

THE

September 2026 • Volume 122 • Number 1465 • £1.50

SOCIALIST STANDARD

Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain

Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

Trump's Middle East plan

Go out with
a bang!



Also: The Middle East powder keg explodes Capitalism's book-burning machines
The Big Issue at 35 The architecture of autistic order
Why Marx's critique of capitalism still matters The White Rose and the Red



Features

The Middle East powder keg explodes	10
The Big Issue at 35	11
Why Marx's critique of capitalism still matters	12
Capitalism's book-burning machines	14
The architecture of autistic order	15
The White Rose and the Red	16

Regulars

Editorial	3
Pathfinders	4

Letters	5
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 is **war** good for? Absolutely nothing

WAR has never solved, and can never solve, any working class problem; wars only help to make our position worse in the long run. They brutalise all those concerned in it, cheapening the feeling for human life and all that makes life worthwhile. Only the continued existence of capitalism drives society to war. The abolition of capitalism and the establishment of socialism will remove the causes of war – and is the only way to remove them.

In furthering the economic ends of the capitalist class within their borders, states have two objectives that are complementary. One consists of economic, political and diplomatic actions, aimed at enlarging the market for exports, securing reliable sources of supply, and finding profitable investment outlets; the other consists of actions intended to enable them to resist armed attack (or force submission on other states) by building up the most murderous and destructive forms of armament that they can afford within the range of human ingenuity at any time. The building up of armaments in turn

breeds fresh economic struggles in the effort to acquire the material needed to produce these weapons such as uranium or rare earths.

Thus there is an intermingling of economic motives in the pursuit of economic and military dominance, because the means to carry on modern warfare are rooted in access to the resources for building up methods of destruction. Sections of the international capitalist class accumulate wealth out of the labour extracted from the working class, and without ever being seen as coming within the categories of 'war profiteers' or 'merchants of death'.

Ultimately, wars are only possible because workers do not understand their identity of interest with workers everywhere in opposition to the interests of their rulers everywhere. Whilst this condition remains, workers of different states can be inveigled into shedding their and other workers' blood for alleged objectives that, even if accomplished, leave them still an exploited class.

Many subterfuges have been used to

entice workers into supporting a war; such as the defence of democracy, the right of nations to self-determination, overthrowing tyranny, resisting the aggression of some other state, safeguarding essential sources of food and other supplies, and so on.

Workers in this and other countries should turn a deaf ear to all those — bellicose generals and compliant governments — who are trying to get their support for policies to increase preparations for war by spending more on so-called 'defence'. We urge them to recognise their fundamental identity of interest as the wealth producers of the world; join together for the purpose of abolishing capitalist domination in all its forms and, by establishing socialism, make the Earth and its products the common inheritance of all. Only then will it be possible to put into operation the socialist principle that will ensure the comfort, security and well-being of the whole of humankind — 'From each according to their capacities, to each according to their needs'.

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Abolish the trough

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SUMMER DROUGHTS, record temperatures and infernal wildfires are fast becoming the new UK normal, as are tabloid splashes during the peak sailing season when overloaded migrant dinghies manage to make it to UK shores. Cue a shrill crescendo of right-wing rhetoric about how immigrants (they mean Muslims) are ruining the country, destroying British culture, raping children and stealing jobs. The ultimate right-wing paranoia is 'the Great Replacement Theory', the modern incarnation of 20th century panics about the Jews or Chinese, in which sharia law comes to dominate the West, and democracy and free speech are annihilated.

Socialists have a different frame of reference, which is the urgent need to abolish global capitalism. To us, right-wing fears are misdirected emotional responses to the pressures and stresses of living in capitalism. When the world establishes post-capitalist common ownership, with no markets or rich elites, no states or governments, these worries will evaporate. When everything in the future is free, everywhere in the world, it's the same as everyone being rich, and then who cares who is a foreigner and who isn't? Maybe we'll all choose to migrate, maybe not. It won't matter.

But when you're impoverished today with no hope of a decent life, it's easy to fetishise what little you do have, like your 'culture'. British culture, as everyone knows, is the mongrel product of scores of migrations and invasions over millennia. We are built from a mongrel mix of genes and we speak a mongrel Indo-European dialect. We enjoy Indian, Japanese, Italian, Malaysian and Caribbean cooking. We like Swiss cheese, Ethiopian coffee, German beer, American fast food with French fries, Swedish saunas and nowadays, Chinese smart gadgets. Most of our classical music heroes are Russian or Polish or

German. We hang out in Spanish resorts or the Austrian Alps or Thai beach bars. If anything's ruining British culture, it's capitalist McDonaldisation, not our boundless appetite for diversity.

Can Britain do without immigrants? With a declining home-grown population and skill set, there is an ever-increasing list of essential jobs that are in short supply. Do we not need electricians or engineers? How about plumbers, builders, bookkeepers, IT trainers or lab technicians? There's a shortage of all these (tinyurl.com/447422vu). The understaffed NHS has 27 percent of nurses and 35 percent of doctors from overseas (tinyurl.com/3m92uthb). Does the right want a functioning NHS or not? Foreign-born dentists now outnumber native ones (tinyurl.com/ysbxmscu). Would the right prefer bad teeth?

Alright, but what about all the Asian grooming gangs and the supposed increase in migrant-related crimes and sex attacks? Certainly there have been some well-publicised cases. Migrant crimes make headlines, equivalent 'white' crimes don't. Migrants are mostly young men, and young men proportionately commit more crimes. The problem is age rather than nationality. If migration causes crime, the two should rise in lockstep. Instead, when migration was rising, overall crime rates were going down. Now both rates are falling. The right can't support their argument with reliable government data, because there isn't any. Crimes are not recorded against immigration status, data collection is not consistent across police forces, and age demographics are not factored in. The overall picture is confused, anecdotal and 'a bit of a bodge', allowing some to claim that the migrant crime problem is worse than it is (tinyurl.com/4s2wwdnr). Conversely, 'if you are a victim of a violent or sexual crime in the UK, the available evidence suggests that the ethnic makeup of the country

means that the perpetrator is most likely to be a white man' (tinyurl.com/4evveaa3).

Legal migrants are statistically less likely to commit crimes, because 'they don't want to get kicked out of the country', while second-generation migrants tend to assimilate, and crime rates come into line with that of the general population (tinyurl.com/4amwaj65). According to the Office for National Statistics, 'MoJ data shows that proportionately fewer foreign nationals end up in prison for sexual offences than British nationals', despite the fact that 'Time and time again audits have found that the police in the UK falsely charge foreign nationals at a higher rate' (tinyurl.com/47c64jyh).

What about the Great Replacement Theory? Currently Muslims constitute around 8 percent of UK and European populations. It's true that rates are rising slightly against a backdrop of declining European birthrates. At current trends and on a reasonable estimate, Muslims would be a UK majority by 2180, in 150 years' time (tinyurl.com/mr42fvej).

A lot can happen in 15 years, never mind 150. Does anyone remember the hot-button social issues of 1876? Mass Polish immigration, recently a right-wing concern, reversed spectacularly when the Polish economy started outperforming the UK's. Any number of other reversals could occur. In any case, how do speculations about future demographics help today's poor, whom the right supposedly cares about?

People who voted for Brexit to stop immigration must be gutted that immigration then went up (tinyurl.com/7cw8ufas). They voted for 'sovereignty' and to 'take our country' back. But if England really is our country, how come we're only allowed to walk on 8 percent of it (tinyurl.com/eupd2p7j)? Why isn't the right angry about that? The rich own all the land because they stole it from our ancestors during the Enclosures and the Highland Clearances, and then passed laws to legalise their own robbery. People complain that foreigners are stealing their jobs. Why aren't they angry that the rich stole the entire world, forcing the rest of us into centuries of landless wage-slavery? Why does the right despise socialists, the very people who call out this crime against humanity and demand that we take our entire world back?

Could it be that prominent right-wing leaders aren't interested in challenging the guilty rich, who cause all our working-class misery? Could it be that they hope to *join* the guilty rich, by whipping up popular unthinking frenzy against hapless scapegoats in order to get their own snouts in the trough? Well, socialists have a simple answer for that. Abolish the trough. Capitalism, not immigration, is humanity's real enemy.

PJS

Dear Editors

The profit paradox: How capitalism's engine fuels its own replacement

CAPITALISM'S GREATEST irony is that the very force driving its expansion — relentless technological innovation — is also paving the way for its peaceful replacement. Each leap in technology makes it increasingly clear that our society possesses tools powerful enough to meet human needs directly, sustainably, and abundantly. As the means of production and communication become almost god-like in their capabilities, it grows harder to justify using them primarily to generate private profit rather than to serve the common good.

While a socialist transformation could have occurred long ago, today's technological landscape makes such a transition far easier. Automation, global communication networks, and advanced artificial intelligence have dramatically

reduced the barriers that once made large-scale social change difficult. As these technologies continue to advance, the path towards a democratic, worker-induced re-organisation of society becomes smoother still.

More and more workers around the world are recognising this reality. As they see machines capable of producing immense wealth with minimal human labour, they increasingly question why that wealth remains concentrated in the hands of a small capitalist class. This growing awareness is likely to inspire peaceful, democratic organisation on a global scale. In my view, the accelerating development of modern machinery could make such a transformation possible within the next thirty years.

MATTHEW SHEARN

One tweak needed

SOCIETIES IN every part of the world are currently organised around the same, single feature — a system of production driven by the search for profit. In other words, capitalist production, where most people work for wages while just a few scoop up the profit that the majority produces.

This system was progressive in the past — it promoted such a huge increase in industrial and agricultural productivity that every person in the world could now have access to all the goods and services needed for a reasonable life.

But a reasonable life for all is denied precisely because the system is driven by the profit motive. If there is no prospect of a profit, there is no question about it, there will be no production.

At the same time, it's a competitive system that inevitably forces individual capitals to expand or lose out to other capitals. But the competition is not (nor can be) subject to any overall planning, which results in the boom/bust pattern that has become a fact of life in the last 200 years, in which time capitalist production has come to predominate.

The need for expansion also results in war. Forget the rubbish about sovereignty and fighting for freedom. Modern war is all about markets, raw materials and transport routes.

And that inevitable expansion is becoming a major environmental threat too.

But hey! Don't despair. That 'one tweak' in the headline? Take the world's productive resources away from the minority and use those resources to produce for human need, not profit.

We know this sounds like a big ask, but remember, the world's workers already run production from top to bottom. It makes sense for them to run it in their own interest.

I READ Mike Foster's article, 'Proper Gander — Grand Designs', which appeared in the July edition of the *Socialist Standard* with interest. The point about Chatsworth House being built to 'communicate power' resonates with me as Derbyshire County Council's libraries have been used to deliver a dubiously named 'community membership pass', which promises free entry for two adults and six children.

As a library assistant for Derbyshire Libraries, I can't help but feel that we've been used in a publicity stunt to maintain the duke's prestige at his ducal seat. The booking and issuing of the tickets, managing waiting lists, taking numerous enquiries and calls each day have fallen on us when we're already stretched thin. The bureaucracy that this one scheme has created is staggering.

Derbyshire has some affluent areas, but there are a lot of economically deprived areas. I find it hard to act as a ticketing agent for a rich duke whilst many of the people who use my library are finding it difficult to survive in the current system. I've served families with children who are struggling with reading at school, and it's a joy to see them thrive after getting hooked by the right book. Another customer is living in mould-riddled rental housing and relies on using our free PCs to find a better place whilst having a sympathetic ear to talk to. That is the bread and butter of my job — not ticket admin for a duke.

On 17th July, I read on BBC News that schools and libraries will facilitate Queen Camilla's birthday book giveaway. Not right away, of course, but at Christmas. We can never expect a queen or a duke to understand the day to day lives of ordinary, working people. Nor will they act in our interests because that would clash with their interests as the upper class. Their paltry attempts at championing literacy are purely for public relations purposes. It's an insult.

We're meant to doff our caps like serfs when nobles and royals offer us scraps whilst offloading the admin on to overstretched public services. I won't wax lyrical about libraries being used to soften the image of aristocrats who maintain the status quo. It's all about communicating and maintaining power over the working class. It was working class labour that built Chatsworth House and its gardens, therefore we should be free to visit it at all times. The only way a true community membership can come to fruition is by having common ownership in a socialist society.

Name supplied

Fully automated *luxury* capitalism?

ELON MUSK has said it again. That money will eventually become meaningless. This time he also gave a date: 2036. In an interview with the editor-in-chief of the *Economist*, Zanny Minton Beddoes on 20 July (tinyurl.com/mysbpdp2), he claimed that in ten years' time advances in intelligent AI and robotics will have helped usher in an era of 'such amazing abundance' that money will have become meaningless. The work of production will be done by robots, leaving humans free to do work they enjoy — he gives gardening as an example — while having access to the abundance of wealth that the robots produce.

There may well be the technological advances he predicts but making something possible does not mean that it will actually happen. Under capitalism technological advances are only applied to production when they become the cheapest way of producing something. The complete robotisation that Musk envisages wouldn't be cheap. He himself mentioned the cost in terms of electricity usage and computer chips. As long as paying humans a wage to produce wealth for sale is cheaper, then that is what will happen, as it is now in almost every field of production and, given capitalism

continuing, we counter-predict still will be in 2036. In fact, insofar as robotisation did replace human labour and create a large pool of unemployed workers, that would exert a downward pressure on wages that would cheapen the cost of employing humans, so slowing down the application of robotisation to production.

Then there is the problem of how Musk's vision would come about. Minton Beddoes pressed him on this point, asking if he thought that it would be through the mass of displaced workers electing a left-wing government that would nationalise everything; which she implied was surely anathema to him as it was to the *Economist*. Musk evaded the question, re-asserting that there would be an abundance produced by AI-driven robots by 2036 and that this would lead to deflation unless something was done to maintain demand, as by the government writing cheques to provide everybody with a Universal High Income.

Quite apart from this meaning that there would still be money, it would require the election of a government that would do this. Unless, that is, he has in mind the cheques being written by him and the other tech bros. The obvious solution,

assuming that the predicted robotisation and abundance was to come about, would be either to hand out to people what they needed or (better) let them take it. But that would imply that the robots and the rest of the means and instruments of production had already become commonly owned. A fully automated luxury capitalism is not possible.

However, in suggesting that a fully-automated moneyless society of abundance could come about Musk has undermined the argument that capitalism is the only game in town. As we pointed out on one of our Facebook pages:

'Has Musk thought through the consequences of his "Money won't matter in 2036" prediction? With a moneyless free-access society with the ability to produce more than enough of what everyone needs, why should an elite continue to own the means of production and distribution, decide how these are used, retain power over humankind because of this ownership, and continue to enjoy immensely superior living standards compared to everyone else?' (tinyurl.com/33fhewbc).



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Halo Halo

YOU CAN'T say that! There's lots of things wrong with wanting and attempting to police language. Something guaranteed to shock and surprise is saying: I'm a socialist; I'm an atheist, I like churches. Oh, and cathedrals. Chapels not so much. Too functional, too severe.

Socialist says, I like mosques, synagogues and temples too but they're not so easily accessible. Now obviously it's not the reason for their existence that one likes, they are, after all, brainwashing centres and indoctrination edifices for despots. No, it's the aesthetic qualities, the enduring link to the class that laboured with their blood, sweat and tears to produce something long-lasting and magnificent in its grandeur and splendour or in its simplicity.

Churches are a bit like pubs, disappearing fast. The headline to a piece in the *Mail Online* of March 2025 said 'Britain's vanishing churches: More than 3,500 have shut in the past decade and been turned into mosques, nightclubs, luxury homes, pubs and even

swimming pools as congregations plummet.' And '... the Church of England has seen 400+ closures since 2010, it lacks a specific breakdown for the Catholic Church. The context mentions that the Catholic Church in the UK still has approximately 3,200 churches and that mainstream denominations are facing declines, but it does not provide a five-year sales figure for Catholic properties' (tinyurl.com/4ez2d9r2).

Once upon a time sold-off churches always seemed to become carpet warehouses.

In Australia, New South Wales, there is an example of a catholic church that, like a battleship, was decommissioned/deconsecrated in the nineteen thirties. Presumably it has, since then been used for capitalist purposes, rental, leasing, making money. It would appear that the church was merely 'resting' and was not a dead church. A group of LGBT Australians who had a contract to use the church, sorry, ex-church, were getting kicked out by whoever owns it, because

of a lifestyle incompatibility with 'religious groups' who objected to the 'offensive trade' taking place there (tinyurl.com/5ax6zb49). Offence can only be taken, not given.

Perhaps not quite the same as getting thrown out of a bar or public house for causing a disturbance, I've been thrown out of better places than this, you cry. Around the same time this LGBT group was being turfed out, the Roman Catholic Church said, "Hold my beer" and excommunicated at least 750 priests because of some malarkey that the Supreme Leader, Pope Leo XIV, didn't like. Don't do it, he said, but they did it anyway. It could also affect thousands of worshippers who have not been immediately expelled (tinyurl.com/yxydkxc8). The Society of St. Pius X wants to remain traditional but if you piss off the ones in power and they can subject you to sanctions then what are you to do? As the Australian group found out.

A socialist society will not preserve ex-religious buildings solely so that religious mumbo jumbo can take place in them. Instead, community decisions will decide what is the best purpose that these places can be put to for the greater good.

DC

Tiny tips

Money may not grow on trees, but according to Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT), it appears to be growing exceptionally well for a tiny fraction of Americans. In a recent post on X, Sanders renewed his long-running criticism of wealth concentration in the U.S. 'Never before have we had so much income inequality', he wrote. 'Last year, the bottom 50% saw their income go down by \$27, on average, while the top 0.01% gained \$2.9 million', Sanders continued. 'And the top 0.001%? They saw their income go up by \$20 million. In a single year. "Yes. We must tax the rich,"' ([Yahoo, tinyurl.com/y2vymxy7](https://yahoo.com/y2vymxy7)).

"Democratic Socialist" is to the Communist what "National Socialist" was to the Nazi, reality TV star and former Los Angeles mayoral candidate Spencer Pratt [sic] posted on X ([Fox News, tinyurl.com/vsp4av73](https://foxnews.com/vsp4av73)).

Zinn expressed the source of his motivations. 'I'm worried that students will take their obedient place in society and look to become successful cogs in the wheel- let the wheel spin them around as it wants without taking a look at what

they're doing', he said. 'I'm concerned that students not become passive acceptors of the official doctrine that's handed down to them from the White House, the media, textbooks, teachers and preachers' ([Portside, tinyurl.com/3yyd95c3](https://portside.com/3yyd95c3)).

... Petrograd's local Soviet government and Bolshevik Party organizations struggled to implement the Bolshevik Party program, fight domestic and foreign counterrevolutionaries, quiet labor unrest, and provide food, fuel, and education to the local population. The methods and strategies used by the government and party organizations to organize public life and fight enemies, domestic and foreign, not only preserved the infant Soviet regime but proved to be the first manifestation of what would become the one-party authoritarian Soviet political system (*The Bolsheviks Survive. Petrograd 1919. By Alexander Rabinowitch, tinyurl.com/3zmz8rmu*).

We emphasized, with Marx, that the proletarian revolution is not only necessary to overthrow capitalist rule but also to

change the proletarians, so that they become fit to transform the world. Through the experience of prolonged collective struggle and being forced to reinvent their social practices to survive, proletarians throw off 'the muck of ages' as Marx put it, the weight of capitalist and pre-capitalist ideology and practices. Fredo thinks it is utopian to put that much 'faith in revolutionary transformation of attitudes'. But isn't it utopian to think that the revolution can succeed without attitudes and social practices being thoroughly transformed? (*Internationalist Perspective, tinyurl.com/ya85fvj6*).

The fear of acting incorrectly, of causing harm, or of being criticized by others can become politically paralyzing. One interviewee captured this dynamic succinctly when she explained that she would rather refrain from acting than risk doing something wrong. Such statements reveal an important contradiction. The ethical demand to act responsibly can, under certain conditions, undermine political action itself. This is not because ethical concerns are inherently conservative. Nor is it because criticism lacks political value. The problem is rather that individualized responsibility offers a weak response to problems that are fundamentally collective (*Jacobin, tinyurl.com/2r9wbfp*).

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

UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

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

MIDLANDS

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

Yorkshire Regional branch.

For activity details contact: Fredi Edwards tel 07746 230953 or alternatively email fredi.edwards@hotmail.co.uk

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

SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

Kent and Sussex regional branch.

Meets 3rd Tuesday of month

On Zoom. To connect to a Zoom meeting, click <https://zoom.us/j/7421974305>

In person at Folkestone in Kent (CT19). For more details contact spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org or 07971 715569

South West regional branch. Meets 3rd Sat.

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China and capitalist property rights

ON 16 July British industrial capital's representative body, the CBI, gave its somewhat begrudging support to what it had called, on 16 May, 'an expensive option of last resort' (tinyurl.com/f8zmb67b), namely the nationalisation of British Steel. Despite their reservations about potential compensation costs and a (probably) valid fear of a negative impact on future investment, for the moment we can assume that industrial capital is okay with bearing the tax burden of a reported daily subsidy of £1.3m. In the 'national interest' of course (tinyurl.com/yc58wxjs).

Nationalisation might be welcome news for British Steel's 2,700 workers, but it is less than welcome in China, if we are to judge by the 17 July report on the *Global Times* website, one of the Chinese state's English mouthpieces (tinyurl.com/43xxmwz).

According to the site, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) is dead against this nationalisation. MOFCOM points out that British Steel is (was) a subsidiary of China's Jingye Group, and says the British government has undermined Jingye's 'legitimate rights and interests' and is severely damaging Chinese companies' confidence in investing in the UK. Somewhat in agreement with the CBI then. MOFCOM is also 'pledging to take strong measures to safeguard [these] lawful interests', although they don't go into details about what these measures might be.

It is clear from the article that the Chinese state supports Jingye's demand for compensation for its 'substantial financial investments in continuous operations [and] equipment upgrades' since 2020. There is also a clear statement that the state will defend the interests of any Chinese company whose UK investments are threatened in future. Again, a position with which the CBI doubtless concurs, and the type of position it would expect the British government to adopt should any of its members be threatened by some uppity foreign politicians.

Let's pause a minute though. Isn't the country concerned always referred to as 'Communist China' by the capitalist media? Run by the Chinese Communist Party? Filthy Marxists, every last one of them then.

Filthy Marxists pledged to defend the 'legitimate interests' of private property – after all, Jingye Group is a privately owned company with 40,000 employees. As it is privately owned, there is no share price but it claims an internationally recognised 'brand value' of almost £14 billion, putting



Credit: Adobe Stock

it in the top 4 of Chinese steel producers (tinyurl.com/nhe4sv5r).

So 'Sinified Marxism', a Marxism tailored to the Chinese context, is defending private property now. Understandable, given that 60 percent of Chinese GDP is created in the private sector. This is why the Private Sector Promotion Law came into effect in May 2025, 'promoting the private sector [...], strengthening legal protections and injecting fresh momentum into a key driver of the world's second-largest economy'. It 'aims to optimize the development environment for the sector, ensure fair market competition, and promote the growth of both the private economy and private entrepreneurs' (*Global Times*, tinyurl.com/k759m2dj).

We can assume that the CBI would be less begrudging in its support for such a law but it does somewhat contradict the Chinese constitution which tells us that: 'The socialist transformation of private ownership of the means of production has been completed' (tinyurl.com/54ss9784). Perhaps steel works aren't part of the means of production – could this be a case of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'?

Leaving that aside for now, what we can't quite understand, with all that capital washing about, is how that same constitution can state that 'the system of exploitation of man by man [has been] abolished'. Nor how, beginning slowly around the time the constitution was published (1982), billions of dollars of private capital have flowed into China in the form of foreign direct investment (FDI), peaking in 2021, when \$344 billion was invested. Could it be that the foreign capitalists and their fund managers all

failed to carry out due diligence, that none of them had studied the economic situation, that they had no idea that there is no exploitation in China, hence there is no possibility of their capital being able to return a profit, the sole aim of capital?

Answer? No, capital is only attracted to China to buy labour power in the expectation that it will generate surplus value – in other words, it goes only with the idea of exploiting the working class – the constitution is just so much tosh.

Let's take another example, again from the *Global Times* (3 March 2026). It discusses the state's plan to increase 'support for financial development by optimizing preferential tax regimes for funds and single-family offices, attracting global capital convergence. Hong Kong is projected to become the world's largest cross-border wealth management center in the coming years'. A single-family office, by the way, isn't for the average family, it's just for the ones that have so much money that they can afford to employ their own staff to manage their investments.

In other words, the Chinese state is trying to make it cheaper and more profitable for capitalists to gamble in HK's stock exchange casinos.

What the ruling clique in China has learned is that they have to do exactly the same as any other government – whether of the left or of the right. That is, create conditions in which capitalists are confident that they will be able to scoop up surplus value to their heart's content.

Quite how long private capital will put up with the Chinese Communist Party supping at its table remains to be seen.

BUDGIE

The Middle East powder keg explodes

Credit: Adobe Stock



PRESIDENT TRUMP probably didn't realise it but when the United States joined Israel in an attack on Iran at the end of February he lit a fuse that caused the Middle East powder keg to explode and with it his ridiculous dream of getting the Nobel Peace Prize. Since then, every single country in the region — Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Jordan, Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, Israel and even, on one occasion, Egypt — has been bombed. At stake has been control of the oil and natural gas resources of the region and the trade routes taking these and their by-products out to other parts of the world.

The Carter Doctrine

In his State of the Union message to Congress in January 1980 President Jimmy Carter read out what has since come to be known as the Carter Doctrine. It was a reaction to the Russian invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

He set out the reasoning behind the doctrine: 'The region which is now threatened by Soviet troops in Afghanistan is of great strategic importance: It contains more than two-thirds of the world's exportable oil. The Soviet effort to dominate Afghanistan has brought Soviet military forces to within 300 miles of the Indian Ocean and close to the Straits (*sic*) of Hormuz, a waterway through which most of the world's oil must flow. The Soviet Union is now attempting to consolidate a strategic position, therefore, that poses a grave threat to the free movement of Middle East oil.'

And concluded: 'Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force'.

The United States had already built up, and paid for, the military power of Israel

to be its proxy in the region. Following the overthrow of the self-styled Shah of Iran in 1979 in an 'Islamic revolution' which installed a hostile regime under Ayatollah Khomeini, Israel was the only powerfully armed state in the region that they could rely on. The US also had established a permanent military base in all the Gulf states except for Oman.

Taking out Iraq

In the end it wasn't military action by Russia that led to the Carter Doctrine being activated. By the beginning of the 1990s the state-capitalist regime there was collapsing, on the way to the final dissolution of the USSR in December 1991. It was the action of Iraq, whose leaders decided in August 1990 to invade and annex Kuwait in order to get free access to the Persian Gulf for its oil exports. This led to the First Gulf War in which Iraq was driven out of Kuwait by a United Nations authorised coalition led by the US. The coalition stopped after driving Iraq out of Kuwait, leaving the Iraqi regime under Saddam Hussein still in power.

The US continued to regard the Iraq regime as a threat to its interests in the region and in 2003 decided to finish the job on the pretext that Iraq was developing 'weapons of mass destruction', including nuclear ones. This time they didn't get UN support, only that of Tony Blair's Labour government. The Second Gulf War was a walkover and Saddam Hussein was quickly overthrown. No WMDs were discovered but a regime opposed to US control of the region had been eliminated.

This turned out to have an unintended consequence. The Saddam regime, which was Sunni Muslim, had repressed the Shia majority in the South as well as the Kurds in the North. With that regime gone, the exclusion of the Shia majority in Iraq ended, opening the way for the Shia Islamic regime in Iran to gain influence there. In short, it strengthened another regime that threatened US control of the Gulf.

The current line-up

Just as the US had established a string of bases in the Middle East so in effect did Iran, made up of Shia militias in Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen. There are Shias in other Arab states. Bahrain has a Shia majority while Saudi Arabia's oil fields are situated in a Shia majority area. Both dynastic regimes ruled by Sunni despots severely suppress any sign of Shia political activity.

The regime in Iran had always seen Israel as a key element in maintaining US domination of the Gulf, denouncing it as a

'Zionist entity' to be wiped off the map. This was couched in religious terms, but behind it were strategic considerations to do with control of the Gulf. Israel returned the compliment and regarded the Iran regime as an existential threat to be destroyed.

The scene, then, was set for any military confrontation. On the one side the US with military bases in friendly Sunni Arab states and Israel as its (unruly) attack dog and, on the other, Iran with proxy Shia militias in Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen. Israel took the initiative in June last year when it bombed Iran, resulting in a twelve-day war between the two states, in which the US joined to bomb nuclear sites in Iran.

The pretext was that Iran was developing a nuclear bomb. That might or might not be true but, in terms of the principle of 'might is right' that governs relations between capitalist states, it wouldn't be surprising if it was true. Iran would have an interest in having the Bomb just as the US would have an interest in it not having one. A nuclear Iran would shift the balance of power in the Middle East in its favour. Trump's claim that if Iran had the Bomb it would use it on Israel is most likely nonsense, especially as Israel is a nuclear power too. States acquire nuclear weapons not necessarily to use them but more as a deterrent and to increase their might, and so their bargaining power, in relations with other states.

Better than the Bomb

At the end of February, Israel and the US again attacked Iran for the same reason. Again, this has had an unintended consequence. Iran discovered that it has a better bargaining chip than the Bomb and one which it could actually use — the capacity to disrupt traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, the trade route which, as Carter noted, vital exports for the world economy of oil and natural gas from the Gulf have to take. Which it has used to its advantage. Trump has egg on his face while Israel is frustrated and may be tempted to have another go.

Socialists have always contended that wars break out when one side considers vital capitalist interests are at stake, over control of natural resources, trade routes, markets and investment outlets and strategic points and areas to acquire or protect these. The killings and destruction in the Middle East are a textbook confirmation of this.

ALB

The Big Issue at 35

IN MAY this year the *Big Issue* published its annual 'Impact Report', a celebration, it said, of '35 years of action and impact' (tinyurl.com/34rczuvb). Its CEO claimed that, over its existence, it had 'changed Britain's high streets' and provided 'innovative earning, learning and social investment opportunities', seen as 'the key to breaking the cycle of poverty'. It had been 'an exciting year', the report stated, and now the Big Issue Group was moving forward 'to build bold new solutions to tackle poverty and the deepening crisis amongst young people'. Its 35th Anniversary Dinner, held in March, raised over £200,000 and was attended by celebrities and politicians, most notably the *Big Issue* founder, Lord John Bird, and Angela Rayner, Housing Secretary in the current Labour government. Rayner was quoted as saying: 'The *Big Issue* provides the dignity of a hand-up. That opportunity to become economically active, build confidence, develop new skills and a sense of dignity. That's why I got involved in politics and it's why I'm a supporter of the Big Issue'.

Yet, together with all these optimistic words, the report also points out that, even after 35 years of the magazine, destitution still affects 3.8 million people in the UK. In so doing, it echoes the frustration expressed in a recent article by John Bird that 'three decades of the same conversation is exhausting'. Not that anyone would want to deny the report's other claim that *Big Issue* activity has helped support many individuals to live less deprived, less demeaning lives. It has given them the magazine to sell, advised them on finding employment and even assisting some in starting their own small businesses. This, however, is a drop in a very large ocean where, given the extent of poverty and homelessness in the society we live in, for every individual helped out of a dire situation, there is another (and others) waiting to be helped. The report itself provides evidence of this with its figure of 3.8 million people living in destitution, representing a rise of 148% since 2017.

Looked at closely, the experience of the *Big Issue* very much mirrors that of the older charity organisation known as Shelter. Founded in 1966, Shelter pledged to get rid of homelessness within 10 years. But, since then, the problem it set out to tackle, together with the poverty that underlies it, has remained endemic.

Shelter recently announced that 120,000 children in the UK are waking up homeless every day and that many thousands more are suffering housing and living conditions that make it impossible for them to live comfortable and fulfilling lives. There is no more talk of eliminating homelessness but rather a focus on the need to provide day-to-day assistance to those without a proper roof over their heads. Shelter even runs its own weekly lottery to raise funds for this. In a similar way the *Big Issue* report makes no mention of bringing homelessness to an end but sees its role as 'ensuring our impact continues for generations to come'.

None of this is to demean the dedication or good faith of those involved – many on a voluntary basis – in seeking to alleviate the hardships of those suffering the worst effects of poverty. So we should not, for example, question the sincerity of Greg Hurst of the Centre for Homeless Impact when, in a recent *Big Issue* article, he wrote that 'We must hold on to the belief that homelessness can be ended and look for evidence of proven or promising approaches that could be tried or tested right now'. But those seeing things in that light would at the same time do well to ask themselves why, regardless of their best efforts, the problems they are addressing not only never seem to go away but, depending on circumstances, may even get worse with the passage of time, so at best they are running fast to stand still. If they did ask the question, they might end up agreeing that poverty and homelessness are not caused by a dearth of houses or food being in short supply, and that, with the technologically efficient production systems that exist today, we could easily house, feed and clothe everyone on the planet. They might go even further and

accept that the reason this never actually happens is that, in the system we live under, goods are produced and services are provided not to satisfy human need but to make profit for the small minority of humanity who own or control the vast majority of the wealth, while the rest of us can only have access to what the money in our pockets will buy.

For some, especially in the more technologically advanced countries, the existing set-up may offer a stable existence, even if at the cost of having to work on a day-to-day basis in employment we may not like or conditions that make it unpleasant or insecure. But for others, in particular those who have the most poorly paid or insecure jobs or no employment at all, things are far worse, often a constant round of worry, instability and hopelessness. And no matter how much time and energy is put into trying to rectify this by the *Big Issue*, Shelter and other such well-meaning organisations, their efforts can do no more than scratch the surface of the problems they would like to solve. John Bird got it right – perhaps inadvertently – when, in a *Big Issue* article, he wrote that 'ideas of ending poverty are stuck in the realm of fantasy'.

So while the Big Issue Group's stated ambition to 'build a future where every individual can thrive' is nothing if not admirable and one socialists would share, in today's system of 'can't pay, can't have' that we call capitalism, it is frankly unachievable. It can only realistically be envisioned in the society socialists campaign for, in which nothing is bought or sold, production is for use not profit and there is free access for everyone to all goods and services.

HKM



Credit: @Louise Haywood-Schiefer/hschiefer.com/2018

Why Marx's critique of capitalism still matters

Marx's Capital is subtitled A critique of Political Economy. 'Political Economy' was an attempt to explain how capitalism works and how it might develop over time. Two of its main representatives were Adam Smith and David Ricardo and much of Capital is shaped by and addresses the works of those two thinkers. They shared a fundamental idea that we know as the Labour Theory of Value (LTV), but it had a major flaw: the inability to explain the source of capitalist profit. This flaw was only solved in Marx's Capital. Below, we discuss issues around the theory.

Part I: The Ricardo problem

TO UNDERSTAND Marx's contribution, you first need to understand the problem he inherited from classical political economy. *The classical labour theory of value* Adam Smith and David Ricardo both worked with versions of the labour theory of value. The basic idea: the value of a commodity is determined by the amount of labour required to produce it. The greater the labour-time required, the greater the value of the commodity.

This made intuitive sense and seemed to explain a lot about how markets worked. But it had a fatal flaw that Ricardo acknowledged but couldn't resolve. By the way, both of them treated 'labour' as the only commodity that the worker brings to market.

What Ricardo understood

Labour Theory of Value: Commodities exchange based on the labour time required for their production; labour is the source of value.

Class conflict: He recognised that capitalists, landlords, and workers have opposing interests; rising wages reduce

profits and vice versa.

Where Ricardo stopped (and Marx went further)

1. Naturalisation of capitalism

Ricardo: 'This is how economies function. Labour creates value, always has, always will.'

Marx: 'Value is specific to capitalism. In other systems like feudalism, labour does not take the form of value.'

Value can be defined as the socially necessary labour-time spent reproducing commodities within the capitalist mode of production.

2. Inability to explain profit's source

Ricardo's dilemma: If labour creates all value and workers are paid for their labour, where does profit arise? He couldn't resolve this contradiction.

Marx's solution: Workers are not paid for their labour; they are paid for their labour-power. Labour-power possesses a value, say 10, reflecting the cost of reproducing the worker (food, shelter, etc.), but normally generates more value, say 12, when consumed. It is the only commodity which can do this, This extra value is the source of profit.

Historical context: Franklin, Smith, and Aristotle

Benjamin Franklin contributed to this discourse by asserting that the value of a commodity derives from the labour hours needed for its production from start to finish. Franklin never developed it into a theory. He was writing about legitimising paper currency.

Adam Smith maintained a contradictory attitude to value, shifting between LTV and a cumulative theory whereby value was determined by wages + profit + rent. He noted that commodities exchanged at equal ratios (one beaver = two deer) but couldn't explain why this was so.

Aristotle was able to observe the LTV in action – he saw that commodities exchanged at stable ratios (5 beds = one house) but couldn't explain why this should be so. Marx paid him a compliment writing: 'Aristotle's genius is shown by [the fact] that he discovered, in the expression of the value of commodities, a relation of equality' (*Capital* volume 1 chapter 1) but the inequality inherent in a slave society blinded him to the source of that equality.

The profit paradox:

Here's Ricardo's problem: if, as he argued, commodities exchange at their value (determined by labour-time), and if labour itself is a commodity that exchanges at its value, then 'where does profit come from?'

Let's walk through it:

1. A capitalist buys raw materials at their value (say, \$50 worth of cotton yarn).
2. The capitalist buys labour from the worker at its value (say, \$50 for a day's work).
3. The worker transforms the yarn into cloth.
4. The capitalist sells the cloth at its value (the combined labour-time of producing the yarn + weaving it into cloth).
Total cost: \$100 (materials + labour)
Total revenue: \$100 (value of the cloth)
Profit: \$0

But capitalists do make profit. So either:

1. Capitalists are systematically cheating (buying below value, selling above value), or
2. There's something wrong with the theory.

Ricardo couldn't solve this. He acknowledged the problem but left it as an unresolved contradiction in his system. He died not being able to resolve it. He had his hand on the doorknob, but didn't turn it and walk through the door. This wasn't just an academic puzzle – it was the central question of political economy. Without solving it, you couldn't explain how capitalism actually worked.

The moralistic detour

Some socialist thinkers – particularly Pierre-Joseph Proudhon – seized on this contradiction and concluded: 'Capitalism is theft'. Workers are being cheated. The solution is to create fair systems of exchange where workers receive the full value of their labour.

Proudhon's famous declaration - 'Property is theft!' – captured this moral outrage. His solution was mutualism: worker cooperatives, mutual credit banks, and systems of direct exchange that would eliminate the middleman capitalist.

But this was a dead end. Why? Because it misdiagnosed the problem. It assumed exploitation happened because of cheating – bad actors violating the principle of equal exchange. Marx would show that exploitation happens within

equal exchange, as a structural feature of the system itself. This is the difference between scientific socialism and utopian reformism. Capitalists aren't villains – they're playing by the rules. The problem is the rules themselves. But on we go...

Part II: Marx's breakthrough - Labour vs. Labour-Power

Marx's genius was in recognising that Ricardo and Proudhon were asking the wrong question. The problem wasn't that capitalists were cheating. The problem was that labour itself isn't what workers sell.

The distinction

Marx distinguished between two concepts that everyone before him had conflated:

1. Labour-power: The capacity to work. This is what the worker sells to the capitalist – their ability to perform labour for a certain period of time.
2. Labour: The actual activity of working, which produces value when labour-power is consumed in the production process.

This distinction is subtle but revolutionary. Here's why it matters:

Labour-power as a commodity

Like any commodity, labour-power has a value – determined by the labour-time required to reproduce it. But what does it mean to 'reproduce' labour-power?

It means: 'the cost of reproducing the worker'.

To show up to work tomorrow, the worker needs: food, shelter, clothing, rest, healthcare, education or training.

The 'value of labour-power' is the socially necessary labour-time embodied in these necessities. In other words, it's roughly the cost of keeping the worker alive, healthy and able to work. There is an additional component too that covers the cost of raising the next generation of workers.

Let's say all this costs \$100 per day. That's what the capitalist pays in wages.

Labour as value-creating activity

But here's the key: when the capitalist consumes labour-power – when the workers actually work – they produce more value than the cost of their labour-power (Marx lays this out explicitly in Chapter 6 of *Capital* Volume I).

Let's say the worker works an 8-hour day and produces commodities worth \$200.

The capitalist pays: \$100 (the value of labour-power).

The worker produces: \$200 (the value created by labour).

The difference: \$100 (surplus value, appropriated by the capitalist. It will then be split up into profit, interest and rent, but that is immaterial to the present discussion).

Why this solves the Ricardo problem

Notice what just happened: Exchange occurred at value. The capitalist paid the worker exactly what their labour-power is worth. No cheating. No violation of market principles.

And yet, the capitalist extracted surplus value. This doesn't come from cheating – it comes from the unique nature of labour-power as a commodity.

Labour-power is the only commodity whose consumption produces more value than it costs.

This is the secret of capitalist accumulation. And it's why Marx's critique is fundamentally different from the moralistic critiques that came before. This is why socialists assert that class war originates in the employment process – the less a worker is paid, the more a capitalist accumulates in profit. It's not about being greedy or evil, or being good or generous. It's simply necessary to compete in the effort not to go out of business. The capitalist who refuses to extract maximum surplus value doesn't stay a capitalist for long- they get driven out by competitors who do. The system selects for exploitation.

Part III: Why a moralistic critique is dangerous

Marx didn't just disagree with Proudhon's analysis – he considered it dangerous to the working-class movement. Why?

1. It misdiagnoses the problem

If you believe exploitation happens because capitalists are 'cheating,' your solution becomes: 'Make capitalism fairer.'

This leads to reformist dead-ends:

1. Worker cooperatives that still must compete in capitalist markets
2. Ethical consumption campaigns
3. Appeals to capitalist conscience
4. Labour laws that tinker at the margins

These strategies don't challenge the fundamental structure. Even the nicest, most ethical capitalist must extract surplus value to survive in competition. If they don't, they go bankrupt.

Bad diagnosis = bad cure.

2. It lets capitalists off the hook

A moralistic critique says: 'Capitalists are bad people doing bad things.' This can lead to people organising to use violence and fantasising about using guillotines to get this or that capitalist, which will not solve any problems. The problem isn't the capitalists themselves, it's the system's rules that require the capitalist to behave in a certain way.

A moralistic critique is easy to deflect:

1. 'I pay above minimum wage!'
2. 'I offer great benefits!'

3. 'If you don't like the wage, don't take the job!'

Marx's structural critique is much harder to escape: 'Even if you're the most generous capitalist in the world, you are still extracting surplus value. If you didn't, you wouldn't be a capitalist. The system requires exploitation to function, regardless of your personal morality.'

3. It divides the working class

If exploitation is about bad bosses, workers start thinking:

1. 'My boss is actually pretty nice. Maybe I'm not exploited.'
2. 'We just need to replace the greedy CEOs with ethical ones.'

This fractures class consciousness. Workers waste energy trying to find good employers instead of recognising that all wage labour involves surplus extraction.

3. It obscures the source of power

A moralistic critique makes exploitation seem psychological – a matter of individual greed.

Marx showed that it's structural. Even a worker-owned co-op, operating in a capitalist market, must increase productivity and accumulate capital to survive. The system itself enforces exploitation.

Part IV: Conclusion: Why this still matters

Marx's labour/labour-power distinction isn't just an abstract theoretical point. It has profound implications for how we understand the economy and our place in it.

It explains profit without cheating

You don't need to believe in conspiracy theories about greedy capitalists. The system works exactly as advertised- and still produces exploitation.

It reveals the structural nature of exploitation

This isn't about bad individuals. It's about a mode of production that requires the extraction of surplus value to function.

It clarifies strategy

If exploitation is structural, you can't reform it away. You can't create 'ethical capitalism' or 'fair trade' your way out of it. You need to change the fundamental relations of production. In other words, capitalism can't be made nice – maybe nicer at the margins, but never nice. The extraction is baked into the structure.

It cuts through ideological mystification

When someone tells you 'the market is fair' or 'you're paid what you're worth,' you can ask: 'Then where does profit come from?'

The labour/labour-power distinction gives you the tools to see through the illusion of equal exchange and recognise the hidden extraction at the heart of the system.

DAN MULLENS

Capitalism's book-burning machines

Credit: Adobe Stock



THE MEDIA ask whether robots will steal your job, because 'AI apocalypse' shifts copy. While socialists ask what the machine was for in the first place, who owns it, who tells it what to do, and where the wealth goes.

Marx cared about machinery because he could see what it could do. A machine that handles the grinding, repetitive labour frees human beings from that labour. In a society run for human need, that means shorter hours, less exhaustion, more time to actually live. The technology isn't the problem but how capitalism applies it.

Capitalism doesn't use increased productivity to give us more free time. It uses it to produce more cheaply, undercut the competition, and pile up more capital. The contradiction isn't accidental.

When Marx writes about machinery in *Capital*, he deals with something far more interesting than its impact on employment. He's analysing the social relationship around the machine. A lathe or a loom has no innate capitalist purpose. It could serve entirely different social arrangements. What matters is who owns it and why it's running.

Under the current economic system, machinery becomes a tool for extracting relative surplus value. Technological development gets dragged into the fight over unpaid labour. But the machine isn't the enemy. The property relation is.

This logic is playing out right now in the second-hand book trade. AI firm Anthropic is one that we know has been buying up millions of physical volumes. Antiquarian books. Foreign-language texts. Out-of-print editions. They feed them into hydraulic guillotines, slice off the spines, scan the pages, and pulp what remains. The operation was called 'Project Panama', and they kept it quiet for a reason.

Why? Because the internet is now clogged with 'AI slop' – soulless machine generated text that poisons the models

if you train on it. So capital has turned to pre-2022 printed books as a 'clean' source of human prose. Brokers like ISBNdb now handle bulk orders from a thousand volumes to a million. The books aren't read. They aren't preserved. They aren't shelved. They're strip-mined.

This isn't a glitch. It's exactly how capitalism handles knowledge. The first-sale doctrine and fair use rulings provide the legal scaffolding. Physical carriers of human thought are fed into the inferno. The accumulated intellectual labour of centuries is treated as raw material to be extracted, enclosed, and monetised. Same impulse that cleared forests for timber. Same impulse that pumped the oil dry. The book isn't valued as culture or understanding. It's valued as a vector of data that can be fed into a model to generate return on investment.

Marx and the machine

When Marx examined machinery in *Capital* and in the *Grundrisse* 'Fragment on Machines,' he was describing precisely this. He wrote:

'The development of the means of labour into machinery is not an accidental moment of the development of capital.'

It isn't an innocent invention that society happens to pick up. It becomes part of capital's logic.

In the *Grundrisse*, Marx sketches a future where human labour increasingly consists of supervising and regulating an immense productive apparatus:

'Labour no longer appears so much to be included within the production process; rather, the human being comes to relate more as watchman and regulator to the production process.'

That's a tendency. But under capitalism, the tendency is subordinated to the expansion of value. The machine doesn't shorten the working day; it intensifies labour and throws people out of work. It doesn't liberate. It subjects human beings to the pace of the mechanism and the demands of accumulation.

The AI models trained on shredded books are no different. They aren't being built to reduce drudgery in any rational sense. They're being built to cut labour costs, automate creative and intellectual work, and secure competitive advantage. Whether they serve human wellbeing is secondary. Whether they serve profit is what counts.

Ownership and control

Socialists are not Luddites. We don't oppose technology. We oppose the class

ownership of technology. Socialism means common ownership of the means of production and distribution. Production for use, not for profit. Under that arrangement, machinery and automation would be directed democratically by the whole community.

The same scanning kit now destroying books could digitise the world's literature and make it freely available to everyone, without pulping a single volume. The same AI research could genuinely reduce unpleasant labour. But that requires changing the social relationship, not just tinkering with the machine.

Capitalism is structurally compelled to treat every resource, human labour, natural wealth, accumulated knowledge, as fuel for capital expansion. Book becomes data. Data becomes property. Property used to generate profit. The physical book is just an obstacle to speed.

What is to be done?

Reforms won't fix this. Tighter copyright law, stricter AI regulation, bigger fines will not alter the underlying compulsion.

The company behind Claude, Anthropic, agreed to pay \$1.5 billion to settle a copyright class action brought by authors and publishers. The settlement was finally approved by a US federal judge on 20 July 2026. Reuters describes it as the largest known U.S. copyright settlement of its kind.

So long as the means of production belong to a minority and operate for profit, capital will extract value from whatever is lying around, be it oil, cobalt or the printed word.

The only answer is the one Marx gave: replace capitalist production with socialist production. Common ownership means the machinery, the data, and the knowledge they process belong to society as a whole. Decisions about what to automate, what to preserve, and how to share the fruits of higher productivity would be made democratically, by the people actually affected.

Until then, expect more extraction. More enclosure of creative commons. More destruction of the cultural and material basis of life, all in the name of profit. The machine is not the enemy. The class that owns the machine is.

The task of the working class is to understand this, and to organise for the socialist transformation of society.

A.T.

Socialist Standard September 2026

The architecture of autistic order

WHEN I first got involved in left politics in the early nineties, an older comrade asked me how I thought we'd get to socialism. I drew a straight line with an arrow.

Socialism was at the end. That was the goal. The arrow might have to move around obstacles but it always pointed in the same direction. Simple. Logical. Honest.

He looked at me and said it wasn't as easy as that.

I never said it was easy. I just answered the question as clearly as I could. But I knew in that moment I was speaking a different language. So I started adapting. Fitting in. Saying things the way people expected them to be said.

It always felt contrived. It always felt illogical.

The arrow is still pointing in the same direction.

For decades the clinical establishment has looked at the autistic mind and seen deficit. Restricted interests. Social dysfunction. A fragmented internal life.

That is not my experience.

My experience is order. Sometimes relentless order. A mind that looks for the underlying machinery of things, the patterns, the systems, the internal logic that holds everything together or exposes

where it's broken.

What gets called disorder is usually just a different kind of order. One that doesn't fit the world capitalism built.

In a capitalist world, order is social and hierarchical. It runs on unwritten rules, reading the room, knowing your place. The rules shift depending on who's speaking, one standard for the CEO, another for the worker on the floor.

For an autistic mind, that's not order. That's chaos with a dress code.

My internal logic doesn't work like that. A rule is a rule. If a standard is valid it applies universally, not selectively, not based on status, not depending on who's watching.

When I point out a double standard I'm not being difficult. I'm identifying a structural fault. Hypocrisy is a mechanical failure of the truth.

This is why dialectical materialism made immediate sense to me when I encountered it.

Not because it confirmed what I already believed. Because it gave me a framework that actually followed its own logic. It explained injustice through material conditions and power rather than vague appeals to human nature. It replaced the baffling question of why people behave the

way they do with a structured analysis of how the system is weighted.

For a mind that struggles with the unspoken and the inconsistent, socialist theory functions as a decoder ring.

It doesn't ask you to read between the lines. It puts the lines on the table.

The friction is real though.

Capitalism produces chaos, economic, social, psychological. And an autistic mind trying to find logical consistency in a system built on contradiction will burn out. The disability doesn't come from inside. It comes from the collision between a systematic mind and a society that runs on inconsistency and calls it normal.

That collision is exhausting. I know that from forty years of trying to adapt to it.

What I'm arguing for isn't a world that accommodates autistic people as a minority group with special needs.

I'm arguing for a world built on consistent principles. Where the rules mean what they say. Where resources are distributed according to logic rather than power. Where the architecture of society actually follows its own blueprints.

That's not a neurodivergent fantasy. That's socialism.

The arrow is still pointing in the same direction it always was.

I still think the diagram was right.

PABLO



Credit: Adobe Stock

The White Rose and the Red

Credit: Adobe Stock



THE SUN is shining, again, although there is a breeze with rather a honed edge to it. I'm sitting under a tree in a West Yorkshire park next to my duo partner with his tenor banjo fully loaded. Around us are food and ice cream stalls, sideshows and charity tombola. Carried on that sharp breeze faint sounds of a fairground organ, however not so loud as to clash with us when we begin to play. People are beginning to stream in, children looking slightly bemused at two old guys sporting instruments.

It's the first of August, Yorkshire Day. It may seem to be an event dating back to time immemorial. Actually, it's just over 50 years old, founded in 1975, not by some ancient aristocratic family, but by the Yorkshire Ridings Society as a protest against local government reforms of 1974.

Still, a summer's day out is welcome, especially when it's free in these straitened times (are there ever any other such times?). At the invitation of the local civic society, who organise the event, this is our fourth year of being the in-house (in-park) musicians. This is why I'm sitting under a tree tuning my guitar with our extensive set list on the grass between us. I have a silken white rose tucked into the hatband of my panama, another pinned to my waistcoat. This may appear to be an incongruous situation for a socialist.

Even more so considering that by birth I'm a Lancastrian. Or perhaps not. This is an annual community event that happens

due to the freely given time of those in the local Civic Society. A demonstration that people will work without financial inducement, even in a society driven by the profit motive.

We are able to contribute our music, without recompense, due to many hours of work in practice. We don't need to do any of this as neither of us are, or have been, professional musicians. What makes those hours worthwhile is the appreciation we receive from those who enjoy what we play.

This is to attribute a meaning to value that transcends its economic definition related to the production and sale of commodities.

As to what we play; it's an eclectic mix of what is usually referred to, somewhat vaguely, as traditional music. I often introduce a performance by announcing we are going to play popular dance tunes of the '70s and '80s, the 1870s and '80s. Actually, the time span is very much broader than that, with some tunes certainly dating back to before the 17th century to other very venerable-sounding ones written in the 2020s. They are drawn from all over the UK and Ireland, some via America and Europe. Experience has shown they are popular with virtually all ages from pensioners to those bouncing along to the rhythms in their pushchairs. Somewhat unexpectedly we get a very positive response from teenagers who

might be expected to be somewhat dismissive of such ancient stuff.

This is a demonstration that there is far more that unites people than divides them. Ask, 'do you like folk music' and the answer is very often, no! When heard though as performed music, without a defining label, it is enjoyed. Which leads me to wonder if a political analogy might be drawn. Mention 'socialism' and all sorts of unfortunate associations, mostly inaccurate or downright wrong, are made. However, the prospect of a worldwide cooperative society that meets people's needs and isn't driven by profit becomes more widely acceptable and appealing.

This is not to argue for not using the word 'socialism', just as we don't shy away from 'traditional' or 'folk' when referring to what we play. However, it is worth being aware that words can have negative associations, even if undeservedly so.

Which brings me to another question. Should a socialist be celebrating what might be seen as a mildly semi-xenophobic 'Yorkshire Day'? As mentioned, by sheer chance and not of my choosing, I'm a Lancastrian by birth. In terms of where I've lived though, the Lancastrian bit was just the first eighteen years. I then migrated to the North East where I then lived for over 40 years, to which my son's Geordie-ish accent bears witness.

For fourteen years and counting I've been domiciled in South Yorkshire. The

Lancashire element only involves three generations. My great granddad on my father's side moved into the county from what is now North Yorkshire. As ever, economic circumstance was the driver, the need to go where the work was. The same motivation brought my mother's family from Devon via Wales to Lancashire. The other half of our musical duo was born and bred in what before 1974 was the West Riding and then became South Yorkshire. He has lived here almost continuously, so a true Yorkshireman then. Except both his paternal and maternal antecedents were drawn here, again by economic necessity, from elsewhere. It might not have been in small boats, but economic migration makes a mockery of claims to national, regional or local exclusivity.

So, celebrating the artificial confection that is 'Yorkshire Day' does not cause this socialist any difficulties. Rather it seems to me to have been a casual opportunity that I missed, its possibilities only occurring to me after the event. The persistent difficulty for socialists is meaningfully engaging with people to open a discussion about socialism and its possibilities. Public

meetings have their place, but they tend to attract mainly those who are, or close to becoming, fellow travellers already.

Those discussions are very important as being the likely source of active supporters or members. However, that leaves the much broader public of whom many, perhaps most, are disengaged from politics apart from the lottery of the ballot box. Perhaps something as simple as a T-shirt with a slogan might have sparked a conversation between tunes. Then, should the oft-asked question have arisen, 'Will people work unpaid?' I had the living example of how that happens even under the present strictures of capitalism.

I am not suggesting this is a sure-fire way of bringing people to socialism, but as a – if somewhat fleeting – initial engagement it at least would be part of widening awareness. How many other such casual opportunities are there?

Even someone being insistently 'proudly Yorkshire' on the day might respond to being challenged by the reminder that the Wars of the Roses were actually quarrels between ruling-class cousins, not counties. There is more that unites Yorkshire and

Lancashire than a difference in the colour of roses: An old slogan proclaimed, 'The personal is political'. The reverse, 'the political is personal', perhaps is suggestive of looking for ways to talk to people personally, people who perhaps rarely if ever happen upon propaganda, and casually disregard it if they do. How many have recently voted Reform UK because they are disgruntled, but don't really know why? Undoubtedly some who heard us playing at the Yorkshire Day event in the park. They can be dismissed as small-minded racists, which is the standard left-wing, even liberal, response.

As socialists it is our responsibility to engage with those who are disgruntled and try to persuade them that while their ire is understandable, even justified, their present response does not, and cannot, serve their best interests. Music may not change anyone's mind, but it might be a starting point in the huge task of bringing people to an understanding of the causes of their predicament and what needs to be done by them, and so many others, to finally resolve it.

D. A.

Why would anyone bother with voting?

Can't be bothered with voting?

Fair enough.

So let's do this instead!

WE KNOW, they're all rubbish. Red, blue, yellow, green, whatever colour that other lot are this week. They all want the same thing: to keep things ticking along for the people who own everything while the rest of us graft for a living.

Not voting will look like you don't care and these career politicians will use that as a mandate when the election is over.

Get down to the polling station. Take the pencil. And write **SOCIALISM** right across the ballot paper.

Why bother? Spoilt ballots get counted and published. Sitting on sofas doesn't. It tells them, you're not apathetic. It tells them you want the whole lot replaced, not just the faces at the top.

What we actually want: No bosses. No buying and selling of people's lives. The factories, hospitals, land, the lot; owned by all of us, run for all of us. That's socialism. Not state control. Not more welfare. Not reformism (tweaking the system) and hoping for the best. Actual common ownership.

None of the parties here are offering it. So don't pick one. But don't be silent either!

SPOIL IT PROPERLY. WRITE SOCIALISM.

Leaflet distributed during the election of the new Mayor of Greater Manchester in July.

What is a commodity ship?

ON 29 July Reuters reported that ‘thirty-nine commodity ships passed through the Bab el-Mandeb strait’. A ‘commodity ship’, what is that? Presumably a ship that carries commodities, but what is a commodity? According to Reuters, the ships were all carrying either crude oil or chemical products made from oil.

If you look through a paper like the *Financial Times* you will come across a page which, alongside a list of share and bond prices, shows the prices of ‘commodities’; besides oil and natural gas, such products as coffee, sugar, cocoa and wheat.

According to Wikipedia, a commodity is ‘an economic good, usually a resource that specifically has full or substantial fungibility: that is, the market treats instances of the good as equivalent or nearly so with no regard to who produced them. The price of a commodity good is typically determined as a function of its market as a whole. (...) Most commodities are raw materials, basic resources, agricultural, or mining products, such as iron ore, sugar, or grains like rice and wheat. Commodities can also be mass-produced unspecialized

products such as chemicals and computer memory. Popular commodities include crude oil, corn, and gold.’

In this sense, commodities are goods that have a single world price. The price of some of them is included in financial publications because financial capitalists speculate on how these prices move as well as on share and bond prices. The fact that their price is fixed by the world market puts countries which depend heavily on producing and selling them at the mercy of world economic forces, with dire consequences when the price falls.

This is a narrower use of the term than in the 19th century when a commodity meant anything useful that has been produced for sale on a market. This definition was shared by Marx. In fact the opening lines of Marx’s *Capital* are: ‘The wealth of societies in which a capitalistic mode of production prevails appears as an ‘immense collection of commodities’; the individual commodity appears as its elementary form. Our investigation therefore begins with the analysis of the commodity.’

As a commodity is something useful that has been produced for sale on a market,

it has an exchange-value in addition to its use-value. Not all useful things are commodities, for example things produced directly to satisfy some need or want, such as food produced by farmers to satisfy their own needs or taken from them to satisfy the needs of some exploiting class. Under feudalism and previous class societies most wealth — useful things — was not produced as commodities.

The two definitions of a commodity are not necessarily incompatible as one can be seen as a subset of the other and closer to the ideal form. However, for Marxian economics all commercial cargo vessels are commodity ships.

In socialism, wealth will not take the form of commodities as it will not be produced for sale but directly for use, both by other workplaces to produce their product and by individuals to use and consume. Ships will still transport natural resources and agricultural products from the part of the world where they were extracted or grown to another part where they will be used but they won’t be commodity ships, just tankers and bulk carriers.

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Class Struggle

Credit: BBC



SILENT CLASSROOMS with students reading line-by-line in unison, wary that any wrong action will lead to a swift reprimand probably isn't what we imagine secondary schools to be like. However, this approach has been taken in recent years, as Richard Bilton reports in *Britain's Strictest Schools* for BBC1's *Panorama*. The Athena Learning Trust runs six secondary schools in Devon and Cornwall with 6,500 pupils in total. On its website are syrupy phrases like 'High support and high ownership are at the heart of our ethos. At Athena, we are resolute in our pursuit of support, kindness, and integrity'. Such words sound particularly hollow to the students, parents and ex-teachers who are concerned about its tough stance on discipline.

As the documentary tells us, Athena Learning Trust has a 'two strikes' policy for when its students break the rules: a warning for the first breach and then being sent to detention for the second, called 'reflection'. Breaking the rules while in reflection leads to 'suspension': being barred from the school short-term. Such approaches are familiar, but in Athena schools, looking out of the window can be an infraction. One of the students tearfully explains the '321 focus' catchphrase, heard dozens of times daily, which is a (clumsy) acronym for 'face and observe the teacher in clearly upright silent attention'. There are strict expectations not just about students' attention, but also for punctuality and their uniforms being 'perfect'. We're told that children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are more likely to behave in ways which challenge the rules, although Government Adviser on behaviour in schools in England Tom Bennett says people with conditions such as ADHD need a 'calm, safe, dignified environment' and that tight discipline supports this.

Having a lot of regulations to breach has meant that a lot of punishments have been issued. The programme states that Athena's Ilfracombe school has around 1,000 suspensions a year, almost five times higher than the average across England. One of the parents interviewed for the documentary describes how his daughter got into a cycle of going from reflection to suspension repeatedly, therefore missing out on what was being taught in the classroom. He and others attended a drop-in session to voice concerns, arranged by *Panorama's* producers, which Bilton says attracted more people than anticipated. Those interviewed for the programme aren't short of adjectives to describe Athena's regime: 'authoritarian', 'cruel', 'dystopian', 'robotic', 'abusive', 'almost militaristic' and 'a bit like a dictatorship'. Athena's management didn't agree to be interviewed and instead issued a statement.

Athena is an ancient Greek goddess associated with wisdom and handicrafts, both appropriate to schooling. She's also associated with warfare, perhaps reflecting her namesake's regimented methods. Schools with reputations for lax standards of behaviour and low exam results were taken over by Athena because it was acknowledged that changes were needed. The stringent policies covering discipline were introduced because the demographic of 'white underprivileged people near the coast' is hardest to teach, Independent Councillor James Ball says he was told by Athena staff.

Bilton asks whether Athena's approach has been beneficial. Its schools mostly have good outcomes from Ofsted assessments and exam results have improved. But according to former Athena teacher Robin Johnson, the children have a 'joyless education', and students say they find the ethos 'depressing'. As another ex-teacher says, when children have come to

hate school, this 'can't be good, no matter what their GCSE results are'. Some parents have decided to educate their children at home instead.

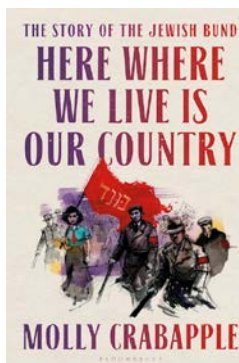
This summer, hundreds of people attended public meetings protesting against the schools' practices, and 'parent power won', says Bilton. Athena Learning Trust is being disbanded, as we're told towards the end of the programme, its footage having been recorded before this was announced. CEO Ben Parnell has resigned and the Department For Education will monitor Athena to implement changes until its schools are transferred to other trusts.

Athena has operated in the academy system, as a not-for-profit charitable trust. While organisations which run academy schools are still funded and regulated by the government, they aren't overseen by the local council, and so they can be run in different ways to state schools. More than 80 percent of secondary schools in England are academies, with other frameworks in the rest of Britain. One criticism of trusts which manage multiple academies (like Athena) is that decisions are made in some centralised head office distant from the schools, and therefore don't fully consider local concerns. They are likely to take into account the interests of any financial backers, which could include businesses, other educational establishments, faith groups or voluntary groups. While the academy system isn't a 'privatisation' of education, it has made schooling more corporate in how it is structured.

This system is an attempt to make education run within the constraints of capitalist society. While Athena's methods may have been extreme, they were a response to the difficulties of the circumstances the schools found themselves in. One consideration not explored by the documentary is the number of students in each class. Large class sizes are a result of schools not being able to afford the staff or the room to have more classes which have fewer people. Smaller class sizes would mean that more time could be spent with each student, personalising their learning and reducing the likelihood of distracting behaviour. But as resources are rationed by money, large classes are the norm and discipline becomes a more pragmatic option. This doesn't excuse Athena for the harm its approach caused to some of its students, although in a way it teaches them what to expect once they leave school for wider society which also stifles learning with unaccountable rules and the threat of punishment.

MIKE FOSTER

Anti-Zionists



Here Where We Live is Our Country. The Story of the Jewish Bund.
By Molly Crabtree.
Bloomsbury Circus. 2026.

THE JEWISH Bund was a Jewish workers' organisation founded in 1897 in Vilnius (called Vilna in this book), today the capital of Lithuania but then part of the Russian Empire. Its official name in Yiddish, the Germanic language spoken by most Jews in Russia, was the *Algemeyner Yiddisher Arbeter Bund* (General Jewish Labour Union). It was the largest constituent organisation represented at the later founding of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP), the equivalent of the German Social Democratic Party,

They were known simply as the Bund, its members were Bundists and its doctrine Bundism. They claimed that only they should organise Jewish workers in Russia. Their immediate aim was the establishment of a democratic republic in Russia with cultural autonomy for Yiddish speakers, with socialism as the longer-term aim after Russia had passed through capitalism. Other Russian Social Democrats, including many of Jewish background such as Trotsky and Martov, argued that all workers in Russia, whatever their background or language, should be organised in a single all-Russia party.

When the issue came up at the RSDLP congress in 1903-4 and the Bundists' claim was rejected, they walked out. This was a fateful decision as it meant that, in the more famous vote on how the party should be organised, Lenin and his supporters won and so got to be called 'Bolsheviks' (the majority) as opposed to those who lost the vote who came to be called 'Mensheviks' (the minority). The Bundists were opposed to Lenin's organisational principles, and had they not walked out Lenin's supporters might have ended up being called the Mensheviks.

The Bund's policies and tactics were close to those of the Mensheviks and it would not be entirely unfair to describe them as Yiddish Mensheviks. Their mass basis was Jewish workers living within the 'Pale of Settlement', the part of the Russian Empire which covered most of Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine as well as the whole of what is now Belarus and Moldova and to which ordinary Jews were confined.

After the First World War, when Poland

was reconstituted as an independent state and 3.3 million Jews made up about 10 percent of the population, the Bund was active in Polish politics. Its opponents amongst Jews were the religious parties and, above all, the Zionists. In fact they were bitter enemies, the Zionists proposing the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine and the Bundists proposing full civil and social rights for Jews within Poland. Hence the Bundists' slogan — and title of this book — 'here where we live is our country'. They regarded themselves as Poles who happened to be Jews. Unfortunately for them, as Crabtree recounts, Polish 'ethno-nationalists' as they would be called today didn't agree and by the late 1930s the Polish government was just as officially antisemitic as neighbouring Germany under the Nazis.

As for those who ended up in Russia, the Bolsheviks banned the Bund in 1921. Some Bundists joined the Bolshevik Party but most of them were executed in Stalin's purges in the 1930s.

Crabtree's book is not a scholarly study of the Bund but an account based on what happened over the years in various places and to various personalities, especially her great-grandfather who had been a Bundist in a small town before emigrating to the United States in 1904. Hence the subtitle of her book, the 'story' (rather than the history) of the Bund. It makes for an easy and fascinating read. Disturbing too, in that many Poles, Lithuanians and Ukrainians joined in the extermination of the Jews in the Second World War.

Crabtree doesn't disguise her own, left-wing political views and her opposition to what the Israeli state, currently controlled by extremist Zionists, is doing in Gaza. She quotes from Bundist publications predicting what would happen if ever a Zionist state was established in Palestine: the Jews would become the oppressors and the previously established population the oppressed. Which is exactly as it has turned out.

She realises that, with the social basis of the Bund's support exterminated, after 1945 the Bund had no future and was destined to die out, in fact has aged out with the last surviving militants. Even so, she says it left a legacy. It provides Western Jews with a secular, alternative Jewish tradition to the nasty ethno-nationalism of Zionism. In fact, half the Jews in the world have done what the Bundists advocated: they have regarded where they live as their country. We would justify not being Zionists in a different way: workers should unite with other workers living under the same state to win political control there to dispossess the capitalist class. Where you live is

where you should wage the class struggle.
ALB

Anti-fascism



Bye Bye Blackshirt.
By Mark Krantz.
Bookmarks.
2026. 114pp



This book is a well-researched account of the opposition to Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF) as that grouping rose to prominence in the 1930s on the back of similar movements in Italy and Germany. It offers a powerful evocation of the context and the atmosphere of the time it investigates, focusing in particular on the various ways in which, up and down the country and mainly in the years 1934-36, BUF activities were violently countered by left-wing groups and their supporters.

Taking their cue from Hitler's Nazi party, Mosley and his BUF were virulently anti-semitic, portraying Jews as a malignant force in society — the enemy-in-chief. In a period of severe economic depression, they found a significant number of recruits among frustrated workers looking for 'others' to blame for their plight and sense of hopelessness. In London and up and down the country (for example Manchester, Newcastle, Glasgow, Gateshead, Leeds, Swansea, Plymouth, Gillingham), the BUF organised large-scale meetings, both indoors and outdoors, often with Mosley at the helm and sometimes bringing along several thousand supporters dressed in black shirts who paraded slogans like 'Perish the Jews' and were primed to deal violently with protestors. At one of their rallies in 1934, Mosley announced that 'Jews more than any single factor are undermining the prosperity of the British people today'.

The anti-BUF protests that took place were organised mainly by the Communist Party and the Independent Labour Party who themselves encouraged violent means to prevent meetings taking place or speakers being heard. Their tactic was what the author calls 'direct confrontation and disruption'. So at a meeting in Gillingham in 1934, when Mosley appeared outside the meeting hall, we are told that 'he was spat upon and missiles were thrown, including bottles', and likewise, in Liverpool, he was 'knocked unconscious by stones thrown at his head'.

Police were present at these events in numbers with a brief to facilitate the marches and meetings on 'free speech' grounds and thereby effectively siding with the Fascists in trying to prevent or ward off protests. The result was that protestors themselves were often dealt with violently by the police and arrested and charged with public disorder, in some cases leading to prison sentences.

At the most well-known of these events, 'The Battle of Cable Street' in October 1936, Mosley and his followers set out on a provocative march through what was known as the Jewish quarter of the East End of London. But the thousands of police seeking to ensure the BUF's passage found themselves outnumbered by larger numbers of political opponents and locals who had put up barricades, mainly consisting of furniture, to block the procession. They charged to clear the way but were met, the author tells us, 'with milk bottles, stones and marbles' and 'a brick went clean through the window' of Mosley's car'. The police gave it up as a bad job and Mosley and his followers had to turn back. The book describes the Battle of Cable Street, perhaps a little over-excitedly, as 'the apex of the mass anti-fascist protests that stopped the advance of fascism in Britain'. And it is certainly true that, following this, support for the BUF began to wane and, by the time war broke out three years later, it had gone down dramatically, especially as it was seen by the British state as a potential ally to the Nazi enemy.

The book's key argument is that the reason why the threat of a fascist takeover in Britain was never realised was the vigorous physical opposition it faced from left-wing forces and those who joined them. And this must indeed have had an effect. But it must be open to question whether, even it had not happened, any attempt at a violent takeover of the state by Mosley and his deluded followers could have had the same kind of success as Mussolini's forces had had in Italy in the previous decade. Though the BUF presented itself as a threatening force, those workers willing to follow Mosley constituted a very small percentage of the population and would probably not have been capable of overturning the well-established system of capitalist democracy that existed in Britain, nor of setting up a repressive right-wing dictatorship as in Italy and Germany.

The writer also draws comparisons between Mosley's movement in the '30s and the current right-wing populism in Britain stirred up by such loathsome individuals as Nigel Farage and Tommy Robinson. Will these be any more

successful than Mosley in fomenting division and hatred among workers? It remains to be seen. But it has to be observed that the alarmism about this that *Bye Bye Blackshirt* evinces is typical of the longstanding Trotskyist belief in impending catastrophe and the hope that fear of this will cause workers to rally to the leadership of a vanguard party of the left to rescue them from the crisis and assert its own control. Such is the Trotskyist concept of 'revolution from below', which is entirely at odds with the need for a conscious spread of socialist understanding leading to democratic political action to establish a true socialist society of common ownership and free access – the real 'revolution from below'.

HKM

Spain



What Have You Done For Victory? A Cultural History of the Spanish Civil War.
By Jo Labanyi.
Reaktion books.
October 2026.
490 pages.

This year is the 90th anniversary of the outbreak of the Spanish civil war when a part of the armed forces under General Franco revolted against the Popular Front government elected earlier in the year. It ended three years later with 600,000 dead and victory for Franco and the rebels.

This anniversary has seen the publication of a number of books on the subject including this, a detailed blow by blow account of the culture wars that preceded,

accompanied and followed the war. It has a useful introductory chapter setting out the events leading up to and the course and outcome of the war.

The Franco side rested largely on the big landowners and the Church, both of which saw their privileges threatened by the Popular Front government, one of whose declared intentions was to break the landowners' stranglehold on the countryside. The rebellion was not supported by the capitalists; they also saw the landowners as their enemy. Openly capitalist parties, 'radicals', 'republicans' and 'progressives', were part of the Popular Front.

The government said it wanted a 'parliamentary democracy'. The 'Communist' Party said that that was their aim too but, as supporters of the Stalin dictatorship in Russia, what they were really favouring was state-capitalist Russia's foreign policy of trying to prevent Germany gaining a foothold in Spain.

The anarchists and the syndicalist trade unions were opposed both to 'parliamentary democracy' and to the Stalinists. Their aim was a revolution to destroy the state. Their attempts to organise production without capitalists or money confirmed that this could be done but were never going to last whichever side won.

There never was working class unity for 'parliamentary democracy' and the course of the war brought the bitter antagonism of the rival factions to the surface with mutual charges of murder and betrayal.

In the end the working class lost everything they had before. Franco's victory ushered in thirty-six years of savage repression of the working class, deprived of elementary political and trade union rights.



Amin, Africa and the world

THE WAY to stop understanding of events is to show them as resulting from personal misconduct or mismanagement by those in charge. Had Hitler not been mad and bad, the Second World War would never have happened. Stalin's treacherousness made Russia what it is. But for a succession of weak and untrustworthy leaders, the Labour Party would have brought us all to the Promised Land. This view of history means we are perpetually invited to look at figures idiotic and corrupt, and put all the blame on them. Without doubt they are all as objectionable as stated, but that is not the answer. The high chairs in which these characters sit are provided by capitalism, and at some time of need each appeared to be the ideal occupant.

The special place of buffoon-turned-villain is held at present by President Amin of Uganda. Since his regime began it has been characterized by killings, culminating in the 'Makerere massacre' of over 100 students in August this year. It has included the deportation of Asians in 1972, and a series of international incidents; in July there was a confrontation with Kenya, and on the 28th July Britain broke off diplomatic relations with Uganda. There have been attempts at

uprisings and to assassinate Amin. On 1st August The Observer had an editorial headed 'Getting rid of Amin'. (...)

The balance of power in Africa is between the growing and aspiring ruling classes of the states there, their deals for aid with bigger nations, and the bigger nations' own need for oil and minerals for commodity production.

In this balance, the grotesque Amin is entirely dependent on his sponsors. The continuation of the Kenyan oil blockade in July could have caused his downfall, and from the viewpoint of his Arab allies he is unreliable and disposable; no doubt their attitude is like Samuel Pepys's — 'whether it will be better for me to have him die, because he is a bad man, or live, for fear a worse should come'. Meanwhile, workers in Uganda and countless other countries live not only under tyrannical regimes but have the prospect of being fodder for wars, in which the enemies are a matter of permutation. This is the result of production for profit. It does not have to go on.

(Socialist Standard, September 1976)

Action Replay

Get your **kit** on

LAST YEAR an American athlete suffered an unfortunate mishap in a 400 metre race, when his penis appeared from his shorts. He struggled to push it back in, and did indeed win the race.

This illustrates the point that sportspeople often need to wear rather brief outfits that do not impede their movements. And, of course, it is mainly women who have to put up with media attention to such matters.

For instance, in the recent Commonwealth Games, there was much hoo-ha about the dresses worn by the Australian netball team. The dresses tended to ride up at the slightest movement and the players had to keep tugging them down. The players, however, seemed more blasé about this than some of the supporters. It has been suggested, though, that girls might be put off playing the sport if it means wearing inappropriate outfits.

A few years ago Norway's female beach handball team were fined because their players at the European championships had worn shorts instead of bikini bottoms, as specified in the rules. But then the rule book was changed to allow shorts, with no mention of bikini bottoms.

Men players, incidentally, had to wear shorts that were at least ten centimetres above the knee.

In Action Replay for June 2011, we commented on similar issues, including the

requirement that women beach volleyball players must wear bikini bottoms with a maximum size width of seven centimetres.

These issues have certainly not gone away since then. The European Broadcasting Union recently issued guidance about sexualising images of female athletes. This included avoiding low camera angles that can result in compromising scenes, for instance of long jumpers or pole vaulters,

and also slow-motion replays that serve little technical purpose.

According to one long jumper, some camera angles may have 'serious long-term effects on [an] athlete's mental health', with abuse on social media taking place.

The incident mentioned in our first paragraph was shown in high-definition replays, but clearly it is women who are subjected to the most unfortunate experiences in connection with sports outfits. A reflection of the sexualisation of women in society, sadly.

PB



Credit: Adobe Stock

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.

September 2026 Events

World Socialist Movement online meetings

Friday 4 September 7.30pm

What happened in August?

General discussion on events last month

Friday 11 September 7.30pm

Sudan – Who profits from the civil war?

Speaker: Richard Botterill

Friday 18 September 7.30pm

The market as prison

Why gradualist reformism is impossible.

Speaker: Adam Buick

Friday 25 September 7.30pm

How bad is world poverty? And can capitalism solve it?

Speaker: Howard Moss

Socialist Party

Physical Meetings

LONDON

Sunday 27 September 3pm

Andy Burnham: Same Horse, Different Jockey

Speaker: Graham Gluck

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

WIGAN

Saturday 12 September, 11.00 am on

Wigan Diggers Festival

The Socialist Party will have a stall at this event
Gerrard Winstanley Gardens, The Wiend, Wigan town centre, WN1 1PF

CARDIFF

**Street stall every Saturday 1pm-3pm
(weather permitting)**



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.

Drinks Stop

THIS COLUMN has talked previously about the perils of being your own boss. I focused on a doughnut and coffee shop that had opened in my area and the difficulty it was likely to face in surviving. What happened after that was, following the expected lull in summer trade from its largely student clientele, it closed for a break and then it never reopened. Now, just round the corner from where the doughnuts are no more, a new business has opened up. It's a sort of general store with the name 'Drinks Stop' emblazoned across its front, having taken over what had been a longstanding ironmongers, a shop that was much loved by the community and whose disappearance was much lamented when its owner retired.

The furore

What it would then become was the subject of much local discussion, and that exploded recently when 'Drinks Stop' opened. Some on the local Facebook forum have given it approval because it at least meant that the premises were in use again. But the majority have given it a decisive and, in some cases, scathing thumbs down. Partly because much of what it's selling simply reproduces the stock of another convenience shop barely 50 yards up the road, but mostly because of the new shop's particular appearance. Its façade is shiny black plastic panelling with bright yellow lettering that completely covers the original corner-shop period frontage with its curved glass windows and ironwork entrance. Comments about it on social media have included 'ugly and inappropriate', 'an 'eyesore'', 'a carbuncle', 'a blot on the landscape', 'an utter abomination', and – even – 'it looks like a sex shop'. A more 'moderate' objection has been that its appearance is just out of character with the neighbourhood's traditional architecture, with someone observing 'it might not be so bad if it were one of a whole stretch of shops with different facades, but, as it stands, it really is an eyesore'.

Success or failure?

Whatever the case, just like the failed doughnut shop, an enormous amount of time, energy and expense has gone into converting the original premises, both inside and out, to what it is now. Yet, if



the social media furore is anything to go by and translates into people shunning it, the odds seem to be against it doing enough business to be successful. And if that happens, the family who've opened it will see the enormous effort they've made to be their own boss come to nothing and they'll be forced back into the situation of looking for employment and trying to find someone else to be their boss. Which in fact, so the statistics show, is what happens to the vast majority of workers who seek an escape route from the job market and the tyranny of employment by setting up on their own. Even if they undertake market research first and some do – though maybe the 'Drinks Stop' proprietors didn't – that doesn't remove the risk of their venture failing. In reality, it is impossible for them to know with any kind of certainty whether their new business will 'pay', given the uncertainty and unpredictability of the economic system we all live under, which defies the best laid plans of humans and which even governments can do little to control.

So, as things stand, 'The Drink Stop' will be competing with the other store we have mentioned just up the road. It may manage to capture some of its business, but, since the clientele overall is unlikely to increase, it seems improbable that both will survive. It's not difficult in fact to imagine that the two stores will end

up doing each other down with both eventually closing their doors – and this also in view of the additional fact that there are two other supermarkets, big-name ones (Tesco and Sainsburys), less than ten minutes walk away.

Dog-eat-dog or human connection?

Standing in the street looking at these two local shops, the thought that comes to my mind is why do we put up with (and even support, as many do) a system that has at its heart – and on a colossal scale the world over – an ethic of dog-eat-dog competition and whose inevitable outcome is waste and human frustration? After all humans are equipped for cooperation and connection to one another, even though they (we) are currently stuck in a social system that promotes competition and selfishness. Why instead don't all of us who are forced to sell our energies to an employer for a wage or salary throughout most of our lives get together and act consciously and democratically to put an end to that dysfunctional system and opt instead for the moneyless, wageless society of free association and free access that we call socialism?

HOWARD MOSS