

THE

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SOCIALIST STANDARD

Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain

Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

Everybody out!

100 years since the General Strike



Also: Your Party hits the rocks
General Strike
Nine days that didn't shake the world
Work: Paid and unpaid (part 2)

Liberal media: the barking dog of
institutional power
A hundred years on the line – People's
History Museum, Manchester



Features

Your Party hits the rocks	10
General Strike.....	11
Nine days that didn't shake the world.....	12
Work: Paid and unpaid (part 2)	14
Liberal media: the barking dog of institutional power.....	16
A hundred years on the line – People's History Museum, Manchester	17

Regulars

Editorial	3
Pathfinders	4

Cooking the Books I	6
Halo Halo.....	7
Tiny tips	7
Material World.....	9
Cooking the Books II	18
Proper Gander	19
Reviews	20
50 Years Ago.....	22
Action Replay	22
Meetings	23
Life & Times	24

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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'

What the failure of the General Strike teaches

A GENERAL strike is the refusal to work by employees in many industries, and a manifestation of the class struggle between the working class and the capitalist class that arises within capitalist society. Syndicalists and others have seen it as a weapon to overthrow capitalism. They believe that because workers can stop production they could use this to 'take and hold' the places where they work and 'lock out' their capitalist employers. However, as long as the capitalists control political power (through political parties that support the system) it is they who have the upper hand, using their control of the powers of coercion and exploiting the fact that workers cannot hold out for long without money to buy what they need to survive.

The British general strike of 4–12 May 1926 was provoked by the mine-owners who, faced with an adverse market for coal, demanded a cut in wages and an increase in working hours from the mineworkers. The Miners' Federation, led by A.J. Cook and others, asked the TUC to bring out all the major industries,

in line with a resolution supporting the miners carried at the 1925 Congress. The Conservative government, with Stanley Baldwin as Prime Minister, had prepared for the strike by recruiting special constables and setting up the strikebreaking Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies. During the strike millions of workers came out in support of the miners. The government monopolised the means of propaganda, however, and the BBC suppressed news that might have embarrassed the government.

After nine days the General Council of the TUC called off the general strike, betraying every resolution upon which the strike call was issued and without a single concession being gained. The miners were left alone to fight the mine-owners backed by the government with the tacit approval of the TUC and the Parliamentary Labour Party led by Ramsay MacDonald. The miners stayed out until August before being forced by starvation to accept the mine-owners' terms of reduced wages (below 1914 level) and an increase in the working day by one hour. In other words, it

was a failure even from a trade-union, let alone a socialist, point of view.

A general strike cannot be used to overthrow capitalism. At most, under favourable conditions, it can achieve some trade union or democratic political aim. To get socialism requires a class-conscious working class democratically capturing state power to prevent that power being used against them.

In 1926, the very facts that the government was firmly in control of political power, that less than two years before at the general election millions of workers had supported them and other capitalist political parties (including the Labour Party), showed that socialism was not on the political agenda.

Workers who do not vote for socialism will not strike for it. Workers who want socialism do not need to strike for it but can use their votes to deprive the capitalist class of political control. That — the need to win political control first — is the lesson of 1926.

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Moon madness

Credit: Adobe stock



ACCORDING TO media hoopla last month, the NASA Artemis 2 flight round the Moon generated enormous public interest around the world. Did it really? Anecdotal evidence seemed pretty thin on the ground.

Okay, so maybe those old enough to remember the first-time round weren't impressed. A fly-by is not a landing, after all. Back then the Apollo programme really did look like something out of science fiction and seemed to herald a new era of space conquest. Never mind that it was all blatant anti-Soviet swagger, after the US had been humiliated by first Sputnik and then Yuri Gagarin. Some things are bigger than politics.

The fascination was huge. The few state TV and radio channels were awash with space updates for weeks. Poor kids watched it all through snowy static on monochrome TV sets, while kids with rich parents played with plastic Saturn V model rockets with real detachable launch stages, plus model Moon landers on cratered terrains, crewed by Action Man astronaut dolls. Every magazine had special issue pull-out posters to plaster across bedroom walls. And then the landing. Neil Armstrong's crackly, matter-of-fact voice held the world in breathless thrall as, between technical beeps, he announced the legendary step. Nobody used the word 'singularity' back then, but it felt like one. And that wasn't even the greatest drama. Candlelight rallies and school assemblies across the world offered up fervent prayers during the hour-by-hour knuckle-gnawing crisis of Apollo 13. For a time it seemed like there was no another topic of conversation to be had. The world was of a single mind.

The illusion couldn't last, of course, and neither could the budget. The Soviets had been bested, the world lost interest, and Apollo was cancelled. The space age

failed to materialise and the notion of colonising other planets evaporated from the world's travel plans. If today's oldies are unimpressed, it won't just be that humans have 'been there, done that', but rather that FA resulted from it. This time round the political swagger is aimed at China, which has announced that it intends to have a crewed moon-base by 2030. To any US president and especially King Donald, now modestly lecturing the Pope and presenting as Jesus, such an upset is beyond unthinkable.

Compared to the steely-eyed Cold War of the Apollo era, today's world looks positively unhinged, with infantile megalomaniacs in charge of infantilised populations, and god-knows-what disaster right around the corner. If the Moon was habitable, perhaps we'd all be queuing up. As it is, opinions on Artemis among younger generations seem divided. Some argue on Reddit that they have enough to worry about 'down here' as it is, though one commentator makes a despairing case for distraction: 'I (like most people) need something to be excited about right now. I refuse to not be excited for this just because life fuckin sucks at the moment lol' (tinyurl.com/4m9dwd3s).

Recent YouGov polling finds that '57% of Britons feel returning to the Moon is of little to no importance for humanity' and only '37% of Britons believe it's likely that humans will land on Mars in their lifetime'. This appears to reflect a reasonable sense of priorities rather than any profound loss of interest in science, with 'just 21% of Britons believing it's of little to no importance for humanity to explore space for scientific purposes' (tinyurl.com/4v9vtxv2).

Maybe the UK perspective is not representative, given that Britain never really had a dog in the space race, but opinions across the pond also seem

divided. According to one source, 'most polls show that as many as 90 percent of Americans don't care about returning to the Moon or establishing a presence there' (tinyurl.com/52nyv9va).

This however is in sharp contrast to a recent Ipsos poll which found that 62 percent of US adults thought sending people into space was worth the money (though interestingly the percentage dropped by 20 points when the phrase 'billions of dollars' was mentioned), with NASA earning 80 percent approval, a rating which Trump himself, currently on 38 percent, probably thinks he shares (tinyurl.com/8p7m7pfe).

You might expect scientists devoted to popularising science to be in favour, at least. But astronomer Neil deGrasse Tyson is scathing in his dismissal of the Artemis programme as a waste of time and money, and future Mars expeditions as 'vanity projects' (tinyurl.com/4akrj6hz). Then there's Martin Rees, the UK's Astronomer Royal, who argues that in the age of AI and robotics there is simply no point in humans running the considerable risks of interplanetary spaceflight except possibly as 'an ultra-expensive sport' for billionaires (tinyurl.com/4faapfp8).

NASA knew, of course, that they faced a potential public engagement problem, especially during a cost-of-living crisis, so they embarked on an extensive PR campaign in order to justify the \$100bn+ budget which, though only a fraction of the US defence budget, could still fund ten years of the UN World Food Programme that feeds 150 million people across 120 countries (tinyurl.com/2ryv7u98). Thus, NASA devoted much time to workshoping 'ethical and social considerations' in a bid to persuade voters that the whole venture was a worthwhile expense (tinyurl.com/mr2b8xf). As NASA flight director Zebulon Scoville put it, 'This program will be over if people don't buy it and they don't come with us' (tinyurl.com/5n9ye562).

Capitalists and state politicians do have ulterior motives though for Earth's 'eighth continent'. The great powers will happily ignore the Outer Space Treaty if they can feasibly extract the mineral deposits thought to be there. And with water now believed to exist at the poles, nuclear-powered crewed bases are viable, which could serve as low-gravity launch stations to Mars using electrolysis to generate oxygen rocket fuel. But in true Cold-War MAD style, these bases could also bristle with hard-to-hit nuclear missiles, as well as being out of range of prospective satellite wars. That, in short, is how capitalism on Earth could turn the Man in the Moon into our collective nemesis.

PJS

Contrasting tones about Iran

Dear Editors

I WAS struck by the contrasting tones of your February and April editorials. Whereas the more recent editorial argues that 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 earlier piece is an emotionally charged condemnation of the violent suppression of protests by the ‘mad mullahs’ and their ‘army of police thugs’. The author seems to anticipate, almost gleefully, that when the leaders of the ‘regime’ finally lose their tenuous grip on power they ‘won’t expect mercy’ and ‘damn well won’t deserve any’. Perhaps recognizing the overcharged rhetoric of the editorial, the author inserts a boilerplate paragraph at the end, bemoaning the ‘slaughter’ taking place elsewhere that is attributed to the ‘competitive market system which sets humans forever against each other, just so that a tiny few can profit’. True enough, but this does not shed much light on the recent protests.

Given that the protests began over economic issues, some mention could have been made of the role of economic sanctions and the collapse of the Iranian currency (which US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent took credit for in remarks made at Davos). The reasons why the protests turned violent must also be considered on a more sophisticated level than simply saying that the police always go in ‘with guns blazing’. In light of how often violent repression of protests backfires (eg, Minneapolis 2025), such an approach, as government policy, would be as moronic as it would be mad. Were all of the blazing guns in the hands of the Iranian police? This question should at least be considered in light of the clear and longstanding US and Israeli policy of ‘regime change’ in Iran by any means.

And since the author goes all the way back to the 1979 revolution, in listing up past protests, why not also mention a few of the efforts made to topple the Iranian ‘regime’, starting from the full US backing and arming of Iraq’s 1980 invasion of Iran and the eight-year war that followed. The assassinations of Iranian political leaders

and scientists, the tearing up of the JCPOA nuclear deal, the Israeli attack on the Iranian embassy in Damascus, and not one but two sneak attacks during negotiations may also be relevant in assessing why the hard-liners have triumphed over the liberal wing of the Iranian ruling class. On a deeper level, it would be helpful to say a word or two about why the US and Israel have been so hell-bent on regime change in Iran.

Putting the recent protests in this historical and geopolitical context does not mean siding with the Iranian leadership, however. There is an obvious distinction between understanding the grounds for a certain behavior and justifying it. Explaining why capitalists behave the way they do did not make Marx an apologist for capitalism. Similarly, when the April editorial states that ‘the United States, Israel, and Iran each act to defend and expand their economic, political, and military power’, I do not take this as a justification for war.

But even the April editorial, for all its truths (or truisms), is not much help to a reader trying to understand the US and Israeli war against Iran. It is remarkable that it does not contain even a single concrete example of the ‘regional and strategic interests’ of Iran or what sort of ‘influence, resources, and strategic advantage’ is being sought by the US and Israel. If the author had cut out some of the repetition in the editorial, surely there would have been space to list one or two of the ‘structural drivers of conflict’ (the author’s jargon – not mine). Doing so might have helped us understand why the Americans and Israelis are acting in ways that make the ‘mad mullahs’ look like the adults in the room

MICHAEL SCHAUERTE

Reply:

As with much socialist activity, editorials are shared endeavours, so the tone and style can vary. They are short topical commentaries, not in-depth articles, and perspectives can also vary. Rather than an objective and dispassionate overview, the February editorial was a more visceral

response to what had only recently taken place and which was, after all, a monstrous slaughter by anyone’s reckoning. We make no apology for that response, as socialists always take the side of the oppressed against the oppressors.

Of course it’s true that economic issues, and US sanctions, played an important part in the protests, but economics isn’t everything. The point of listing every Iranian working-class protest since 1979 was to show how much workers hate the theocratic regime, and how astonishingly brave they have been in fighting it.

On the regional geopolitical situation there is of course much to say, and one can always criticise analysis for not being thorough enough. Whole books will no doubt be written on the madness of King Trump and the cynical and perfidious power-plays of the US – now a net fossil fuel exporter and thus less affected by energy consequences; Israel’s expansionism promoted as a quest for survival and its premier’s self-promoting quest for political survival in order to stay out of the courtroom; the Iranian regime’s own destabilisation programme via proxy forces in Lebanon, Gaza and Yemen; the sometimes conflicting axes of republican versus monarchist and Sunni versus Shia; the manoeuvrings of Russia and China behind the scenes; the complex web of rivalries and proxy conflicts among the Gulf states themselves, and the spectre of nuclear war that hangs over the whole region if and when Iran matches Israel and finally produces a bomb; all of this against the shifting backdrop of a global decarbonisation agenda and the consequent long-term reorientation of goals and priorities by local rentier/capitalist elites facing their own impending irrelevance and possible extinction. A couple of editorials can hardly be expected to cover everything, but there’s always room for contributors to add further illumination in future issues. — *Editors.*

Who does capitalism work for?

'AI RISKS widening inequality, warns Fink' was the headline in the *Times* (24 March) reporting on the annual letter from billionaire Larry Fink to the shareholders of his asset management company BlackRock. The caption under a photo of Fink read: 'Larry Fink said that most people who work for an income would be left behind by those enjoying returns on investment'.

These weren't Fink's exact words but they expressed his meaning. They also point to the two classes of capitalist society — the working class (those who work for an income) and the capitalist class (those who enjoy returns on investment).

More accurately, the working class is composed of all those who *have* to work for an income to survive, and the capitalist class of those who have sufficient returns on investment to survive without having to work.

What Fink wrote was that over recent decades: '... the vast majority of wealth has flowed to people who owned assets, not to people who earned most of their money by working. Since 1989, a dollar in the U.S. stock market has grown more than 15 times the value of a dollar tied to median wages. Now AI threatens to repeat that pattern at an even larger scale—concentrating

wealth among the companies and investors positioned to capture it. This is where much of today's economic anxiety comes from: a deeper feeling that capitalism is working—just not for enough people'.

He may be exaggerating — he himself later pointed out that when there is some technological innovation the companies producing and adopting it benefit and that this is 'not unusual' nor 'inherently problematic' — but he has an axe to grind. He argues that widening inequality could be avoided if more people owned stocks and shares; if they owned shares in these companies they would benefit from the rise in their stock market capitalisation. And of course BlackRock will be there to manage their share portfolio, for a fee.

It's the old fraud of a 'people's capitalism' that the Tories and the Liberals over here used to propose — making capitalism work for more people by giving them a share in profits.

Quite a few workers do own shares, though not enough to bring them an income to allow them to live without having to work, like capitalists. Fink quoted figures showing that in the US more than half of households own shares and that

this is 'a distinctive feature of American capitalism' compared with Europe where only a third of households do.

This doesn't mean that workers in the US are better off than those in Europe. It simply means that more workers there hold their savings as shares compared to Europe where more hold theirs as savings in a bank. The source of both the dividends on shares and the interest on savings accounts is profits made in capitalist industry, only in the case of interest on bank savings in a roundabout way.

Banks and assets management companies are in competition for the savings that workers might have. In Britain the asset management companies are currently running an aggressive advertising campaign to persuade workers to entrust their savings to them. Workers can make up their own minds on this. Savings in a bank are secure but, as they say, shares can go down as well as up.

One thing, however, is clear: workers will never have enough savings, whether in shares or in a bank, to allow them to live without having to work for wages. After all, if they did, who would produce the profits? Or the wealth society needs to continue to exist?



The Socialist Party's Summer School 21st—23rd August 2026

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

RECENT SPECULATION is that an individual who is nominally in charge of one of the most powerful capitalistic entities on the planet and 'has his finger on the nuclear button', may be the 'Antichrist'. Karl Marx noted that recourse to the 'mist-enveloped regions of the religious world' show that 'in that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race.' The Antichrist is, along with other made-up things, a product of the human mind so we're not taking it seriously.

Pope Leo XIV has incurred the wrath of the megalomaniac currently spreading death, destruction and mayhem everywhere. On his social media the egoist said, 'he's WEAK on Crime, and terrible for Foreign Policy. I don't want a Pope who thinks it's OK for Iran to have a Nuclear Weapon. I don't want a Pope

who criticises the President of the United States.' It's not known if he's asked how many divisions the Pope has yet.

The 'leader' of the 'most powerful nation' on earth, one comprising a hell (sic) of a lot of Christians who look forward to the 'end times', also posted an AI-generated image of himself as a Jewish soothsayer. One of his previous gung-ho supporters said it's 'more than blasphemy' and 'it's an Antichrist spirit.' Given how 'his' adherents proclaim the sanctity of life and love for your neighbour, their continuing support for someone who threatened to blast a civilisation back to the stone age ain't very Christian at all.

Is the Islamic Republic of Iran still fighting with the Great Satan and the Little Satan? Back in 1979 when Iran's monarchy was replaced by an Islamic theocracy a 'leader' coined the Satan expressions including the Lesser Satan (the Soviet Union). In July 2014 the *Socialist*

Standard noted that Pope Francis blamed Satan for the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians saying 'More than once we have been on the verge of peace, but the evil one has succeeded in blocking it'.

Quoted in the *Mail Online* from an original podcast run by an American Christian ex-Navy SEAL, a Catholic priest suggested that the time of the Antichrist may be near. He said that the AC would rule the world through 'economies' and that 'modern financial systems and emerging digital technologies could potentially create the kind of centralised economic control described in biblical prophecy'. Revelation 13;16-17: 'And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads; And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name'.

Sounding more like an anti-globalist, he opined, 'one of the ways how he's going to control people is through digital currencies, and he's going to just shut people off, and that's how they'll be able to basically starve people out...'

DC

Tiny tips

MOJTABA KHAMENEI... successor to his father Ali Khamenei, is reported to own the high-end Kensington properties through associates. The apartments, located on the sixth and seventh floors of a building close to Kensington Palace, are believed to be worth more than £50 million (***The Standard*, /tinyurl.com/ms3adbfs**).

'I can't really afford to take full baths anymore. It's hard work, keeping yourself clean with a bit of water and a flannel', the 78-year-old, from London, told *Big Issue* (***tinyurl.com/y8mw2z9d***).

According to UNICEF's 2024 global estimates, more than 230 million girls and women worldwide have undergone female genital mutilation. This alarming number reflects not progress but regression. Despite decades of advocacy by the United Nations and other organizations, achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal to eliminate FGM is out of reach. These statistics boorishly underscore not only the persistence of the FGM practices but also the depth of the systemic, cultural,

and political forces that continue to perpetuate FGM (***Independent*, tinyurl.com/2s3wr5tv**).

'If the city is saying they're building the wall to protect people of the N2, why can't they take the people out of the area to a place where there's no crime?' asked Nomqondiso Ntsethe, a 65-year-old pensioner, who shares a shack in Taiwan with 13 children and grandchildren. 'It's a political game', she said. 'They're separating the poor from the rich. It's segregation'... Mayor Hill-Lewis, who last year put the city's housing backlog at about 600,000, has remained defiant amid the latest criticism... 'This barrier was built 20 years ago when the ANC was in charge of Cape Town – the same party now hysterically and hypocritically shouting about our plan to fix the security barrier to keep the people of Cape Town safer', he said (***Aljazeera*, tinyurl.com/yv9hzaa9**).

Atlas has averaged \$2m (£1.49m) a month in bunker sales this year, but Hubbard predicts this could rise to \$50m (£37m) next month.

'Bunker building is like being a farmer. When it's time for harvest, you have to reap all you can.' The Texan insists he is 'not the type who hopes for war', but admits 'from my point of view, I don't have to advertise very much [at the moment]'. 'Now that they've been bombed, they're all going to want shelters. It's just a fact of life', he says (***The Telegraph*, tinyurl.com/yeyjashw**).

The working class does not have to choose sides! The proletarians of the whole world must not succumb to the siren calls of nationalism or take sides with either camp, whether in the Middle East or elsewhere. All nations, all bourgeoisies, whether democratic or authoritarian, left or right, populist or 'progressive', are warmongers. Despite the pompous rhetoric of hypocritical morality, pitting 'civilisation' against 'barbarism', 'good' against 'evil', 'aggressors' against 'victims', wars are nothing more than clashes between rival bourgeoisies. In these ever-increasing conflicts, it is always the exploited who are taken hostage and sacrificed for the interests of those who oppress and kill them. To end wars, capitalism must be overthrown! (***ICC*, /tinyurl.com/2un5jdvr**).

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

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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.

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Gangsterism rules OK

WHETHER YOU believe the stories about US officials issuing veiled threats by reminding Vatican diplomats of the Avignon Popes (when the French Crown asserted secular power over the church and moved the seat of the Bishop of Rome to France), that they are circulating at all is a sign of the widely held sense of American lawlessness. An American official, according to the gossip, opined that the US has the power to do what it likes in the world, and the Catholic Church should take sides. Some have seen this as a threat to the Pope.

It has been doing what it likes for decades. In 2001 the US Congress passed a resolution, Authorization for Use of Military Force of 2001, which stated: 'That the President is authorized to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations or persons' (tinyurl.com/SPGBG0401).

In justification, it noted: 'the President has authority under the Constitution to take action to deter and prevent acts of international terrorism against the United States'.

This became the basis for the campaign of targeted killing by executive order, as part of the so-called War on Terror. It was a carte blanche, and, as with any executive authority, the office holders since that date have sought to strengthen and extend the scope of authority for actions taken under this resolution. It extended from the battlefields of Afghanistan to become a universal reach, justifying strikes in Libya, Somalia, Oman and even, under the present administration, to the strikes against alleged narco-trafficking boats in Venezuelan waters.

In 2011 even Obama took the step of killing an American citizen, Anwar al-Awlaki, in an overseas strike.

Although there are no exact figures available, the estimate is that in over 14,000 strikes, over 10,000 people were killed and wounded (tinyurl.com/SPGB0402), of whom around 15 percent were civilians, including hundreds of children.

The laws of war

The 'rules of war' permit civilian casualties in proportion to the value of the



Credit: Adobe Stock

military objective to be achieved: that is, the decision to adopt the targeted killing policy was a decision in advance to kill entirely innocent civilians.

The argument of presidents and their hangers-on is that such death tolls save more lives and stretch the limits of liberty and legality less than alternatives. But it does, in the end, put the President in the same place as a gangster, killing anyone who might get in his way (and threatening anyone thinking of doing the same). It turns the end sequence of the first Godfather film, where Michael Corleone orchestrates a string of murders of rival bosses, from a fictional scene into real government policy.

Of course Trump, who most likely will have encountered the real-world mafia in his career as New York real estate developer and casino owner, has extended this policy even further. His strikes on Iran this year included the direct slaying of the Iranian head of state, as well as top government officials. This is close to saying all bets are off.

The laws of war, such as they are, were developed by professional militaries and soldiers to make a life of warfare possible. They limit the actions either side can make to prevent a cycle of violence so destructive that the entire game of war grinds to an exhausted halt. It was always a hypocritical gloss on the murderous business, but it did offer some respite and protection.

The chief victims of Trump's extension of the remote murder strategy are likely to be members of other governments. The US position is that it will retaliate with untold ferocity should someone dare to slay its head of state: but other governments may not have that luxury. And, as Iran has demonstrated, the technology for a sudden and surgical missile strike is within the reach of many countries.

Iran, for its part, has come out swinging:

its retaliation against US bases and the countries that host US bases has been to try and impose costs on any US attempt to repeat the Iraq adventure of siege and invasion. They aim to pressure the US to back off by causing pain to US allies.

Whilst the fog of war still prevails, it's clear that deaths have been many and widespread: (<https://tinyurl.com/SPGB0403>) at the time of writing over 2,000 Iranians have been killed, with over 20,000 injured. Around 15,000 have been injured in US-allied states (with around half of those in Israel), and about 200 dead (including 15 Americans).

Given the interconnected worldwide system we all rely on, the direct casualties in modern wars are very likely dwarfed by the number of deaths later incurred due to damage to infrastructure. Both sides in this war have threatened desalination plants essential for life in the region, as well as power plants (including nuclear installations).

Iran's blockade of the Strait of Hormuz will lead to disruption around the world, as we see fuel prices rise dramatically (already there are serious fuel protests in Ireland).

With Trump threatening to counter-blockade the strait (which will bring the US navy within range of Iranian missiles), the prospect of damaging the world economy in the medium term is real.

Leaving simple morality to one side, war makes us all poorer. Every death is the loss of a mind that might have come up with brilliant insights in the future. Houses, roads, bridges all get destroyed and inhibit economic activity in a wide area (the same has already happened in the war between Russia and Ukraine).

Universal gangsterism over trade routes and resources means everyone has a stake in ending war, and the only means to do that is the common ownership of the world.

PIK SMEET

Your Party hits the rocks

LAST MONTH the Central Executive Committee, the ‘collective leadership’ of the (ridiculously named) Your Party, decided to enforce the condition for joining that you should not be a member of any other political party. Up to then such ‘dual membership’ had been tolerated and the condition was only applied to some of the top leaders of the SWP and to candidates seeking election to the CEC. Members of Trotskyist groups, including the SWP, continued to be active and hold office in YP’s ‘proto-branches’.

Actually, the resolution passed at YP’s founding conference in November did not completely ban being a member of another political party as it allowed this subject to CEC approval. What the CEC decided on 12 April was that members of a certain type of political organisation can no longer be YP members or join, the type which it said ‘operates as a democratic centralist party or organisation, maintains its own national political membership structure, and requires political discipline and accountability to an external leadership or programme’.

Clearly what they had in mind were Leninist would-be vanguard parties. In fact a list circulating ahead of the CEC meeting named as examples ‘the SWP, Alliance for Workers’ Liberty, Socialist Party, Communist Party of Great Britain (Provisional Central Committee), Scottish Socialist Party, Socialist Equality Party and Revolutionary Communist Party’.

The ‘Socialist Party’ is not a reference to us but to a section of the old ‘Militant Tendency’ which since 1997 has been trying to usurp our name. The full name they have given themselves is ‘Socialist Party of England and Wales’, or, appropriately enough, SPEW. The list wouldn’t have needed to include us of course since we are opposed to Your Party as we are to all other political parties that support capitalism in one form or another. The inclusion of the SEP (one of the fragments of the once premier Trotskyist organisation in Britain, the Workers Revolutionary Party) seems unnecessary as it opposed YP from the start, denouncing it as a joint Corbyn/SWP plot to divert the working class from revolutionary action (ie following the lead of the SEP).

The two biggest Trotskyist ‘entryist’ groups, the SWP and SPEW, took the ban graciously and instructed their members to withdraw from YP. Some of the smaller ones may decide to practise ‘deep entryism’ by remaining secret members of their vanguardist group.



Credit: Leon Neal/Getty

So, where does this leave YP and the groups that have been excluded? For the latter, it’s back to what they used to do (and what they would have continued to do had they been allowed to stay in) — exploiting any discontent to try to build up a following for their particular, vanguard proto-party, through taking over existing protest groups or setting up their own front organisations such as Stand Up to Racism, Stop the War and ‘Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition’. In fact, the last, which is a front organisation for SPEW, nominated candidates for this month’s local elections even before the ban was enforced.

YP’s attempt to be a strong left-of-Labour electoral force hasn’t taken off and it looks like it never will. It was bad luck for them that, as they were preparing to launch themselves as such a party, the Greens elected an eco-populist as leader who stole the clothes they were about to put on — tax the rich, renationalise the utilities, improve social services, rally to beat the Reform party. It is clear that most of the 800,000 who expressed an interest in the idea of forming a new leftwing party have come to see the Greens as this. Since the Green Party does not even claim to be a socialist party, this shows that most of the 800,000 didn’t want a new system to replace capitalism but merely the implementation of ‘progressive’ reforms and policies within it.

If it had taken off, YP would only have been a Labour Party 2.0. Now, it won’t

even be that but a party whose MPs will mainly be pro-Gaza local Muslim dignitaries (denounced by the Trotskyist ex-entryists as ‘landlords’) and whose councillors will be representatives of localist ‘independents’ engaged in pot-hole politics.

Had Sultana’s ‘Grassroots Left’ rather than Corbyn’s ‘For the Many’ won a majority on the CEC, the Leninists would have been allowed to stay in as ‘factions’ and the party would have been advocating policies without much electoral appeal, such as ‘Smash Israel’, ‘Leave NATO’ and ‘Abolish the Monarchy’. In other words, a small party similar to previous attempts to unite ‘the Left’ including the Trotskyists in a single electoral party such as ‘Socialist Alliance’, Respect and Left Unity and which are now just history and where YP is heading too.

What is required is a mass working-class party dedicated to the establishment of a genuine socialist society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production so that production directly to meet people’s needs can replace production for sale on a market with a view to profit. A party that avoids advocating reforms to capitalism in order to avoid attracting the support of those who only want that; a democratically organised party in which vanguardist factions would not be welcome.

ALB

General Strike

UNION BRANCHES will be passing resolutions and holding events to commemorate the centenary of the General Strike that ran in the United Kingdom from 3 May to 12 May 1926.

As an event, it is a Rorschach test: people see what they want to see in it. For Trotskyists, it was a failure of leadership at a revolutionary moment. For the Labour left, another example of betrayal. For the Labour right, a foolhardy adventure, which proves that sensible electoral politics is the way forward.

The background was declining productivity of British coal: around one and a half million men worked in the mines. Output per man was falling, and it was facing competition on the international markets (particularly from the return of German coal). This was compounded by Chancellor Winston Churchill's attempts to return to the gold standard (effectively over-valuing the pound, making British exports expensive).

The mine owners reacted by wanting to cut wages to restore their profits. The response of the mine workers was 'Not a penny off the pay, not a minute on the day'. They sought an assurance of support from the TUC that other unions would back up the mine workers in their dispute, which was agreed.

The Conservative government of Stanley Baldwin intervened: simultaneously buying time by engaging a commission to examine the coal industry and agreeing a temporary coal subsidy, whilst also preparing to meet a widespread strike organisationally. The commission was headed by Herbert Samuels, a former liberal Home Secretary (and recently returned Governor of Palestine). He had, whilst an MP, represented iron mining districts in North Yorkshire.

The report noted that 'the dominant fact is that, in the last quarter of 1925, if subsidy be excluded, 73 percent of coal was produced at a loss'. It recommended that the state take ownership of the coal in the ground, with compensation for active mines; that mines be amalgamated; that coal mining work more closely with other industries; that research in coal technologies be intensified; that more integration of distribution be carried out; and while the mining day remain at 7.5 hours, working time should be cut from 6 days to 5 (tinyurl.com/SPGBGS1).

This was a substantial pay cut. Baldwin was happy to accept these proposals, but

the miners' union, obviously, rejected it (along with rejecting compensation for the nationalised mine owners). Without agreement, the government ended the subsidy, and on 30 April the mine owners locked the men out.

The dispute was placed in the hands of the General Council of the TUC, which, according to Miners' Union General Secretary A.J. Cook's account, took the dispute out of the hands of miners (tinyurl.com/SPGBGS3). As a TUC account of events has it: 'The only principal unions initially called out in support of the miners were those of the railwaymen, the transport workers, the builders, the iron and steel workers- and the printers, engineers and shipyard workers were called out after the first week' (tinyurl.com/SPGBGS4).

As they note, the unions preferred to refer to it as a national strike, rather than a general strike. The strike was enthusiastically supported (better than had been expected by any party).

The government swung into action, and began to call for volunteers to help keep the railways and other services running. They tried to take the high ground. They represented the print workers' refusal to print the *Daily Mail* (because its editorials attacked the strikers) as an attack on free speech. They laboured their democratic mandate as the constitutional government. Although police and troops were called out to protect scabs and break picket lines, Baldwin refused Churchill's call to use armed force against strikers.

The nascent BBC found itself in the firing line: Baldwin was able to broadcast to the nation, but Ramsay MacDonald and the strike leaders were not permitted a voice. Lord Reith did, however, rebuff Churchill's call for the nominally independent company to be put entirely at the service of the government.

The time won by the subsidy for organisation was put to good use.

As Baldwin said in Parliament:

'I do not think all the leaders when they assented to ordering a general strike fully realised that they were threatening the basis of ordered government, and going nearer to proclaiming civil war than we have been for centuries past. They laboured—that is, many of them—with the utmost zeal for peace up to the very end. Perhaps they thought that there was nothing more at stake than bringing a certain amount of spectacular pressure to bear, which might suffice to persuade the Government to capitulate without serious damage to the liberties of the nation. But they have created a machine which they cannot control' (tinyurl.com/SPGBGS5).

MacDonald's contribution was 'With the discussion of general strikes and Bolshevism and all that kind of thing, I have nothing to do at all. I respect the Constitution', plus a call for 'co-ordination' in the industry, which was, after all, the entirety of what he aspired to and called 'socialism'.

The leaders of the TUC had not intended to overthrow the government, but to win an industrial dispute. The unions and strikers did not represent the whole of the working class (for example, there were as many domestic servants as there were miners). Faced with a resolute government, the TUC backed down and asked for no reprisals (which the government would not commit to). Cook believed that had the TUC held out a few more days, the government would have backed down – and the miners continued their action.

Although a defeat, which led to laws banning sympathy and general strikes, the action was not a disaster. The unions had brought the government to the negotiating table; they had shown the strength of union organisation and feeling. They also survived with their organisation intact. In the end, the reality of coal mining productivity prevailed and world markets asserted themselves. The working class demonstrated resolve and solidarity, but could not overcome the organised power of the state without a clear plan and resolve to that end.

PIK SMEET



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Nine days that didn't shake the world



AT 11.59 pm on 3 May 1926 the General Strike began, called by the General Council of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in solidarity with much put-upon miners in the coal industry. The intention was to force the British government to act on behalf of over one million locked-out colliers.

The coal industry was in decline. It had reached its peak annual production, of 292 million tonnes, in 1913. Seven years later output had fallen to 233 million tonnes. The First World War (1914-18) had made such demands on the industry that many of the better coal seams had been depleted.

The same period had seen the expansion of coal production in other countries such as Poland, Germany and the USA. After 1918, as coal working became more difficult in British mines, and therefore more expensive to produce, cheaper imported coal became an increasing challenge.

The Dawes Plan of 1924 enabled Germany to once again export coal, 'free

coal' as it became known, as part of war reparations. The effect was to reduce the price of coal on the international market. A year later the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Winston Churchill, placed Britain back on the gold standard.

This strengthening of the pound sterling made exports more expensive which, along with raised interest rates, led to economic instability in some sectors and a quest for cost cutting in Britain. Coal mine owners subsequently found themselves faced with falling profits.

The reaction was, as usual, to make the workforce bear the cost. There began a sustained process of increasing working hours and reducing rates of pay. Miners, unsurprisingly, reacted against this assault on their living and working conditions.

The response of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain was, in the words of AJ Cook, the Federation's leader, 'Not a penny off the pay, not a second on the day'. As to action, Cook had made his position clear in 1924, 'I believe in strikes.

They are the only weapon.'

Unrest in the mines echoed through many a steel mill and loco shed, through industries also having straitened times. This resulted in widespread sympathy for the hard-pressed colliers, organised workers expressing solidarity.

Stanley Baldwin, Prime Minister of the Conservative government, introduced a nine-month subsidy of miners' wages along with a Royal Commission under Sir Herbert Samuel to investigate the industry.

Its main recommendations, in March 1926, were nationalised royalties, national (rather than local or regional) pay and employment agreements, along with the withdrawal of the government subsidy and a reduction in miners' wages of 13.5 percent.

Emboldened by the Commission's report, mine owners proposed new employment terms of a longer working day with reductions in pay packets. The Miners' Federation rejected these proposals, exposing the supposed neutrality of

governments in such matters.

Following failed negotiations on 1 May, the General Council of the TUC announced that a general strike would commence at a minute to midnight two days later.

Despite there being up to 3 million workers on strike, mainly but not exclusively in heavy industries, there was no clear strategy as to how to conduct or progress the campaign. The government, however, was organised and responsive.

The Labour Party, not wishing to be associated with disruptive and possibly revolutionary action, adopted a sympathetic but distanced attitude. A legal ruling under the Trade Disputes Act, 1906, declared that union funds during a general strike were not protected. This enabled employers to sequester union assets.

On 12 May, the TUC called the general strike off. The miners were left to fight on largely alone until the extremes of poverty forced their return to work under even more stringent conditions. Capitalism's prioritising of profits over the needs of workers had been blatantly demonstrated.

Although the strike garnered mass support, the majority of workers were not directly involved. There were some though prepared to physically confront any who were actively working to mitigate or undermine the strike.

For example, in Leeds, on 5 May, a crowd of over a thousand gathered by the Corn Exchange. They were determined to prevent the continued, somewhat reduced, running of the tram and bus services.

To make their point obvious, coal was taken from a delivery lorry and used to pelt a tram on Duncan Street, smashing its windows, thereby forcing it to stop. Next day more trams and buses were forced out of service the same way.

Such small victories may seem significant in the moment, but they serve only to provoke a predictable response from the forces of the state. The police responded with horses, truncheons and arrests. What occurred at Orgreave six decades later was not unprecedented.

The week after this event the General Strike ignominiously collapsed when the TUC's General Council went to Downing Street and surrendered. This was always the most likely outcome as was the defeat of the miners' strike later that year.

Limitations of trade union action

Trade unions have served a positive and useful purpose as a collective response by workers to the depredations inflicted on them by capitalism. Indeed, they have played an important part in tempering some of the worst features of capitalism,

fighting to improve wages and working conditions for their members.

They eventually gave workers a voice in parliament by founding their own political organisation, the Labour Party. However, ameliorating the excesses of capitalism was, and is, the extent of their power.

The slogan 'A fair day's pay for a fair day's work' gives voice to union and Labour Party aspirations. It leaves capitalism free to determine to its own advantage the definition of the word 'fair'. Also, the word pay indicates no sense of looking beyond capitalist relations; employers who take profits while employees depend on wages/salaries. A relationship defined in terms of money.

Unions and their political party can only, at best, reform elements of the capitalist system. Miners, in the twentieth century, exemplify this. In the 1920s their parlous state motivated a collective, if limited, response by their fellow workers. Ultimately defeated.

1 January 1947 was Vesting Day, when the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act of the previous year came into force. There were many who welcomed this as a 'socialist' measure, along with the NHS a year later, by the reforming Labour government.

Just 25 years later, in 1972, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) was taking strike action against the employers, the National Coal Board (NCB). Had coal mining been truly socialist those miners would, effectively, have been striking against themselves.

Mining could not, of course, be a

socialist enclave within a capitalist economy, just as there cannot be a single socialist country in a capitalist world. The NCB ran the mines on behalf of the state that itself runs society on behalf of capitalism. Coal mines were reformed, but not socialist.

It has been estimated that 253 coal mines closed during periods of Labour governments between 1964-70 and 1974-76 with the loss of over 200,000 jobs. Prior to 1964 coal was in long-term decline. The economic problems of mining coal in Britain that so adversely affected mining in the 1920s, difficulties in extraction and cheaper imports, along with newer competition from other fuels, oil and natural gas, resulted in falling profitability.

Even the success of flying pickets and a second strike in 1974 could do little to divert capitalist economic logic. By 1984-5, any illusion as to the socialist nature of coal mining was surely dispelled by the Thatcher Conservative government.

No matter how great the solidarity of workers in dispute, or subsequent reforms enacted in response, ultimately capitalism, through its state, will organise matters to its own requirements. Reforms granted are readily withdrawn when increased profitability demands.

Strikes are essential to our lives as wage-slaves, yet their very existence is a mark of the failure, to date, to confront the reality of capitalism and the necessity of replacing it with socialism.

D. A.



Credit: Painting by G. Palmer

Work: Paid and unpaid (part 2)

Part 1 of this article last month considered how people react to work according to whether it is paid or unpaid and how hierarchised and authoritarian work structures are increasingly affecting their lives. This second part looks at the feasibility of attempts to 'humanise' work under the current system of production for profit and points to how such humanisation is only truly feasible in the context of a different social system.

TOGETHER WITH the intensification of the employment process previously discussed, in recent years there has also been considerable discussion about whether there might be more effective and efficient, and at the same time more humane, ways of organising work – even within the existing system of production for profit.

Hierarchy challenged

There are examples of companies instituting freer, less rigid work structures and even more 'equal' pay. One of the most striking instances has been the American 'Valve' video game company where the owner decided to establish a 'flat' non-directive structure based on the conviction that people work better and more efficiently when they're relaxed and don't feel they're being surveilled and constantly judged. Another example is the financial services company Gravity Payments. Here the CEO decided to pay

all his staff a minimum wage of \$70,000, that being the amount he decided was necessary to live what he called 'a normal life'. This compared with the previous average salary of \$48,000. At the same time, he slashed his own salary of \$1.1m to the same \$70,000. Then a recent programme in the 'Analysis' series on BBC Radio 4 asking the question 'Does Work Have To Be Miserable?', included the boss of the Howorth Air Tech company in Salford explaining how he had moved strongly in the direction of putting resources into helping to bring out his employees' latent talents and not simply regarding them as 'factors of production'.

Other reactions to hierarchy and authoritarian work practices in capitalism have included a beneath-the-radar move among some workers away from the conventional jobs market – a rejection, partial at least, of the normally life-sapping existence of wage and salary work to lead what has been called 'a low-desire life without gruelling competition'. Those who choose this path still do of course need to carry out some paid work and to participate in the buying and selling system, but what they are seeking is an existence that offers them more freedom and less stress. This kind of choice was recently highlighted in the BBC radio series 'The Digital Human' where the presenter, Aleks Krotosky, talked about how, unexpectedly, in China, a country she referred to as 'the most competitive

society on earth', a good number of young people were managing to 'opt out' from full-time paid work and attempt to lead that 'low-desire life'.

Reorganising capitalism?

The more radical view, such as espoused by the Socialist Party, that the nature of work can only be fundamentally altered by a new social system, also has advocates in a significant number of quarters. In a 'Ted Talk' from the University of Edinburgh given by Jade Saab in 2018 and called 'A World Without Money', the speaker includes a section entitled 'Why and how we work will be different'. On social media too there are groups hosting similar discussions with names that speak for themselves, for example 'Moneyless Society', 'World of Free Access', and 'A group around the world where we are all anti-capitalist'. This is matched in book publication by more than just a few writers proposing various different kinds of non-hierarchical work organisation.

Some of these proposals, when closely scrutinised, amount to suggestions for reorganising capitalism, which we would regard as utopian, since it would be impossible in reality for the capitalist system, given its profit-seeking basis, to implement them. We would agree with Anitra Nelson, in her book *Beyond Money. A Post-Capitalist Strategy*, that 'modified



Credit: Adobe stock

forms of money and markets ... are bound to fail' with the vast majority being 'unable to enjoy the full benefits of their everyday work and have little say in how they live or work'. Her conclusion is that we cannot 'tweak the system to overcome its weaknesses'.

Such flaws as pointed to by that writer are also to be found in otherwise perceptive books about work such as Daniel Susskind's *A World Without Work. Technology, Automation and How We Should Respond* (2020) and Michael D. Yates's *Work, Work, Work. Labour, Alienation and Class Struggle* (2022). But even if the conclusions of those writers fall short of advocating a completely different social order or of being convinced that this may be possible in the foreseeable future, they can still have a lot of powerfully relevant things to say about work and its meaning in human society. Susskind, for example, while in the end not venturing beyond the idea of buying and selling, describes work as 'a source of meaning, purpose and direction in life with community recognition of that work rather than wages fulfilling the human longing for personal fulfilment and social interaction'. Yates, for his part, states: 'Regarding work (...) we should strive for a society in which this word is no longer used except to describe the past. What we are, as human beings, is a species that can thoughtfully produce what is needed for survival and enjoyment (...) only cooperative and beneficial production, with substantive equality in all aspects of life'.

Work in a non-market society

But others go further in seeing as a practical possibility a society where work in exchange for payment would not need to take place at all – and this within the framework of a completely different social system than the one that dominates the world at present. Recent examples of this outlook are to be found in Matthew Holten's book, *Moneyless Society. The Next Economic Evolution*, in Aaron Benanav's *Automation and the Future of Work*, and in *Half-Earth Socialism: a Plan to Save the Future from Extinction, Climate Change and Pandemics* by Troy Vettese and Drew Pendergrass. These writers stress the downsides of employment for money with its imposition of a daily stretch of work, lack of variety, hierarchical organisation, and the potential precariousness of keeping your job. And they are generally keen to point to the fact that, in a future post-capitalist, non-market society, non-socially productive activity (eg armaments, insurance, banking, sales promotion,



Credit: Adobe stock

taxation, legal contracts, etc) will disappear and all the work that takes place will have a useful and necessary function with no stigma attached to any of it.

As to specific details of how work could be organised in a non-monetary society and the nature it would take, it is probably Benanav who puts his finger on it most tellingly. In his final chapter, entitled 'Necessity and Freedom', he argues for 'the abolition of private property and monetary exchange in favor of planned cooperation', and 'a world of fully capacitated individuals ... in which every single person could look forward to developing their interests and abilities with full social support' and which will be 'the first time in their lives that they could enter truly voluntary agreements – without the gun to their heads of a pervasive material insecurity'. He goes on to say that 'we would divide up responsibilities while taking into account individual aptitudes and proclivities' with some tasks needing to be performed locally, but many capable of being 'planned on a regional or global scale, using advanced computer technologies'. And finally: 'The realm of freedom would be the one giving rise to all manner of dynamism: that is where human beings would invent new tools, instruments, and methods of accounting, as well as new games and gadgets, rapidly reallocating resources over time and space to suit changing human tastes (...). The world would then be composed of overlapping partial plans, with interrelated necessary and free activities, rather than a single

central plan'.

Commentators such as these are clearly not talking here about strategies within capitalism for dealing with problems thrown up by that system, for example climate change or environmental degradation. They are not looking for more 'sustainable' ways for production, consumption and work to continue much as before, for 'green deals' or for ways of finding replacement work for those who lose their jobs through automation. They are talking rather about a society in which people will no longer have to do jobs they do not necessarily like (or may even hate) just for the money but will be able to do work they *want* to do and ideally *enjoy* doing. And for any 'less popular' jobs, there would be a focus on automation and the use of robotics to give assistance.

Above all one of the first things that will end in the kind of society being envisaged, which we would call socialism, is the link between work and consumption: what people will consume will not depend on the amount of work they do. Above all people will cooperate to do the work that makes society function and they will make decisions democratically – in workplaces, in their local communities, in their regions and, in some overarching cases, no doubt even globally. Above all there will no longer be top-down control by leaders, governments and bosses and no more money controlling people's lives, wasting so much of our time and energy. There will be no useless toil, only useful work.

HKM

Liberal media: the barking dog of institutional power

Credit: Adobe stock



THERE WAS a recent Reuters investigation revealing that one fifth of sitting US Congress members, living presidents, and Supreme Court justices are direct descendants of slaveholders. Liberal circles celebrated this as exemplary accountability journalism. But this celebration reveals the sophisticated mechanism by which modern media manufactures consent. Not through falsehood, but through strategic structural omission.

The investigation was conducted by journalist Blake Morrison. He meticulously mapped genealogical connections between today's political elite and their slaveholding ancestors. He traced lineages through census records, slave schedules, estate documents, and family bibles. He identified at least 100 members of the 117th Congress with ancestral ties. The investigation even named the enslaved individuals where records permitted, giving human names to those previously reduced to property listings alongside sorrel horses and folding tables.

The dog is on the chain

Morrison's reporting frame focuses on the personal impact of discovering these genealogical connections. It frames the story through individual family history and curiosity. It systematically avoids examining the legal and financial mechanisms

through which slaveholder wealth was preserved, compounded, and transferred into the present day.

The Reuters investigation, like much accountability journalism, perpetuates the fiction that wealth passes simply from father to son. This is not how dynastic wealth operates. The actual mechanisms, trust law, estate law, corporate inheritance, land title chains, and complex financial instruments, remain entirely unexamined. By failing to map and explain the legal instruments that protected and grew slaveholder wealth across generations, the investigation performs a crucial ideological function. It transforms a systemic analysis of racial capitalism into a personalised narrative of ancestral discovery. The story becomes about individual bad apples and their personal reckonings with family history, rather than about the structural continuity of wealth extraction from enslaved labour into contemporary financial and property systems.

The everyday reproduction of consent

This is not accidental. It represents the operational logic of what Walter Lippmann termed 'the manufacture of consent' in his 1922 book *Public Opinion*. Lippmann argued that the professional class should manage democracy because they know about power and because raw political

reality is too complex for most people. Columbia University's journalism school is the training arm of the institution most closely associated with Lippmann's legacy. And it's where Blake Morrison teaches interviewing and investigation.

Now consider a story that Reuters is not currently investigating. In March 2026, the Poynter Institute reported that Thomson Reuters (Reuters' owner) has multiple contracts with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), one of which gives DHS access to number plate reader data. Reuters journalists themselves signed a letter demanding the company explain what human rights and civil liberties due diligence it has undertaken in relation to this contract.

This story is not historical. It's happening now. And it is about US government surveillance. Thomson Reuters has a \$22.8 million open contract with DHS that runs until 2026. Another company, LexisNexis has a separate \$22.1 million contract. These contracts support ICE and Customs and Border Patrol operations, including immigration enforcement and deportations.

A YouTuber, Ali McForever, traces the connections between state power, media systems, and global economic structures. Her analysis reveals how the manufacture of consent operates not through crude propaganda but through the careful cultivation of partial visibility.

She argues that Reuters will trace a family tree across centuries but will not trace a contract across subsidiaries. They will name an enslaved ancestor but will not name the shell company receiving ICE funding. They will expose a genealogical connection but not a procurement chain.

She also argues that Morrison's investigations are formulaic. Although the story is always factual, the conclusion is invariably some bad apples and a regulatory gap. That is deliberate, not incidental omission. Legal wealth transfer mechanisms or surveillance infrastructure never appear anywhere in the investigation. A story containing falsehoods can easily be debunked yet stories that are structurally true but conclude just before the system is made visible produce something more durable. The wagging tail of accountability without any bite.

She argues further that Morrison's work occupies a space where a systemic critique would otherwise exist. It occupies this space deliberately while Thomson Reuters takes millions from the same agencies that Morrison claims to expose. The public receives confirmation that journalism performs its watchdog function while never barking against the actual levers of power.

Trust structures

Let's consider what a genuinely systemic investigation would require. Mapping trust structures established in the 19th century that remain active today or tracing land titles through Jim Crow-era legal mechanisms designed to protect white property ownership. Examining how corporate charters and financial instruments allowed slaveholder capital to transform into industrial and banking capital without passing through the father to son inheritance model that Reuters implicitly assumes.

Tracing the Thomson Reuters contracts through their actual ownership layers. Revealing which data brokers operate the number plate reader databases for ICE. Exposing the procurement chains that connect historical slaveholder wealth to contemporary border militarisation. This is work that Ali McForever has done. This is the work that Reuters deliberately avoids because it would expose their own complicity.

Journalism that maintains intimate proximity to power while performing the ritual of critique is in thrall to King Capital. It names the brokers but not the

banks. It traces the genealogy but not the wealth. It exposes the contract but not the procurement chain.

This is workers' consent being manufactured in its most abstracted form. Not through raw propaganda, but the careful cultivation of partial visibility, we are shown enough to believe ourselves informed, while the actual mechanisms of power, legal, financial, structural, remain unexamined behind a veil of individual narrative and personal moral narrations.

For socialists, we know when the bourgeois press celebrates its own accountability, we must ask what remains unseen. What legal instruments go unexamined? What ownership layers remain obscured? What surveillance contracts go unexamined? The answer reveals not mere journalistic failure, but journalistic function. To manufacture the consent necessary for the continued operation of capital and its dog, the military industrial complex, one carefully framed investigation at a time.

A.T.

Exhibition Review

A hundred years on the line – People's History Museum, Manchester

THIS MONTH is the centenary of the General Strike, which took place from 4 to 12 May 1926. An exhibition 'On the Line' is being held at the People's History Museum in Manchester until November. It consists of banners, photos, pamphlets and leaflets relating to strikes and other workers' struggles over the last hundred years.

The earliest item on display is a banner 'Union and Victory' from the Great London Dock Strike of 1899. There is relatively little on the General Strike itself, but there are photos of soup kitchens, military convoys, and polo players enrolled as special constables policing the streets on horseback. Also, a copy of a pamphlet, written by a barrister, on what to do when arrested.

Among the other disputes covered are the UCS work-in in Glasgow in 1971, Grunwick in 1977, Orgreave in 1984, the ambulance workers' strike in 1989, and the Liverpool dockers' strike in 1996. As would be expected, there is a lot of material relating to the miners' strike of 1984-5. This includes Women Against Pit Closures,

with a photo of women in Barnsley supporting the miners, and a T-shirt from Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners ('Pits and Perverts' is the slogan). A strike at an Amazon warehouse in Coventry from 2023 is recalled with a robot costume: workers felt they were being treated like robots. There is documentation of recent strikes, such as those by couriers and delivery workers, and last year's strike by resident doctors. From 1972 there is a poster about four workers arrested on a picket line, a reminder of the possible consequences of workers defending their pay and conditions. A 1986 poster 'Murdoch is bad news' captures the role of the capitalist media in undermining workers' struggles.

As noted in the exhibition, Stanley Baldwin, PM at the time, described the General Strike as 'the road to anarchy and ruin'. The 1927 Trade Disputes and Trades Unions Act, passed in response to the strike, prohibited mass picketing among other forms of resistance. The TUC ended the strike without an

agreement; the miners stayed out for another seven months before being forced to return to work.

The June 1926 *Socialist Standard* responded to the ending of the strike by commenting, 'The greatest Trade Union action that was ever taken in any country was closed by the most gigantic swindle in the whole history of Trade Unionism.' It then went on to criticise other organisations' reaction, such as the 'Communist' Party. There was no point, the article argued, in preferring left-wing over right-wing leaders: the very idea of leaders and leadership should be rejected. Trust in leaders was not a good idea: 'Trust and ye shall be betrayed'. The strike itself was seen as 'a sham fight'.

The exhibition as a whole is well worth visiting, and gives a good, if necessarily only partial, idea of industrial actions over the last century. Of course, such struggles are still needed, as workers do their best to resist the exploitation and oppression of capitalism.

PB

Money problems

CENTRAL BANKS and ordinary banks are both concerned about the spread of ‘private credit’, as reflected in two headlines last month in the *Times*: ‘Dimon alert on private credit loans’ (7 April) and ‘Bailey warns of private credit “lemons”’ (11 April). Dimon is the chief executive of JP Morgan and Bailey is the Governor of the Bank of England.

‘Private credit refers to loans that are provided by private equity firms, asset managers or hedge funds rather than banks. The sector has grown rapidly since the financial crisis [of 2008], as tighter restrictions on traditional banks pushed riskier forms of finance into unregulated markets. Dimon estimated that lending from private credit funds to heavily indebted companies was worth about \$1.8 trillion.’

These financial institutions may not be banks from a regulatory point of view but, economically, they are as they borrow money from one source and lend it to another. As the other article, on Bailey, put it, ‘private credit funds ... take money from investors and lend it to other often privately-owned companies’.

Some of those engaging in this type of ‘shadow banking’ have got into difficulty or

even gone bankrupt through making bad loans. Seeing this, some of those providing the funds have been asking for their money back or to be moved elsewhere. The concern is that, if the whole sector were to be affected, this could provoke a more general financial crisis just as another form of subprime lending did in 2008.

This brings out that governments can’t control lending in the way they — and the textbooks — claim. Where there is a demand for loans and money to be made from lending, then that demand will be met, one way or another.

It also brings out that the money that is loaned doesn’t come from nowhere. Not that anybody claims that it does; everybody can see that it comes from those who confide their money to the hedge funds, asset management companies and private equity firms concerned.

A question to ponder, then, for those who think that banks can create money to lend out of thin air: if private credit firms, which are performing the same economic function as banks, can’t, how come that ordinary banks can?

The other news about money is the Bank of England’s decision to replace pictures of famous people on bank notes

with pictures of animals. This of course is a trivial matter but it led *Private Eye* (3 April) to ask why so many bank notes are needed in the first place. It quoted figures showing that the number of payments using cash ‘has fallen roughly 70 percent from around £17bn in 2015 to fewer than £5bn, or less than 10 percent of all transactions, last year’ but that, despite this, the total value of bank notes in circulation has continued to go up not down, even taking into account inflation.

The answer *Private Eye* came up with is that it is ‘very likely to be tax evasion and money laundering’. This seems a reasonable assumption as, normally, if cash transactions fall, the economy will need fewer notes for its economic transactions and, if the amount in circulation is not reduced, the result would be inflation in the sense of a rise in the general price level due to a depreciation of the currency. The fact that the non-reduction in notes issued has not resulted in such inflation suggests that there is a real demand in the economy for certain cash transactions, in the event tax evasion and money laundering. There is still a certain irony in the government making more cash available for this.



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Theroux the keyhole

Credit: Netflix



LOUIS THEROUX has built up his career as a documentary-maker since the 1990s, with his trademark approach being to patiently spend time among society's stranger subcultures to learn about what motivates the people within. The subjects of his latest film are prominent figures in the 'manosphere', a loose online network which upholds hard-line versions of masculinity. Netflix's *Inside The Manosphere* follows Theroux as he meets influencers who have amassed millions of young male fans through their social media platforms, livestreams and podcasts. Their content extols their values of conspicuous wealth, sexism and conspiracy theories, with the influencers all living extravagant lifestyles and exuding confidence, giving their views plausibility among their impressionable followers.

In Marbella, Theroux visits Harrison Sullivan (aka HSTikkyTokky) and Ed Matthews, whose online content includes videos of macho fitness tips and 'predator stings' confronting alleged paedophiles. Sullivan becomes suspicious that Theroux is trying to catch him out and cuts short the time he agreed to spend being interviewed, although he later backtracks after his videos about their first meeting attract more clicks. While Sullivan and Matthews represent the 'laddish' style of influencer, Justin Waller from Louisiana is more measured, wearing tailored suits as he drives Theroux around in his Lamborghini. Waller's material combines business advice with a disdain for feminism, saying women tend to prefer traditional family roles. He and his wife are in a 'one-sided monogamous' relationship, and it's not him who's monogamous. This arrangement is also a preference of the Miami-based influencer known as Myron Gaines, who claims women 'want a guy that can lead them and dominate them'. Theroux sits in during Gaines' *Fresh & Fit* podcast in which his female guests get objectified, belittled and embarrassed. As Theroux later comments, many of the

influencers 'advocate for traditional values while at the same time wanting to be seen with scantily-clad models'.

The confidence which influencers have in their derisory beliefs about women's roles comes from their 'red pill' ideology. This is a reference to the 1999 film *The Matrix*, which we're told in this context means seeing through the mainstream media's discrimination against men, although 'redpilling' is usually shorthand for adopting a far-right viewpoint. New Yorker Sneako is among the more politicised of the influencers Theroux meets. Alongside being a Muslim Trump-supporter, he claims satanists run the world, leaving clues in pictures of celebrities using 'one eye' symbolism and telling people such as singer Sam Smith to become transgender. Predictably, he adds that the aim of this satanic cabal is to establish a single global government. While Sneako denies this is Jewish, other influencers share the conviction that a small group of Jews are behind a plan to promote degeneracy through manipulating culture, especially gender politics.

The outlook spun by the influencers is really a convoluted way of enticing people to buy the financial products they have a stake in. Theroux tests one of Sullivan's investment opportunities and loses most of the £500 he paid in. Sullivan is at least honest in admitting that what drives his material is what makes money for him rather than what is considered right or wrong. An example is when he says he was 'clip-farming' by including antisemitic content while not believing it, as he knew this would generate attention. Getting exposure in order to gain more supporters and therefore customers is the priority. The notion that 'there's no such thing as bad publicity' would apparently be confirmed after *Inside The Manosphere* was released, with Sullivan accruing more followers because of the coverage it has given him, according to an article in the *Metro* (7 April), which itself represents

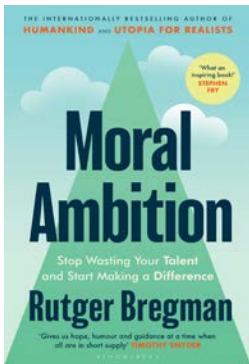
more promotion.

As the focus of the show is Theroux meeting people, not much time is spent analysing the manosphere's place in society. This approach either admirably allows the viewer to reach their own conclusions or disappointingly makes the programme feel shallow. Theroux posits how the upbringing of the influencers may have contributed to their mindset in that many of them lacked a supportive father figure, perhaps affecting their attitudes to relationships, such as 'one-sided monogamy'. More widely, he says they are 'products of a culture – growing up online in a world that's changing at dizzying speed' with long-established male roles challenged. He adds that they now project their trauma by 'spewing hate' to an audience of young men looking for something to feel they belong to, preferably with money to buy financial products. The fans of the influencers we see in the documentary clearly feel empowered by what their heroes advocate. Theroux recognises that while the influencers offer hope to troubled men, it comes with a belief that they are living in 'a matrix purposely designed to make men fail'. He suggests 'the matrix they rail against more accurately describes the algorithmic prison they've created for their followers, an illusion of endless wealth and power that actually only enriches a few at the top'.

The personal traumas which shaped the mindsets of each influencer and follower happened in a world which *is* 'designed to make men fail' (and women too, often in different ways). This is the divisive world of capitalism, driven by aspirations of wealth amid poverty and power amid powerlessness. They have misinterpreted this, though, and don't identify the economic system itself as structurally creating (nearly all) people's disadvantaged position, but instead blame the 'matrix' of feminism and a supposed Jewish cabal. This poisonous stance has proved lucrative for the influencers because it attracts attention online among vulnerable men, reinforcing a worrying association between wealth and bigotry. The confidence with which this mentality is promoted disguises its errors and contradictions, such as its ridiculous 'evidence' for a Jewish / satanic conspiracy and the hypocrisy of its attitudes to women. For an ideology apparently based on dogged independence it relies heavily on fan worship of the influencers. The 'manosphere' is both an expression of the alienation which comes with living in capitalist society and a dangerously misguided attempt at compensating for that alienation.

MIKE FOSTER

Moral stories



Moral Ambition. Stop Wasting Your Talent and Start Making a Difference.

By Rutger Bregman.
Bloomsbury.
2025. 283pp.

‘Humans are social creatures through and through’ (Rutger Bregman).

This is the third of Dutch historian Rutger Bregman’s books to have garnered attention and praise from a wide range of quarters. His theme is, as before, the need for large-scale social change, and on a planetary scale. Described on the book’s dust cover as ‘the internationally bestselling author’, Bregman proposes morally founded activities that people can become involved in to ‘start making a difference’ and help bring about such change. One of the impressive endorsements by various writers and commentators in the book’s opening pages describes it as ‘packed with powerful insights, inspiring stories, and data to back it up’. Another refers to it as ‘a true bible of realistic idealism’. And it is definitely an invigorating and thought-provoking read.

It focuses in significant part on the work of a number of individuals who, by virtue of their dedication and determination to certain causes, have ‘made a difference’, either historically or more recently, to the lives of large numbers of people. Examples of such individuals, some of them little known, include:

- Thomas Clarkson, who, from the age of 24 in 1785, dedicated his life to campaigning against slavery at a time when, as the author points out, the very notion of abolishing slavery seemed unthinkable;
- Arnold Douwes, the Dutchman, who, in the Second World War and at enormous risk to himself, devoted himself to finding shelter for Jews who otherwise would have been transported to concentration camps;
- Ralph Nader, who over very many years campaigned indefatigably in the US against the advertising and sale of manifestly dangerous products and managed to recruit a whole ‘brigade of Davids’ who ‘combined moral indignation with laborious research’ and eventually become known as ‘Nader’s Raiders’;
- Rosa Parks, the black woman in Alabama who wouldn’t give up her seat to a white passenger on a bus and lit the spark for the civil rights movement;
- Rob Mather, the British business

executive, who, in the early 2000s, inspired voluntary and charitable activity among thousands for the purpose of raising money to combat the world’s single largest killer of children, malaria, and up to the present day is estimated to have saved over 100,000 lives;

- and Joey Savoie, a Canadian would-be psychology student who instead dedicated himself to intensive charitable work and founded a school of ‘Charity Entrepreneurship’ whose graduates then set up projects such as Fortify Health that teaches local millers in India to enrich wheat flour with iron, folic acid and vitamin B2 as a way of reducing iron deficiency anaemia among millions there and protecting against congenital defects like spina bifida.

Bregman also gives space to philanthropists such as Katherine McCormick, whose sponsorship of research into female contraception resulted in the pill and so gave millions of women a new kind of control over their lives, and to campaigning scientists like Joseph Salk and Viktor Zhdanov whose dedication and determination brought crippling and deadly diseases like polio and smallpox under control. And he tells all sorts of other quite fascinating tales of people who have dedicated themselves to ‘making a difference’, some much against the odds of their upbringing, education and the society around them. He frames these with the consideration that ‘a small group of determined individuals can have enormous influence’.

Such stories make this a truly compelling book, as also does its manifest ambition to contribute to improving the lives of humans. So is there anything not to like? In the course of the recent Reith Lectures which its author delivered for the BBC on the subject of ‘moral revolution’, he described himself, on more than one occasion, as ‘an old-fashioned social democrat’. And the trouble is that, just like so many others who call themselves ‘social democrats’, he confines himself to seeking to solve or alleviate the world’s problems within the confines of the existing system, capitalism. His abiding focus is on how to make that system better.

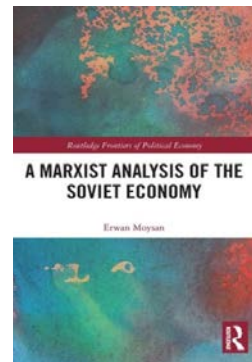
With this book, therefore, he has produced a kind of guide to reformism, novel and very readable, but never seeking to peer outside of the constricting framework of existing society, based as it is on monetary exchange, buying and selling and production for profit. This means that, despite the fact that certain problems may be capable of alleviation or even solution through devoted campaigning or pressure on governments, in the final analysis the anti-human needs of the

market and its profit imperative will never allow continuing and widespread scourges such as poverty, insecurity, oppression and unfulfilling work to be consigned to history, and tragedies such as wars and environmental degradation will ever lurk and sometimes pounce. In other words, while admirable in so many ways, this book fails to engage with the real reason that renders necessary all the campaigning and dedication its author records and recommends to others.

That is not to say that the kind of campaigning activity recommended by Bregman – radical, persistent and confident in its ideas – is not necessary. However, it needs to be focused not on ‘morality’ but on challenging the system at source and creating a society capable of offering to everyone a share of the potential wealth and abundance that capitalism – with its interconnected production across the globe, its robots, 3-D printing and digital media – has made possible. Currently all this is being held back by the artificial scarcity and oppression associated with the market, money and production for profit and will only be achievable on the basis of common ownership, the abolition of the market and free access to wealth.

HKM

Back to the USSR



A Marxist Analysis of the Soviet Economy.
By Erwan Moysan.
Routledge
Frontiers of Political Economy.

At one time ‘the nature of the USSR’ was a burning issue. That was before 1991, while it still existed. The regime itself and its supporters in other countries claimed that it was ‘socialist’, a view that had to be refuted. The Trotskyists couldn’t decide whether it was a ‘degenerate workers state’ or a new class society of ‘bureaucratic collectivism’ or a form of ‘state capitalism’. Eventually they split into rival factions over the issue. Today the question is largely of academic and historical interest. However, there is one aspect that can usefully be addressed: why did it collapse?

Our view was that the USSR was capitalist because the defining features of capitalism (class property, wage-labour, production for the market, and capital accumulation) all existed there and that,

given that most industry was state-owned, 'state capitalism' was the best description. Moysan has essentially the same position and, like us, notes that 'Marx and Engels' understanding of socialism as a worldwide society without classes, state, wage labour, commodity production, value and surplus-value, money, or competition of capitals is directly in contrast to the Stalinist view'. Chapter 1 is a very good description of the 'capitalist mode of production'.

The view that the USSR was socialist or that it was a 'degenerate workers state' is easily disposed of. Unless you redefine socialism (as the 'Stalinists' did) then the existence of widespread (and spreading) wage-labour was proof that it wasn't socialist; while the fact that the workers there were oppressed and exploited refuted the claim that it was a place where the workers ruled. Little wonder then that more independent-minded Trotskyists came up with the idea that it was either a new class society or a form of state capitalism.

The collapse of the economic system in the USSR was not something that the alternative Trotskyists expected; they — those who talked of 'state capitalism' as well as those who saw a new class society — thought that the system was more advanced than classical capitalism. Some of them saw that this was where the rest of the capitalist world was heading.

Moysan rejects this — which in any event was disproved by events — and argues that the USSR was less advanced and that the greater role of the state in the economy was a sign that 'the Soviet economy was a catch-up economy', writing that 'countries that develop later must, in order to compete with countries with a high organic composition of capital, "catch up", and this entails brutal state-led accumulation of capital' (p. 111).

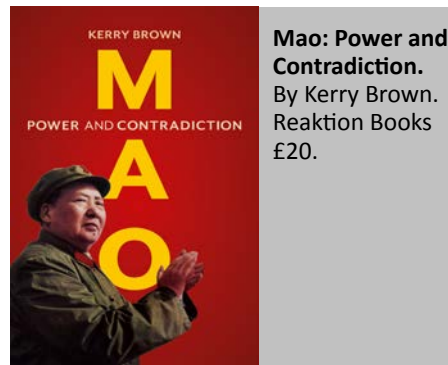
His explanation for the collapse of such state-led capital accumulation was that in the USSR it led to a 'crisis of absolute overproduction of capital' — and so to a slowing down of capital accumulation — due to a labour shortage caused by agriculture being so backward that not enough workers were being released to work in industry. The only way out was abandonment of the type of state capitalism that existed in industry there and a move towards the sort of capitalism that existed in the other capitalist countries.

We get a brief mention in a footnote referring to a debate at our conference in 1969 about the nature of the ruling class in the USSR (tinyurl.com/2c2ydttt). During the debate, Moysan notes, some members argued that 'the private sector was more important than commonly thought, and

that the Soviet Union was going towards a Western-style capitalism', which turned out to be what happened.

ALB

Thought and Contradiction



This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Mao Zedong, and for over a quarter of a century before then he had been the ruler of China. Here Kerry Brown presents an account of his life, with a great deal of background information on developments in China, including since his death.

Born in 1893, Mao was one of fifteen people who attended the founding meeting of the Chinese 'Communist' Party (CCP) in 1921. This was a time when few of Marx's writings were available in Chinese. The CCP's first manifesto stated that one of its aims was to eradicate the capitalist system, even though the vast majority of China's inhabitants were peasants, and capitalism was just getting off the ground. Mao argued that the peasantry would play a crucial role in bringing the CCP to power, though he also accepted the Leninist idea of a centralist, vanguard party. He had very little understanding of capitalism, and sometimes saw class as something that was inherited.

Mao gradually rose to the top of the CCP during its and the Red Army's fight against the Nationalists, but his life at this time was not easy. In 1927 he narrowly avoided

being executed by the Nationalists, and in 1930 his second wife Yang Kaihui was tortured and executed by the provincial government. On the Long March of 1934–5 his two children by his third wife were given up soon after birth to local families, but could not be traced later.

The CCP took power in 1949, after driving out the Nationalists. Brown points out that Chinese society at that time was in a dire condition, after two decades of civil war and Japanese occupation. Average life expectancy was just 35, and the country was worse off economically than it had been in 1820. Land reform and the expansion of state-owned enterprises led over time to much-improved living conditions, but movements such as the Great Leap Forward were the cause of maybe as many as fifty million deaths, by famine and persecution (it is not clear how much Mao knew about the consequences of his policies, or how hard he tried to find out). The Cultural Revolution from 1966 was a power struggle within the ruling class, with Mao turning on anyone he saw as an enemy.

Since Mao's death China has become the world's second largest economy, rivalling the US, and a major manufacturing base, also now a hub of technological development. There has been nothing in China like de-Stalinisation in Russia, and Mao is officially viewed in China as a great man who made mistakes. The term Mao Zedong Thought is used, rather than Maoism, and Brown seems to see his ideas as some odd mix of Marxism and Daoism, though this may mean little more than a supposed emphasis on contradiction. There is no recognition here that Mao's views had little to do with those of Marx, and that he contributed to the spread of capitalism in China: not abolishing the wages system but forcing it on far more of the country's population.

PB



The General Strike

ON ITS 50th anniversary the tales of the General Strike, real and legendary, will be told. The strike action of those Trade Unionists and others who took part was not based on a clear recognition of the position of the workers under capitalism and the class struggle resulting therefrom. The workers were not class-conscious, and therefore their actions were not a challenge to the existence of capitalism. Nevertheless, under the present order workers have to defend their living standards against their employers, and to that extent the General Strike must rank as a landmark in the history of the British working class; as the most determined display of solidarity we have seen this century. That is encouraging to the Socialist — if workers can unite on one issue for a limited purpose, they can certainly unite on the greater issue of Socialism. “Unity is strength”, and “A house divided against itself shall fall”. (...)

Writing about the Strike fifty years later, what lessons were learned by the workers? Have they abandoned the idea of leadership inside or outside the Unions? The answer is no. Has the Trade Union organization and the TUC undergone a change of attitude on the question of class co-operation? Again, the

answer is no. If anything, Trade Unions have become more insular: more concerned with the narrow issues affecting their individual members. They are completely steeped in capitalist ideology. Their world begins and ends with their members’ interests, not with the interests of the working class as a whole. The TUC is nothing other than a political wing of the present Labour government. Those who think in terms of a successful general strike with Jack Jones, Hugh Scanlon, Len Murray, and the other untalented servants of capital, in place of J. H. Thomas, Swales, Hicks, Tillett and Pugh, etc. are deluding themselves. The present Trade Unions are hopelessly compromised with the Labour government, and this is to their disadvantage. They are expected to co-operate on wage reductions, redundancy policies, wage freezes, and hosts of other schemes which are of direct help to the capitalists. But the general strike is not a means or an aid to the establishment of Socialism. Joint action by groups of Unions against groups of employers can achieve benefits or prevent living standards from being depressed. This is the most that can be expected. The capitalist class will not, nor cannot, succumb to any other form of economic pressure as long as they control the State machine.

(Socialist Standard, May 1976)

Action Replay

War in the Way

SPORTCITY IN Manchester is a venue for a number of sports facilities, most notably the Manchester City football stadium, but also the Velodrome and National Squash Centre. This idea of hosting various amenities in one area can of course be applied on a national or international level too, and the Middle East is a prime example.

The Persian Gulf in particular has seen a lot of state and private investment in sport, part of a programme aiming to attract increased tourist and leisure visitors more generally. We have previously examined the role of sportswashing in this (see Action Replay for October 2023 and December 2024). The 2022 football World Cup in Qatar was one of the first instances. Saudi Arabia then took the lead, winning the bid to stage the 2034 World Cup, as part of a Vision 2030, supposedly aiming to ‘diversify the economy and invest locally and internationally’ (pif.gov.sa). The Middle East Sports Investment Forum (mesifglobal.com) holds regular conferences to discuss future opportunities, with a meeting in London scheduled for June; a standard delegate ticket costs just £1500.

But a very big ‘but’ has materialised, the US-Israeli attack on Iran and Lebanon, and the Iranian attacks on neighbouring countries. Bombs and drones have made travel to and from the region difficult and unpredictable, and simply being there became unacceptable for some. The

motor racing grands prix due to be held in April in Bahrain and Saudi were called off, as was the MotoGP grand prix in Qatar. Perhaps a hundred events of all kinds had been cancelled or postponed since the start of the war (*Guardian* 21 March). Sports such as football and motor racing are likely to be better protected than tennis and golf, for instance.

The same source quoted a professor of Eurasian sport industry (!) as saying that the Gulf states had placed too much emphasis on events, without diversifying sufficiently. Manufacturing equipment

and clothing would have been a good idea too, but it may well be too late to get into that market.

The war shows the unpredictability of capitalism as far as business ventures are concerned. Capitalists don’t take possible wars into account when planning new businesses or expanding existing ones. It remains to be seen what effect the ‘cease-fire’ in operation at the time of writing will have. But that just reinforces the uncertainty surrounding the fighting and its consequences.

‘The war has come at the wrong time,’ the professor mentioned above said, though he presumably wasn’t saying that there is a good time for wars.

PB



Credit: iaks Sport

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 1 May 7.30pm • The 1926 General Strike

Speaker: Bill Martin

Friday 8 May 7.30pm • Have you heard the News?

General discussion on what's been in the news.

Host: Doug McClellan.

Friday 15 May 7.00pm (hybrid) • Soul and Socialism

Speaker: Johnny Mercer

See London physical meeting. Note earlier starting time.

Friday 22 May 7.30pm • The Post Office scandal

Speaker: Andy Thomas

Friday 29 May 7.30pm

Beyond Politics: Rethinking the System Itself

Guest speaker: Harald Sandø, Author of *Waking Up*



Socialist Party (GB)
WhatsApp channel

Scan this QR code using the camera to view or follow this channel.

Socialist Party Physical Meetings

BURFORD

Saturday 9 May 2026 10.30 to 4.30 • Levellers Day

The Socialist Party will have a stall at this event.

Warwick Hall, Burford OX18 4RY, from 10.30

LONDON

Friday 15 May 7pm • Soul and Socialism

Speaker: Johnny Mercer

A working class history from Wigan to Detroit. Talk followed by an evening of rare Northern Soul, funk and RnB, all on original vinyl. Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN. Also via Zoom.

MANCHESTER

Saturday 16 May 2pm • The Case for a Classless Society

Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester city centre

MIDDLESBROUGH

Saturday 23 May 12 noon to 5pm

Teeside Radical Bookfair

The Socialist Party will have a stall at this event.

The Auxiliary, Station Road, Middlesbrough TS1 1SR

CARDIFF

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

Capitol Shopping Centre, Queen Street (Newport Road end).

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.

The Annual Vegan Fair

THE VEGAN Fair I went to near where I live was quite an event. People milled around outside the hall where it was being held and on either side of the entrance there were queues at the two food-to-go stalls, one of them offering Persian vegan *mezze* and the other vegan American-style burgers. I'd arranged to meet my friend Jane, an enthusiastic anti-vivisection campaigner, and when I arrived, she was already outside the hall handing out leaflets and asking people for petition signatures. I greatly admire her dedication and share her concern for the suffering that vast numbers of animals are subjected to in the millions of experiments on them every year – many for no faintly useful purpose. And I'm sympathetic to the vegan cause more generally and to those who put the case for it, though I also think that such things as the food people eat and the clothes they wear must in the end be a matter of personal choice.

Entrance to the hall itself was free and the place was packed. There were stalls and tables of various kinds selling a variety of different types of food as well as jewellery, clothes and ornaments. People seemed most interested in the food and I suppose I was too. What caught my eye among all else was, of all things, a stall offering a wide selection of different types of olive. I liked the look of one particular kind and the young woman at the table selling them told me they were 'a special olive'. So I asked for some. They turned out to be a special price. Too late. I should have asked about that first. But never mind.

Later on, I sat down with Jane and one of her fellow campaigners at the large dining table in the centre of the hall. We'd bought coffee and snacks and, as we ate and talked, I also began looking at the various leaflets and flyers scattered across the table. One in particular caught my eye. It was headed 'Socialists for Animal Liberation (SAL)'. I read what it had to say and was definitely impressed. One of its paragraphs went as follows: 'Capitalism is a highly destructive system that drives inequality, war, famine and environmental collapse in order to concentrate wealth and extreme power in the hands of the few. The need for a new economic system is clear. But if we want a future that's sustainable and one that is not predicated on violence or exploitation, then we must reject



capitalism and simultaneously reject all forms of animal exploitation'. It went on to outline aspects of the suffering inflicted on animals by factory farming, adding that 'no amount of suffering is too much for a system which cares only about maximising profit' and concluding that 'a post-capitalist society will inherently end the exploitation of animals'.

Later, I used the email address on it to write for further information, outlining what it seemed to me SAL had in common with the Socialist Party but also mentioning that many socialists could only see decent treatment for animals as a pipe dream under a system that set so little store by decent treatment for humans. I amplified this by saying that I thought we should therefore put our energies into campaigning for 'system change' (ie a new democratic, marketless, leaderless world system of production for use, without buying and selling or wages and salaries and based on free access to all goods and services) rather than focusing on issues within capitalism that we might consider 'immediate' and 'priority'. I expressed the view that to do otherwise could only have the effect of postponing real system change until the first of never. I nevertheless stressed my personal sympathy with the concerns of the group and asked for more information about SAL and its activities.

I got a quick and friendly reply from their organiser, Claire, together with a copy of the SAL manifesto, which, as well as calling for involvement in ongoing issues of 'animal rights', stated: 'With its emphasis on ending profit-based relationships, on social ownership and a planned economy, SAL remains convinced that it is only in the context of a socialist society that

animals will achieve true liberation'. I couldn't disagree with this or with their statement that they welcomed 'any reduction, big or small, in the abuse that animals suffer'. Claire also invited me to the group's next online meeting the following week, which I attended and found interesting, even if I wasn't convinced that everyone there had a clear notion of what socialism meant. Since then, I've been invited to other meetings, one of which was a 'reading group' to discuss an article entitled 'The Case for Socialist Veganism' from an American journal, *Monthly Review*. I wasn't able to attend but, since I'd written a piece on that very article in a recent issue of the *Socialist Standard* (tinyurl.com/4p3v5m7y), I drew Claire's attention to it and she replied that she would circulate it among the group. I don't know if she did and, if so, what they made of it, but I couldn't help thinking that it might well be submerged in discussion of what could be done to alleviate the plight of animals here and now.

Perhaps that's being unfair, but when, at the vegan fair that day, I drew the attention of Jane, my anti-vivisectionist friend, to the SAL leaflet, she showed little interest, focused as she was on her own immediate mission. And I couldn't help feeling that, despite the SAL group's stated desire for a 'post-capitalist' society, their overwhelming focus too would be on the various reforms they were chasing in the current system and which, even if achieved, would bring us no nearer the aim stated in their leaflet of 'a future that works for people, planet and animals'.

HOWARD MOSS