

THE

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SOCIALIST STANDARD

Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain

Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

Fool's Mate

Another
stupid
capitalist war



Also: London borough council elections
The dictatorship of employment
Agency and responsibility
Work: paid and unpaid – Part 1

No socialism in one country
The hollow cry of 'self-determination'
in a world of borders
Land reform in Scotland



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Introducing the Socialist Party

The Socialist Party advocates a society where production is freed from the artificial constraints of profit and organised for the benefit of all on the basis of material abundance. It does not have policies to ameliorate aspects of the existing social system. It is opposed to all war.

The Socialist Standard is the combative monthly journal of the Socialist Party, published without interruption since 1904. In the 1930s the Socialist Standard explained why capitalism would not collapse of its own accord, in response to widespread claims to the contrary, and continues to hold this view in face of the notion's recent popularity. Beveridge's welfare measures of the 1940s were viewed as a reorganisation of poverty and a necessary 'expense' of production, and Keynesian policies designed to overcome slumps an illusion. Today, the journal exposes as false the view that banks create money out of thin



air, and explains why actions to prevent the depredation of the natural world can have limited effect and run counter to the nature of capitalism itself.

Gradualist reformers like the Labour Party believed that capitalism could be transformed through a series of social measures, but have merely become routine managers of the system. The Bolsheviks

had to be content with developing Russian capitalism under a one-party dictatorship. Both failures have given socialism a quite different-- and unattractive-- meaning: state ownership and control. As the Socialist Standard pointed out before both courses were followed, the results would more properly be called state capitalism.

The Socialist Party and the World Socialist Movement affirm that capitalism is incapable of meaningful change in the interests of the majority; that the basis of exploitation is the wages/money system. The Socialist Standard is proud to have kept alive the original idea of what socialism is-- a classless, stateless, wageless, moneyless society or, defined positively, a democracy in which free and equal men and women co-operate to produce the things they need to live and enjoy life, to which they have free access in accordance with the principle 'from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs'

Why war?

THE WAR involving the United States, Israel, and Iran marks another dangerous moment in world politics. Airstrikes, retaliation, and rising regional tensions are being presented through the language of security, defence, and national interest. Yet beneath these justifications lies a familiar reality: ordinary people are once again being killed and maimed and their homes destroyed in a conflict that they neither chose nor control. As socialists we utterly condemn this latest manifestation of capitalist barbarity.

Governments frame wars as necessary responses to threats, but history repeatedly shows that modern wars are struggles between competing states pursuing strategic influence, military advantage, and economic power. Workers, families, and civilians — regardless of nationality — bear the real consequences through loss of life, instability, inflation, displacement, and fear.

The attack on Iran must be understood not as an isolated moral crime, but as a predictable consequence of the global

system in which all states operate. The United States, Israel, and Iran each act to defend and expand their economic, political, and military power. Modern wars are not struggles between good and evil; they are structural conflicts between states competing for influence, resources, and strategic advantage. Ordinary people, who have no control over these decisions, are the ones who suffer the consequences. Framing the conflict as the wrongdoing of one government alone is misleading. Iran is itself a capitalist state with its own regional and strategic interests. Selective anti-imperialism, which opposes Western interventions but excuses rival states, risks replacing one bloc with another and fails to address the structural causes of war. External interventions and regime-change campaigns show that foreign powers rarely act to promote democracy or peace. Instead, they reshape governments to serve strategic and economic interests. Similarly, targeting Iran's leadership today is less about morality or security and more about shifting the balance of power in the region. Military escalation, sanctions, and proxy conflicts are predictable outcomes of a system built on competition and profit, not justice or human rights. The global scale of the problem is clear.

Worldwide military spending exceeds two trillion dollars annually. Alliances shift according to economic and strategic advantage, not ethical principles. Civilians bear the cost of sanctions, arms races, and proxy wars. The structural drivers of conflict are embedded in the organisation of capitalist states; until these are challenged, wars will continue, regardless of who occupies leadership positions. The socialist perspective rejects nationalism, moral alignment with any government, and the illusion that stopping one war solves the problem. True change requires international working-class awareness, solidarity across borders, and a fundamental transformation of society to remove the systemic causes of war. Only by confronting the structures that produce recurring conflict can humanity hope to prevent the next war, rather than simply reacting to its latest outbreak. Peace is inseparable from the end of a system that profits from division, conflict, and exploitation. The working class, not governments, must become the agent of real change. Until then, each 'crisis' will be merely another chapter in the same predictable story of power and suffering.

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David and Goliath

Credit: Adobe stock



POSSIBLY ONE of the least attractive neologisms of the modern tech era is the word ‘enshittification’. But its coiner, science fiction author and post-scarcity activist Cory Doctorow, doesn’t much care. It’s an ugly word for an ugly thing. And once you are aware of it, you can’t unsee it, because it’s everywhere.

It all starts with a basic and age-old capitalist conundrum. How, as a manufacturer or service provider, can you come to dominate the market and crush all the competition? If you are hopelessly naïve, you might plan to do it by having the best quality product. An easier way, as practised by the likes of Amazon, Uber, Shein, Temu, and many others, is to borrow vast amounts of venture capital (VC) in order to sell at a loss, for long enough to undercut and wipe out the opposition. Then, when you’re the last company standing, the fun can really start.

Your VC-funded product doesn’t need to be perfect, just better and cheaper than the rest. People will flock to it, never suspecting a thing. After all, don’t we live in a world of limitless improvement? That’s how capitalism works, right?

And thus, you conquer the market by making your customers 100 percent happy. You’ve hit peak product. Nothing to change. Nothing more to do. Just sit back and watch the direct debits roll in.

In theory, anyway. Degrowthers and Doughnutters argue that the finite planet can’t afford infinite growth, but what if the economy could achieve a ‘sweet spot’, neither growing nor shrinking, that observes environmental boundaries? All manner of sustainable social benefits could flow from that. It’s a seductive idea. But capitalism is not a static system. It has its own laws of motion. Nobody has the choice to stand still. If you’re not racing ahead, you’re losing ground to the

competition. Eat their profits, or they’ll eat yours. If *the system* isn’t racing ahead, there are no new profits to attract new investments. It either grows, or it withers.

And let’s not forget that you achieved peak product and market dominance *at a loss*. First you need to claw back those losses, and then your Silicon Valley VC investors will want a big fat return on top. But you’ve already maxed out the market. Where do you go from there? The answer, the only possible answer, is enshittification. Here’s how it works.

You’ve locked in your customers and killed the competition, so now you can price-gouge them. But it doesn’t stop there. Instead of one-off sales, you force subscription models on them so that they have to keep paying forever. If you run a streaming service, open up new income by riddling it with adverts your customers have to pay extra not to see. If it’s a social media platform, collect oceans of personal data to sell to third parties. If you own a phone product, issue updates that make it progressively ‘laggy’ until the customer surrenders and buys a newer model. If you own an electric car company, entice buyers in with fancy software services and then save money by shutting them down (tinyurl.com/y5ws3ktm). If you own an operating system, design a new version that won’t work on existing computers, forcing everyone to chuck theirs in landfill and buy a new one. Cram it with unremovable resource-draining bloatware and charge extra for a ‘premium’ clean version. Build in intrusive and interfering AI that nobody asked for, with forced logins for simple desktop tools. Add a handy ‘Recall’ function that photographs their desktop every second, including all their passwords, website visits, personal messages, Tinder profiles and online banking details, and

stores that information in your company servers where it’s a target for hackers. Ignore the protests. You know what your customers need better than they do. And besides, you’ve fired all your human customer service reps so now the whingers and wailers have to navigate a tortuous odyssey through concentric rings of automated responses and AI chatbots. In short, start with customer satisfaction, end with customer extraction, which Chinese scammers call ‘pig-butchering’. Lock in the suppliers too, and repeat up the chain.

Windows 11 is getting furious blowback for being enshittified. Users are turning in disgust to Linux, which is free, has no viruses and runs on any old machine with a fraction of the resource requirements. Others are resurrecting the antiquated Windows 7, now topping lists on pirate bittorrent sites. Piracy itself, once neutralised by the ease and reach of ad-free Netflix, is now resurging as the streamer market has fractured into a proliferation of platforms, each demanding your money while thrusting ads at you. The subscription model backfires as customers adopt the same cynicism as the corporations: ‘If buying is not owning, then piracy is not stealing’. The double standards are obvious to many: ‘If people downloading a song are criminals, what are the CEOs of AI companies using the entire internet to train their LLMs?’ (tinyurl.com/wb94my9z).

Last month the Norwegian Consumer Council released a video of someone cutting holes in socks, and sawing legs off tables to make them wobbly. The video was part of a global campaign to draw attention to the ‘deliberate degradation of a service or product’, urging politicians to take action against enshittification, including enforcing data protection, breaking digital monopolies, and giving consumers ‘more power to control, adapt, repair and alter the products they already own’. The council admits it’s a David and Goliath battle, ‘but... David won in the end, right?’ (tinyurl.com/2x687ktz).

Doctorow isn’t claiming he’s discovered some new phenomenon. He’s savvy enough to know how the world works. Enshittification is not just about how profit sabotages tech development, making things worse instead of better. It’s really a metaphor for capitalist production itself, which has generated eye-watering wealth yet imposes poverty on billions. In this version of the bible story, David is the bad guy, the tiny rich elite, while Goliath is the world working class, the sleeping giant that needs to wake up.

PJS

London borough council elections

The Socialist Party is standing candidates in three wards in Lambeth..

Want something better?

Capitalism, the system we live under, is divided into two classes: the privileged few who own the places where wealth is produced and services provided; and the rest of us who have nothing to sell except our working skills and which economic necessity compels us to sell to an employer for a wage or a salary.

In Lambeth this division is written plainly in the things you need but can't afford, in the strain on services, and in the constant worry that is part of life under capitalism.

The other candidates say that these hardships can be remedied by new councillors, new policies or new regulations. But governments and councils exist to administer the capitalist system. So long as the places where wealth is produced remain the property of a minority, so long will production be carried on for profit and not for use, and so long will the needs of the many be sacrificed to the interests of the few.

We are standing not to manage capitalism but to make the case for replacing it with socialism: a system of society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in interests of the whole community.

Socialism means production solely for use and not for profit and free access to the wealth produced. It means the abolition of class domination and privilege and the production for profit and working for wages that goes with them. It is not state-run capitalism, but a world system of cooperative production for human need.

No leader or politicians can bring this about for you. And we are not offering to. It is something that you have to do yourselves by organising to win political control, not to run capitalism, but to end it.

If you agree with this, vote for our candidates in Brixton North, Clapham Common & Abbeville, Stockwell West & Larkhall.

In the other wards, write 'SOCIALISM' across your ballot paper.

We stand for the many

We want to send a message to the establishment: Lambeth is one of the most unequal boroughs in London. High rents, insecure work, and overstretched services exist alongside great wealth and profits. This division is not caused by poor local management. It's exactly how a system based on profit is supposed to operate.

The career politicians of other parties offer slightly different ways of running the same system but we seek real change.

We stand for SOCIALISM: 'The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community'. That is no private landlords, no wages system, and no buying and selling.

Our candidates do not seek power or privilege. If elected, they will act as mandated delegates, using their position to oppose policies that harm your interests and to argue openly for socialism.

If you want more than cosmetic change, Vote Socialist.

Housing for use, not for profit

Lambeth's housing crisis is not the result of poor council management or the wrong policies, but of a system that treats homes as commodities. Rents and house prices are far beyond what most workers can afford, tens of thousands are on housing waiting lists, and thousands of families are stuck in temporary accommodation. Developers, landlords, and housing providers profit from scarcity, while workers are forced to compete with one another for somewhere to live.

Schemes labelled 'affordable housing' do not solve this crisis. Rents set at a percentage of the market are still unaffordable, and shared ownership and housing association homes tie people to lifelong debt. Poor conditions, overcrowding, and insecurity persist because housing under capitalism is built, allocated, and maintained according to cost and profit, not human need. Local councils, including Lambeth, operate within these limits and cannot abolish rents, mortgages, or homelessness.

The Socialist Party stands for a different solution: the abolition of the market in housing altogether. We argue for common ownership of land and housing, production for use not profit, and free access to homes based on need. In a socialist society there would be no landlords, no rent, no housing registers, and no homelessness.

Socialism: freedom, equality, solidarity

Socialists are against authoritarianism, privilege and division. We are for freedom, equality, and solidarity. These can only be achieved in a society based on common ownership and democratic control by the whole people.

Freedom means genuine freedom of thought and expression as well as freedom from having to work for wages. We are fully committed to defending open debate and independent thinking. No government or corporation should silence the voices of working people or control how people think and live.

Equality means that every human being is of equal worth regardless of ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. We stand for a society of social coexistence based on mutual respect.

Solidarity is the shared commitment to live together with respect, cooperation, and collective responsibility. We stand with working people, defending unity over division and cooperation over conflict.

Capitalism works against these principles. We oppose this economic system that concentrates wealth and power in the hands of a few whilst exploiting the vast majority and that puts profits before people. We oppose the wars it inevitably generates over markets and resources.

We are not standing to manage capitalism locally. If elected, we will be an uncompromising voice for workers in every decision that affects them, making the case for a social revolution to replace capitalism with a society based on common ownership, democratic control, and production directly to meet people's needs not profits.

AI, profits and Engels

CITY GENTS reading the business section of their *Times* (24 February) might have been surprised to come across a photo of Engels. Socialists would have been intrigued more by the caption ‘could AI create a new Engels pause, named after Friedrich Engels’. The term ‘Engels pause’ was not coined by Engels but by an economic historian, Robert Allen, to describe the course of economic development that led to the workers being in the situation described by Engels in his 1845 book *The Condition of the Working Class in England*.

Normally, a period of sustained capital accumulation should lead to some increase in working-class living standards, both because of employers bidding up wages as they compete for workers and because the increase in profits means they can afford to pay more. Allen noted that this had not happened in Britain during the period of rapid industrialisation from 1790 to 1840 as wages had stagnated. As in the period after 1840 wages did increase, Allen called this a ‘pause’ and named it after Engels (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Engels'_pause).

Engels might not have regarded this as a compliment. He might have preferred the term ‘the Engels profit bonanza’ as, if wages stagnate in a period of economic

growth, that means that profits will be more than they otherwise would.

The article in the *Times*, by its former business editor David Wighton, discussed two views of the possible economic impact of AI. He quoted a former Google executive as saying that ‘the most likely outcome is an economy in which corporate profits explode as labour costs fall, while workers’ share of output shrinks’. In short, another ‘Engels pause’. The opposite view was put by Jamie Dimon, the head of the bank JP Morgan Chase, who is quoted as saying that while AI will increase profits, ‘this isn’t like you’re going to build three points of margin and you get to keep it — you don’t’. Competition sees to that.

Who is more likely to be right? Critics of capitalism might be tempted to agree with the one-time Google executive as it would be another good argument against capitalism. However, Dimon has a point. His view reflects more accurately what happens when one capitalist enterprise makes extra profits by reducing its costs through some innovation and outcompetes its rivals.

‘An enterprise or industrial sector with an above average level of productivity (...) economizes in its expenditure of social labour

and therefore makes a surplus profit, that is to say, the difference between its costs and selling prices will be greater than the average profit. The pursuit of this surplus profit is, of course, the driving force behind the entire capitalist economy. Every capitalist enterprise is forced by competition to try to get greater profits, for this is the only way it can constantly improve its technology and labour productivity. Consequently all firms are forced to take this same direction, and this of course implies that what at one time was an above-average productivity ends up as the new average productivity, whereupon the surplus profit disappears. All the strategy of capitalist industry stems from this desire on the part of every enterprise to achieve a rate of productivity superior to the national average and thereby make a surplus profit, and this in turn provokes a movement which causes the surplus profit to disappear, by virtue of the trend for the *average* rate of labour productivity to rise continuously’ (E. Mandel, *An Introduction to Marxist Economic Theory*- tinyurl.com/mvtyzb8r).

That’s the likely outcome of the spread of AI to production and business. A temporary increase in profits for the firms that are the first to use AI in their branch of activity but no ‘profit explosion’ in the sense of a general increase in profits for all firms which eventually adopt it.



If ‘populism’ is taken to mean politics popular with the majority pitched against an elite minority, should socialists aim to make socialism ‘populist’? Certainly socialists work to make socialism popular globally with the majority, but without pandering to notions that would negate its revolutionary goal. This means being opposed to ideas that might attract wide support in the short term yet actively undermine the socialist case. Because ‘populism’ remains ill-defined, it gets applied to a right wing group

such as Reform UK, or a left wing organisation like Your Party. In the USA, Donald Trump’s Republican Party can be termed ‘populist’ as might Bernie Sanders’ variety of leftism, and similar examples are found in Europe and elsewhere. Is ‘populism’ simply reformism repackaged for the 21st century?

The Socialist Party’s weekend of talks and discussion will explore how the concept of ‘populism’ has developed, why it attracts support and what this tells us about capitalist society.

Our venue is the University of Worcester, St John's Campus, Henwick Grove, St John's, Worcester, WR2 6AJ. Full residential cost (including accommodation and meals Friday evening to Sunday afternoon) is £150; the concessionary rate is £80. Book online at spgb.net/summer-school-2026 or send a cheque (payable to the Socialist Party of Great Britain) with your contact details to Summer School, The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN. Day visitors are welcome, but please e-mail for details in advance. Bookings will close on 19th July or before. E-mail enquiries to spgbschool@yahoo.co.uk.



Halo Halo

PLANS BY the UK government to not go ahead with making Islamophobia an offence would appear on the surface to be a victory for common sense.

In March 2026 the government put in place a 'non-statutory definition of anti-Muslim hostility.' The government is adamant that this is an advisory, not legally binding measure and that free speech remains inviolate.

Internet AI says that this plan covers violence, harassment, and prejudicial stereotyping; it applies to individuals based on their actual or perceived Muslim identity; it will not hinder criticism of religion or beliefs, and a special representative on anti-Muslim hostility will be appointed to support implementation. How this will work out in practice remains to be seen. It will be greeted with relief by those expecting something more draconian but it still provides special measures for a specific religious group.

If you belong to a religion, which is the equivalent of an American Homeowners Association, filled with rules and regulations, then one of the cardinal rules is do not take the head honcho's name in vain – or else!

Do that and you might find yourself getting stoned, and not in a good way. However, cursing those who follow and support a different honcho is positively encouraged.

'Infamy, infamy, they've all got it in for me' is a line from a 1964 *Carry On* film; 'Blasphemy, blasphemy, they've all got it in for me', doesn't come within a light year of being as funny, but then blasphemy is certainly no laughing matter. And never has been. Merriam-Webster defines blasphemy as 'the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God or to something sacred'.

In modern times AI says that ninety-five countries, possibly more, still have laws that regulate blasphemy. In six countries, mainly in West Asia, the penalty for

blasphemy is death. It was always thus because to attack the gods a group had brought into being was to try to undermine that society.

Thomas Aikenhead, a seventeenth century Scottish student, articulated the following statement: 'Theology is a rhapsody of ill-invented nonsense, patched up partly of the moral doctrines of philosophers, and partly of poetical fictions and extravagant chimeras'. However, uttering these sentiments, or truths, resulted in his hanging at the year's end of 1696. Aikenhead was the last person to be executed for blasphemy in Great Britain.

In 1977 a private libel prosecution for blasphemy was brought against *Gay News* and its editor. It resulted in financial damages being awarded against the defendants. In 1979 an appeal to the House of Lords against its conviction was lost. One of the judges hearing the appeal opined that blasphemy laws ought to cover all religions, not just Christianity, and would no doubt have liked to implement some medieval punishment against those who 'cause grave offence to the religious feelings of some of their fellow citizens or are such as to tend to deprave and corrupt persons who are likely to read them.'

DC

Tiny tips

'UKRAINE IS being devastated... The threat of escalation to nuclear war intensifies. Perhaps worst of all, in terms of long-term consequences, the meager efforts to address global heating have been largely reversed. Some are doing fine. The US military and fossil fuel industries are drowning in profit, with great prospects for their missions of destruction many years ahead... Meanwhile, scarce resources that are desperately needed to salvage a livable world, and to create a much better one, are being wasted in destruction and slaughter, and planning for even greater catastrophes' (**CounterPunch, /tinyurl.com/2c3eswkw**).

'We really don't have time for the Marxists, Leninists, Trotskyists, Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, Spartacists, Revolutionary Communists or whatever sect in Your Party to get their shit together in order to take on the challenges we face – they might never overcome their miniscule differences or the battle of the £1 newspapers,' Mish Rahman, a former Labour politician-

turned-Your-Party-insider who defected to the Greens last month, told Novara Media. Rahman said he doubts the differences between the two camps are as substantive as they're made out: '[Sultana and Corbyn] are not far off each other [politically], it's just a proxy war for control' (**NovaraMedia, tinyurl.com/mve3v78p**).

"They say they don't have enough homes, but look at how many empty ones there are- [the council] just doesn't want to fix and repair them," says mother-of-one Vanessa. She lives on Central Hill estate in Lambeth but only in temporary accommodation and says she's been left "in limbo". Dozens of properties on the south London estate are unoccupied, one for eight years, and yet the borough has the third-highest housing waiting lists in the capital- something that Vanessa, who has been waiting for a social home for three years, describes as "outrageous" (**BBC, tinyurl.com/2ejefc3d**).

Los Angeles spent about \$418 million on homelessness programs in 2025, yet only

a small share went toward helping people leave the streets for good, according to the *New York Post*. A recent City Hall report suggests most of the money supports short-term services that manage homelessness rather than resolve it (**ZeroHedge, tinyurl.com/4nzadw88**).

In 2021, there were only two diagnosed silicosis cases in California. In 2025 there were 214. 'The number of cases is rising rapidly' Dr. Michaels wrote to me, 'That's the important point'. Here's the more tearful description from Dr. Michaels...: The hallmarks of the disease: shortness of breath and diminished exercise capacity that progresses to an inability to climb even one flight of stairs. A short walk that should take just 20 minutes can take an hour. Working is difficult or impossible. People cough incessantly. They can't sleep because it is difficult to breathe and they are kept awake coughing. Over time, people with more advanced silicosis require supplemental oxygen and can't leave home without an oxygen tank. And they are at increased risk of dying from lung cancer. The crime behind this slaughter is that safer, profitable substitutes are available (**Common Dreams, tinyurl.com/424fv2xv**).

(These links are provided for information and don't necessarily represent our point of view.)

UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

LONDON

London regional branch. Meets last Sunday in month, 2.00pm. Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Contact: 020 7622 3811. spgb@worldsocialism.org

MIDLANDS

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NORTH

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Doncaster. Contact: Fredi Edwards, fredi.edwards@hotmail.co.uk

Yorkshire Regional branch.

Contact: Fredi Edwards, Tel 07746 230 953 or email fredi.edwards@hotmail.co.uk

The branch meets on the last Saturday of each month at 1pm in the The Rutland Arms, 86 Brown Street, Sheffield City Centre, S1 2BS (approx 10 minute walk from railway and bus station). All welcome. Anyone interested in attending should contact the above for confirmation of meeting.

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

Kent and Sussex regional branch. Usually meets 3rd Sun. 2pm at The Muggleton Inn, High Street, Maidstone ME14 1HJ or online. Contact: spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org or 07971 715569.

South West regional branch. Meets 3rd Sat. 2pm on Zoom. For invite email: spgb.southwest@worldsocialism.org

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South Wales branch (Cardiff and Swansea)

Meets 2nd Monday 7.30pm on JITS! (meet.jit.si/spgbsouthwales3). Contact: botterillr@gmail.com or Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. 01792 643624

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The closed world of billionaire power

YOU CAN'T throw a brick these days without hitting one... philanthropic billionaires. One of them has been in the capitalists' news cycles: Bill Gates has been in the news recently not so much for the atrocious spyware-laden Windows 11 operating system, but for his business ties and friendship with serial child exploiter Jeffrey Epstein. Yet Gates is still treated by the media as a kind of global saviour. A benevolent technocrat. A trusted voice on health, population, food, and development.

Philanthropy or social currency of 'soft power'

Gates's relationship with Epstein reveals the closed world of billionaire power. According to recently released documents, Epstein first contacted Gates in 2013 to propose a 'donor-advised fund' that would serve as 'cloud computing for the giving world', a vehicle to attract 'the most money any charity has ever had'. Over 18 months, Gates's family office head and foundation general counsel engaged in extensive correspondence with the convicted sex offender about this charitable vehicle.

But here's the thing: why did the world's second wealthiest individual require introductions to wealthy donors from a registered sex offender? The answer lies in understanding that billionaire philanthropy operates not as charity but as a mechanism of class consolidation an exclusive club and you're not in it. Where the extraction of surplus value is celebrated through tax advantages. Barry Josephson and Epstein revelling through criminal interactions. Bill's conundrum: what to do about the poor.

And we know exactly what they discussed. In an email exchange, Epstein wrote to an associate: 'I've been thinking a lot about that question that you asked Bill Gates 'how do we get rid of poor people as a whole' and I have an answer/ comment regarding that for you' (from the document provided, dated 3 February, 2011, showing correspondence between Jeffrey Epstein and Barry Josephson). This is what they talk about on the island. This is what billionaire philanthropy really means.

The population... problem?

Gates believes that the problem isn't over-extraction, capitalism or the profit motive. Greed or billionaires don't concern him, instead he sees African birth-rates as a threat to global capitalist progress. He has stated in a TED talk that he wants to reduce global population by 15 percent.

The Gates Foundation's 2024 budget totals \$8.6 billion, with family planning separate from the \$8.3 billion for 'fertility management'. Gates pledged \$100 billion for this on World Population Day, not International Women's Day. Fertility management in the Gates Foundation has its own budget and targets: \$150 million for 2024 and \$143 million for 2025. Not through maternal care or with improving material conditions like clinics that could continue afterwards. The money does not flow from charity to women; it flows from tax sheltered wealth to pharmaceutical corporations.

The Depo-Provera scandal

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), backed by hundreds of billions, claims moral authority to influence the health, agriculture and family lives of millions across Africa and the global south. This is about Sayana Press, Pfizer's injectable contraceptive, a reformulated version of Depo-Provera that was previously subject to over 2,000 brain tumour lawsuits in Florida. The UK and US government both subsidise the use of this drug.

A 2024 study in the British Medical Journal revealed that women using Depo-Provera face a 550 percent increased risk of developing intracranial meningiomas, AKA brain tumours, requiring invasive surgery, radiation, and often causing permanent neurological damage. Pfizer knew of these risks for decades while failing to warn patients. European and Canadian labels now carry meningioma warnings; the US label was only updated in December 2025 after litigation began.

The Maxwell precedent: intelligence and institutional power

Robert Maxwell, press tycoon, scam artist, and former Labour MP too knew how to create institutional power. He had intelligence contacts in Mossad and with the KGB and did work for British intelligence. He also hobnobbed with the queen, (prince) Charles, Thatcher, Mother Teresa, George Bush and so on. He was the go-to guy for dirt on the lifestyles of the rich and famous.

The Epstein-Gates nexus is modelled on these earlier networks of elite control. Epstein's own operations, his 'black book' of contacts, his mysterious wealth, his lenient 2008 prosecution, suggest similar intelligence community protections. The 'Lolita Express' flight logs and island visitors represent not merely criminal activity but the mechanisms through which ruling-class loyalty is ensured through mutual incrimination.

The socialist alternative

Socialists do not oppose access to contraception, nor deny the importance of reproductive choice. On the contrary, we insist that women must be free from economic compulsion in deciding whether and when to have children. The Gates Foundation model, in which pharmaceutical corporations, backed by billionaire 'donations' and government co-funding, experiment on vulnerable populations, represents the antithesis of reproductive freedom.

True reproductive freedom requires the social ownership of pharmaceutical production, democratic control over healthcare priorities, and the elimination of economic coercion in all its forms. When contraceptives are developed through producer-controlled research, distributed through publicly accountable health systems, and provided as genuine choices rather than population control measures, then we will have achieved something worth calling family planning.

Until then, we must recognise billionaire philanthropy for what it is: the velvet glove of the ruling elite sanitising exploitation while the iron fist of king capital maintains its grip.

A.T.

The dictatorship of employment

IN A recent article in the *Guardian*, two of the most active voices in the ‘degrowth’ movement, Jason Hickel and Yanis Varoufakis, argued the need to ‘move beyond the capitalist model and save the climate’ (tinyurl.com/493hpek). They laid out the paradox of an Earth with the technology to produce everything everyone could reasonably need while at the same time ‘millions of people suffer in conditions of severe deprivation’.

They attribute this to capitalism, which they explain as ‘an economic system that boils down to a dictatorship run by the tiny minority who control capital – the big banks, the major corporations and the 1% who own the majority of investible assets’. They go on to say that, even in political democracies where the majority can choose which party shall govern, nothing seems to change and the majority who do the producing have no say in ‘what to produce, how to use our labour and who gets to benefit’.

What they are saying, in other words, is that the economic system, whichever regime or government oversees it, is the same. And that system has the objective of producing ‘to maximise and accumulate profit’ rather than to satisfy human needs or have regard for the earth’s ecology. This, the writers continue, compels a ‘perpetual growth’ imperative which leads to production being focused on goods and services that are likely to find a market regardless of whether they are genuinely useful. Examples they give of this are ‘massive production of things such as SUVs, mansions and fast fashion’, as well as the use of fossil fuels rather than renewable energy. They point out that, though renewables like solar are much cheaper to produce than fossil fuels, ‘fossil fuels are up to three times as profitable’, causing environmental considerations to be swept aside, ‘even while the world burns’.

The article sums this up in the following resonant fashion: ‘Here we are: trapped in capitalism’s set of priorities, which are inimical to humanity’s. Human ingenuity has bequeathed us splendid technologies and capacities. But, like a cruel divinity, capital not only prevents us from using them for our collective good, but in fact coerces us to deploy them towards our collective doom.’ And in this connection they point to another undeniable and very current reality: how the imperatives of capitalist production lead to violence and wars as advanced economies, via their governments, jostle for advantage over others using tools such as ‘debt, sanctions,



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coups and even outright military invasions’.

So what is the remedy Hickel and Varoufakis propose for all this? We must, they argue, ‘democratise our economy, so that we can organise production around urgent social and ecological priorities’, since ‘we are the producers of the goods, the services, the technologies’, and it is ‘our labour and our planet’s resources that are at stake’. To achieve this they recommend actions such as an extension of ‘public finance for public purposes’ via ‘a new public investment bank ... in association with the central banks’, and an injection of ‘deliberative democracy’ into the economic sphere via a ‘Great Corporate Reform Act’ so that the workplace ceases to be ‘a dead end dictatorship’ and each employee gets to have a say in the operation of the company they work for. ‘We live’, they conclude, ‘in a shadow of the world we could create’, one in which ‘the abolition of economic insecurity, precarity, poverty, unemployment and indignity is possible, while we lead meaningful lives within planetary boundaries’.

A good deal of this is attractive, even inspiring, stuff, laying out an analysis of capitalism and a vision of the future that we could at least partly endorse. Only partly, however, since it fails to take into account certain important considerations, making similar mistakes to a number of recent commentators whose ‘post-capitalist’ ideas have often been discussed or reviewed in the pages of the *Socialist Standard* (tinyurl.com/yycedd53). This lies in the notion – utopian we would call it – that it is possible to have a society of equality, of choice of activity and of workplace democracy while retaining finance, money and governments. Even if governments were to intervene to a greater extent than they do now in the market and the buying and selling economy of capitalism, as these commentators would like, they could not resist that system’s economic laws and,

if they tried, would end up triggering financial crises leading to lay-offs, unemployment and the majority of people turning against them.

Other policies ‘post-capitalist’ commentators advocate such as a guaranteed minimum wage or universal basis income would be equally subject to extreme strain under pressure of the need for each company to produce goods for profit in competition with others. And this would be the case even if somehow workers were allowed to have some form of control over the running of production or services in their workplace. As Anitra Nelson in her 2022 book, *Beyond Money: a Post-Capitalist Strategy*, explains, all attempts, no matter how well meaning, to ‘mould money to progressive ends’ are bound to fail. We simply cannot, as she puts it, ‘tweak the system to overcome its weaknesses’.

So while the world that Hickel and Varoufakis – as well as others with similar views – refer to as ‘post-capitalist’ might, in many of the ways they frame it, seem tantalisingly close to the Socialist Party’s vision, it could only at best amount to a more benign form of capitalism, and at worst lead to economic chaos stemming from the fact that production under the money and buying and selling system cannot, by the very nature of that system, be redirected from profit-seeking to meeting people’s needs. All this would be like trying to build safely on seismic ground. A true ‘post-capitalist’ society can only be established once the current economic system has been abolished democratically (ideally voted out) by a majority of the world’s workers and society reorganised on the basis of common ownership and democratic control of the world’s productive forces – a system of production and distribution for human need where each individual has free and equal access to a common store of goods, services and amenities.

HKM

Agency and responsibility

CONTROVERSY SURROUNDED the 2026 BAFTA Film Awards, in which John Davidson, whose life with Tourette's inspired the film *I Swear*, involuntarily vocalised a racial slur during the ceremony, thus generating predictable outrage. Social media rapidly framed the incident as an 'outburst', implying intent. The assumption of agency was immediate.

Yet Tourette's syndrome involves involuntary vocalisations, particularly in cases involving coprolalia. Uttering socially taboo words is not a sign of personal belief but a neurological compulsion. Coprolalia occurs in approximately 10-15 percent of people with Tourette's and involves the brain's failure to suppress socially inappropriate utterances. The individual has no control over the content; the words that emerge are often those with the most shock value, precisely because the brain's suppression mechanism has misfired.

Agency under capitalism

The episode offers a useful case study in how capitalist society understands, and misunderstands, responsibility. Capitalism rests heavily on the idea of individual responsibility. Workers are treated as autonomous units of labour power, assumed to be rational, self-regulating, and fully in control of their conduct. Discipline in speech and behaviour is expected as part of employability and public legitimacy.

Where agency is compromised, through illness, disability or neurological variation, this framework strains. Instead of adjusting its assumptions, society often reasserts them more harshly. The presumption of intent remains, even where medical explanation is well documented.

This reveals a contradiction. When an individual is able to conform, their conformity is praised as personal virtue. When they cannot, their difference is interpreted as moral failure.

The policing of speech

Modern capitalism places significant emphasis on regulated language. Public speech is increasingly scrutinised, not only in workplaces but in cultural life. While there are good reasons to challenge genuinely racist or abusive expressions, the framework often operates without regard to material context.

This is not an argument against challenging racist language. When someone with full agency chooses to use slurs, that reveals values and deserves opposition. The point is that agency



Credit: Getty Images

itself must be established before moral judgment is applied. Treating involuntary and deliberate speech identically serves neither anti-racism nor disability justice.

The Davidson incident illustrates this tension. A word can be socially harmful in its historical weight and impact. But responsibility cannot be abstracted from agency. To treat involuntary neurological discharge as deliberate prejudice collapses an important distinction.

Capitalist society frequently commodifies 'inspirational' narratives of disability. Films, awards ceremonies and media profiles celebrate individuals overcoming adversity. Yet this celebration is conditional. It assumes that disability can be packaged into palatable form. When the unfiltered reality appears, tolerance evaporates. The disabled individual is accepted only so long as they remain manageable.

Outrage as commodity

The rapid reaction online was not incidental. Social media platforms reward immediacy and emotional intensity. Speed outruns verification. The platforms profit from engagement regardless of accuracy. A nuanced explanation of Tourette's generates less interaction than moral outrage. The economic incentive is towards simplification and condemnation, not towards understanding the material reality of neurological conditions.

Under these conditions, moral judgement becomes performative. Expressing indignation is easier than examining neurological evidence. The result is a form of 'gotcha' politics that prioritises signalling over understanding.

The paradox of inspiration

Davidson's presence at the BAFTAs was itself a product of an inspiration narrative, his life 'overcoming' Tourette's packaged as cultural uplift. But inspiration requires disability to be sanitised, controlled, presented as triumph over adversity.

The moment Tourette's manifested as it actually does, involuntarily, inconveniently, in a way that cannot be neatly celebrated, the sympathy fractured. This reveals what capitalism often means by 'acceptance': the disabled must perform their difference in ways that affirm rather than challenge existing norms.

Responsibility reconsidered

A socialist analysis does not abandon the concept of harm. Words carry histories; their impact is real. But an equitable response requires proportionality and context. If an action is involuntary, then moral condemnation is misdirected.

The deeper issue is the rigidity of a society that demands uniform neurological performance in public life. When responsibility is defined without regard to material capacity, it ceases to be rational and becomes punitive.

The BAFTA incident reveals a system that confuses control with virtue and compliance with morality. It treats neurological difference as character defect and involuntary behaviour as moral choice. A materialist analysis rejects this confusion and demands that responsibility be matched to actual agency, not to capitalist fantasies of the self-regulating individual.

PABLO

Work: paid and unpaid – Part 1

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MOST OF my working life was spent teaching in a university. I consider myself to have been reasonably well paid for the work I did. And the superannuation scheme I paid into has yielded a reasonable pension. The same applied to my workplace contemporaries, fellow wage-slaves who started and finished their careers at more or less the same time as me. But, if I look at them, they've not all had identical reactions to ending their paid employment.

'Bored out of my skull'

Some of them have carried on with a particular aspect of the work they did before – their academic research – but independently. And even though they're no longer paid for it, they seem reasonably content. Others have been less happy. They've found themselves at a loose end with no teaching or associated work, and see no point in carrying on with any research given that it's no longer connected to a day job. They see working in isolated fashion as no longer affording them the recognition and approbation of their colleagues and of their wider

academic community. I found an example of this when I ran into a former colleague some time ago, several months after he'd retired in his early 60s. I asked him how things were going. He seemed pretty miserable and replied: 'I'm bored out of my skull'. He sounded and looked angry and frustrated. I didn't know what to do other than wish him well.

Volunteering

So these are a couple of the kind of reactions that workers in what was my own line of work may have in response to no longer doing paid work. But there's also a third category – those who, having finished their paid employment, feel they've been set free, and this has made them decide to involve themselves in activities which are usually unpaid and often quite different from the paid work they did. Sometimes it's a continuation of things they devoted a certain amount of time and energy to in their spare time before, such as looking after family members, for example grandchildren, or involvement in political or social activity such as campaigning or

charity work, or participation in a voluntary group of some kind. In my own case, for instance, I agreed to be recruited to a committee of volunteers who run my local Community Centre. Once there, I found that two of my former work colleagues, now retired like me, were also active there and in the community more widely. One of them was heavily involved in helping to organise a local food bank of the kind that has sprung up in increasing numbers in recent times. A common factor in this kind of activity is the obvious personal satisfaction people who engage in it derive from their new unpaid, 'non-professional' work. And it is of course a form of work, in that it involves expending mental or physical energy, even if many people wouldn't necessarily think of it as such, since there's no suggestion of any financial recompense from it. But, however they regard it, the motivation, rather, is the perception that they're doing something useful, experiencing a sense of community, and also enjoying the approbation, spoken or otherwise, of the people around them.

As well as this, two other activities

have absorbed my own time and energies in a practical and satisfying way since retirement. The first has been increased activity in the trade union that, though retired from work, I'm still a member of. With the forbearance of my former employer, I'm still able to handle personal cases or pension matters for members, as I did when I was employed. And I have more time to do this than those colleagues who also volunteer for union work but still have paid jobs. The second has been playing an increased part in Socialist Party activity – helping to organise my local branch, giving talks, going to events to try and spread the socialist message, writing columns, articles and book reviews for this journal.

Hierarchical work

Some of the reviews have actually been of books on the subject of work in its various different aspects. This seems, in fact, to be an area in which there's a good deal of interest at present – interest stimulated by the fact that, in recent times, say over the last 30-40 years, the face of employment has changed in a number of noteworthy ways. In particular, it has become increasingly what may be called 'hierarchised'. The 'flat structures' in the workplace that were being talked about and to a certain extent practised in the 1960s and 70s and seen as the way of the future began to fall out of favour and to give way to more rigid, authoritarian line management systems, so that most workers effectively had someone 'higher up' breathing down their necks, assessing them, judging their work or productivity – and sometimes intimidating them.

I saw that in my own field of employment, where it was accompanied by the invention of various terms, such as 'lean production' or 'agile working', to try and give a benign, softening impression to a more rigid form of workplace organisation. Critics of this new form of work discipline gave it other names such as management by stress or managerial feudalism (or even managerial fascism). The way American mathematician and political activist Eric Schechter characterises it in his video '*Only Revolution Can Save Life on Earth*' is brutally simple: 'workplaces are dictatorships'. Certainly, in many cases, the process consists of workers' performance being subjected to close surveillance, with their efficiency or productivity judged on a regular basis via performance targets, sometimes referred to as KPIs (Key Performance Indicators). And this with the shadow of a possible 'capability process' hanging over them, which can potentially lead to dismissal.

An irony here of course is that the

manager conducting the KPI operation is usually her or himself subject to the same process at the hands of the person who is *their* manager. It's hard not to be reminded here of Oscar Wilde's famous essay *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, where he writes: 'All authority is quite degrading (...) It degrades those who exercise it and degrades those over whom it is exercised'.

Ian Shaw and Marv Waterstone, authors of the book *Wageless Life*, are just as uncompromisingly critical. They describe work of whatever kind under capitalism as 'a scramble to sell our energies under conditions of duress and unfreedom', describing it as 'a war of profit against life on earth', in which workers are denied the ability to control how they work and so suffer a disconnection that 'separates them from the material conditions that allow humans to flourish'. Capitalism, they go on to say, fosters 'the utter worship of paid work' and in so doing 'thrives on producing docile subjects who are alienated from their surroundings'. One of their conclusions is: 'We live in a world sculpted by money but populated by the moneyless.' Very much akin to this, if expressed in milder language, is Martin Luther King's well-known maxim: 'profit forces people to be more concerned with making a living than making a life.' A similar more recent characterisation says: 'the greatest prison has no bars, just a paycheck, a routine and weekends off'.

Not all 'bullshit jobs'

While we would broadly endorse such an analysis, it is also necessary to point to the fact that not all paid work is equally dispiriting, unsatisfying and alienating. So

while it's surely true, for example, that, if they didn't need a wage to survive, no man or woman would willingly choose to sit at the entrance to a supermarket all day looking at a screen to check if anyone is stealing or looks as though they might steal, at the same time there's no doubt that some paid work, even if accompanied by conditions of insecurity or duress, can give significant pleasure or satisfaction to those who carry it out. And while that supermarket guard job is one of the many millions that exist across the planet in the system we live under (so-called 'bullshit jobs'), constituting a colossal waste of talents, energies and resources, in some cases even the rigid and unforgiving employment practices already mentioned can be offset to an extent by an individual's passionate interest in the work they are engaged in – maybe for example as a naturalist, a scientist, a computer programmer, or as a gardener or a builder.

It's only fair to point out too that some challenges have arisen to the hierarchy and intensification of employment practice in recent years, and from some quarters there have also emerged striking (sometimes revolutionary) ideas and recommendations concerning work organisation. These are the areas that Part 2 of this article next month will discuss before going on to look at ways in which work might be organised in the different, non-coercive, moneyless production for need society that socialists campaign to see established.

HKM



Credit: Adobe Stock

No socialism in one country

CAPITALISM IS not a collection of separate national systems; it is a global network of production, trade, and competition. Every country is tied to the world market, and survival within that system requires competing for profits, investment, and economic advantage.

Because of this, any attempt to build socialism in one country alone would be forced to operate under capitalist pressures. It would have to maintain wages, compete in international markets, and prioritise economic survival over human need. Step by step, the original goal of a cooperative and democratic society would be pushed aside by the demands of global competition. History shows that isolation does not abolish capitalism — it reshapes it under new management.

Socialism, therefore, is not a national project but a humanity-level one. The working majority everywhere shares the same condition: we produce the wealth of the world yet remain dependent on wages and subject to economic insecurity. Our struggle is not against other nations or peoples, but against a system that divides us while relying on our collective labour.

The necessary conclusion is clear: real emancipation requires conscious, democratic action on a global scale. When people understand their shared interests beyond borders, they can replace production for profit with production for use, competition with cooperation, and economic domination with genuine human

freedom. Socialism is not merely an ideal — it is the logical and practical next step in the struggle for a world organised by and for humanity itself.

Global networks

What is often missed in discussions about ‘banana republics’ is that the decisive transformation was not simply political independence but the globalisation of capital itself. In the past, domination appeared visible because it was concentrated in a single corporation or foreign power controlling land, labour, and government institutions directly. Today, control is more diffuse and therefore less obvious. No single company needs to govern a country when financial markets, credit systems, trade dependence, and technological monopolies can discipline entire economies.

Modern states are not passive victims; they actively compete to attract investment, secure export markets, and integrate into global production networks. This creates a situation where governments formally exercise sovereignty while simultaneously adapting policies to maintain competitiveness within the world market. The pressure no longer comes from a colonial administrator but from capital mobility itself — investment can simply move elsewhere.

This helps explain why countries with very different political ideologies often pursue similar economic strategies.

Whether governments describe themselves as left, right, nationalist, or progressive, they must operate within the same global framework of profitability, productivity, and trade balance constraints.

In this sense, the historical ‘banana republic’ has not returned, but neither has dependency disappeared. What has emerged instead is a system in which economic power operates structurally rather than territorially. The question today is not who rules directly, but how global economic relations limit the range of choices available to every nation-state.

Structural problem

When reformist governments promise improvements within capitalism, they inevitably collide with economic factors they cannot control — investment decisions, profitability, need for capital accumulation, and global competition. When reforms stall or are reversed, disappointment follows, and many workers understandably turn elsewhere, sometimes towards right-wing populists who appear to challenge the status quo more decisively. This recurring pattern points to a deeper structural problem rather than individual political failure.

Historical examples like the reforms under Lyndon B. Johnson, subsidised education, or public transportation systems in countries such as Brazil show that significant social concessions can exist within capitalism. Free or subsidised services, however, were never simply the

Capitalism is global - socialism has to be global too



Credit: Adobe stock

result of goodwill; they emerged under specific economic and political conditions — periods of growth, social pressure, or geopolitical competition. When those conditions change, reforms become vulnerable to cuts or restructuring, regardless of which party governs.

This helps explain why debates framed as a struggle between ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ administrations miss the underlying issue. Policies may differ, but governments operate within the same economic framework, which ultimately prioritises accumulation and fiscal constraints over permanent social guarantees.

The recurring cycle — reform, limitation, frustration, and political backlash — suggests that the problem may not lie primarily in voter misunderstanding or conspiracies, but in the expectation that lasting social security can be achieved through reforms that leave the basic economic structure unchanged.

Understanding this dynamic may be more useful than attributing political shifts solely to

ideology or manipulation, since it highlights why similar outcomes reappear across different countries and historical periods.

Moral denunciations

The controversy surrounding Noam Chomsky and his association with Jeffrey Epstein has generated intense debate within the left, but much of the discussion reveals a deeper political confusion. The focus has largely shifted toward personal morality and individual guilt rather than examining the social structures that allow power, wealth, and influence to concentrate in the first place.

Capitalist society consistently brings intellectuals, politicians, financiers, and academics into overlapping networks because access to funding, publishing, and institutional influence depends on proximity to wealth. This is not primarily a question of individual virtue or hypocrisy, but of how a system organised around capital inevitably connects cultural

authority with economic power.

Sections of the left tend to respond to such controversies through moral denunciation, as if removing flawed individuals could purify politics. Yet history shows that replacing personalities does not alter the underlying social relations that reproduce inequality and elite influence. The problem is systemic, not psychological.

A serious socialist perspective therefore avoids both personal hero-worship and moral panic. Intellectual contributions should be evaluated critically and independently of personal reputation, while recognising that meaningful change cannot come from reforming elites but from conscious democratic control of social production by the majority itself.

In that sense, the debate should move beyond personalities and return to the central question: what kind of social organisation continually produces these concentrations of power, and how can society collectively move beyond them?

R.

The hollow cry of ‘self-determination’ in a world of borders

THE AIR is thick with the rhetoric of ‘self-determination.’ From the hallowed halls of the United Nations to the televised addresses of national leaders, the principle that ‘all peoples have the right to freely determine their political status’ is touted as a moral absolute. Yet, for the global working class, this ‘right’ is nothing more than a cruel joke—a deceptive mask worn by the state to protect the interests of the ruling class.

The hypocrisy of the nation-state

The very states that harp on about self-determination are the ones that have historically opposed it whenever it threatened their own economic or military interests. For example, British imperial history is a masterclass in this hypocrisy; the idea of self-determination was seen as a direct threat to the control of colonies essential for economic benefits, military strategy, and international prestige.

Even today, the nation-state remains a ‘prison house of nationalities’. Leaders preach the moral superiority of national self-determination over sovereignty to justify their own territorial claims or to undermine rivals, yet they remain the routine managers of a capitalist system that thrives on exploitation.

The myth of national interest

Socialists maintain that there is no such thing as a ‘national interest’ that includes both the exploiter and the exploited. The nation-state is a territorial entity that identifies itself with a particular ‘people’ only to better manage them for the benefit of the capitalist class. When workers are told to wave national flags, they are being encouraged to block the path to any higher human synthesis and to ignore the fact that they have no fatherland to defend.

In this elemental chaos, the state uses nationalism and racism as tools to divide the working class, making more privileged groups feel that their interests lie with their masters rather than their fellow workers.

The real victim: working-class self-determination

While leaders argue over where to draw lines on a map, the true self-determination of the working class is systematically trampled. We define real socialism as a society where production is freed from the artificial constraints of profit and organised for the benefit of all.

Under the current system:

- Freedom is an illusion: workers are forced to sell their labour power for a wage, which entails providing the unpaid labour that forms the basis of capitalist wealth.

- Democratic rights are suppressed: governments and unions often cultivate a myth of an all-powerful government while insisting that nothing can be done about the systemic inequalities of capitalism.
- Solidarity is sabotaged: by emphasising national boundaries, the state ensures that workers of different nations view each other as competitors rather than allies against a common enemy.

A world without borders

We affirm that capitalism is incapable of meaningful change in the interests of the majority. The struggle for national liberation is frequently a trap; when a new national bourgeoisie takes power, the working class finds itself exploited by a new set of masters and mistresses under a new flag.

Our goal is not the ‘self-determination’ of new states, but the abolition of the state itself. We advocate for a classless, stateless, wageless, moneyless society — a frontierless world community where men and women cooperate freely to produce what is needed. Only by recognising that they are exploited by the same enemy class in all countries can workers reclaim their true identity and achieve real self-determination through a global democratic revolution.

JAKE AMBROSE (Australia)

Land reform in Scotland

SINCE THE inception of the Scottish Parliament, land reform has been a significant issue. It is widely recognised that there is considerable concentration of land ownership in Scotland. Typically, land reform is an issue in formerly colonised countries, where the occupying power has concentrated land ownership, such as in South Africa and Zimbabwe, to benefit the colonisers and exert control.

The concentration of land in Scotland, through the famous Highland Clearances, was a precursor and a part of the same process, appropriating land for the ruling class and sending people out to colonise other parts of the world.

According to the Scottish Land Commission: 1,252 owners hold 67 percent of privately owned rural land. Of these estates, 87 are estimated to be larger than 10,000 hectares (67 of these are in the Highlands), 667 are 1,000-10,000, and 371 are smaller than 1,000 hectares. There are 5.5 million people in Scotland.

As they note, this is not unusual:

‘Ownership of agricultural land is becoming increasingly concentrated in Europe, with one percent of agricultural businesses controlling 20% of agricultural land in the EU and three percent controlling 50%. Conversely, 80% of agricultural businesses control only 14.5% of agricultural land (European Economic and Social Committee, 2015)’ (tinyurl.com/SPGBSSL1).

Early in the parliament’s existence, the then Labour government passed laws to abolish the last vestiges of feudal land ownership – no longer requiring the payment of feudal duties and creation of outright ownership of land.

The Scottish Parliament took the opportunity to make changes, now it was no longer confronted by the power of landowners in the House of Lords. By 2004, it passed its first Land Reform Act, which included a broader right to roam than in England and Wales, and also introduced community right to buy, where populations up to 10,000 could register a right of refusal on land sales and transfers. This legislation also placed responsibilities on landowners for the management of their property.

The SNP have continued the process by passing further acts in 2015, 2016 and 2025. The 2016 legislation gave Scottish ministers the power to intervene in land sales. Some of this legislation was refinements of the process following human rights cases that upheld the right of private ownership against the provisions of the Land Reform Acts, particularly *Salvesen v Riddell*.



Credit: Adobe stock

The 2016 Community Empowerment Act gave communities rights to intervene in disused or neglected land causing harm to communities (including urban properties). The 2025 Act includes a requirement to consider reasonable requests to lease land or convert parts of it into crofting land. This act also requires a plan which will improve biodiversity, adapt to climate change and contribute to net zero.

The large estate owners continue to fight a rearguard action, maintaining that large estates can be run more efficiently and with economies of scale (eg, when a part of the estate has a lean year, they can cross-subsidise from other parts of the estate to continue paying staff for maintenance and other costs).

Campaigners maintain that there is evidence that large estates stifle development, and concentrate power into a few hands: ‘Scotland’s current pattern of landownership frustrates economic development within fragile rural communities. Most of these responses were very general in nature but the overall perception was that because landowners have a very high degree of control over decisions about how land is used, they also have the capacity to either help or hinder economic development. The implication of this is that where local economic development is not regarded as a priority by the landowner, then it will not happen’ (ibid).

Further, some landowners are perceived as ‘trophy’ owners, holding the land as a status symbol (mostly for shooting); whereas some charities are seen as hindering economic development in the name of conservation. As the land commission notes, ‘This indicates that the issue here is more to do with concentration of power and resources more generally, and that land holdings are acting as an outlet for the exercise of this power rather than its source’ (ibid).

These frustrations reflect the desire of small-business folk and entrepreneurs who are locked out by their more powerful

rivals. Indeed, part of the impetus behind land reform is securing the votes of rural population, including farmers and small-business people. The fact that the legislation is locked in with significant requirements for Scottish ministers to intervene, means that wealth and social connexion may, however, be the real determinant for how much, or how little changes. It will be interesting to see how much this will affect land held by the King in his own right (rather than as Crown land, which itself is managed by Scottish ministers and accounts for 35,000 hectares), such as Balmoral, and if ministers will be willing to impose conditions and lettings on any of his land.

So far, there has been little change in the pattern of land ownership, and sales and transfers of large estates are few and far between. Much as in land reform in many parts of the world, the power and right of property tends to chafe against any attempts to constrain it.

Where land is owned by public bodies, such as ‘Forestry and Land Scotland,’ commercial imperatives still apply, so the logic of capital predominates regardless of titular ownership. It is this logic that will continue to predominate even if the land is parcelled up into smaller lots.

Socialists want to end the private ownership of land and want to see it used rationally to benefit the needs of the whole community. That means, not state ownership or ownership by forestry commissions or trusts, but common ownership and democratic control.

Land being held in common doesn’t mean that people won’t be free to use their initiative to employ the land, but that under properly understood and agreed common and democratic rules, people would be able to co-operate to meet their individual and collective needs without all the layers of complexity and chicanery that come with the private ownership of land.

PIK SMEET

Escape from capitalism?

ON 13 February Krishnan Guru-Murthy interviewed Clara Mattei for Channel 4 News to discuss her book *Escape from Capitalism: An Intervention* which later circulated as a podcast (https://youtu.be/9M_dq_0ljsc?).

In the interview Mattei argued that people are taught that capitalism is an economic system that arose spontaneously out of humans' supposed natural propensity to barter, but in fact it is of relatively recent historical origin and was brought into being through violence and coercion. The state forced people off the land who, no longer able to meet their needs from directly working land, had no alternative but to work for wages.

Wage-labour, said Mattei, with workers creating more value than what they are paid as wages, is one of the two basic features of capitalism. The other is what she called 'private investment' for profit controlled by and for a privileged few; nothing is produced except in the expectation of ending up with more money than invested at the beginning. This means that 'austerity', in the sense of restricting how much people as wage-workers get to consume, is a structural feature of capitalism; it is not merely a policy pursued by some governments or the system not working properly but is the basis of the system. The logic of profit required that

workers be denied direct access to what they need to live so obliging them to sell their ability to work for money to buy it; the money they are paid was never going to be enough to enable them to live without having to continue working for wages. Austerity, she concluded, was necessary for the system.

Good stuff. Questioned by Guru-Murthy, Mattei agreed that she was in the 'Marxian tradition' (she seemed to have deliberately used this adjective rather than Marxist, which is fair enough). What she particularly liked was Marx's criticism of earlier writers who thought that capitalism was the natural economic system for humans; wage-labour and production for profit were parts of a system constructed by humans and so could be replaced by human action.

How, then, did she propose that people escape from capitalism? As well as being a professor of economics at Tulsa University in Oklahoma, she is also the director of its 'Forum for Real Economic Emancipation'. Here, she explained, she is running a pilot project to test on the ground an alternative. This involved encouraging people to take part in collective decision-making on economic matters, along the lines of 'participatory budgeting' practised in a number of cities in Brazil. Under this the local population are involved in

deciding how money raised through local taxes should be spent. The implication is that in an alternative society to capitalism all economic decisions would be taken in this way, including in workplaces.

This brings out the ambiguity of the term she used to describe the second basic feature of capitalism, 'private investment'. This could suggest that what is wrong with investment (as money used to initiate production) is not that it is money invested in production with a view to making more money but that it is controlled by a few at the top rather than democratically by all involved. What she seems to have in mind are factory councils as envisaged at one time by Gramsci (who she name-checks) and assemblies; these should decide democratically how the money obtained from sales should be allocated between individual workers, social amenities and new investment. In other words, a form of what has been called 'market socialism'.

However, this wouldn't be an escape from the logic of profit; it would mean that this logic would be applied by workers themselves rather than by their bosses as now. Escaping from capitalism has to mean escape from production for the market and the economic pressures this exerts on whoever actually takes the decisions at workplace level.

ALB



Credit: Adobe stock

Outdated measures

THE *COMMUNIST MANIFESTO* was published on 21 February 1848. The *Morning Star*, the paper run by nostalgics for the former USSR, chose that date this year for an editorial headed ‘The Communist Manifesto is as relevant today as it was in 1848’. Yes, most of it is. It is a brilliant description and analysis of the development of capitalism, its role in history in bringing into existence a working class struggling against exploitation and to replace capitalism with a society based on the common ownership of the means and instruments of production. It remains today a good introduction to socialist ideas which those interested in understanding the society we live in should read.

However, it was not this part that the *Morning Star* considered ‘relevant today’ but the ten measures listed at the end of Chapter 2, which include: abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes; a heavy progressive or graduated income tax; centralisation of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with state capital and an exclusive monopoly; centralisation of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the state; extension of factories and instruments of production owned

by the state; and free education for all children in public schools.

The *Morning Star* sees them ‘as a series of direct demands which challenge the material basis of existing society’, as reforms which the working class should campaign for under capitalism. But this is a misinterpretation as the context, both textual and historical, makes clear. The preceding paragraphs indicate that they were measures that the working class should implement *after* it had won control of political power. One of the measures — the ‘confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels’ — doesn’t make sense except in that context.

The historical context is the uprising that had broken out in Germany against autocratic dynastic rule. Marx and Engels thought that this ‘bourgeois revolution will be but the prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution’. In other words, they were measures for the working class to implement on winning political control *in 1848*. This didn’t happen and, in exile in London three years later, Marx and Engels recognised that they had been mistaken and that this was never really on the cards. So the listed measures weren’t relevant even in 1848, let alone today 178 years later.

Some of them, such as a progressive income tax, a state bank, railway nationalisation, and free education, have since been implemented under capitalism; which rather undermines the *Morning Star’s* claim that they ‘challenge the basis of existing society’. In fact, that claim reveals that those behind it envisage existing capitalism being gradually transformed into state capitalism by a series of reforms and nationalisations.

But the killer quote that disposes of the *Morning Star’s* misinterpretation is what Engels wrote in the Preface to the 1872 re-edition: ‘The practical application of the principles will depend, as the Manifesto itself states, everywhere and at all times, on the historical conditions for the time being existing, and, for that reason, *no special stress is laid on the revolutionary measures proposed at the end of Section II. That passage would, in many respects, be very differently worded today*’ (Our emphasis).

Today of course they would be even more differently worded, not that it would make sense to draw any up today since we don’t know what the conditions will be in which the working class will assume control of political power. But we can safely say that they won’t need to include any of those listed in 1848.



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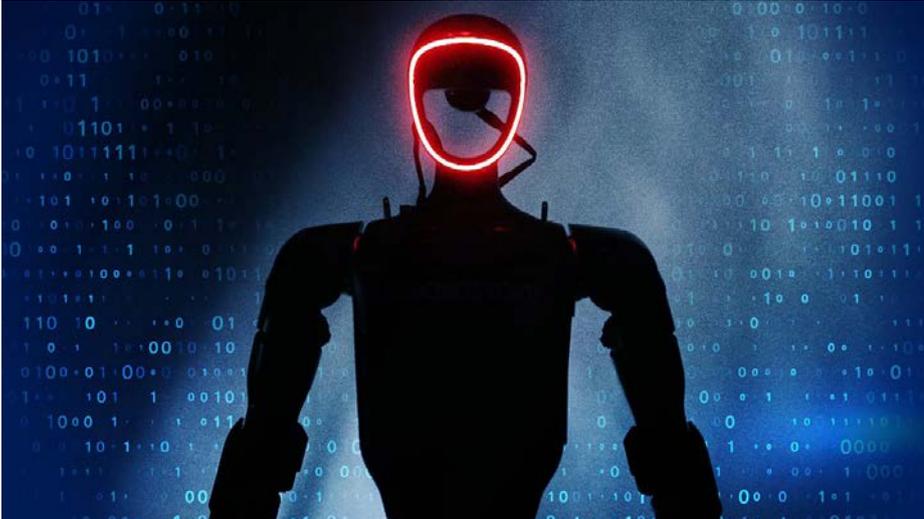
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Automation and occupations

Credit: BBC



REPORTER RICHARD Bilton is waiting on a sidewalk in Los Angeles as a couple of boxes on wheels trundle up towards him and then carry on past, with another one stopping by his feet. Lifting its lid, he finds the cheeseburger he ordered online, delivered by a robot rather than a human, and while he's explaining this, a driverless taxi cab glides along the road, identical to one he tried out in San Francisco. Thousands of automated servants like these are already operating in several cities across America, with robotaxis scheduled to arrive in London before the end of 2026. In his edition of *Panorama* (BBC One), Bilton asked the question *Will Robots Take My Job?* and looked for an answer among academics and tech companies leading in robotics.

More complex types of robots than those on wheels are still in development, some of which promise to be particularly useful for otherwise difficult tasks, such as one designed to enter burning buildings. The humanoid robots featured in the documentary don't attempt to look like people beyond their basic shape, with varying designs of cold, blank-faced heads reminiscent of something from *Doctor Who*. While prototypes can do backflips and dance, their immediate descendants are likely to end up with less vivacious careers as warehouse operatives. So far, these robots aren't autonomous, but are controlled by a technician twiddling a joystick, and can only perform within a set of limited pre-programmed movements. Teddy Haggerty, CEO of Robostore, talks about turning this apparent restriction into a business model, emphasising the 'remote' in remote control. He suggests that these robots could be used in a warehouse in one country, directed by workers based in another country. The important point is that these workers are

employed for lower wages than the going rate wherever the warehouse is located. Even with outlay for the upkeep of the robots, this would reduce costs to the company, maximising profits. This tactic is nothing new, akin to placing a call centre in a country where labour is cheaper than the places where the calls are going to. The robotics companies' representatives Bilton meets excitedly describe how their humanoid robots will do the dull jobs and chores so we don't have to. Their enthusiasm is understandable, given the ever-expanding applications of this technology, especially now Artificial Intelligence is being integrated. As James Bessen of Boston University explains, this enthusiasm gets channelled into hype. Sleek promotional videos and flashy choreographed demonstrations are intended to attract investment. Building a profitable business model is the priority, rather than providing what's really needed and wanted by people, including the employees involved.

The only workers featured in the programme whose jobs are being directly threatened by AI robots are the taxi drivers Bilton speaks with, who aren't impressed by the supposed merits of driverless cabs. Fast-food delivery robots have started to replace costlier people on motorbikes, and if Haggerty's idea gains traction, more human warehouse workers will be made redundant. AI-enabled robots are also learning specialist roles such as welding, and many office duties can already be carried out quicker and cheaper by AI analysing data and drafting strategies. According to a 2024 report from the International Monetary Fund, an estimated 70 per cent of UK workers are in occupations with tasks which could be performed or enhanced by AI.

However, robots aren't yet sophisticated

enough to be swapped for large numbers of staff. Professor Aaron Ames of the California Institute of Technology points out that even the action of opening a door is currently beyond their grasp. Another reason why the growth of AI robots may not lead to mass unemployment, quoted by Ali Kashani, CEO of Serve Robotics, is that new technology expands the economy and creates more new jobs than those it supplants. Bessen agrees: 'it's just a mistake to think that this technology comes in and replaces the humans and everything else stays the same', citing how next-to no occupations were made obsolete by the growth of automation in the mid-20th century. Although they don't say it themselves, this stance reflects how capitalist production adapts according to what is likely to be profitable. For example, driverless taxis have reached the stage where the expense of manufacturing and running them is falling below current costs for traditional cabs, such as drivers' wages, which means they are more likely to turn a profit for the companies behind them. As also shown by Robostore's cynical idea to outsource warehouse staff, financial prerogatives override the interests of workers in how the technology is applied. Whether this leads to unemployment or creates new jobs elsewhere, it's still in the alienating context of capitalism's labour market.

In a socialist society, the use of AI and robotics would be guided by practicalities, as financial considerations would no longer exist. Without the framework of employment, people and robots wouldn't be in competition, so it wouldn't be that a robot would 'take someone's job'. For the same reason, people wouldn't risk hardship if a robot or AI did tasks instead of them. It's possible that many aspects of how society functions would be automated, reducing the amount of labour people would have to do, freeing up more time for what they want to do. AI (or whatever it becomes in the future) could monitor what needs to be produced and trigger this to happen, with robots doing the practical work. Communities and the organisations they run would be able to decide how technology is incorporated into industries and services based on people's requirements and the circumstances at the time. The robots shown in *Panorama* have this potential, but as this technology is developing in capitalism, it will instead be shaped according to what benefits companies' shareholders.

MIKE FOSTER

Potential abundance



Abundance. How We Build a Better Future.
By Ezra Klein and Derek Thompson.
Profile Books.
2025. 289pp.

The August 1970 edition of the *Socialist Standard* was a special issue with the phrase ‘A World of Abundance’ emblazoned across its front page. It featured a series of articles seeking to demonstrate how humankind already had the knowledge, the resources and the technology to produce an abundance of the things needed by all the people in the world but how their use and development were being held back by the economic and social restrictions of our present profit-based system of society – capitalism. How much truer this is now – more than 50 years on – given the vast further advances in knowledge and technology. Yet the same system still grinds on failing to use its potential and resources to satisfy everyone’s needs and instead condemning vast swathes of people to live in poverty, most others to get by on the insecurity of one month’s pay to the next, while permitting a tiny minority to enjoy untold amounts of wealth which they will always seek to increase.

So any discussion of this phenomenon or proposal to remedy it, such as promised by the title of this book by the two well-known American journalists Ezra Klein and Derek Thompson, can only be welcomed. This is especially the case as the book’s back cover is unequivocal in the view it expresses: ‘We have the means to build an equitable world without hunger, fuelled by clean energy. Instead, we have a politics driven by scarcity, lives defined by unaffordability.’ What’s not to like about such a statement?

More specifically the book’s authors allow themselves to imagine a breathtaking future in which, for example, climate change can be reversed by removing carbon dioxide from the air, overuse of land for growing crops and feeding animals can be remedied by ‘vertical greenhouses which feed far more people while using far less land’, and technology will permit ‘an economy with robots that build our houses and machines that take on our most dangerous and soul-draining work’.

They consider furthermore that, with appropriate and effective use of sun and wind in particular, humanity has ‘the gift of abundant energy’ and, contrary to advocates of ‘degrowth’, is capable, if it uses that gift correctly, of supporting its current population (and more) without exacerbating ecological breakdown.

Yet, despite such radically invigorating leaps of the imagination and the words ‘abundance and ‘better future’ in the title of this book, anyone thinking that the authors’ proposals for building that future will involve radically changing the society that currently exists so as to make that abundance available to all is in for a disappointment. That is not what they are calling for. Their quest rather is to explore the ways in which what they see as the bureaucratic excesses of capitalism can be reduced to make that system run more efficiently and less wastefully and thereby provide a somewhat better, somewhat less unequal system for most people.

They back this up with an admirable wealth of information, evidence and documentation. They have thoroughly immersed themselves in the details of capitalist organisation (especially in the US), thereby putting themselves in a knowledgeable position to critique its waste and inefficiencies on what might be called a micro level. But it is not their purpose to go any further than this, for example to challenge the system’s underlying profit imperative or to consider whether the best (or only) way of realising the potential for equality and abundance is a complete change of social organisation.

To be fair, however, the authors’ efficiency and anti-waste agenda is at least aimed at suggesting ways in which the existing system can, at least as they see it, be made ‘more equal’. So they are writing from what might be called a humanitarian perspective, looking for what they see as practical forms of adjustment to the system – ways, for example, of providing homes for the homeless, of making poor people less poor and of providing easily accessible healthcare. Most of this they consider achievable through state intervention in the economy, which they hope can lead to a fairer distribution of wealth and to more people having decent living standards, even if this means ‘fettering’ some producers’ ‘obsession with profit’.

The trouble is that experience in many different countries has shown that governments cannot ignore or overcome the economic laws of capitalism and its market and, if they try, via reforms of one kind or another, the success they

have is limited. And if they go too far, this can trigger reduced investment leading to economic crises, recession and unemployment, leading them to change policies or be voted out of office. The simple fact is that, however governments may try to release the potential abundance that technology promises, the system presents them with insurmountable obstacles, since by its nature it cannot be redirected from profit-seeking to meeting people’s needs.

So, the limits of this book’s ambitions are clear to see, shot through as it is with acceptance of the status quo, of the system of working for wages and salaries, of buying and selling, of governments and governed, and of division of the world into those competing economic units known as nations. In stating that they would like to see us ‘align our collective genius with the needs of the planet and each other’, Klein and Thompson are certainly proposing an admirable goal. But it is one that can only be achieved after capitalism has been abolished and society reorganised on the basis of the common ownership and democratic control of the earth’s natural and industrial resources.

HKM

Preying on others



The Hour of the Predator: Encounters with the Autocrats and Tech Billionaires Taking Over the World. By Giuliano da Empoli. Pushkin Press £12.99. (Translated by Sam Taylor)

The author was formerly an advisor to an Italian prime minister, a role which gave him the opportunity to meet various powerful people. Here he examines the actions of dictators and technology bosses; he describes many of them as Borgians, resembling Cesare Borgia, the fifteenth–sixteenth century Italian ruler who was renowned for his scheming and plotting. He sees political life as a comedy of errors, like an Armando Iannucci show such as ‘Veep’.

The main autocrat discussed is Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), the de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia. In 2017 he summoned three hundred rich and powerful men to a posh hotel in Riyadh, where they were held hostage for various periods of time and, among other things, forced to pay a total of \$8bn to fund

MBS's plans, which include a massive city powered by renewable energy, and a winter sports resort and floating port. The actions of Nayib Bukele in El Salvador are also discussed, but MBS really does seem to be a bit of a special case.

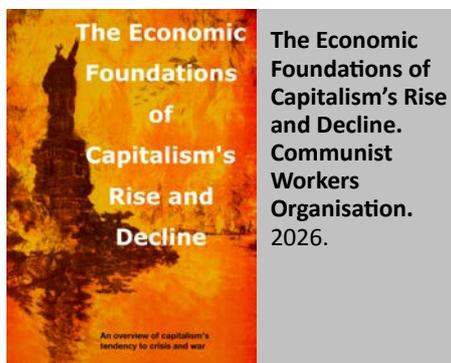
Da Empoli also sees artificial intelligence as a 'Borgian technology', as it can produce shock and awe. It is really a kind of authoritarian intelligence, transforming data into power. AI is not subject to regulatory control and 'is in the hands of private companies that have elevated themselves to the ranks of nation states.' Economic elites used to rely on political elites, but the new tech bosses wage war on the old political elites, preferring disruption and chaos. So AI is a political development, not just a technological one, for instance creating massive electoral databases of voters and their likely preferences.

And this is a world of violence, with global military spending increasing by 34 per cent in the last five years. Attack is now cheaper than defence, and an 'era of limitless violence' may lie ahead.

The book as a whole contains some interesting observations, but does not provide much by way of conclusions.

PB

Another world war?



The Economic Foundations of Capitalism's Rise and Decline. Communist Workers Organisation. 2026.

'For global capitalism the devastation of world-wide imperialist war is the solution to its ineluctable profitability crisis'. This — that a third world war is needed for capitalism to continue — is the position that this 100-page book seeks to defend.

The argument starts from the view that under capitalism there is a tendency for the rate of profit to fall as capital accumulation proceeds, due to an increasing proportion of capital being invested in plant, machinery and materials, rather than in employing workers (whose labour is the only source of profits). This was something noted by Marx but he also noted other tendencies, arising too from capital accumulation but conversely tending to raise the rate of profit, such as plant, machinery and materials becoming cheaper and increasing surplus value per

worker. So, what happens over any given period — which tendencies prevail and so whether the rate of profit does actually fall — is unpredictable. There are also other factors that reduce profitability, such as overproduction in an important industry having a knock-on effect on the rest of the economy resulting in a general slump in production.

The book hopelessly mixes up all the various tendencies, elevating a theoretical slow long-term tendency for the rate of profit to fall into 'the drive towards the collapse of the capitalist system'. The authors also see this as, in the shorter term, the cause of slumps but to do that there would have to have been a fantastically rapid increase in mechanisation and productivity. They are correct, though, that an important way out of a slump is the restoration of the rate of profit due to devaluation of the capital invested in the plant and machinery.

According to the CWO, a new factor entered into the equation at the beginning of the 20th century: capitalism, after coming to dominate the whole world and creating the basis for a world socialist society, passed its peak and entered into a period of decline which they call 'decadence'. In this period, the boom/slump cycle continues but:

'Capitalist competition is no longer a purely economic battle between firms but imperialist rivalry between "great powers"; where, in short, the massive devaluation of capital required to assuage the crisis of low profitability and achieve a new round of accumulation is obtained by the destruction of capital values via war'.

'The history of capitalism since the start of the twentieth century' we are told, 'has been this cycle of crisis-war-reconstruction'. That the First World War was caused by imperialist states being driven to war as the only way out of a fall in the rate of profit doesn't hold. Conflict between the 'great powers' over sources of raw materials, markets and investment outlets makes more sense. Replacing the destruction caused during the Second World War will have been one explanation for the resumption of capital accumulation in the postwar period but by no means the only one and would have been completed within a decade or so. Another, more significant factor will have been the expansion of the world market as more and more parts of the world were industrialised.

Whether or not the rate of profit has fallen since the 1970s is a moot point since it is not easy to calculate. On some assumptions it has; on others it hasn't. In any event, a hard-to-calculate and unknown average rate of profit will not

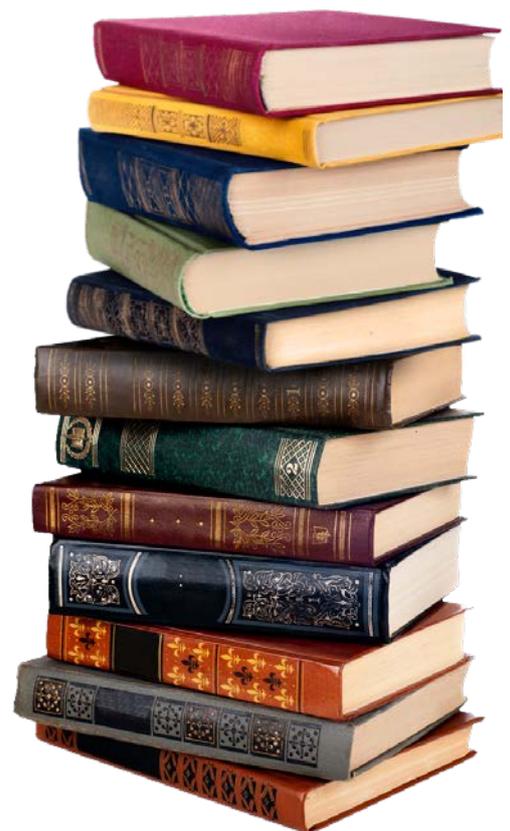
have been a factor influencing decisions to invest by those in charge of capitalist enterprises; shorter-term and particular sectoral considerations will have been the deciding factors.

The question also arises as to why the long gap between the end of reconstruction and the outbreak of the Third World War. The authors provide an economic history of the period since the 1970s but don't answer this question. They describe well enough the extent of the non-productive, financial sector that has grown on the basis of the real, productive sector of the capitalist world economy, but can't explain away the real capital accumulation that has taken place.

When they write that, if socialism is not established, 'capitalism could continue on its demented course for centuries', it is not clear what they mean. Is it that capitalism could continue after a nuclear world war or that capitalism might not lead to one for centuries?

In short, the CWO have not proved their claim that present-day capitalism *must*, for capital accumulation to continue, lead to a Third World War (they are suggesting it's going to be between China and the US). As long as capitalism continues, there will be wars but there is no compelling reason why there should be another world war, this time between states armed with nuclear weapons. It is not entirely impossible of course, but it wouldn't be to restore the rate of profit.

ALB



An implement for digging

HAVE YOU noticed the way today's politicians are afraid to call a spade a spade and instead resort to every kind of euphemism to disguise the reality of whatever they happen to be talking about? So we have 'social security' – the Poor Law or National Assistance by any other name – a cynical term indeed. Ask anyone who's ever had to claim and they'll tell you there's little that's social and nothing that's secure about it. Perhaps you've experienced yourself the interminable form-filling and prying by clerks for a pittance that won't feed a dog, let alone keep it warm.

We have the 'Department of Employment'. I wonder what the one and a half million on the dole would say about that, the Industrial Reserve Army as Marx put it?

What other contenders are there? How about 'an expanding economy'? An expression that looks a little sick in these days. How about 'the underprivileged': politicianese for the poor and the deprived – members of the working class in other words. But

let us not forget 'the affluent society' (it's been a good year for grinding the faces of the workers); 'we have got to pay our way in the world' (we're going to turn the rack a few more notches); 'nobody owes us a living' (your tomorrow, the promised land is just over the next hill); and, to end a short selection, 'welfare state' (80,000 will die this year from hypothermia).

Politicians are the mouthpieces and the lackeys of the capitalist system which needs to dupe the mass of the people in order to maintain itself in power. The contrast between the humbug of political pronouncements and the struggle for survival of the working class worldwide cries out for a solution. That solution can be achieved—Socialism, which will finally make politicians redundant when it replaces capitalism across the globe.

Workers of the world unite—you have nothing to lose but your leaders.

(Socialist Standard, April 1976)

Action Replay

You can't play here

PROBABLY THE best-known example of a sporting boycott was that of South Africa under apartheid, which lasted from 1964 to 1992 and involved not just cricket and rugby tours but also the Olympic Games. As other examples, the US and other countries boycotted the 1980 Olympics in Moscow after the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, and in 1984 the Soviet Union and others boycotted the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles.

An alternative to a complete boycott has been to allow athletes from specific countries to compete, but as 'neutrals' rather than representing 'their' country. Russian athletes have only been allowed to compete as neutrals in recent Olympics, so no national anthems if they win a gold medal. Previously barred from the Winter Paralympics, this year athletes from Russia and Belarus were permitted to compete under a national flag. This is supposedly because there is now less evidence of Paralympic sport being used to promote the invasion of Ukraine.

Suggestions of a boycott have also been raised concerning this summer's Football World Cup. Iran has been attacked by massive US and Israeli air strikes; their football team was due to play its three qualifying group matches in different US cities, and the head of Iran's football federation wondered if participation would be possible. Donald Trump has generously said that he doesn't care if Iran takes part,

describing it as 'a very badly defeated country'. The Iranian Minister of Sport then stated that the country would not be able to take part.

There has also been speculation about countries such as England and Germany not participating because of US global policies, travel bans and the viciousness of ICE. However, it seems likely that there may well be contracts between FIFA and the English FA about taking part, which would mean that a boycott could break any contract and so lead to sanctions (sportbible.com, 31 January).

This year's cricket T20 World Cup also led to controversies over who should play, and where. The tournament was co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka, and tensions among South Asian countries gave rise to many

problems. The Bangladesh Cricket Board said that on safety grounds its team would not travel to India, as it was scheduled to do, and requested that its games all be moved to Sri Lanka. When they refused requests to change their stance, they were removed from the competition by the International Cricket Board.

Then the Pakistan government said its team would not play against India, though it then changed its mind and the match took place. India vs Pakistan is a huge game at any tournament, so big viewing figures and revenue were no doubt a consideration here.

You can't help wondering if boycotts really have any impact, or whether they mainly occur to make some people feel good.

PB



Credit: IRNA

World Socialist Movement Online Meetings

Our general discussion meetings are held on Zoom. To connect to a meeting, enter <https://zoom.us/j/7421974305> in your browser. Then follow instructions on screen and wait to be admitted to the meeting.

April 2026 Events

World Socialist Movement online meetings

Friday 3 April • No meeting: Easter holidays

Friday 10 April 7.30m • Have you heard the News?

General discussion on what's been in the news.

Friday 17 April 7.30pm

Socialism's false dawns and where we are now

Speaker: Howard Moss

Friday 24 April

No Meeting: Annual Conference

Saturday 25 April 10am to 5pm

Annual Conference (hybrid)

Friday 1 May 7.30pm

The 1926 General Strike

Speaker: Bill Martin



Socialist Party (GB)
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Socialist Party Physical Meetings

LONDON

Saturday 25 April 10am to 5pm

Annual Conference

Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN.

Sunday 26 April 3pm

Election meeting

Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN.

CAMBRIDGE

Tuesday, 14 April 7pm

Informal meet-up of party members and sympathisers with a view to

starting regular public meetings in the Cambridge area. Devonshire Arms, 1 Devonshire Rd, Cambridge CB1 2BH.

CARDIFF

**Street Stall Every Saturday 1pm-3pm
(weather permitting)**

Capitol Shopping Centre, Queen Street



Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class

will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

Decline (and fall?)

THE OTHER day I walked down what used to be the main shopping street of my city centre. When you drive down it, as I frequently do, you don't take in too much of what's around you. But on foot I had a close-up view of the stretch that, not so long ago, had some of the best known and most popular shops and businesses in town. What did I see? As I walked along from one end of the street to the other, these were the establishments on view:

1. T's Nail and Spa (operating)
2. Flamingo's Vintage (closed and to let)
3. Shaw's Drapers (closed and to let)
4. The Hanbury Pub (open – having closed and reopened several times)
5. Winning Post Betting Office (operating)
6. Della Cura Authentic Italian Restaurant (closed and not operating)
7. Info Nation NHS Health Board Support (closed and not operating)
8. Chic and Elegant Bridal Wear (open)
9. Ali's Barbers (open)
10. Greyhound Rescue Charity Shop (open)
11. Warhammer Shop (open)
12. RSPCA Charity Shop (open)
13. Kings Mart Convenience Store (open 6am till late)
- 14 Brides Bridal Wear (open)

What did this tell me? Firstly, it told me the obvious thing – that this city centre like so many others across the country has taken a hit as a place for people to come and do their shopping, to mingle and maybe to socialise over a drink. It also told me that shops that close are likely to stay closed or, at best, be turned into charity shops, barbers or open-all-hours convenience stores. All of which gives the place a bit of a run-down, derelict look. But, as well as this, walking along that stretch also made me think of the loss of livelihood and perhaps way of life for the people who'd previously worked there, whether as bosses or employees. Some of them at least (for example, the women who'd worked in Shaw's Drapers for years and I'd got to know a bit from going in there) would have had their existences upended. True, some may have found opportunities or jobs elsewhere, but others may not and the very process of needing to look would have been likely to cause worry,



anxiety and maybe even deprivation, all of course hidden from public view. Not that what I saw on that street is unique to this particular location. A similar situation is to be found across many towns and cities in this country and others with bleak effects both on the urban environment and on the people who worked in it.

How much does it matter? After all, people can still obtain most of the goods or services those shops once provided either online or from those large, if usually soulless, edge-of-town or out-of-town stores and supermarkets. And the chances are that most of the people working in the establishments that have gone will have found other work that enables them to make ends meet. As for the visual decline, if the loss of shopping outlets means that people have little or less need to frequent city centres, then they will rarely even come into contact with that.

But isn't there another side to it? The degeneration of town and city centres has not just lessened their attraction as places to shop but has also meant the diminution of a communal environment for people to meet and fraternise with others and generally feel part of a wider community. Such closeness to fellow human beings has been a fundamental feature of human societies over the 300,000 years that the species has existed, even if it's something that today's capitalist's society militates against. With profit as its mainspring, human togetherness and community hardly feature among its priorities.

And in fact, apart from the demise of community, what we are seeing on my High St with the disappearance or at best rapid turnover of small businesses, is the

tireless, unrelenting mission capitalism imposes on all who live under it. It is a system that simply can't keep still. It ducks, dives and twists at every moment as the market dictates and in pursuit of financial returns. The system's very nature allows nothing else and at its sharp end are those who do all the work, be they self-employed business owners or, more overwhelmingly, wage and salary workers.

But isn't there a bright side? On the one hand we have the competitive dog-eat-dog mentality that the system's money-driven, growth-at-all-costs logic drives and that some say is just part of 'human nature'. Yet, on the other, the fundamentally friendly, cooperative and empathetic nature of human beings never ceases to shine through in the countless exchanges that take place between people every day and everywhere. It may be in the concern for the welfare of others to be seen in charity and other voluntary activities or just the simple everyday exchanges between vehicle drivers as they slow down or stop to let others pass and are acknowledged with a wave. This gives us hope that, whatever the fate of the High Street shops and businesses in my own city or elsewhere, the basic ineradicable feeling of fellowship that characterises humans will eventually be fully activated and be part of what drives workers to unite to replace the current production for profit society with a quite different one of production for need.

HOWARD MOSS