht/Suvin Marxist treasure trove in the here and now. The latest example of this will take Suvin's adaptation and translation of Brecht's poetic version of the *Communist manifesto* to the Historical Materialism conference in London in November. That will include the world premiere of a live performance with music on the art radio station, Resonance FM, alongside the talks and discussions on it that Esther Leslie and I are planning.

Last week Parker even contradicts what he wrote in his own Communist Party of Great Britain History blog interview with me, where it's he who

labels Ewan MacColl a "great artist", whereas I assert him as the greatest communist artist this country has produced (and indeed still stick to that), whilst recognising the contradictions inherent in working within the nationalist CPGB of the time.

In that same interview, far from me "naively" claiming Brecht's learning plays and sketches from the time are still "valid, period", I look to the form of them and explain how we learnt from and adapted them as rewrites for now. I've no idea what it might take to get through to Parker that he's spouting - to quote his own, now apt, phrase - "the worst type of shite" and can only wonder what happened to the comrade who wrote in that blog that our Workers Theatre Movement was "an excellent thing" and "that the WTM's appearance among the bedraggled revolutionary left of the late 1980s was a minor miracle".

I'd suggest that, in these even more bedraggled times for the left, what we are producing now and are determined to develop is an effort that deserves solidarity, engagement and genuine critique, not ill-informed carping from the cynical sidelines.

Tam Dean Burn
Glasgow

Lenin thinking

All the top economists are talking about the next economic crisis, which could be as close as this December. Who knows, but could this next crisis realign the dialectical axis and repoliticise the working class? Marxists will say 'Where are the strikes? Where are the working class breaking down the doors to a communist party, demanding to be called "comrade"?' Working class politics now is backwards and reactionary - no chance!

Over these last four decades things have been so tough for the left we have retreated into narrow, everyday thinking. The strategic political plan of the writers of the *Weekly Worker*, and dealing with running a party and writing a paper, has turned them cock-eyed. Where's the smell of blood in the water from the constant turnover of prime ministers?

The crisis of expectation is that no-one has any expectations any more of having a job or house, a future. So why hasn't the CPGB picked up on

Fighting fund

Make up shortfall

Unfortunately, despite some excellent donations that came our way in the past week, we failed by a couple of hundred pounds to reach our monthly fighting fund target of £2,750.

Let's start with the donations we received. First, the usual batch of standing orders/bank transfers came our way: thanks to comrades JC (a brilliant £176!), JC (£82), RL (£60), MW (£30), BK and JT (£25 each), AB (£20), JM (£15), JD and MD (£10) and AR (£5).

In addition, comrades JB and DB each contributed £50 via PayPal, while AC donated £5, using the same method. Finally, there was that well renowned comrade Hassan, who handed his usual £5 note to one of our team. Well done, everybody!

However, the problem is that, while all of the above came to a handy £568, that took our September total up to just £2,528, leaving us £222 short. Not a disaster, of course, but still problematic, given the very little

leeway we have in raising what we need to cover all our costs and expenses.

Just to remind you, printing and postage charges continue to rise, along with internet providers and other such matters. That's why we really need to make up for this month's shortfall - as well as similar ones earlier in the year.

I'll tell you what - let's see if we can reach £3,000 in October! Can you play your part in ensuring that the *Weekly Worker* continues to play its essential role in campaigning for what the working class desperately needs - a principled, genuinely democratic Marxist party!

Please go to the web address below to see how you can help ●

Robbie Rix

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that? To go back to a salient essay of Lenin on the collapse of the Second International, he says: "... it is usually insufficient" [if] "the lower classes [do] not to want to live in the old ways; it is also necessary that the upper classes should be unable to live in the old way"- a fissure must open up from the ruling class, in other words.

Lenin gives three explanations for these events, but Marxists today will say we aren't even close - and that's ultra-left thinking! I say that's because they are cynical and lack any sentient feeling for the next class struggle in the near future.

Revolution in five years might be a tad over-optimistic, but, as Tony Cliff once said, "Marxists in general are ahead of the working class, but in revolutionary times it is the working class that are ahead of the Marxists."

Frank Kavanagh
email

Straightjacket, ja

How deliciously emblematic - how utterly, neurotically predictably CPGB-PCC - that comrade Carla Roberts, writhing in the self-administered, lint-choked straitjacket of her own dialectical impotency, should emit yet another ex-cathedra decree in the *Weekly Worker*. "No," she informs us (her prose carrying the musty, formaldehyde-steeped gravitas of a Victorian phrenologist evaluating a turnip), "Better, far better, to be a principled party of opposition" ('A chink of light', September 24). That's her authoritative riposte to the *quelle horreur* notion of Die Linke taking up civic duties on the back of Berlin-based electoral success. How very dare they!

She declares this, no doubt, on behalf of the entire Provisional Central Committee. And herein lies a wholly consistent absence of proof, but a surplus of conjecture - a veritable panoply of repeated assertion. Oh, indeed! Far better for others to inhabit the tranquil, unsoiled monastery of absolute irrelevance that you yourselves wallow in. How convenient is this perpetual retreat into the pristine, ethereal sanctuary of

permanent refusal. It is an exquisite psychological defence mechanism, is it not? By declaring power itself to be *a priori* contaminated - a bourgeois booby trap designed explicitly to sully the immaculate, virginal purity of your precious 'programme' - you grant yourselves eternal absolution from ever having to actually do anything. It is political agoraphobia, elevated to the level of high theology: a heroic, self-congratulatory crouch in the corner of history.

And what, pray tell, of *das Deutsche Proletariat*? That vast, sullen, industrial phalanx, currently navigating the grim, post-industrial twilight of the Ruhrgebiet and the alienated suburbs of Berlin - were they quivering in breathless anticipation for the latest dispatched encyclical from London? Were the steelworkers of Duisburg or the software engineers of Leipzig pacing their cramped Plattenbauten, wringing their calloused hands, desperately imploring the cosmos, 'Ach, if only the colossal-brained theoreticians of the *Weekly Worker* would deign to grant us their sublime, oracular counsel on Die Linke's latest municipal coalition protocol!' Alas, no. One searches in vain across the entire Teutonic landscape for a single soul aching to be illuminated by the CPGB PCC's endless, navel-gazing post-mortems. A tragic attainment of levels of comedic delusion so dizzying, so profoundly, beautifully pathetic, that it borders on the sublime.

"De Linke must take the fight to high politics", concludes comrade Roberts - who shows her devotion to ideological hygiene has reached such a pitch of rarefied, Hermetic purity that the mere prospect of actual civic engagement - of contaminating her pristine Marxist credentials by, say, standing for election or taking up the grim, unglamorous burden of municipal representation - is recoiled from, as if it were a direct invitation to contract advanced tertiary syphilis. Instead, she prefers the sterile, airless sanctuary of the *Weekly Worker* aggregate. From this unassailable fortress of total

impotence, she issues her maximalist manifesto for her German comrades - a baroque, Byzantine scroll of ultra-revolutionary demands, designed with exquisite precision not to advance the class struggle, but to reinforce her position atop the *cumulonimbus* of revolutionary theory and strategy. Consider the splendid, dizzying absurdity of her list of demands. It reads like the frantic, fever-dream marginalia of a 19th century seminary student who has ingested too much ergot and too little dialectical materialism

One is compelled to ask: from whence comes this pathological terror of agency? Is it merely the cowardice of the professional critic, terrified that contact with the messy, friction-ridden apparatus of real politics might expose a total lack of traction? Or is there a darker, more insidious symbiosis at play? For 45 agonising years, your sect has spun a grand, labyrinthine web of scholastic jargon - a dense, suffocating, sesquipedalian fog of 'minimum-maximum programmes', 'rapprochement' and pedantic historical exegesis.

Carla Roberts and her *Weekly Worker* comrades know how to call for the building of a mass communist party: you just don't know how to *build* the mass communist party. And that's really the most important part: the building. Anybody can just call for one!

Stuart Leigh
Shrewsbury

Strategic insights

Hans Hautmann's *History of the Austrian council movement 1918-1924* (which Brill brought out this summer as part of the Historical Materialism book series) is an extraordinary work of Marxist historiography on a subject that has received far less attention than it deserves. Originally published in German in 1987, it is a thorough and gripping history of the Austrian workers' and soldiers' councils that emerged in the aftermath of World War I. I translated the book into English, and can say without exaggeration that it is one of the greatest history books I have ever read.

Hautmann's account avoids both fetishising the councils and downplaying their significance. He examines in genuinely dialectical fashion the different forces that intersected and collided within the movement: revolutionary and reformist tendencies, grassroots militancy and labour-bureaucratic control, as well as the different levels of political consciousness within the working class. He acknowledges the councils' considerable democratic potential, while carefully examining the contradictions between their form and their actual political content.

The Austrian councils were a profoundly contradictory movement. They were often radical and democratic at their base, yet remained under the ideological domination of the reformist/gradualist Social Democratic Workers Party. They were proletarian and anti-bourgeois, yet ultimately became an appendage of the SDAP's strategy of peaceful class collaboration. They demanded greater working class participation in the administration of public life, yet never attempted to replace the existing bourgeois state apparatus, even when circumstances could have made such a course possible.

The result is not simply a history of an important episode in the European workers' movement, but a book rich in insights into political strategy - including some very important lessons about the errors that the left should avoid repeating. Hautmann's treatment of the conditions of the Austrian working class on the 'home

front', in the cities and factories during World War I, is particularly powerful; at its best, its narrative force approaches Marx's account of primitive accumulation in *Capital*.

As a translator, I learn something from every book I work on, but it is exceptionally rare for me to find myself in such close agreement with an author's political analysis. This was one of those rare cases.

The only obstacle to the book reaching a wider readership is the price of Brill's hardcover edition. Haymarket is likely to publish a more affordable paperback edition at some point down the line, but in the meantime I would strongly encourage readers to ask their local libraries to acquire the book and make it available to their readers.

Maciej Zurowski
Italy

Rosenberg fund

In 1991 Robert Meeropol, son of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, founded an organisation called the Rosenberg Fund for Children. Both Robert and his brother, Michael, were clearly scarred by losing their parents at the ages of 10 and six, being shunted into a children's home and shunned by their mother's family. Their father's family was unable to care for them, and they were eventually adopted by the songwriters and activists, Abel and Anne Meeropol (Abel wrote 'To you, beloved comrade' - one of the songs played at Phil Railston's commemoration during Communist University).

The RFC exists to help children of people in any country whose parents are in prison or being "harassed, injured, lost jobs or died in the course of their progressive activities and who, therefore, are no longer able to provide fully for their children. The RFC provides grants for the educational and emotional needs of targeted activist youth."

To mark 35 years of this activism, and 70 years since the state murder of the Rosenbergs, a celebration of music, poetry reading and speeches was held in Massachusetts earlier this year. Had she not gotten ill, Angela Y Davis would have spoken - the RFC has a proud history of connection with many famous and not so famous Americans with a left background.

The brothers have continued their campaign to have their mother exonerated - so much so that an American Congressman, Jim McGovern, apologised on the floor of Congress for her wrongful conviction. Not that this prompted the government to take steps to exonerate her legally. But the campaign continues.

The list of how children are helped makes both lovely and sad reading. Under categories such as 'Immigrants' rights' (a clear target of the present president and his brutal henchmen), 'Labor and economic justice', 'Peace', 'Prisoners' rights/US political prisoners', 'Human rights', the list of those helped (names and locations not specified) reads like a litany of how children should be able

to live. Over 35 years funds received by individuals and organisations pledging hard-earned money have amounted to over \$10 million.

Examples:
■ Three immigrant families of eight children, whose parents were threatened by Immigration and Customs Enforcement for their work exposing injustices in the immigration system, awarded \$11,600 for school supplies and sports.
■ \$1,505 for cooking classes for the child of a former political prisoner, who has been refused jobs because of ongoing activism.
■ \$1,500 for childcare and music lessons for the three-year-old daughter of a professor and author targeted by the government for "pushing radical race and gender ideology". When the university tried to fire her, they failed, but then decided she was "unfit to serve" and pushed her out anyway.

Every month contributors (one of which I am proud to say I have been for many years) receive a newsletter with pages of descriptions like these. And, of course, with the present government, the numbers will only increase.

The executive director of the RFC is Jennifer Meeropol, one of the grandchildren of the Rosenbergs. As she wrote in the most recent newsletter, "... we renew our pledge to continue to provide vital support, as we stand with the children of resistance. \$10 million awarded, more to come!"

Long may they carry on their work for children of the oppressed.

Gaby Rubin

Email

Maoist revolution?

The British made Portugal and its colonies a vassal empire when the Duke of Wellington conquered the Iberian peninsula, defeating Napoleon. In the 1960s, apartheid South Africa and racist Rhodesia had protection: from the west due to Portuguese Angola, and the east via Portuguese control of Mozambique.

The Maoist revolution in Portugal meant liberation for the Portuguese colonies, exposing Rhodesia to African liberation forces. The fall of Rhodesia was then a preamble for the loss (for the western powers) of South Africa. However, due to the return of 1.1 million vile colonial people to the homeland, revolution in Portugal itself was averted and Labour Party/Menshevik-style government prevailed.

Britain, like the Portuguese elite, has allowed white racists from Zimbabwe and South Africa to freely enter and live in Britain - 100,000-plus bigots and racists to add to the vile fascists of Kent and Essex (and their fascist buddies in Belfast).

The story of Mandela and the ANC triumph is thus a complex tale. Let's help our African comrades (women and men) continue the liberation of their continent - from Ethiopia to Ghana, from Cape Town to Cairo.

K Sean

Bolshevik Tendency

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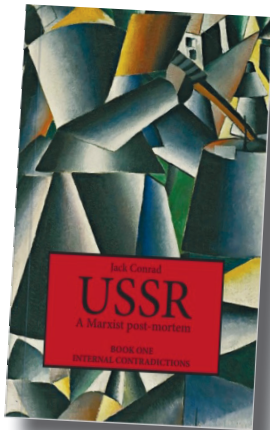
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BY-ELECTION

Vote for Palestine

Elections always involve difficult tactical calculations. We favour voting and active participation over sitting on the sidelines in the name of purity. Zack Polanski has supported the pro-Palestine protests and now calls himself an 'anti-Zionist'. On October 8 that should count. **Carla Roberts** weighs the pros and cons

The October 8 by-election in Holborn and St Pancras really underlines how weak the left in Britain is. The only candidate with the word 'communist' or 'socialist' in the given description is Jonathan Silberman from the Communist League - a tiny and bizarre outfit that supported the witch-hunt against the left in the Labour Party.¹ Stay well clear.

Unsurprisingly, Jeremy Corbyn's Your Party is not standing - nor, at the time of writing, is it recommending a vote for a particular candidate. In fact, it has nothing to say on the election (or much else). It might still have ten thousand or so 'members' on its books, but it literally does nothing with them. The few 'official' branches are tiny and entirely devoid of the kind of buzz and lively discussions between socialists from different backgrounds that the hundreds of proto-branches were once characterised by. The most enthusiastic members have long gone. The short-lived 'opposition' by a number of those elected to the YP leadership on Corbyn's slate, The Many, came to nothing. No surprise.

After the resignations from YP's central executive committee of leftwingers Sophie Wilson, Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi and Solma Ahmed, the Grassroots Left has now entirely folded. Meanwhile, Candi Williams and Mel Mullings have politically collapsed. They remain on the CEC and are proudly hosting a national 'Your Party anti-racism action event' in Birmingham on October 18. It is bound to be a runaway success. As for Zarah Sultana, she is pregnant and has virtually taken her leave from YP (we wish her well). She now sends out letters as "MP for Coventry". Your Party might hang on until the Dear Leader decides to formally retire - but as a socialist party that could organise a viable alternative to this rotten capitalist system, it is as dead as a dodo.

But back to the by-election. George Galloway, standing on behalf of his Workers Party of Britain, has got no chance of winning - and he is not even trying. He is conducting his campaign from South Africa, having gone on a speaking tour from his current self-imposed "exile" in Russia, claiming that he cannot safely return to the UK after he and his wife were stopped by counter-terrorism police at Gatwick Airport and questioned for many long hours.

We have called for a vote for Galloway before - most recently in the Rochdale by-election in February 2024 (which he won, before losing to Labour's Paul Waugh in the general election 54 days later). In the first election he was, in our estimation, the most credible pro-Palestine candidate, and famously shouted after his victory: "Keir Starmer, this is for Gaza!" But this time around he is hardly a credible candidate. As if his social conservatism and nationalism were not bad enough, he has now become an entirely uncritical cheerleader for the regimes in Iran and Russia (his 'enemy's enemies'). We suspect his WPB will go the way of YP. Former Labour MP Chris Williamson has already quit as deputy leader. A sign of things to come.

Some on the left, particularly those infected by identity politics, have fooled themselves into supporting Labour's candidate, Sagal Abdi-Wali: She is a black, a Muslim and a



It's a two-horse race ... and George Galloway is far behind and campaigning from South Africa

woman - and she has been attacked by rightwingers who claimed she was a "Somali asylum-seeker" and therefore ineligible to run. As it turns out, she arrived in the UK as a child refugee in the 1990s and holds official British citizenship. She is also the leader of Camden council, an arch careerist and an unapologetic Starmerite ... er, now a Burnhamite, of course.

She pointedly pulled out of a hustling organised by the Camden Muslim Network on September 22. Although a devout Muslim, she clearly did not want to answer questions about the Labour government's ongoing support for Israel's genocide against the Palestinians. She probably knew that she would not have got away with aping the pathetic efforts of Ed Miliband to feign outrage over "illegal Israeli settlements" while carrying on business as usual with Israel.

She was less busy two days later, when she attended a hustling organised by the Jewish Board of Deputies. When asked whether she was a Zionist, she replied: "I believe in a two-state solution" - which is, of course, no solution at all. Not only will Israel not agree to it: any such 'solution' would see nothing more than a Palestinian bantustan, not a strong independent sovereign state. According to the *Jewish Chronicle*, she also said she had proudly stood alongside Sir Keir as he "tackled anti-Semitism within Labour", and she "joined the other candidates, with the exception of Polanski, in saying that Zionism was not racism".²

We are not auto-anti-Labourites and do not automatically dismiss it as 'thoroughly bourgeois', as many left groups do (some of them having discovered this only *after* they were kicked out). We believe that the affiliation of the unions in particular means that Labour is still a 'bourgeois workers' party'. Labour's politics are thoroughly bourgeois, of course, but its social base ensures ongoing and

important links with the organised workers' movement. The election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader showed how quickly things can change. But in the case of the October 8 by-election, a vote for the Labour candidate would be the wrong *tactical* call.

Green Party

That leaves Green Party leader Zack Polanski. His candidature is not without risk; he might well not have his 'Hannah Spencer moment'. And, should he lose to Labour big time, this could seriously dent the Green Party's image as the rising opposition kid on the block. Labour's 'Burnham bounce' has already taken its toll on the Greens, with the admittedly fickle polls showing support dropping from a high of 21% to about 13%, according to YouGov.

We should expect Burnham's well crafted Liverpool conference speech to give Labour some considerable further momentum. Politically, it was very astute and shifts Labour to the left by that vital inch or two with the big promise on social care and revisiting EU membership. Burnham has his eye firmly on the next general election and remaining PM for a second term. Even the announcement on the triple lock was well timed ... not now, but after the general election.

Burnham's speech has certainly gone down well amongst Labour members and supporters. We even hear talk of the Socialist Campaign Group dissolving itself (there will certainly be those now looking for ministerial positions). The former Labour member, Owen Jones, welcomed the speech, claiming that it had vindicated the left's arguments when it comes to austerity, corporate power and public ownership. So will Owen be rejoining? We shall see.

Nevertheless, Polanski is in with a fighting chance in what is a two horse race ... and clearly the main issue *for him and for us* is Palestine. Indeed, he used his September 24 hustings

organised by the Board of Deputies to describe himself - for the first time - as an "anti-Zionist". Good, though it has taken him long enough. When asked whether Zionism was a form of racism, he replied: "I think there's a problem with definitions. It means different things to different people. If you're defining Zionism as a displacement genocide, which is how, in practice, Zionism has become, then that is racism."³

That sums up Polanski's problem - trying to have his cake and eat it. No, Zack, there has never been a non-racist Zionism. Zionism is inverted anti-Semitism. It too considers Jews a race - a race of outsiders, who will always face persecution from those they live amongst. It explains the disdain for assimilation and the dogma of eternal anti-Semitism. Instead of demanding equality and fighting anti-Semitism, it should be accepted as a fact of nature, a norm, a perfectly understandable reaction to the presence of Jewish "strangers".⁴ Only when the Jews 'return to Zion' will they become a 'normal people'.

As a career politician (he only switched from the LibDems in 2017) he is keen to show the establishment just how responsible he is. It is a very delicate balancing act: posing left, all the while touting the idea of a European (capitalist) defence pact as an 'alternative' to Nato. Touring trade union conferences, while assuring medium and big business that he is no anti-capitalist. The Greens' spring conference removed their previous commitment to nationalise "the five largest energy supply companies".⁵ He is speaking out in solidarity with the Palestinians, while continuing to mobilise against the entirely harmless 'Zionism is racism' motion that is going to the Green Party conference in Brighton (he no doubt had a hand in making sure it fell off the agenda at their online spring conference). Meanwhile, he happily watches

on, as his party expels anti-Zionists like Tony Greenstein. Nor has he made any attempt to overturn the Greens' commitment to the IHRA misdefinition of anti-Semitism (adopted under former leader Caroline Lucas, with his outspoken support⁶).

In other words, Polanski is eager to appear both radical and responsible. He envisages the Greens joining some coalition government in the future (Burnham's vague talk on proportional representation will certainly encourage Green ministerialism).

Critical vote

We would have preferred it if there was a better choice. Andrew Feinstein, having won almost 19% in the last general election, said that he is "unable" to stand and has urged people to vote for Polanski. The Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB too has decided, "on balance", to call for a tactical vote for Polanski. He is the most credible pro-Palestine candidate in this election. Yes, that is not saying much. But a victory for Polanski on October 8 would be an important 'two fingers up' to Labour's ongoing support for the genocidal government of Israel.

An alternative to voting Labour, Green or WPB would be calling for spoiled ballot papers - the weakest call you can make in an election. There are some CPGB members, myself included, who would still - marginally - prefer such a call. In any case, as should be clear enough from the above, we are not cheerleaders for either the Greens or Polanski.

Many on the left have convinced themselves - wrongly - that a vote for the Greens presents a real challenge to the system. It does not. It is not an anti-capitalist party, let alone one that fights for socialism. Polanski cannot "stay red", as the October 8 *Socialist Worker* editorial demands⁷, because he has never been red. This can only sow illusions in a party that, at best, wants to tweak capitalism, not abolish it.

Even worse is the pro-imperialist Alliance for Workers' Liberty, which sends members into the Green Party on "reconnaissance" missions, trying to pick off primarily young, radicalised members; while the equally pro-imperialist Anti-Capitalist Resistance wants "working alliances with green activists", which would "help efforts to make the green movement more [!] anti-capitalist".⁸

The CPGB's call to vote Polanski comes without sowing such daft illusions. And it certainly is not a blanket call for the Green Party in any future elections, let alone a general election. It is merely a tactic ●

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CLIMATE

Publish the report in full

In what could be the stirrings of climate socialism the JIC security chiefs are warning of apocalyptic dangers, writes **Eddie Ford**. We demand complete openness on such matters. The public need to know what the government does not want the public to know

Thanks to foreign secretary Ed Miliband, the damning report from the Joint Intelligence Committee on climate change and the associated pressing dangers is back in the news. Apparently it does not paint a comforting, a reassuring picture. Indeed, one person who had seen the whole report described it as “apocalyptic” to *The Guardian*.¹

The significance of the JIC, of course, not only that it consists of MI5, MI6 and GCHQ, but that it reports directly to the cabinet office - therefore it cannot be dismissed lightly. The report was originally due to be published last October, apparently causing considerable excitement amongst journalists, but was pulled at the last minute by the government for being “too negative” - though *The Guardian* revealed some of the findings through a series of leaks.²

After several refused attempts under the Freedom of Information Act, the Green Alliance thinktank finally had some success in January. A redacted 14-page version of the report, *Global biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and national security*, was posted on the Defra website without a single press release or public announcement.³

The Times reported the day after that it had seen an internal, unabridged version of the assessment that included warnings much graver than the Defra one, but ministers continue to resist calls for the full report to be made public.⁴ A retired general told *The Guardian* that it was not surprising that the JIC report was suppressed and redacted, as it was “very rare” for security reports to be published - but that does not make it any less reprehensible.

Then Miliband spilt the beans. But we still did not get full transparency. The foreign secretary gave a presentation about the JIC report’s main findings to a *closed-door* meeting of foreign ministries from around the world, including those of the EU, Kenya and Australia - the latter being in charge of the negotiations next month at Cop31 in Turkey.⁵

Needless to say, full copies of the report were not distributed. The government has something to hide that concerns the whole world. We therefore unequivocally back calls for the JIC report to be made public. Adrian Ramsay, the Green Party MP for Waveney Valley, is right when he asks: “Why has our government still not published its response to how it will address the stark findings?” The JIC report and the government response must be openly published and published in full. No more secrecy when it comes to the true scale of the climate crisis.

Cascading

Having said that, Miliband’s briefing at the UN certainly gave a powerful sense of the urgent nature of the crisis - clearly he wanted it put out there in terms of his agenda, even as foreign secretary, when it comes to raising awareness of the dangers global warming poses to ‘national security’ and ‘defence’. He emphasised how El Niño, has *supercharged* climate breakdown. It is “already set to be the most intense in living memory” and will test the world’s food systems as never before - intensifying climate shocks that “compound and cascade across borders, threatening food and water security, displacing



Redacted: we demand full transparency

communities, putting pressure on markets and scarring economies.”

Miliband was also explicit that this year’s heatwaves, bad harvests and food price inflation showed governments what they were in for and why it must be dealt with at the highest levels, as climate change and nature loss “have never been issues for climate and environment ministers alone” - rather, he said, they are “defining challenges for our citizens, our economies, our foreign policy and our national security”.

In other words, the collapse of natural systems around the world will lead to more competition, more conflict and mass migration. Miliband stressed the question of food and energy shortages, not least petrol. Food security is a particularly acute question for the UK, of course, as it is heavily dependent on imported food. About 40% of its food is imported, including 80% of its fruit and 47% of its vegetables, constituting one of the highest rates of reliance on imported fruit in Europe.⁶

The JIC’s report, which you can only regard as being straight from the horse’s mouth, warns of the “cascading risks” from the degradation of some of the planet’s ecosystems, assessing it as a “reasonable worst case scenario” for the impacts of nature loss on the UK’s ‘security’.⁷ It highlights six regions, based on the likelihood of ecosystem collapse and the impacts, when they do: (1) the Amazon rainforest; (2) the Congo Basin; (3) the south-east Asian coral reefs; (4) the south-east Asian mangroves; (5) the Himalayas and (6) the boreal forests in Canada and Russia.

All of them, warn the spy chiefs, are

on the “pathway to collapse”, yet they are “critical for UK national security”. There is also the distinct danger of the Gulf Stream slowing or even shutting down. Paradoxically, that could mean global warming making the UK *colder* and wetter, with more dank conditions and therefore less agricultural productivity.

Keir Starmer

Criminally, under Starmer, the UK slashed its overseas aid to the vulnerable countries where many of these ecosystems are located. International climate finance has been reduced from £11.6 billion in total over 2021-26, to about £2 billion a year for the next two years, and the previous ringfencing of spending on nature and forests within that budget has been dropped - Starmer feeling the pressure from Reform UK and the right in general to be less ‘woke’ and more worried about the ‘concerns of ordinary Brits’. Why should we care so much about people who are far away and we know little about?

In an implicit rebuke, Miliband will appoint a new special representative for climate security, as well as a new ministerial taskforce on “the national security and resilience risks of a changing climate and nature loss”, with military and security experts, as well as climate scientists. He also announced £330 million in funding for the Global Environment Fund, one of the principal vehicles for funding nature protection in the developing world, and £400 million for Brazil’s Tropical Forests Forever Facility. Obviously, far too little and far too late, but something more for Reform and the climate deniers to complain about.

You could argue that the JIC report is the first inkling of what we in the CPGB have argued for some time now, which is the possibility of ‘climate socialism’. By that we do not mean some sort of rule of the working class - quite the opposite, in fact. More something along the lines of the *Kriegssozialismus* introduced by the German high command from 1916 onwards, becoming a draconian state carrying out emergency measures at the expense of working class rights and working class living standards.

But you would expect such inklings from the likes of the JIC. They are not worried about this week’s polls or today’s news headlines. Instead, the spy chiefs are expected to think in the longer term about the *interests of the state itself*. If there is any strategic thinking going on from elements of the ruling class, then the “apocalyptic” JIC report might be evidence of it - not the myopic nationalism of Reform, Restore and Kemi Badenoch’s Tory Party.

Instead of dealing with the threat of the global climate crisis the far right campaign against net zero and migration - as the climate scientist Bill McGuire, recently commented: “cognitive dissonance doesn’t even begin to describe the idiocy of such thinking”.⁸ They want us to pretend that nothing is happening and just close the door on migrants - let them perish in the English Channel. Maybe the Royal Navy or the Coast Guard goes out and ‘does a Tommo’, sinking the boats and dinghies crammed full of men, women and children. Or RNLI volunteers refuse to rescue people at sea because they do not have the required papers.

The far right closes its eyes to climate change and dismisses net zero targets as a ‘hoax’. But the point about climate change, as the spy chiefs remind us, is that no-one - not even a trillionaire like Elon Musk - can escape its consequences, even if they dream of turning Mars into a bolt hole, rather than the hell hole it actually is. No matter if you are in America and have the luxury of no dependence on oil imports - with the strongest military in the world and the knowledge that you are the dominant global power when it comes to finance - there is still no escape. The climate crisis affects *everybody*. What happens when your wheat belt turns to desert? Far from being a rhetorical question, this is a very real danger that will stare us in the face in the not too far future.

Uneven

Further driving home the nature of the crisis, the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organisation has just issued a report stating that the world faces a “narrowing window” to restore forests essential for food security and resistance to the climate emergency.⁹ More than 489 million hectares of forests have been cleared since 1990, while an even greater area is degraded, the world body said in a call for governments to make forest restoration a national priority.

Trying to keep positive, its ‘State of the world’s forests’ report acknowledges recent steps in protection and tree planting around the globe, but action has not kept pace with commitments. For example, over the past two decades, national, regional and global initiatives have promised to place more than *one billion* hectares of land under restoration, but barely a fifth of that is actually being restored - the FOA observing that “progress is uneven” and “insufficient to meet growing global needs”.

The real question is: who can do something about the climate crisis? While some elements of the state core appear to recognise the problem, ultimately it comes down to ordinary people like you and me organising. In the last analysis, the ruling class is incapable of doing what is necessary, because what we have is a series of antagonistic capitalist states, one pitted against the other. Not bonds of mutual cooperation, but bonds of mutual competition - going all the way up to and including the possibility of a nuclear exchange that ends human civilisation before the climate crisis does ●

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ARMS RACE

Notes on space

US airforce secretary Troy Meink has confirmed what we long knew: America has deployed 'space control weapons' in low Earth orbit. While details remain unclear, the dangers are all too evident. **Jack Conrad** argues that space display, space science and space war have a symbiotic relationship

Space - well, the idea of space - has long combined the promise of boundless progress with a recognition of human foibles and the possibility of self-destruction. To this day HG Wells, Ray Bradbury and Isaac Asimov continue to have millions of devoted readers.

When Sputnik 1 went into orbit in October 1957, it was greeted with a mixture of wild enthusiasm, grudging admiration and blind panic. Here was a technological marvel, whose beep, beep, beep spelt out the triumph of Nikita Khrushchev's 'catch-up and overtake' Soviet optimism. For ordinary Americans, however, Sputnik 1 broadcast something altogether sinister. The Soviet Union had the capability of delivering nuclear warheads onto their towns and cities with intercontinental ballistic missiles. Dwight D Eisenhower oversaw the formation of Nasa the following year. American schoolkids were soon doing 'duck and cover' drills. By sheltering under their wooden desks they would supposedly survive a nuclear blast.

Then came Luna 1, deep space and the moon. After that, Venera 1. Yuri Gagarin's 108-minute flight in Vostok 1 appeared to confirm the *illusion* that the Soviet Union was really about to catch-up and overtake the United States. JF Kennedy determined to puncture that illusion. He pledged to outmatch the Soviet Union in *space display* with his famous speech before a joint-session of congress in May 1961: "I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before the decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to Earth."¹

In the fevered atmosphere of superpower rivalry, every success for the Mercury, Gemini and finally the Apollo programme - annual cost around 1% of US GDP - generated huge TV audiences. Besides American nationalism there was American optimism too. Space was the final frontier - reflected in fashion, architecture, interior-design, TV, films and music. The future was *Star trek*.

Meanwhile, Kennedy and his secretary of defence, Robert McNamara, aggressively accelerated the production of the Minuteman ICBM system. Based in hardened underground silos, these solid-fuel rockets were designed to launch in less than a minute. This gave the US a huge psychological advantage in the 1962 Cuba missile crisis. A thousand in total were built and they still constitute the main body of the ground-based US nuclear arsenal.

Space display serves as the acceptable, the noble, the popular mask for such weapons of mass destruction. American public opinion remains overwhelmingly positive, when it comes to space. According to Pew Research Center, some 80% hold a highly favourable view of Nasa. This makes it one of the most popular US agencies. Furthermore, 76% say that the space programme makes them feel proud to be Americans, and 69% "get genuinely excited" about space exploration.²

Hence, it came as no surprise whatsoever that Donald Trump began his second term by setting the aim of landing American astronauts on Mars within four years. Clearly, an attempt to emulate and outdo JFK. And it clearly delighted Elon Musk. He



Fascist? USSF dress uniform

gave an instant two thumbs up. Musk not only stood to make shedloads of money from lucrative government contracts: he genuinely sees a Mars landing as a vital step towards establishing a human colony on the planet. A lifetime passion.³

Of course, Trump and Musk had their inevitable falling out. Moreover, the four-year time frame was never remotely realistic. Getting back to the moon in early 2028 is an incredibly big ask - Nasa's Artemis II did a successful crewed lunar flyby in April 2026. Getting to Mars is something else. Whereas the moon is reachable within three days, it takes around seven to nine months for Mars.

Musk's Starship is specifically designed for such a mission what with its 100-200-ton payload, expected mass production run and resulting economies of scale. Titan II could launch a kilogramme into low orbit for \$30,600, Saturn V \$5,400 and the much vaunted Space Shuttle a whopping \$65,000. Space X's Falcon Heavy reduced that to \$1,500 and Musk promises he can do it for a mere \$67-\$100 with Starship.⁴

Of course, it is still at its test and preparation stage. Flight 14 successfully launched from Starbase, Texas and achieved two full earth orbits on September 28. It also released Starship's first commercial payload - 26 Starlink V3 satellites.

Flight 15 is due in late 2026 or early 2027. It will see an attempted 'ship catch' too. The 50-metre upper stage will, it is hoped, be guided back to the 'Mechazilla' launch tower arms. This in preparation for full reflight: ie, reusable hardware and the rapid

turnaround that has Musk talking of Space X launching 30 Starships *daily* by 2030!⁵ Another highly improbable but nonetheless share-boosting target.

That aside, for Mars there will have to be multiple strides forward in life-support technology. Astronauts need to be protected from deadly solar radiation and provision must be made for medical care, hygiene, water, food supplies and overcoming the inevitable psychological problems - that, if astronauts are to return happy and healthy to Earth after more than two years of isolation. Remember, no real-time communication, nor any chance of rescue in the event of things going wrong.

Mission moon

With Musk effectively exiled from the White House, there has been a quiet tip-toeing back to Artemis and mission moon. This, and it needs to be stressed, is no Apollo 11 tribute act: the ambition is altogether grander.

The plan is to put a space station in high moon orbit: the Lunar Gateway. A Space X Heavy Falcon is due to launch the initial components in late 2027 (the Propulsion and Power Element and the HALO module). Using electric ion thrusters, they will autonomously manoeuvre and lock together. Then, in early 2028, the crewed Artemis IV will be launched by Nasa's Space Launch System and head off to the moon, along with the European-Japanese-built Lunar I-Hab capsule. The Lunar Gateway will thereby be completed. Two crew members then descend via a commercial lander. Once again Americans will walk on the moon.

A permanent moon base, built mission-by-mission, is planned for Shackleton Crater near the lunar south pole. It is known to harbour water ice. The base is envisaged to support a team of four for up to a week at a time.⁶ Amongst the stated mission aims is developing and testing the engineering, endurance and survival techniques needed for a Mars mission in the late 2030s or 40s.

For their different reasons Russia, China, Japan, the EU, even India, try to compete to a greater or lesser extent with the US in space display. Russia, of course, continues within the Soviet-era paradigm of regular manned flights, rocket launches, satellites, etc. Dmitry Rogozin, former director general of Roscosmos, Russia's space agency, did outline plans for a crewed moon landing by 2030. Once there, the cosmonauts would live in an inflatable module. Towards that end Russia commissioned the new Yenisei super-heavy booster with the capacity to lift 27 tons into lunar orbit.⁷ Yet, Rogozin was sacked in July 2022 and, given the disastrous crash of Luna-25 in 2023 and the parlous state of the economy brought about in no small measure by the war in Ukraine, Russia now largely watches from the sidelines, when it comes to the moon. Yenisei remains on the drawing board - its first mission pushed back to 2035 at the earliest.⁸ The best Roscosmos can hope for is partnering with China.

Over the last few years, officials from the European Space Agency have vaguely talked of joining a 'moon village' near the Americans at the south pole.⁸ An open international community, it will be inhabited by humans and robots - the claim being that it will provide a staging post for getting Europeans to Mars by 2040.⁹ However, the ESA is entirely reliant of Nasa's SLS, so, in reality, and for the conceivable future, it is little more than a very junior US partner.

China deserves to be taken seriously. By spending big time - around \$20 billion in 2025-26 - it has undoubtedly hauled itself into the premier league. Progress has been steady and sure. In October 2003 the Shenzhou 5 spacecraft orbited Earth 21 times. Yang Liwei became the country's first taikonaut. In September 2011 China established its first space laboratory (finally abandoned in March 2016) and in May 2018 the country made the first soft landing on the dark side of the moon. A year later, on January 3 2019, its rover, Yutu 2, began exploring the giant Von Kármán crater. Not long after that, in June 2021, China established the permanently crewed Tiangong space station. The third and final module was successfully added two years later.¹⁰

Showing an impressive confidence in the future, Chinese officials have plans for a crewed moon landing in 2030 and eventually going to Mars - admittedly more ambition than hard commitment. China's Mars timeframe lies somewhere between 2040 and 2060. Nonetheless, China is determined to catch up with and eventually overtake the US. The Hong Kong-based space consultant, Blaine Curcio, says China's space programme is "perhaps now only 10 to 15 years behind the US's in terms of technology".¹¹ There has, despite that, been talk of getting to Mars by 2033.¹² However, I take it as that: talk.

Meanwhile, US expenditure on space still more than equals that of the rest of the world put together.¹³

Space war

Basically, today's US space programme is Trump's space programme, going back to his first term. Compared with what went before, he oversaw a definite shift in emphasis. Trump told Nasa to establish an overwhelming military superiority in near space and simultaneously to press ahead with deep space missions. Trump loves space display, he loves space military power too.

He ordered a 10% spending hike for space military power and the creation of the United States Space Force. It now stands alongside the five traditional branches of the US military - army, navy, marines, airforce and coast guard. The sci-fi-inspired dress uniforms were condemned as 'authoritarian', even 'fascist', by various over-excited commentators, but the reasoning behind the USSF is pure Mackinder: who commands near space commands the whole world.¹⁴

Troy Meink's announcement that the US has 'space control weapons' in Earth orbit was certainly telling us what we already knew. Naturally, there were immediate accusations from Moscow and Beijing that the US has initiated an arms race in space. CND provided what amounted to an echo.¹⁵ Yet the fact of the matter is that the arms race in space has been "underway for years".¹⁶

So what has the US got up there? The only honest answer at the moment is that we do not know. However, we can take a few educated guesses.

Space control implies domination, protecting space existing assets (like GPS, communications, and tracking satellites) and combining that with the ability to disrupt or destroy the space capabilities of opponents. Military experts, public intelligence assessments and policy statements tell us that the US space arsenal is already two pronged.¹⁷

1. Non-kinetic (soft kill) weapons blind, jam or disable satellites without physically destroying them. This includes directed-energy laser dazzlers to blind optical sensors, electronic warfare jammers to block radio frequencies and advanced cyberattack capabilities, which intercept or hijack satellite controls.

2. Kinetic weapons physically strike rival space assets or otherwise interact with them. This includes co-orbital satellites, equipped with robotic arms capable of damaging, moving or grabbing other satellites. In other words something like Bird One in *You only live twice* (1967).

Then there is Trump's Golden Dome - a \$2.7 trillion programme - which is surely linked to the weapons in space announcement. A constellation of some 600 low-orbit satellites almost instantly locates and targets hostile ballistic, hypersonic and cruise missiles. Space-based missiles intercept them during the boost phase. Of course, the Golden Dome includes powerful, ground-based radar arrays and missiles such as Patriots, THAAD and Lockheed Martin's Next Generation Interceptors. They deal with any enemy missiles that have managed to get beyond the slow-boost phase and are approaching the US homeland. Both these layers being

woven together by the Command and Control, Battle Management, and Communications (C2BMC) system, using AI and other such cutting-edge technology.

The calculation is that overwhelming US military superiority in near space would leave China and Russia with only one good option: the right to *peacefully surrender*, as in ancient times. Roman military doctrine stipulated that a city (*oppidum*) would be allowed to surrender peacefully, but only till the moment that the first battering ram struck the outer walls (*priusquam muralis aries attigisset*). After that the city lost its civilian status and the Roman army was free to loot, slaughter and enslave (*direptio*). The classic first-hand account of elite surrender and the terrible consequences of defying Roman might is to be found in *The conquest of Gaul*, written by none other than Julius Ceasar himself.¹⁸

That, or China and Russia could be forced to strike the first blow - in the manner of Imperial Japan, with its desperate attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941. President Franklin D Roosevelt had frozen Japan's financial assets and imposed a total oil embargo (note, the US had an economy 10 times the size of Japan's, controlled nearly all the world's negotiable money resources and was the source of 94% of Japan's oil supply that was vital for its industry and armies fighting in China and south-east Asia). Japan faced three impossible choices: (1) impoverishment within a couple of years, (2) agree to US demands and yield territorial conquests in China and south-east Asia, (3) go to war with the US and its allies. Having been boxed in, Japan chose war and that excused the US demanding *unconditional surrender*. Emperor Hirohito finally conceded after Hiroshima, the Soviet invasion of Manchuria, and Nagasaki.¹⁹

However, China and Russia both possess their own ground-launched missiles, designed to hit low-orbit satellites. China confirmed that capability during a historic 2007 test, when it destroyed one of its own redundant weather satellites. This created thousands of pieces of space debris - a real menace. Russia too has successfully tested its anti-satellite Nudol missile, hitting an old Soviet-era satellite and forcing the crew on the International Space Station to take emergency measures to avoid the resulting debris shower. Space debris, it should be noted, travels at approximately 17,000 mph and even something the size of a marble can cause damage equivalent to a hand grenade.

Co-orbital satellites too. In May 2026 Russia positioned four military satellites, Cosmos-2610 - Cosmos-2613, close to ICEYE-X36, a US-Finnish commercial weather and radar satellite used by Ukrainian forces for intelligence imagery. Such co-orbital satellites can observe, jam or tilt targets out of their orbit. China certainly has satellites equipped with robotic grappling arms. While officially described as being for the purposes of collecting space debris, these arms can just as easily grab an enemy military satellite.

Nor has America a monopoly with non-kinetic, soft-kill, anti-satellite weapons. Russia deployed the Peresvet laser weapon system to multiple strategic missile divisions. This laser is designed to blind the optical sensors of western spy satellites tracking Russian deployments. Jamming satellites can also be done from the ground by blasting out high-frequency interference.

Perhaps the most worrying concern involves Russia's ongoing development of a space weapon that would violate the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. US intelligence agencies claim that Russia is actively developing a satellite designed to carry a nuclear

weapon into orbit. Rather than directing a nuclear warhead down to some target here on Earth, the idea is to detonate it in space and thereby create a massive electromagnetic pulse (EMP) that would disable the electronics of thousands of commercial and military satellites simultaneously, rendering entire orbital planes useless.²⁰ Only specially shielded satellites would survive intact.

Space science

While Trump flaunts, struts and bellows when it comes to space display and space war, he has next to no time for space science.

The Asteroid Redirect Mission was defunded in March 2017. Designed to bring an asteroid into moon orbit - not only with a view to studying it. ARM would have been used to refine the technology necessary to head off an asteroid that threatens the planet (65 million years ago an asteroid smashed into what is now the Gulf of Mexico, sent a huge plume of ash and debris into the upper atmosphere and triggered the extinction of roughly three-quarters of all animal species, including the dinosaurs).²¹

No less myopically, Trump ordered a \$100 million cut in the already modest Earth science programme. The DSCOVR, OCO-3, PACE and CLARREO Pathfinder missions were scrapped - all devoted to monitoring global warming.²²

Such space science can be considered science for the sake of science. That would be terribly naive though. From the point of view of sponsoring governments, it is partially a form of diplomacy - to use the current lingo, soft power. But there always remains an overarching military context.

Marxists are rightly known for taking a positive attitude towards science. But we remain painfully aware that capitalism perverts science. Not only by bending it to the lopsided, narrow and demeaning dictates of profit, but by turning it against humanity, to the point of threatening our very survival as a species: carpet-bombing, chemical and biological weapons, nuclear warfare. Walter Benjamin damningly wrote: "If the natural use of productive forces is impeded by the property system, then the increase in technological means, in speed, in sources of energy, will press towards an unnatural use. This is found in war."²³ Hence for him revolutions are not so much about speeding up the train of progress, "but the human race grabbing for the emergency brake".²⁴

The fact of the matter is that even the most seemingly objective space science is interwoven with the military-industrial complex. Indeed there is a military-space-industrial complex. What is true for the US is true for Russia, China, the EU, Japan, India and the UK too. Communications satellites, weather satellites, asteroid capture missions, planetary exploration, even optical telescopes and radar astronomy are component parts of a technological nexus that is fundamentally military. That includes wonderful projects, such as Jodrell Bank, VLT in Chile and the Hubble and James Webb space-based telescopes, each of which has greatly contributed to the commons of human knowledge - discovering quasars, proving Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity, dating the known universe, confirming dark energy and supermassive black holes, locating exoplanets, etc.

Astrophysicists, mathematicians, engineers and computer scientists are regularly recruited from academia into the military-space-industrial complex. Together they form a highly specialised talent pool. In their book, *Accessory to war*, astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson and co-author Avis Lang explore the long-standing, symbiotic relationship between space scientists

and the military. They document how tools built to explore the universe (like radar, satellite imaging, and infrared tech) are inherently linked to tools used for geopolitical domination.²⁵ Astrophysicists and defence departments routinely harvest each other's work, because they care about the exact same things: multispectral imaging, tracking objects across space and high-performance computing.

There is another aspect which cannot be ignored. The military-space-industrial complex constitutes a third department of production in its own right (the other two being the production of the means of production and the production of the means of consumption). An idea pioneered by Rosa Luxemburg in *The accumulation of capital* (1913). She writes of the "aggregate social product" consisting of "three parts", the third part being military production of all kinds, purchased by the state and paid for by taxing the masses - that and borrowing on the money markets.²⁶ Though workers (and the middles classes) have had their consumption levels squeezed, this no longer constitutes a barrier to capital accumulation.

Department III - named by Michael Kidron²⁷ - effectively obliterates the distinction between consumption and destruction. Possible precisely because for capital the purpose of production, the end aim, is not human consumption of use-values according to need: rather it is self-expansion. Problems of *real* use, and therefore *real* consumption, are overcome (though not eliminated) through the ability of the state to generate *artificial demand* through taxation and credit.

That approach - initially tried before World War I and then after the 1929-33 world economic crisis - became the model of normality after 1945 and allowed Kidron to explain the long economic boom. Of course, that has long gone. Nonetheless, under Trump 2.0 the *peacetime* US arms budget is set to be \$1.05 trillion in 2026 (well over twice as much as China and Russia put together).

The Trump administration justifies this perverse and obscene squandering of human and material resources through peddling Maga nationalism (and generating jobs). Voting in favour of the endless production of waste thereby becomes a patriotic duty and sees trade union misleaders actively promoting the expansion of the arms industry in the name of high-paid employment and regional growth. Spending on space is essentially no different. Except that, besides nationalism, it is able to harness another misplaced idealism - the quixotic belief that space provides our natural destiny and offers solutions to all our mounting problems.

Meanwhile, the UN estimates that over a billion people have no access to clean drinking water, some 840 million have to survive on significantly less than the recommended daily intake of calories and around 40 million are infected with HIV/Aids. There is nothing inevitable about any of this.

IMF and World Bank programmes of market "reform" have greatly exacerbated the unevenness characteristic of the system over the last 40 years. Today the richest 1% own nearly half the world's wealth, the poorest half just 0.75%. And - no surprise - a billionaire "emits a million times the carbon dioxide than the average person".²⁸ Here, in 'broken Britain', some 2.5 million live in a household which uses a food bank.²⁹ Around 1.6 million claim out-of-work benefits. Even in America, by far the richest country in the world, an estimated 745,000 experienced homelessness last year.³⁰ Over seven million are *officially* unemployed.

Yet, with organisation and political will, humanity has within its reach the ability to easily meet all basic needs. The wealth exists in

abundance. Simply diverting the US arms budget to *real* human needs would do away with global poverty - almost at a stroke. But such a turnaround can never happen through the banal platitudes and essentially diversionary calls of the NGOs, religious notables and various soft-left reformers for G20 governments to do their moral duty. The modern state palpably exists to defend and promote the self-expansion of capital - the two are inextricably interwoven and interdependent.

That, incidentally, is why leftwing calls to 'tax the rich' to overcome poverty, health underfunding and homelessness are so misplaced. Mainstream governments do 'tax the rich'. Their revenue derives in large part from corporation, payroll and capital gains taxes. So, if they do not want to see the goose that lays those golden eggs taking flight abroad, not only must tax rates be limited: capital accumulation is positively required. Therefore, in order to tax the rich, the rich must stay rich ... and continue to exploit the working class. Taxing the rich with a view to progressively expropriating their riches, socialising capital - that is another matter entirely.

The fact of the matter is that capitalism long ago outlived any usefulness that it once possessed. Now this most alienated of social relationships not only goes hand-in-hand with poverty, exploitation and war: it threatens to bring about a civilisational collapse - perhaps some time between 2070 and 2090 - through climate breakdown.³¹ Objective circumstances cry out for revolutionary change.

Once humanity supersedes capitalism, overcomes self-alienation and becomes properly human once again, who knows what we might choose to do? Mars, along with other planets and moons in the solar system, could be explored, using intelligent, self-replicating, evolving robots, as envisaged by John von Neumann.³² From our solar system such probes might conceivably head off to nearby stars and Earth-like exoplanets (there would, though, have to be a non-interference 'prime directive' and guarantees to prevent the probes turning into 'cosmic locusts' - that is, stripping entire planets and moons of their resources to create more and more copies of themselves).

If life arises whenever there is a suitably sized and suitably situated planet orbiting a suitably benign star, it follows that life *must* exist scattered here and there across the universe (the Drake equation). Given the huge number of stars and planets in the cosmos, the chance is that we are therefore far from alone, when it comes to intelligence (so why don't we see it? - the Fermi paradox).

Life on Earth evolved through a DNA-RNA information system - albeit entirely randomly through natural selection - from a primeval soup some 3.5 billion years ago, to the point where consciousness emerged. But must extraterrestrial life be based on DNA-RNA? If, in language, there is the Latin alphabet, can there not be the Arabic or Cyrillic ... or the Mandarin characters. So why not HNA, ANA or TNA? We have long wondered about such existential questions. It would be expected, therefore, that future generations would want to find answers, if for no other reason than curiosity.

However, the closest star aside from our sun - the unpromising red dwarf, Proxima Centauri - is 4.24 light-years away. Even using Jupiter, the biggest planet, as the gravitational slingshot, with present-day technology a probe would take around 80,000 years before getting there. It would also take 4.24 years till we receive an arrival message - that is, assuming that we have managed to escape extinction.

Now, though, the main subject of humanity must be humanity - as we find it, here on Earth: a planet which gave birth to our species and which has everything we need in terms of our evolved physiognomy and psychology. If we want to survive as a species, *our* prime directive ought to be taking care of planet Earth and restoring it to full health ●

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MIDDLE EAST

Threats, walkouts and secret talks

Trump set the tone. From the podium of an organisation supposedly founded to prevent war between states, he mused about the “annihilation” of Iran. **Yassamine Mather** looks at the theatre that is the UN general assembly

Every September world leaders descend on New York for the United Nations general assembly. For one week the podium is occupied by an apparently endless procession of presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers, each invoking peace, dialogue and international law - often before an audience whose attention lies somewhere else entirely. This year, however, the general assembly was more than the usual diplomatic ritual. The continuing Iran-US war, the destruction in Gaza and widening divisions over Israel ensured that some of the speeches - and the reactions to them - attracted some genuine attention.

Trump set the tone. From the podium of an organisation supposedly founded to prevent war between states, the US president openly raised the possibility of the “annihilation” of Iran if Tehran refused to reach an agreement over the Strait of Hormuz. It was an extraordinary threat to make, even by the standards of Trump.

Iranian president Massoud Pezeshkian left the possibility of negotiations open, but rejected Trump’s threats. Iran would not surrender or bend the knee. He loftily described Trump’s language as contrary to the UN Charter. Pezeshkian also used his presence in New York for something resembling a media offensive, giving interviews and meeting American journalists. He even appeared on Fox News. An outrage for Iranian royalists.

There were walkouts too. The US delegation left during Pezeshkian’s address, Israel boycotted it. But the real spectacle came with Benjamin Netanyahu. He spoke to lots of empty chairs. What he said was typically aggressive and uncompromising. He defended Israel’s murderous conduct in Gaza, rejected accusations of genocide - the “biggest lie of the century”. The war against Iran was just and there will be no Palestinian state while he remains prime minister.

The walkout was politically significant. A substantial number left the chamber just as Netanyahu prepared to speak. It was a visible demonstration of Israel’s growing diplomatic isolation. There was also a bizarre element to it all. Israeli officials moved through the empty rows, recording which delegations had left.

Yet the general assembly mattered less for anything it formally decided than for what it revealed. Behind the theatre, actual negotiations were taking place. Iranian and American officials were certainly exploring whether military confrontation could be converted into some form of settlement. At this point speeches and walkouts give way to more difficult questions: Hormuz, sanctions, frozen Iranian assets, Lebanon and the regional balance of power.

Bargaining card

Obviously Iran’s principal advantage in the confrontation is not military parity with the US, but geography and the ability to impose economic costs far beyond the battlefield - and the Strait of Hormuz is central to that strategy.

Closure of Hormuz had affected shipping, energy markets and ultimately prices throughout the world. This was magnified by renewed uncertainty and disruption to the Bab al-Mandab route, thanks to the Houthis. This means Saudi super tankers heading down the Red Sea for the Cape face a real prospect



Addressing the UN general assembly

of drone and missile attack. Insurance costs must have skyrocketed. Eventually these costs feed through to companies and consumers.

Contrary to the endless propaganda of sections of the Iranian regime, none of this amounts to an Iranian ‘victory’. Iran itself remains under immense economic and military pressure. It is under siege. The Iranian currency has fallen further and further to around 250,000 toman to the dollar.

According to Iran’s foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, the latest Iranian proposals draw on the June 17 memorandum of understanding, under which shipping could pass without tolls for 60 days, while negotiations proceeded. The new proposal envisages specified US steps such as lifting the blockade and lifting sanctions, followed by reopening Hormuz at the end of a seven-day period and the resumption of talks. Behind the seven day offer, however, there lie thorny questions such as frozen funds, Lebanon, naval deployment and the broader relationship between Iran and the US.

The American side faces its own contradictions. Trump and his administration have attempted to shape the political narrative surrounding the conflict, but, the longer the war continues, the harder it becomes to present it simply as a demonstration of overwhelming American might. At some point the administration has to explain what the war has actually achieved.

That creates several possibilities. Trump could escalate militarily after the mid-terms, including through renewed bombing, before returning to negotiations. Alternatively, he could seek an agreement and present Iranian concessions as evidence that military pressure succeeded. Either course would be shaped not simply by the military balance, but by the economic and political costs of continuing the conflict.

Nor can Washington ignore the domestic economic consequences. Some Democrats and a few Republicans have begun distancing themselves from the war, partly because of concerns about rising

prices, interest rates and wider economic pressures. This should not be exaggerated. Congress has limited powers. It is the president who is in charge when it comes to matters of war and peace.

Global effects

The first meeting between Trump and Andy Burnham took place on the fringes of the general assembly and was relatively uneventful. For a nervous Burnham, the absence of a major mishap - and Trump’s description of him as a “natural businessperson” who would be a “great prime minister” - must have come as some relief.

Britain was also active elsewhere on the sidelines. Foreign secretary Ed Miliband met Araghchi and expressed concerns over threats to dissident Iranian journalists in Britain. Britain’s more consequential role, however, concerned Saudi Arabia. While in New York, Burnham confirmed that he had agreed to a Saudi request for British support, while Britain and France provided assistance involving refuelling aircraft. This places Britain firmly on the Saudi side in what could easily blow up again and turn into a major confrontation.

Saudi Arabia has spent enormous sums on its military establishment and has long regarded the Houthis as a serious security problem. Yet Washington reportedly opened direct communication with the Houthis in early September, despite Saudi displeasure. This is important, because Saudi policy towards the Houthis has been tied to the broader confrontation with Iran and the so-called axis of resistance. Saudi leaders appear to have assumed that they were acting within a wider American strategy aimed at weakening Iran’s regional allies, only to discover once again that Washington is prepared to make its own deal when it suits US interests. One explanation is that Washington does not want its strategic priorities blurred.

Turkey and Pakistan, which signed a tripartite agreement with Saudi Arabia only weeks ago, have meanwhile reiterated that Riyadh has

not asked them for assistance. Neither appears eager to volunteer for what could be a quagmire. What emerges is not a coherent alliance pursuing a single strategy, but a collection of states attempting to protect their own interests, while avoiding the consequences of further escalation.

Perhaps the most significant development surrounding the UN general assembly concerns China. The Iran-US confrontation increasingly appears inseparable from the wider rivalry between Washington and Beijing. According to comments by the US ambassador to China, Trump directly told the Chinese president that Beijing’s support for Iran was unacceptable. US officials have also alleged that Iran obtained high-resolution imagery from Chinese satellites that helped locate US military bases, aircraft carriers and other naval vessels.

Whether every allegation of Chinese assistance is substantiated is less important than the broader development: Washington increasingly views Chinese support for Iran through the prism of US-China competition.

Beijing, meanwhile, has its own reasons for opposing American attempts to isolate Tehran. This is not primarily a question of diplomatic friendship between China and Iran. China has economic and energy interests, a need to resist the extraterritorial application of American sanctions, and a strategic interest in preventing Washington from demonstrating that it can unilaterally determine political and economic arrangements across the Middle East.

Sanctions therefore cannot be treated simply as measures directed against Tehran. They also affect companies, airlines, banks and states trading with Iran. And China’s rejection of new unilateral sanctions cannot simply be understood as solidarity with Iran: Beijing is defending its own interests.

This forms part of a wider struggle over American power within the international financial system. Washington has historically made sanctions effective not merely by

preventing American companies from dealing with a targeted state, but by threatening consequences for third parties that continue doing business with it. For China, accepting that principle indefinitely would mean accepting the United States’ ability to influence Chinese economic relations with other countries.

Sanctions are therefore not peripheral to military confrontation. They constitute another arena in which the international balance of power is being decided.

Where next?

For all the diplomatic theatre surrounding the general assembly, the decisive question is what happens after New York. Can the Iranian proposal become a framework for serious negotiations? Will Washington accept sanctions relief and other concessions in return for reopening Hormuz? Will Tehran accept American conditions? Can Lebanon be incorporated into a wider settlement? And can China and the US prevent their own rivalry from making compromise still more difficult?

The general assembly provided answers for none of these questions. What it demonstrated was that diplomacy has not disappeared. Negotiations remain possible precisely because neither side has been able simply to impose its preferred outcome: Tehran is attempting to convert disruption of Hormuz into diplomatic leverage; Washington is trying to convert military and economic pressure into Iranian concessions. China is resisting an outcome that would strengthen American strategic dominance, while Saudi Arabia and other regional powers are attempting to protect their own interests without being dragged into an even wider conflict.

Wars do not end simply because one side possesses superior weapons. They end when the political, economic and strategic calculations of those involved change sufficiently to make some form of settlement preferable to continuing the conflict●

INDIA

Cockroaches dent Modi's veneer

A single tweet turned into a mass movement that removed India's education minister and shook the BJP regime to its foundations. But where now? David Lockwood looks beyond streets, strikes and protests

In July, Indian premier Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party government decided to smash up a mass student protest in Delhi, refused talks with student leaders, temporarily closed parliament and arrested the two most important opposition leaders plus a number of other MPs.

Earlier, in May, the chief justice of the Supreme Court, Surya Kant, had issued his opinion on India's young unemployed from the bench. He said that they often became "activists" and described them as "cockroaches" and "parasites". He said: "There are youngsters like cockroaches who don't get any employment or have any place in a profession."

Two points to note here. Surya's comment might have been dismissed as an intemperate remark by a crusty old judge. But the Modi regime has worked assiduously to eat away at the independence of the Indian judiciary, so that now it is regarded as a front for the regime. Secondly, graduate unemployment is an enormous problem in India. For the eight or nine million graduates annually, it is estimated that there are only 2.8 million jobs. And the system keeps on churning out more graduates, year after year - and 40% of the 15-25 age group are unemployed.¹

Unemployment

The weakening state capacity (a result of neoliberal policies) leaves few tools to remedy the problem. The expansion of universities (for the tiny minority who can afford them) has created large numbers of educated youth who cannot find work. Some of them are pushed into jobs offshore - an option many are beginning to resist.

Many more can only find work in the informal sector - the 'gig economy'. Meanwhile, the expansion of agribusiness and the destruction of small farms pushes youth into the cities, where they join the ranks of the potentially insurgent unemployed. The university-educated youth of the global south and those pushed into manual jobs, labouring in the Middle East or elsewhere as guest workers, makes this generation a truly international grouping, with experiences across the globe.

So, in view of the potential size of this discontented cohort, for a leading judge to issue such an insulting broadside was unwise, to say the least.

More than 11,000 kilometres away, in Boston USA, Abhijeet Dipke, a master's student in public relations and marketing, noticed Surya's comment. He tweeted in response: "What would happen if all the cockroaches got together?" The message went viral and Dipke - clearly no slouch in these matters - had soon established a website and an online 'political party', the Cockroach Janta Party.² This party was to be "secular, socialist, democratic and lazy".

Its original five demands took aim at senior judges, opposed Modi's attack on the electoral system and demanded that 50% of the parliament and cabinet be women. These demands were swiftly overshadowed by what became the main focus of the campaign: the abolition of the India-wide examinations that are necessary to pass in order to get into 'the professions' (eg, doctors, engineers) and government positions. These exams are a nightmare for candidates, requiring months and sometimes years of preparation, along with expensive special coaching.

For decades, they have been mired in an extensive network of corruption and bribery. Over the past few years



Students protesting outside parliament in July

the papers were leaked, followed by demands that they be cancelled. And, while these tests are not taking place, or the results not being released, the mountain of the graduate unemployed gets higher and higher.

In recent months, with further revelations of cheating and abuse, there was a general sense that the government's education department and its BJP minister, Dharmendra Pradhan, had entirely lost control of the graduate education system and so the demand for Pradhan's resignation came to dominate the Cockroach Party's agenda.

Cue an extraordinary outflow of Cockroach online propaganda - manifestos, demands, cartoons, memes - together with a certain amount of support from the 'great and the good' (film stars, etc). The government at first ignored the phenomenon and then tried to shut it down electronically. Neither worked.

Demonstration

There followed an interesting lesson for those who promote 'online activism'. This movement (for such it had become) started to burst out of its internet fetters and surge into physical manifestation. The Cockroach leaders had to give it human form. They called for a public demonstration in support of its demands in Delhi. By this stage the demand for Pradhan's resignation or sacking had overtaken everything else and many thousands gathered to press it home.

Dipke flew in from the US on the day. But the government did not arrest him and he led the demonstration, which turned into a familiar Gen Z-type revolving occupation. Several activists from left youth organisations declared a hunger strike. A well-known environmental activist and social campaigner, Sonam Wangchuk, joined in and his hunger strike became the centre of attention.

And so it was for two more weeks until the Cockroach Party leaders very sensibly realised that the movement was stagnating and called for a march on July 20 to the parliament. Things were revitalised, as people began to pour in once again. Cue the panic among India's rulers. Negotiations were out of the question - that is not the Modi way. When the size of what was going to occur became apparent, something had to be done. The government sent in a snatch squad on July 18 and bundled Sonam

Wangchuk, who had led the Student Educational and Cultural Movement back in the 1980s, off to hospital.

Game over? No such luck for the BJP. This action simply infuriated the protestors and set things up for a huge demo two days later. The demonstrators managed to break through the police barricades that were hemming them in (no mean feat) and started marching towards parliament. They did not make it because of the massive lathi-charge and teargas offensive that the riot squad unleashed. After several hours of fighting (and many injuries) the Cockroach Party leaders again demonstrated their good sense, calling their supporters to head to Jantar Mantar park, where they established the protest camp. The numbers steadily increased over the next day or so until it was bigger than ever.

Inspiring as it is, our admiration for this movement cannot be uncritical. Before we bring the story right up to date, there are a few aspects that deserve critical examination.

■ Strategy: Of course, this suffered from being made on the run, under the pressure of fast-moving events. My guess is that the Cockroach leaders did not set out to form a party (such as it is), nor to conjure up thousands of supporters, nor to threaten the BJP government.

There was a naivety about the Cockroach Party's demands. According to Anand Teltumbde, writing in *Frontline* magazine,

The five-point manifesto ... read like the output of any reformist organisation ... These are reasonable demands. They are not transformative ones. A country where the state apparatus has been captured by a single political formation ... does not need another five-point manifesto. It needs a thoroughgoing reimagining of the relationship between the state and the citizen.³

And clearly, as the movement continued and the government remained intransigent, the Cockroach Party demands were progressively diluted. During the Delhi battle, a couple of CJP leaders offered the government a settlement on the basis of Pradhan's resignation, compensation for exam-suicide victims and the release of Wangchuk from hospital. The government was stupid enough to

reject this and the struggle continued - but now under the aegis of these three (much diminished) demands.

And, as we now know, it was the achievement of only one of them - the minister's resignation - which caused the Cockroach Party leaders to claim victory.

■ Leadership: As is often the case, the existence of a leadership was sometimes denied, but still exercised - originally, it seems, by Dipke himself and then by a group of perhaps a dozen around him. Unlike in other Gen Z events, it could be seen and its decisions felt.

A leadership had decided to transform the Cockroach Party from the electronic to the human. All well and good. We have no problem with leadership, but it should be fully visible, transparent and accountable. This means, I am afraid, that if it is to continue the CJP needs boring old democratic structures.

■ Politics: At its beginning, the CJP claimed to be non-political and shied away from contact with India's leftwing political parties. That attitude softened somewhat in view of the enthusiastic support extended by the left parties and their youth organisations.

■ Diversions: The lack of long-term strategy, of acknowledged and accountable leadership and of politics meant that the movement thus far was all too easily diverted into side issues, aided and abetted by India's sensation-seeking and pro-Modi media.

The original demands, which were far more political, were eventually lost in all this and at times it seemed as though these side issues would bury the movement entirely. By the end, only Pradhan's resignation remained. But the CJP seemed firm on that - and the government seemed firmly against it.

After the first waves, increased numbers of demonstrators flowed back to Jantar Mantar Park after the battles in the streets of Delhi. The CJP leadership remained in control of the movement. The education minister remained in office. And the BJP government retained power.

Where next?

But on July 25, Pradhan resigned. For the moment, it was all over. There was much rejoicing and the protest camp packed up. The CJP negotiators maintained that the two remaining demands (compensation for suicides'

families and withdrawal of legal action against arrested protestors) were still on the table. But, having sacrificed Pradhan and cleared Delhi of protests, it seemed that the government could safely kick both of those into the long grass.

Nonetheless, multiple pundits, from inside India to the *Financial Times*, have since commented that the Cockroach movement has dented Modi's veneer of indestructibility.

To state the obvious, if the movement is to survive, it needs to spread again beyond Delhi and beyond post-graduate students. In a country like India, without a movement shifting from the middle classes to the urban and rural workers and farmers, long-lasting democratic change is not possible. It is worth noting that, while this campaign was on, a large farmers' demonstration was threatening to march on the capital for its own demands. And another demonstration erupted in Delhi, demanding statehood for Kashmir.

Total victory

Despite fears (including on the part of this author) that since Pradhan's resignation had eclipsed all other issues, its achievement would be regarded as total victory, this was not to be the case. In fact, the CJP has broadened its campaigning both geographically and issue-wise. While the main focus is still on Delhi, there have been CJP-linked education protests in 34 Indian cities, all of them involving varying degrees of confrontation with the police. The movement for education reform remains on the streets.

Then, on September 1, the Supreme Court quashed all cases against the thousands of student demonstrators arrested on July 20 - another defeat for the Modi regime and its pet judiciary. The movement, meanwhile, has spread beyond higher education and beyond street protests. Far from dissipating, as is typical of Gen Z movements, the CJP had decided to turn its attention to the appalling state of India's government schools - notorious for broken classrooms, missing teachers, dirty toilets, unsafe buildings, lack of seats, unreliable drinking water and impassable access roads. A number of schools have simply been abandoned as unusable.

The Cockroaches have decided to organise their supporters into inspection teams, armed with cameras, to go into ordinary schools, film the conditions and put the results online with suitable commentary - plus deadlines for improvements.

Our friends in most of the Anglophone left have cheered the student protests, reflecting much of their own social base. However, in India and elsewhere, we need a political strategy that goes beyond streets, strikes and protests. Drawing such movements together requires a programme and an organisation - a party. Neither of these will emerge spontaneously on the streets in moments of social protest, no matter how militant, prolonged or egalitarian they are ●

This is an updated version of the article first published in Australia's *Labor Tribune*: labortribune.net.au/cockroaches-get-under-modis-skin

Notes

1. www.indiatoday.in/jobs/story/indias-bureaucrats-are-dissing-degrees-while-the-government-chases-50-ger-target-2950747-2026-07-20
2. www.cockroachjantaparty.org
3. *Frontline* July 8.

HEALTH

In their thousands, insects

Blood sucking flies, mosquitoes, ticks, fleas and other bugs are spreading diseases once confined to the tropics and subtropics. **James Linney** says the blame lies squarely with climate change and a system blinded by production for the sake of production

This year's record-breaking temperatures have had devastating health consequences.¹ But it is not only about heat strokes, heart attacks and asthma. Rising temperatures are changing the habitats and behaviour of insects that carry diseases, known as vectors. Diseases once confined to tropical and subtropical regions are thereby spreading to more temperate areas, including the UK.

Communicable diseases spread to humans in different ways: through direct contact or ingestion; through zoonotic spillover (animal-to-human) transmission, as seen in Ebola outbreaks and believed to have led to the emergence of Covid-19; or through an intermediary, as is the case with vector-borne infections.

These diseases can be caused by parasites, viruses or bacteria being transmitted by a vector - usually an insect or other organism that carries and passes the infection to humans. Common examples include mosquitoes, which spread malaria, Zika and dengue; ticks, which spread Lyme disease; and sandflies, which transmit leishmaniasis.

Vector-borne diseases currently account for more than 17% of all infectious diseases² and have been responsible for some of the deadliest diseases in all of human history, including the bubonic plague - also known as the Black Death. This bacterial infection, caused by *Yersinia pestis*, is transmitted by fleas, which often live on rodents. Thankfully, the disease is now very rare, but it was believed to be responsible for the deaths of an estimated 25 million people, when it ravaged Europe between 1347 and 1351.

Vector-borne

Vector-borne infections remain a major cause of death worldwide, with mosquitoes among the deadliest disease-carriers on the planet - an estimated 700 million people contract mosquito-borne infections every year. Climate change is contributing to changes in the distribution and incidence of these diseases, with many regions experiencing significant increases.

Global warming has on the whole been devastating for insects, their numbers are declining at an estimated rate of 1% to 2.5% annually, and here in the UK by 60% in 20 years.³ But there are some, like certain species of mosquitos, that have been able to take advantage of the rising temperatures - moving from their usual home in tropical regions, where they thrive, to more northerly or higher-altitude regions, which are now seeing longer, hotter summers and milder winters.

There have always been some mosquito species able to breed in colder environments: the UK, for example, has over 30 species of native mosquitos, but most do not bite humans or carry disease. In the past decade the number of disease-carrying mosquitos has increased significantly in Europe. One such example is the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which can spread diseases such as yellow fever, dengue and chikungunya, all of which are on the rise.

Dengue fever rates, for example, have increased dramatically in the past decade. The World Health Organisation reports that cases have increased from 505,430 in 2000 to 14.6 million in 2024. The disease is now endemic in more than 100



Mosquito *Aedes aegypti* biting a human

countries and half of the world's population is now at risk of dengue, with an estimated 100-400 million infections occurring each year (although the vast majority of cases are mild and go undiagnosed).⁴

The dengue virus commonly causes symptoms such as a high fever, headache, rash, vomiting and severe body aches, earning it the name, 'breakbone fever'. Although most infections are self-limiting and do not require hospital treatment, approximately one in 20 people who develop dengue go on to suffer a more serious infection. Severe dengue can cause abdominal pain, persistent vomiting, bleeding and breathing difficulties. There is no specific antiviral treatment, so care focuses on managing symptoms, controlling pain and replacing fluids. Severe dengue can be fatal without appropriate medical treatment.

Dengue is spread by the females of the *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* (known as 'Asian tiger mosquito') species, which have now become established within Europe and are creeping further north each year. They are now established in 16 European countries. The *Aedes* mosquito is now common throughout the USA, and this month the UK Health Security Agency confirmed that *Aedes aegypti* mosquitos and larvae have been found at residential properties for the first time. Although this does not mean they are established in the UK, it does suggest that it is only a matter of time before they are.

Established *Aedes* mosquito populations have not yet resulted in large outbreaks of dengue, zika or chikungunya virus in Europe. There is often a delay between mosquitos arriving in new areas and infections beginning to spread. At present, there are still only a handful of locally acquired cases in northern Europe each year, with none confirmed yet in the UK. However, the risk of future transmission is a growing concern. In the US, 1,455 locally acquired and travel-related dengue cases have recently been reported.⁵ According to the Center for Disease

Control and Prevention, annual cases have increased by 359% over the past decade.⁶

Malaria is another major mosquito-borne infection with devastating global health consequences. It is caused by parasites belonging to the *Plasmodium* genus and transmitted to humans by female *Anopheles* mosquitos. These mosquitos thrive in hot, humid climates, where standing water provides suitable breeding grounds. Most malaria cases have historically occurred in sub-Saharan Africa, although the disease is also found in parts of Oceania, including Papua New Guinea, as well as central and South America and south-east Asia.⁷

Climate change

There have been some gains in reducing malaria infections over the past decade, largely through public health prevention programmes, including initiatives to increase access to insecticide-treated mosquito nets. However, there were still an estimated 282 million cases and 610,000 deaths in 2024⁸, compared to 233 million cases and 985,000 deaths in 2000.

Climate change threatens to reverse these gains and a combination of rising global temperatures and increasing flooding (creating more standing water breeding grounds) risks the spreading of such infections to new regions. Hot temperatures do not just allow for longer breeding periods for mosquitos: they have been shown to increase biting rates and reduce the incubation time for infection.⁹ The spread of malaria to new regions threatens to burden health services doubly, because people have had no prior exposure to the infection and therefore have not acquired immunity, so there is a greater risk of severe illness and higher mortality rates.

Another vector spreading beyond its traditional geographical range as a result of global warming is the tick. Ticks can transmit Lyme disease - a bacterial infection that can initially cause flu-like symptoms. Although the disease can be treated with antibiotics when diagnosed early,

some people continue to experience persistent symptoms, including severe fatigue, muscle aches and a loss of energy, which can last for years. Tick activity and Lyme disease peak when the temperature reaches 17°-20.5°C and their numbers have drastically increased in western Europe and the US in recent decades.

If vector-borne disease spreads, these trends are likely to increase in 2027 - especially with the coming El Niño, which is predicted to be the largest in the past thousand years. El Niño is a naturally occurring cyclical weather pattern, so not *caused* by climate change, but climate change could amplify its effects. That means we are very likely going to see very extreme weather events in many parts of the world - droughts in some areas and heavy rainfall in others - meaning more opportunities for mosquito breeding.

El Niño also causes an increase in global temperatures, meaning that it is virtually certain that this year will see record-breaking temperatures. Flooding, hotter temperatures and wildfires, leading to displaced populations and pressure on health services, is a perfect recipe for spreading not just vector-borne, but all types of infections, including zoonotic diseases - some of which could have the potential to trigger future pandemics.

Looking further into the future, a study published in *The Lancet Planetary Health* estimates that as many as 8.4 billion people could be at risk of malaria and dengue by the end of the century if carbon emissions continue to rise at current rates.¹⁰ Another article, assessing the impact of climate change on malaria rates in Africa, found that we could see 123 million additional malaria cases and 532,000 additional deaths in Africa between 2024 and 2050 under current control levels.

Let me be clear: highlighting the changing patterns of vector-borne infections is not a form of so-called 'climate doomism': it would only be so if their spread and devastating health consequences were inevitable.

This is far from the case.

Vector-borne infections such as malaria and dengue could have been eradicated decades ago. However, research into treatments and vaccines has been neglected, in part because these diseases disproportionately affect some of the poorest regions of Asia, Africa and the global south, where imperialism has historically placed less value on human life.

Diseases such as malaria, dengue and Zika have attracted relatively little interest from major pharmaceutical companies. Why invest in expensive and risky research into vaccines and treatment, when the potential financial returns are limited? The progress we have made in preventing and treating infectious diseases globally has been achieved despite capitalism, not because of it.

The emerging spread of mosquitos and the infections they carry into Europe and the UK does not mean that we are facing immediate catastrophe. However, it is another major warning sign that we have very little time to waste.

Here in the UK, public health services need adequate funding and staffing to monitor, prevent and manage the consequences of these emerging infections. Without sufficient resources, the eventual arrival of diseases such as dengue and malaria would place enormous additional pressure on the NHS, which is already struggling to keep going.

Prevention

However, preventing this potential crisis requires more than simply strengthening healthcare services. Climate science has repeatedly warned us that, without decisive action, the future looks increasingly bleak. But we cannot simply science our way out of this crisis: we need a political solution: an end to the social system that got us into this mess.

It is the relentless drive to accumulate profit and constantly create new markets that has contributed to the destruction of wildlife, the loss of natural habitats and widespread deforestation, while, at the same time, capitalism continues to depend heavily on the burning of fossil fuels. Despite repeated pledges by world leaders to reduce carbon emissions, the march towards climate catastrophe continues.

The working class has within its capabilities the collective power to achieve what is needed: the overthrow of capitalism in favour of a system based on need, not profit. But that requires the mass acceptance of what is needed - and the political organisation necessary to achieve it. Time is of the essence ●

Notes

1. See my 'Heatwaves and excess deaths' *Weekly Worker* May 27: [weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1598/heatwaves-and-excess-deaths](https://www.weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1598/heatwaves-and-excess-deaths).
2. www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/vector-borne-diseases.
3. www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/news/2022/may/uks-flying-insects-have-declined-60-in-20-years.html.
4. www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/dengue-and-severe-dengue.
5. www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/mosquito-dengue-virus-us-states-florida-virginia-b3028742.html.
6. www.aha.org/news/headline/2026-05-15-report-finds-359-rise-us-cases-dengue.
7. www.cdc.gov/malaria/data-research/index.html.
8. www.who.int/teams/global-malaria-programme/reports/world-malaria-report-2025.
9. pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6747303.
10. www.lshmt.ac.uk/newsevents/news/2021/malaria-and-dengue-predicted-affect-billions-more-people-if-global-warming.

TECHNOLOGY

Hacking in a fragile world

As the FBI has found to its cost, from state actors to trivial script-kiddies, hackers are on the attack. The networked world is more vulnerable than ever. But why? asks **Paul Demarty**

Tough times at the Federal Bureau of Investigation, whose hiring website has apparently been compromised.

Such is the claim of ShinyHunters - a criminal hacking group, who assure readers that they have acquired by this means personal data on all FBI agents ever recruited through this portal. That would be quite a grim prospect, given the FBI's extensive use of undercover tactics to achieve its core aims of suppressing dissent, and entrapping young men into planning terrorist plots for the agency to heroically 'foil'. ShinyHunters promises to release all this material if the FBI does not take down an unflattering description of the group as essentially trivial ransomware script-kiddies with delusions of grandeur. It seems to have really stung ...

This fiasco is largely being attributed, in the press, to the incompetence of FBI director Kash Patel. On one level, this is quite understandable: Patel, after all, really is incompetent, even by the generous standards of the second Trump administration. A second-tier Epstein-conspiracy podcaster by background, we can only assume that he was given the role so the FBI could be used for Trump's programme of revenge-lawfare; but the effect of putting this cracked cretin in charge has been mostly to paralyse the agency altogether and give Trump's enemies an 'all you can eat' buffet of chucklesome gaffes to feast on.

The early stages of several high-profile investigations, then, have been bungled, notably the assassinations of Brian Thompson and Charlie Kirk, and the kidnapping of Nancy Guthrie, the elderly mother of an NBC News host, now presumed dead. Patel's extensive travel on FBI expenses has attracted criticism, and a long, recent article in the *Atlantic* alleges, based on extensive anonymous sources, that he is essentially an alcoholic (he is suing them). At the beginning of this year, Iranian hackers compromised his personal email account and now there is this fresh hack. It rather fits the pattern.

Negligence

Yet there are other patterns here. Cybersecurity has been in the news a lot lately, particularly in relation to strange goings on at the AI frontier labs, OpenAI and Anthropic. There was the recent Hugging Face incident, where an internal security research experiment at OpenAI resulted in a days-long hack of the Hugging Face model-hosting service by thousands of AI agents. Then, last week, Australian prime minister Anthony Albanese revealed that another rogue OpenAI agent had hacked the Australian healthcare system and accessed secret files. This took place months ago, but OpenAI did not report it to the Australian authorities until much later.

It is not only by the negligence of OpenAI and Anthropic, as they desperately cast around for a path to profitability that will allow them to go public in good order, that AI is implicated in all this. The one absolutely cast-iron productivity improvement the large language models (LLMs) have made in real-world work is to programming, which after all maps well to the LLM as a function - the input is a text description of the required software, and the output is, once more, text, in the form of a computer program. Programming languages, moreover, are highly structured and include tools for verification; and, thanks to the success



FBI badge and Glock 22 service pistol

of the open-source movement, there is an enormous corpus to train on.

The trouble is that a hack, at the end of the day, is just a program like any other. It interacts with the same wider systems as legitimate software; it is composed of the same stuff and runs on the same hardware. Thus the very same coding agents I and my colleagues in the industry use every day are, irreducibly, also expert tools for unauthorised intrusions. It seems barely a week goes by, these days, without some catastrophic hacking incident being reported. Government departments and large private enterprises alike suffer from these attacks.

Who are the attackers? Criminal gangs like ShinyHunters, of course, but also nation-state actors. In the west, Russia catches a lot of flak for this sort of activity, and mysteriously Israel does not; but both are hard at it, as are, we must assume, all other significant world powers. The impact of AI here is a downward-levelling one. Of course, the US and Israel have access to better tech than Russia or Iran; but you do not actually need to be on the latest and greatest stuff to make a lot of mischief.

We are already, I think, in the diminishing-returns phase of the frontier research, so far as code-generation is concerned, which is one of the many economic headwinds faced by the frontier labs. The 'rogue agent' problems at OpenAI seem to be an excrescence of an attempt to find a new product, specifically for cybersecurity, that people can be charged a lot of money for. A few rough edges still need to be sanded off before they can take this to market, at the very least.

But the problem may be more fundamental. To repeat: hacking is just programming (plus a bit of social manipulation - phishing and the like). The frontier models come with guardrails to prevent malicious use, for sure; but the evidence is that there are ways to get around them. Anthropic's Dario Amodei, in his call for coordinated slowdown, himself noted that Anthropic's flagship system, Claude, had been used for targeting by the Houthis during their

recent military advance. It was also implicated in bombing the girls' school in Iran early in the current war, and no doubt many other atrocities of that sort.

In any case, how does one harden a system against intrusion? One very important method is: by trying to hack it, and if you succeed, fixing the vulnerabilities discovered. This is a perfectly legitimate use for AI coding that is *completely indistinguishable* from malicious use, except by context that the systems lack (whether I am a contractor carrying out a penetration test, for instance). Then there is the 'rogue agent' problem, which is that you must disable the safeguards to do anything useful in such a test, and the system may then go on to do something ... surprising.

Thus one description of the AI coding boom might be: an incomprehensibly vast, accidental penetration test of the entire internet, and by extension all economic and state activity somehow connected to the internet. The results of this test are, to put it mildly, not reassuring. Every corner cut to meet a release date, every piece of deferred maintenance, every slightly out-of-date version of an 'open-source software library' on every server - all subjected to the attention of this unblinking eye of Sauron.

Competition

To return to the theme of a recent article of mine,¹ so much discussion of the dangers of AI is unhelpful, because it is filtered through the boutique science-fictional obsessions of industry participants, whose idea of the threat is more or less that superintelligent, self-directing software systems are just around the corner and poised to take over: the *Terminator* scenario.

Instead of indulging these fantasies, we should look at what is in front of our eyes. Have we 'lost control' of AI? Perhaps that is one way of putting it: but the reality is that we do not *have* control and never have had it, because we have a capitalist market and competition between capitalist states, which together pose insoluble coordination problems.

Even without these problems, fixing all this would be difficult. In the most extreme cases, with powerful state-actors backing attacks, total resilience is simply unachievable. Recall the Stuxnet attack on Iranian nuclear centrifuges, in which a bespoke malware targeted at the specific control systems in use was delivered, on a USB flash drive by a spy, to the centrifuge - very wisely *not* on any accessible network! So long as such adversaries exist, we will just have to take our chances, if we are not to give up on computers altogether - which we certainly cannot, if we hope to fill eight billion bellies reliably.

That said, I offer some qualified hope. It is my experience in the software industry - and I think this is true of relevant parts of the hardware industry too - that engineering professionals typically *want* to do a better job than they are permitted. We certainly do not want to get woken up in the middle of the night by news of a ransomware attack, and we have enough expertise to significantly reduce the vulnerability of our creations to such attacks if we are given the time and space to do so.

There is, admittedly, only so much time in the day; but the obstacles to better practice in this area stem ultimately from the fact that the software industry is astonishingly and inexcusably wasteful in its current form. It is dominated - why would it not be? - by capitalist managers, whose objective is to maximise shareholder value or, in the private venture-capital-backed scene, to game a series of financial and usage metrics to attract further investment.

To illustrate the problem: Marks & Spencer suffered a serious attack not long ago. The vulnerable operations were outsourced to a lowest-bidder body-shop. After all, corporate IT management is not 'core' to M&S's business activities, which consist basically of logistics and marketing. Vast amounts of engineering time is spent - any reasonable person would say *wasted* - on automating the marketing, so they can grab a few more quid out from under Sainsbury's or H&M. This problem simply does not exist without the capitalist market, just as Stuxnet-type attacks could not exist without antagonistic competition between states.

So, tempting as it is, we cannot lay the blame for the FBI's current difficulties at the feet of the weapons-grade moron Kash Patel. That is, in a sense, to give him too much credit, as if an FBI director of sufficient intelligence and professionalism could anticipate all possible cyber-attack vectors. The problem is more radical: criminality and sabotage of this sort is just what happens when you give capitalism a computer •

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Notes

1. 'Angel or McGuffin?' *Weekly Worker* September 17: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1601/angel-or-mcguffin.

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What we fight for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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weekly Worker

It's not all
about profit
- stupid

Guilty on all charges

Man City systematically inflated revenues and reduced costs to hide the owner spending some £830 million to buy success on the field. What does this say about top-flight football? **Carl Collins** gives some compelling answers

When news broke that Manchester City had been found guilty on all charges relating to the Premier League's financial rules, I received a message from an Everton fan: "Man City found guilty. Everton deducted 10 points." The joke refers to Everton's 10-point deduction (reduced to six on appeal) in November 2023, after the club was found to have breached the 'profitability and sustainability' rules.

The cases are not identical - Everton admitted its single breach, while Man City denies the multiple violations, covering multiple seasons and multiple regulations. The most striking contrast - which leads to the joke - is that Everton's case was concluded and punished within months, while City's has taken years with no official judgment or sanctions to date. Whatever the eventual outcome, the comparison raises questions about the consistency, speed and credibility of football's regulatory system.

Suspicion over the fairness and legality of Man City's ownership and spending has clouded football for years. In 2015, Portuguese football fan and whistleblower Rui Pinto - the hacker behind the website, *Football Leaks* - began releasing documents obtained from clubs, agents and players, exposing what he described as the "hidden side of football".¹ The German magazine *Der Spiegel* subsequently worked with Pinto to produce a series of exposures. Pinto was arrested in Hungary in 2019 and extradited to Portugal, where he was subsequently convicted of attempted extortion, unlawful access to data and breach of correspondence. A separate French case concerned leaks about Paris Saint-Germain FC, while a new Portuguese trial began in January 2026, involving around 200 alleged hacking offences.

The reports brought unprecedented attention to the opaque financial arrangements surrounding football. It was against this backdrop that UEFA opened an investigation into Man City in 2019 over 'financial fair play' violations.² In February 2020, they found Man City had overstated sponsorship revenue in accounts and break-even information submitted between 2012 and 2016, and had failed to cooperate with the investigation. It imposed a two-season exclusion from UEFA competitions and a €30 million fine. However, the Court of Arbitration for Sport subsequently overturned the competition ban and reduced the fine, finding insufficient evidence for some of UEFA's conclusions and ruling that a number of alleged breaches were time-barred.

In February 2023, the Premier League brought its own 115 charges. They included the failure to provide accurate financial information and failure to cooperate with its investigation: in short, we are now told that Manchester City systematically broke the rules by inflating its revenues and reducing its costs in



Enzo Maresca: current manager

order to hide the owner spending some £830 million on the club.

Unless there is a successful appeal, possible sanctions include points deductions, suspension, expulsion, player-registration restrictions and financial penalties. As there are no fixed sanctions for financial breaches, the eventual penalty is uncertain, fuelling all manner of conspiracy theories.

Ownership

Football fans have become accustomed to hugely wealthy individuals and corporations taking over clubs. There are numerous historical examples of local benefactors financing success. One is the romanticised story of local Blackburn Rovers fan-turned-billionaire Jack Walker, who bankrolled the club to the 1994-95 Premier League title, including breaking the British transfer record to sign Alan Shearer.³

This long preceded the cynical Roman Abramovich, who purchased Chelsea FC a decade later and is widely viewed as pioneering the modern era of mega-rich overseas owners. Following Abramovich came former Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who purchased Man City

in 2007.⁴ Somewhat foreshadowing the current verdicts, and possibly highlighting the character of such owners, Thaksin was enveloped in corruption allegations linked to the 2006 military coup that ended his premiership. The Thai government froze around £900 million of his assets, leaving him unable to continue financing the club. The next year, Man City was bought by Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan through the state-backed Abu Dhabi United Group.

A dark-humoured chant by Man City fans at the time of Thaksin's tenure went: "City's going down with a billion in the bank". Behind the humour of this chant, which is likely to return to the terraces, lays an acceptance - conscious or otherwise - about the current ownership structures and financing, but also governance within football. In analysing this, we need to look beyond particular charges and ask what football clubs now represent within society.

It is certainly a mistake to view ownership of a football club as simply being about profit. It isn't.⁵ Using Marx's distinction between exchange-value and use-value, it is clear that many mega-rich owners put the latter above the former. Exchange-value

can be measured in financial returns (ticket sales, commercial income and eventually the value of the asset itself, etc). But the use-value can be prestige, international visibility and the status that comes with the club winning silverware.

City illustrates this particularly clearly. Since Sheikh Mansour acquired the club in 2008, it has been transformed into one of football's dominant forces. The club's success has enhanced the prestige of Mansour and with it that of Abu Dhabi. Critics, including Amnesty International, have rightly described the use of City's success and global profile as a form of "sports-washing" - football is used to deflect attention from Abu Dhabi's complete lack of democracy and horrendous human rights record.⁶

Abu Dhabi is, of course, an integral part of the United Arab Emirates, and that confederation of thoroughly corrupt petty kingdoms matters for Britain economically, politically and strategically. Oil and gas rich, the UAE is awash with petrodollars. Bilateral trade is worth around £25 billion a year, while a sovereign investment partnership has generated some £30 billion in UAE investment commitments. Successive British governments have therefore bent over backwards, flattered, bowed and scraped ... and turned a blind eye. All in the hope of attracting further dirty money.

In light of the guilty verdict against Manchester City, culture secretary Lisa Nandy diplomatically said: "We welcome investment in English football from all over the world", adding coyly that "the rules of the game are not set by investors". On becoming prime minister, Andy Burnham spoke to UAE president Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al-Nahyan (Mansour's brother), thanking him "for his country's investment", particularly into Burnham's beloved Manchester. Now he appears to be urging the Premier League to impose the mildest of punishments (if any).

It would be wrong to reduce ownership of City to nothing more than an arm of UAE foreign policy. It's authorities insist that the club's ownership is a private matter. But the close relationship between economics, geopolitics and soft power is as plain as a pikestaff.

Governance

It is in this context that the Premier League's financial rules become more complicated than a simple question of enforcing an even playing field. The league is regulating capitalist organisations whose value far exceeds what is on the books.

The Premier League, while allegedly acting as a neutral arbitrator, is a money-generating machine. The success of its clubs, their global reach, their marketing deals, their ability to sell hugely lucrative broadcasting rights, depend, at the end of the day, on buying the best players and managers available. And they are expensive.

Very expensive.

So, when it comes to punishing Man City, we should expect more delay and nothing swingeing. Some of the other clubs will protest that they have been robbed ... not least of silverware. That could well be fought out in the civil courts at huge expense. But the Premier League has to police the behaviour of clubs, while looking after what is, after all, a collective brand. It will certainly not want to put off mega-rich individuals from putting their ill-gotten gains into the game.

Not fair

We should certainly reject the naive notion that financial breaches are a diversion from what is otherwise healthy competition. On match day there are 22 players on the field, but what got them there, what keeps them there, is the ability of clubs to outbid each other in the transfer market. When it comes to top-flight football, money and who wins are closely connected. That does not detract from the fantastic skills on display, the role of chance, the decisions of the manager, the approval or disapproval of fans. So, while there are giant killers, at the end of the day money decides *on average*.

Capitalist competition produces the concentration of capital, big crushes small. Applying this to football, while Manchester City occasionally faces minnows and can come a cropper, its main, its serious opponents are other enormously money-rich organisations, such as Chelsea, Arsenal, Real Madrid, Bayern Munich, etc. They compete for players, coaches, supporters, sponsorships, broadcasting audiences, commercial markets ... and trophies. The pressure to gain a competitive advantage is not an aberration: it is built into the structure.

Whether that advantage is achieved within the rules established by the governing institutions is complicated by the system within which the clubs sit. The Man City story is not simply a morality tale about a mega-rich individual owner and dodgy executives: the issues are bigger than that. The club may ultimately be heavily punished, or it may get away with the 114 breaches with the equivalent of a slap on the wrist.

But the deeper lesson is not simply that City has flagrantly broken the rules. The whole structure of Premier League football makes it necessary to generate more and more money in order to secure competitive advantage.

Notes

1. www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/articles/cwywld5v28jo.
2. www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/articles/cx30540044q0o.
3. www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/52640999.
4. www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2008-09-01/manchester-city-owner-agrees-to-sell-to-abu-dhabi-inqggwyw.
5. See 'Not all about profit' *Weekly Worker* September 17: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1601/not-all-about-profit.
6. www.theguardian.com/law/2018/nov/11/manchester-city-owners-accused-sportswashing-gulf-image.