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US WAR ON IRAN THE FALLOUT



Epic Fury – the old colonialists attempt to reconquer Iran P5

Europe weakened by Iran war P9

Genocide in Palestine - a testing ground for Iran war P13

The General Strike - 100th Anniversary P17

THE OLD GANG - The powers and purpose of the Privy Council P21

Destroying Labour is in the interests of ruling class P26

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CONTENTS

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|---|
| 4 | ■ The West in crisis
by Frieda Park | 26 | ■ Destroying Labour is in the interests of ruling class by Gary Lefley |
| 5 | ■ Epic Fury – the old colonialists attempt to reconquer Iran
by Uri Cohen | 30 | ■ Averting climate catastrophe
by Brian Durrans |
| 9 | ■ Europe weakened by Iran war
by Simon Korner | 34 | ■ Aftermath of regime change in Bangladesh
by Pat Turnbull |
| 13 | ■ Genocide in Palestine - a testing ground for Iran war
by Leila Ryan | 38 | ■ Tam McFall - Working-class leader and internationalist (21 July 1946 – 26 December 2025)
An Appreciation by Brian Filling |
| 17 | ■ The General Strike - 100th Anniversary
by Kaye Forrester | | |
| 21 | ■ THE OLD GANG - The powers and purpose of the Privy Council
by Clare Bailey | | |

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The increasingly reckless attempts of the United States to retain its global hegemony through war and coercion, are exemplified in its attack against Iran, alongside its aggressive comrade in arms Israel.

The Iran war

In this issue we consider the fallout from the war. Frieda Park, in *The West in crisis*, points to a number of global trends which have been exacerbated by war. These include the increasing unreliability of the US as an ally and mistrust of it as a partner. This can only increase moves by countries, especially of the global south, to find ways to circumvent the dollar and the stranglehold it exerts on trade and finance. The war confirms that the US, whose position is being increasingly challenged, is responding with greater aggression and is more dangerous than ever.

The implications reach to every corner of the globe as fuel and fertiliser supplies are affected and the poorest will suffer more than the better off. However the political crisis is most profound among allies of the US who are locked into supporting its increasingly extreme, tactics. Simon Korner explores the impact of this on European powers in, *Europe weakened by Iran war*. He analyses the economic, political and military stresses they are experiencing trying to maintain subservient support for the US. This is also causing differences to open up between those countries as they try to gain relative advantage in the current situation and is especially true of the two major powers in the EU – Germany and France - who are now seeking to exert military power within the bloc. It is a fiction that European powers are not involved in the war. Although they want to create some political cover for themselves they have (apart from Spain) allowed US forces to

use their bases and therefore are culpable in the aggression.

Bizarrely they do this by trying to paint Iran as the aggressor, as Uri Cohen points out in *Epic Fury – the old colonialists attempt to reconquer Iran*. The Iranian response to the aggression was not just predictable but was set out by the Iranian leadership prior to the attack by the US and Israel. Yet the US seemed unprepared for Iran's effective defensive reaction. He explores the historical relationship between Iran and those colonial powers who have sought to dominate it and extract its oil wealth. External interference in Iran's affairs, including the overthrow of the democratically elected Mosaddegh government in CIA- MI6 coup, laid the basis for the current Islamic regime as liberal and socialist alternatives were suppressed. Yet as he also points out Iran is country with a complex history and one which is resisting the current attempts by the US to impose its domination.

It is too early to say the exact significance of Trump's decision to go to war in Iran, but it certainly is sending shockwaves through the West and beyond. Meanwhile China, though it will be adversely affected in the short term by the war in the longer term will be able to constructively develop its economy and will show itself to be a more reliable partner to countries across the globe. If the US is trying to weaken China through curbing its oil supply from Iran through the war, in fact it may have the opposite effect in the longer run.

The British State at work

In *100th anniversary of the General Strike* Kaye Forrester points out that the strike of 1926 is still the only general strike to have taken place in British labour movement

history. Why this should be the case is one of the important historical lessons which should be explored about the nature of our movement, but the article also draws a number of other key lessons. Firstly the use of the state to attempt to crush the strike. Secondly the inability and unwillingness of the TUC leadership to lead the strike - eventually selling the strikers out. Thirdly the power of working class solidarity and action. How in practice workers could run society without capitalists.

The overt hand of the state in all its forms was used against the strikers but state power isn't always so obvious. Clare Bailey takes up this issue in *The Old Gang - The powers and purpose of the Privy Council*. The Privy Council, comprising leading politicians and others from the establishment dates back hundreds of years, but its powers are still very much in use to circumvent parliamentary democracy through Orders in Council. These can and are used in time of war to deploy troops and may be used in times of crisis in civilian life too. Tony Blair used these powers to send British Troops into Iraq, for example. The powers were used by Margaret Thatcher to ban trade union membership at GCHQ. And, they were used to prepare emergency powers during the General Strike.

The Privy Council effectively rules over the strategically significant remains of the British Empire, the British Overseas Territories, which among other things shelter the financial offshore havens such as the Caymen islands and the British Virgin Islands.

Yet the operations of the Privy Council remain secretive. The full texts of Orders in Council are not available and some are completely inaccessible. Such is the hidden hand of the state, protecting capital.

THE WEST IN CRISIS

by Frieda Park

The West's multifaceted crisis is undermining the established norms of power, alliances and economic systems. This has been exposed and made worse by the United States and Israel's war against Iran and all its unintended consequences.

No one can predict the longer term implications of Donald Trump's miscalculation over launching the war or whether it will mark a decisive point in US decline. However the trends marking that decline, discernible in recent years, have certainly been exacerbated and there are lessons for countries and peoples across the globe.

Significant considerations include :

1. US imperialism threatens the whole world.

2. The US resort to war and coercion to try to maintain its global hegemony has its limits when confronting powerful and determined countries such as Iran.

3. The destabilisation of the Gulf region raises yet more uncertainty for US allies about the reliability of their partner and erstwhile protector, including beyond the Gulf.

4. The brutality of Israel and the US is further exposed and their disregard for the region and its peoples will make alliances with other states there harder.

5. The veneer of international legal norms and organisations has been stripped away and the naked power of imperialism has been exposed.

6. The world economy is being affected negatively

by the US war, exposing the destructive role of US imperialism.

7. Yet NATO countries remain trapped in alliance with the US and are committing to greater arms spending and reliance on the US for energy supplies. This must lead to more disquiet among the populations of those countries who are experiencing worsening services and higher bills caused by the war and following US diktats.

8. Divisions between the Western countries are being exacerbated as they seek to find a way forward which promotes their interests.

9. Although affected by higher prices and denial of oil supplies by the US action, overall the war gives China more space to continue to use its resources to develop its economy as the US is preoccupied with war.

10. It enhances China's claim to be a more reliable and positive partner than the United States.

11. It will encourage further trading in non-dollar currencies and trade agreements which strengthen economic cooperation in the global south as more countries seek to move away from reliance on the United States.

This is certainly not the end of the US which remains the most powerful military and economic state on the planet, but its war of aggression against Iran has exposed its weaknesses and relative decline. The question remains as to how it will confront the rise of China and whether it learn any lessons from the Iran experience. So far that has not proven to be the case as it doubles down on threats, sanctions and war, nor does it seem to want to acknowledge wider, long-term implications of this strategy. The United States, armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons, therefore remains a major threat to humanity.



PHOTO BY EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY

by Uri Cohen

On 28th February the United States and Israel launched an unprovoked military aggression against Iran, assassinated its Supreme Leader and many more of its political and military leadership. Operation Epic Fury had the openly stated intention to overthrow the Iranian regime and bring about the total disintegration of the Iranian state. This ongoing aggression has already claimed the lives of nearly 3000 innocent Iranian civilians, destroying Iran's civilian energy infrastructure, bombing schools, hospitals, public media outlets and razing entire civilian neighbourhoods to the ground.

Iranian response forewarned

On the eve of February 28th, while the US was disingenuously "negotiating" with Iranian officials, the Iranian government had made it very clear that a repeated US/Israeli attack (like the one launched in June 2025) would be met this time with a different defensive response. Iran clearly stated that it would defend itself by attacking all American and Israeli military bases and supportive infrastructure in the entire Middle East region. And indeed, Iran responded as clearly forewarned in advance. The Ira-

nian closure of the Straits of Hormuz for those countries allied to enemy aggression was foretold, and the Iranian asymmetrical defence strategy of attacking the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries who host extensive American military infrastructure was also forewarned.

Yet none of the GCC governments had warned the USA and Israel against using their airspace and land bases to attack Iran ahead of this war of aggression. Nor did GCC rulers even bother to condemn Israeli and US actions after the military aggression was launched. The same can be said about other parties more economically afflicted by the Iranian blockade of the straights, such as Japan, the European Union and the UK government.

It's therefore with total incredulity, that one reads the statement issued by the G7 countries on Saturday 21st of March. The foreign ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US declared: "We express support to our partners in the region in the face of unjustifiable attacks by the Islamic Republic of Iran and its proxies. We condemn in the strongest terms the Iranian regime's reckless attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, including energy infrastructure."

Presumably amongst "our partners in the region" under "reckless unjustifiable attack" according to the G7 is the State of Israel that had launched the aggression against Iran in the first place with its declared aim of destroying the Iranian state. This comes after Netanyahu had murdered over 80,000 of Palestine's indigenous population in Gaza alongside Israel's continued brutal colonialist reign of terror against the population of the West Bank. It's also clear that Israel's brutal assault against Iran has everything to do with depriving Palestinian resistance to oppression of any potential support in the Middle East region. But for the G7 foreign ministers, the unjustifiable mass murder of Iranian, Palestinian and Lebanese civilians doesn't merit a mention, let alone a condemnation.

I'm not going to comment on the reasons for each G7 government's decision to take refuge in an imaginary world of lies and falsehoods that would surely have made Nazi propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels smile with glee. Nor am I going to revisit the collective West's determination to destroy all norms of international and humanitarian law, leading to catastrophic self-harm in the case of Japan, the EU, UK, Australia and Canada.

Racist logic

It is important to note Western political establishments' increasingly flagrant indifference to murderous war crimes when it comes to Muslims, Arabs and other non-White populations, as was clearly shown by most Western governments' continued support for the State of Israel throughout the genocidal atrocities that were committed against the Palestinian people.

The justification used by pro-war Western governments for the current attempts to conquer and dismember the Iranian state is as old as the history of European colonialist conquest and slavery.

We are repeatedly told that the Islamic Republic of Iran is an irrational religious cult that's holding the Iranian people hostage and is engaged in acts of mass repression. Ergo, even if military aggression is unjustified is under international law they say, "but what if the Iranian fanatics eventually got hold of nuclear weapons?" Accordingly we, the "democratic" West, have a right to take pre-emptive military action without proof of an imminent danger, regardless of diplomatic or international norms.

The white supremacist ideology of open-ended and pre-emptive military assaults against the rest of humanity was endorsed by German Chancellor Mertz. He had criticised Spanish President Pedro Sánchez for not allowing the USA to use NATO military bases in Spain for the war against Iran. "Categorising the events in Iran under international law will have relatively little effect," Mertz stated. "Therefore, this is not the time to lecture our partners and allies. Despite our reservations, we share many of the goals without being able to achieve them ourselves." I shudder to think what crimes German Imperialism will be able to commit against humanity, when Chancellor Mertz

achieves his dream of rapid German rearmament.

Imperialist intervention in Iran

Apart from exposing the crimes of American/Israeli aggression, one must also question the simplistic portrayal of Iranian society as victims anxiously waiting to be bombed and killed in the hope that the West will save them from the clutches of religious extremists. The modern history of Iran is plagued with many such violent imperialist interventions and imperialist excuses for financial greed, theft and conquest.

In 1951 the democratically elected liberal government of Mosaddegh in Iran, nationalised the British-controlled Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, sparking a severe diplomatic crisis with Britain and the United States. Subsequently, the CIA and MI6 worked jointly to remove Mosaddegh from power through a military coup, restoring the repressive tyranny of the Shah over the Iranian people. A British Foreign Office Memorandum from 1951 had warned the Americans:

"Iran would be content to see the industry running at low level without foreign management. This raises a problem: the security of the free world is dependent on large quantities of oil from the Middle East. If the attitude in Iran spreads to Saudi Arabia or Iraq, the whole structure may break down along with our ability to defend ourselves. The first effect of nationalisation would be to put control into Iranian hands. Seen from the United Kingdom point of view the present problem was not solely one of the fate of a major asset. Control of the asset is of supreme importance. The point has already been made of the importance of the asset to our balance of payments and to our rearmament program. Moreover, it is false to assume an identity of interests between the Western

World and Iran over how much oil should be produced and to whom it would be sold and on what terms. For all these reasons, the United Kingdom has to keep control of the real resources involved."

American President Eisenhower had agreed to work with the UK to maintain colonialist control of Iran's resources. In 1953 Iran's seven years stint of parliamentary constitutional monarchy was brought to an abrupt end by an American and British intervention in Iran's internal sovereign affairs. President Eisenhower informed the American public that, "the Iranian people have saved the day because of their revulsion against communism." Eisenhower's "blow against communism" had accomplished the violent destruction of Iranian civil society. Western-bribed military and mercenary thugs proceeded with summary executions of liberal, secular nationalist, socialist and communist leaders.

Repressive violence after the 1953 coup was particularly targeted against the Tudeh Party, at the time the largest and broadest socialist labour movement in the Middle East region. It had 150,000 party members and its main daily newspaper had the largest circulation in Iran. Tudeh's affiliated trade union federation had 275,000 members, constituting 75% of the industrial work force. The British embassy in Tehran reported in 1946 that the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company had no choice but to concede the eight-hour day, Friday pay, overtime scales, higher wages, and better housing since the Tudeh-led unions had de facto political control over the oil producing provinces.

By putting a brutal end to Iranian democracy, the CIA-MI6 1953 coup had helped replace a nascent civil society with a theocratic Shia leadership in the Iranian opposition. The roots of the 1979 revolution which overthrew the Shah go back to the 1953 counter-revolutionary coup.

Divisions in anti-colonial movements

Iran had been a Shia majority country since the 16th Century, ruled by monarchical dynasties that had established the Shia Muslim faith as a state religion. Unlike Sunni Islam, the Shia clergy are more tightly structured as an organised religion, more akin to the Catholic Church with its past relationship to Catholic feudal sovereigns. As is the case with Catholicism, there's always been a divergence of political opinions and social inclinations amongst different strata of the Shia clergy which reflected class divisions within society.

The 1906 Constitutional Revolution in Iran had caused the first modern schism amongst the Shia clergy. Some of the most prominent Shia Ayatollahs broke ranks with absolutist royal rule, by attempting to transform Iran into a constitutional monarchy with a parliament elected by universal male suffrage and a liberal separation of powers. The Shia clergy who led the revolution alongside anti-colonialist secular liberals and nationalists, evoked some traditions of the Shia clergy that sided with the oppressed and poor against feudal injustices of the landed nobility. The political actions of the revolutionary Shia clergy in 1906 had initiated a close, symbiotic relationship between the Shia theocratic establishment and the Iranian bourgeoisie, a religious coalition with the Bazaar capitalists (see footnote) that has lasted to this present time.

The two main reasons for the defeat of the 1906 Constitutional Revolution have some interesting resonances in 2026. Firstly, the Iranian bourgeoisie was badly divided between the secular nationalists, who advocated strict separation between the Iranian state and the Muslim religion, and the Bazaar bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, who advocated an Iranian constitution guided by Islamic Sharia laws



Ali Khamenei Supreme Leader of Iran, assassinated by the US

PHOTO BY KHAMENEI.IR

and a parliament vetted by a Guardian Council of the Shia clergy. The second reason for counter-revolution, was the two main colonialist powers with economic and territorial concessions in Iran - the British Empire and Czarist Russia. Both became fearful of the anti-colonialist rhetoric of the constitutional revolutionaries. Hence, the colonial powers sponsored a military coup to install the late Shah's father, Reza Shah as military dictator. Reza Shah later crowned himself as an absolutist monarch in 1925.

Islamic republic replaces Shah

In 1979 the Iranian people finally succeeded in freeing themselves of the Shah's repressive tyranny and its American backers. Although the Shia clergy played a crucial and leading role in organising the mass protests that overthrew the Shah, theocratic religious rule was never an inevitable outcome. Yet, during the Cold War struggle between US imperialism and the socialist countries, Iran was too strategically critical. It bordered both the Soviet Union and an Afghanistan that was in the midst a civil war between

a leftist government and Islamist counter-revolutionaries, backed and armed by the United States, Britain and the Arabian Gulf monarchies.

The Iranian Bazaar bourgeoisie, led politically by the Shia clergy, faced an agonising choice. They had helped to free the country from American domination, had overthrown the Shah's tyranny and banished the so-called 1000 families of the corrupt pro-Shah nobility. But a newly-minted democracy carried serious dangers for the Iranian ruling classes of socialist labour movement resurgence. There were also armed revolutionary leftist organisations patrolling the streets in large Iranian cities, alongside a working class and urban poor that could easily be led astray by these anti-capitalist leftists. Hence, the Iranian army and the Shah's entire state security apparatus quickly surrendered to Ayatollah Khomeini's leadership without much of a fight. For the propertied classes in Iran, the Shia clergy were "the devil you knew the best", much preferable to some liberal secular democracy that might not be effectively controlled and scrutinised by the senior Shia clergy. This section of the clergy

was closely tied with the Bazaar bourgeoisie by family connections, wealthy religious foundations, mosques and community donations, and common landed estates. Once again, the Iranian hard left, the soft left and secular nationalists were brutally crushed by a ruthless Islamist reign of terror.

However, to help consolidate the new Islamic republican order, the Ayatollahs also made some major concessions to the Iranian working class and the peasantry. The Islamic Republic distributed more than 850,000 hectares of confiscated land to some 220,000 landless peasant families. They launched an ambitious literacy campaign and extended roads, electricity, clean water and healthcare into all villages. The regime spent a quarter of the annual budget in subsidies to the poorer urban population through direct

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subsidies for bread, rice, sugar, fuel and cooking oil as well as cheaper domestic energy prices. They passed a labour law with some concessions towards a six-day and 48 hour working week and a statutory minimum wage. Under the Islamic Republic, the percentage of children in school rose from 60 to 90. Infant mortality per 1000 dropped from 104 to 25, life expectancy rose from mid 50s at the outset of the 1979 revolution to 71 years at present.

Solidarity

Therefore, we must be very wary of simplistic ritual denunciations of the Islamic Republic as a mad and irrational religious tyranny. The Iranian people do not deserve to be enslaved

to Western fossil fuel interests and nor does Iran deserve to be conquered and devastated by Israeli and American occupation forces because one may not agree with its government policies. On the contrary, we in Britain should express solidarity with the Iranian people by opposing Trump and Netanyahu's murderous campaign to re-colonise Iran and loot its natural resources. We must also stand firmly against Sir Kier Starmer's continued and active collaboration with the American military in its violation of Iran's sovereignty. And stand against Trump and Netanyahu's forever wars which spread chaos and instability that hurt the overwhelming majority of British people.

Iran has so far managed to successfully resist and stand up to this brutal and unprovoked aggression. We must call for a real and last-

ing ceasefire and negotiations in a framework that respects Iranian sovereignty and the rule of international law, and guarantees safety to Palestinian, Lebanese and Iranian civilians from mass indiscriminate murder by America and Israel.

Footnote - The Iranian Bazaar bourgeoisie

In pre-capitalist feudal Iran, the Bazaar social class ranged from wealthy wholesalers (tujjar) to smaller shopkeepers and guild masters (asnaf); this group formed a dense ecosystem of trade and finance. Historically, major elements of the Bazaar social class allied with the Shia clergy (ulama) to challenge the absolutist tyranny

of the Iranian Shahs and helped resist colonialist encroachment particularly by the British and Russian empires. But with the advent of capitalist industrialisation under Reza Shah and his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi the Bazaar bourgeoisie became more stratified between the wealthier banking, finance and rentier merchant class that benefited from the modern oil boom, and the more traditional market craftsmen and smaller merchants that were neglected in favour of the large shopping malls, big landowners and few major industrialists favoured by the Shah.

However, the process of middle and ruling class stratification didn't diminish the Bazaar's paramount place in Iranian politics. By being situated at the major nodes of regional and global trade routes, merchant families accumulated wealth, prestige and power. In doing so, bazaars also became central locales of political organisation in supporting or opposing the many rulers of Iran. The concentration of merchants, middlemen and wholesalers in densely packed alleys under covered roofs created a social space where common grievances could quickly coalesce, even between rich merchants, poor workers and diverse ethnicities. By the middle of the 1970's, the Bazaar bourgeoisie led and organised by the Shia clergy, played a crucial part in overthrowing the Shah of Iran, his associated landed nobility and allied large industrialists.

After 1979, Bazaari merchants were granted significant power within the Islamic Republic and played a crucial role in managing the economy. They have often been beneficiaries of state policies.

Mark Rutte,
General Secretary
of NATO meets
President Trump



PHOTO BY THE WHITE HOUSE

EUROPE WEAKENED BY IRAN WAR

by Simon Korner

Europe is weaker relative to the US now than at any time since the end of World War 2 – the result of deliberate US strategy to subordinate its allies in order to create a disciplined bloc ready for major war against China. The Iran war has accelerated Europe’s difficulties.

US imposes energy insecurity

In 2022, America’s anti-Russian war cut off Germany’s cheap Russian gas supply that had powered the German industrial base. The US-led sabotage of Nord Stream, coupled with Germany’s self-destructive sanctions against Russia, meant Europe’s leading economy was forced to turn to expensive liquified natural gas (LNG) from the States, which now provides 60% of all European LNG.

In 2026, the Iran war – which the US launched without consulting its European allies – choked off

Europe’s remaining energy supplies. Gas storage levels across Europe were, by mid-April, at just 25-30% of full capacity, dangerously below the EU legal minimum of 90% of capacity. The price of gas in Europe was more than double what it was before the war began. Oil prices rose too, which in turn meant dearer petrol. Fertiliser also became more expensive, which has raised the price of food. Fuel hikes also meant higher production costs. Energy-intensive industries have been particularly affected, including car-making and chemicals, which Germany produces. Supply chains that rely on shipping have been disrupted, and shipping insurance has risen.

President Trump used Europe’s energy insecurity, threatening to withhold LNG unless the EU implemented, in full the one-sided trade deal agreed in 2025. It includes Europe buying \$750 billion of US energy by 2028 and locks in European dependency, further undermining the remaining sovereignty

of individual European countries. Trump also put pressure on the European powers to commit forces to the Straits of Hormuz, especially when Qatar could no longer honour its energy contracts after its gas production was hit by Iranian missiles.

The European Central Bank warned of weak economic growth and soaring inflation, resulting in faster deindustrialisation and a cost-of-living crisis. In comparison, the US has been largely “insulated from the oil price increase, given that it is now the world’s largest crude exporter,” according to Chatham House fellow, Neil Quilliam.

The US economy is forecast to grow by 2% in 2026, up from the 1.7% forecast in December – a low figure but better than Europe’s, where Germany’s forecast GDP growth over the next 10 years is now -0.5%. France and the UK are only slightly better. European stock markets have fallen almost three times more than their American

President Trump's threat to leave NATO unless European ships help open the Strait of Hormuz has been one of his pressure tactics, a form of extortion in line with his insistence that Europe raise its military spending to share the defence 'burden'.

counterparts since the start of the Iran war. [1]

Meanwhile, American energy companies like Chevron have already gained hugely from the energy price rise. President Trump boasted in a social media post: "The United States is the largest Oil Producer in the World, by far, so when oil prices go up, we make a lot of money."

While US shale production is unaffected by the war, European oil companies BP, Shell and TotalEnergies, whose shares have risen for now along with US companies, could in the longer-run become exposed because of their dependence on Gulf holdings. TotalEnergies has already seen 15% of its output in Qatar, Iraq, and the UAE shut down.

The Iran war, says geopolitical analyst Professor Mearsheimer, represents a "double-whammy" for Europe's weak leaders after the Ukraine war, and now Europe is in "deep trouble". Thomas Fazi adds, "The war against Iran is also a war on Europe. If the proxy war in Ukraine was designed to decouple Europe from Russian gas, the Iran war is aimed at decoupling it from Mediterranean resources altogether." [2]

Europe's involvement in war

Europe's position on the war has been uneasy. Italy's prime minister Meloni described it euphemistically as being "outside the scope of international law", as did French president Macron and German Chancellor Merz, though they all condemned Iran's perfectly legitimate retaliation too. Only Spain's Pedro Sánchez has been overtly critical of the US and Israel.

The Europeans have no compunction about the war's illegality, given their support for Israel's Gaza genocide. However, they are worried about its economic impact and

resulting domestic destabilisation. They want, then, to appear to have distanced themselves for political cover. Meanwhile, they're complicit. Without parliamentary approval, Britain has allowed the US to use RAF bases to bomb Iran using RAF Fairford, whose long runway is the only European airfield the bombers can use. B52s take off from there for carpet bombing with 2000lb bombs. Fairford also houses half the fleet of American B1 bombers. Diego Garcia is likewise being used, though Starmer delayed permission for a couple of days until Trump publicly insulted him. Like Britain's facilities, Germany's base at Ramstein is vital to the war effort – it is the central logistical hub for the US military in the Middle East. All supplies go through it. France is also allowing US planes to use its airbase at Istres.

Half the French navy has been deployed to the Eastern Mediterranean, including the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle, with a further ten warships promised. Germany, Italy, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands and Britain have all sent ships – as has even Spain – while Turkey sent F-16 fighter jets to its occupied territory in the north of Cyprus. All this is on the pretext of protecting Britain's main Cyprus base Akrotiri following a drone attack for which Iran and Hezbollah denied responsibility. Macron said the drone strike was "an attack on all Europe". With such a build-up of forces, active combat becomes increasingly likely. A false-flag attack on one of the European vessels would be all it would take.

France has plans to expand Operation Aspides – the EU's naval gunboat fleet assembled in 2024 to challenge Yemen's Ansarallah in the Red Sea. This expansion would begin by bombing Yemen and then moving into Hormuz for what Macron called a "defensive mission to reopen the Strait".

Britain is also involved independently in the war in an active

US oil benefiting from war



PHOTO BY CAROL M. HIGSMITH

way. British fighter planes have destroyed Iranian drones to protect the Gulf states and Israel. By April, they'd flown 1,200 hours of missions. The government has declared it legal to strike Iran, if the reason is to protect British or allied personnel. The legal immunity includes pre-emptive strikes. The same legal cover has been given by the German government for the use of Ramstein for offensive operations.

Despite Trump's fury at the Europeans for not joining in his war of choice eagerly enough, NATO's top military commander, Alexis Grynkewich, reported more objectively that most of the European allies had been "extremely supportive" and that the US had found it "much easier to project power with our network of bases and allies."

US, Europe and NATO

President Trump's threat to leave NATO unless European ships help open the Strait of Hormuz has been one of his pressure tactics, a form of extortion in line with his insistence that Europe raise its military spending to share the defence 'burden': Europe must contribute more to western wars, even if it ruins them. Despite the rhetoric, the US is not about to abandon an alliance which

serves its own interests in projecting its foreign policy (as Alexis Grynkewich observed) and keeping Europe compliant.

For its part, European reluctance to risk entering the Strait has been less an expression of strategic autonomy than a means of exerting leverage from a position of weakness. Europe wants something for its sacrifices if it is eventually forced to participate in the US war. Wolfgang Ischinger, president of the Munich Security Conference, advised the European powers to link any involvement with counter-demands, "That the US re-engage directly in Ukraine, that the long-planned American sanctions package against Russia is finally implemented." These demands echo Chancellor Merz's insistence that the US maintain sanctions on Russia, for fear that Europe will be left paying for the Ukraine war alone – as envisioned in the US National Defense Strategy 2026, allowing the US to focus on its own hemisphere and China.

How much room for manoeuvre Europe has in this tussle with the USA will become clear over the next period. But strategic autonomy, for those who argue for it, is a distant prospect. The US still massively

outspends its combined allies on arms and their financial dependence on it is greater than ever. Equally, the unbridgeable divisions between European powers, exacerbated by the Iran war, make a coherent European military force very hard to achieve. EU member states are "acting separately" on the conflict, according to the Atlantic Council's Europe Centre, which in turn is putting strains on the unity of the EU. [3]

European countries manoeuvre

Independent moves by different European countries are accelerating. Not only is France taking a leading role in assembling the European Armada, but it is using the instability created by the Iran war to announce the expansion of its nuclear arsenal, framed as a stabilising move. France is offering nuclear 'protection' to eight EU countries, including its old enemy Germany, as well as greater nuclear integration with Britain. This would allow France's *force de frappe* to "spread out across the depth of the European continent," as Macron explained, in effect asserting French military dominance over Europe. France is also sensing opportunities in the US withdrawal from Iraq

after pro-Iranian militias attacked American bases and the embassy in Baghdad. France hopes to be seen as a reliable alternative, while it also has assets to protect – such as the energy company TotalEnergies which has invested billions in Basra’s gas fields.

Meanwhile, France is also trying to reinsert itself into its former colony, Lebanon, under the guise of ‘protecting’ the Christian Maronites and the 20,000 French citizens there. It tried unsuccessfully to pressure the Lebanese government to disarm Hezbollah, aiding Israel’s invasion, while at the same time had its soldiers stationed in Lebanon as part of the UN peacekeeping force targeted by Israel, which doesn’t want interference from a rival coloniser. Like France, Germany is using the Iran war as an excuse to boost the remilitarisation it began in response to the Ukraine war. Chancellor Merz said his country must once again “learn to speak the language of power politics.” [4] Germany’s embrace of the French nuclear umbrella plan would bring it a step closer to becoming a nuclear power itself. Currently, German planes are allowed to carry US nuclear weapons. Under the plan, German planes would carry French (and British) nuclear warheads as well. As Bloomberg’s Katia Hoyer observes, Germany is now thinking the “unthinkable”.

Nevertheless, the longstanding rivalry between France and Germany, which has rendered the ambitious project for a joint new-generation fighter plane impossible, makes a Europe-wide nuclear deterrent unlikely.

For Britain, meanwhile, the Iran war threatens its major interests in the Gulf states, including its bases in Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and the UAE and trade worth £60 billion a year. On the positive side for the British establishment, the French nuclear plan could reward Britain with shared strategic leadership over

Germany and greater military reach over Europe. Starmer is also using the Iran war to re-enter the EU by the back-door.

War exacerbates tensions in EU

The Iran war has exacerbated tensions within the EU, already strained by the Ukraine war. The president of the unelected European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen declared in response to the war that “Europe can no longer be a custodian for the old-world order” and argued for a “more realistic and interest-driven foreign policy.” This bellicose speech effectively disposing of international law was seen as a further unwelcome extension of the Commission’s powers by many EU politicians and diplomats. Von der Leyen is also using the Iran crisis to end the current system of unanimous decision-making in the EU. “Often we move forward with the speed of the slowest,” she said. Her proposed use of the EU’s “enhanced cooperation” mechanism would by-pass the democratic will of countries such as Hungary and Slovakia which have at times got in the way of anti-Russian sanctions. The Iran war is sharpening the EU’s anti-democratic teeth.

The divisions in the EU leadership reflect wider tensions between Atlanticism – following the US slavishly – and those calling for a Europeanised NATO. Both strategies are warmongering and neither involves a decisive break with America. Atlanticism has allowed US bullying to go unchecked – as, for example, the US’s unilateral tearing up of the JCPOA nuclear deal with Iran, which the EU had helped negotiate, and forcing a rise in European arms budgets. On the other hand, creating an EU army and raising its strength to the current level of NATO would entail a rise in military spending on such a scale to 10% of GDP from the current 3.5% according to NATO chief Mark Rutte, that the European powers would have to abolish their

postwar welfare systems to pay for it. Either way the working class pays for war. [5]

So this is now the battleground for the EU and Britain: welfare or warfare. It will be in resisting such attacks on living standards that a movement for peace and progress will have to develop.

Some positive signs have been in public opinion polls, particularly in southern Europe. One Italian poll showed 69.5% of Italians believed Italy should follow Spain’s lead in denying the US the right to use its military bases. As a result of that, along with last year’s refusal by the dockers to handle Israeli arms at the ports, the Italian government stopped the US from using its airbase in Sicily to bomb Iran. France too denied airspace to US flights of weapons to Israel – even as it prepared for a naval war.

Such gestures, while to be welcomed as signs of the need to make concessions, are not a peace position. Without a bolder change of direction, the unhappy European allies can do little in the face of US coercion. Europe should do the sensible thing: join China and Russia in their calls to reinvigorate the global multilateral institutions to enforce international law.

[1] <https://www.euronews.com/business/2026/03/17/iran-war-europes-corporate-winners-and-losers-revealed>

[2] <https://www.thomasfazi.com/p/when-will-european-populists-dump>

[3] <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/us-israel-war-iran-leaves-europe-divided-and-exposed>

[4] <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-news-merz-says-europeans-not-subordinates-to-us/live-75706500>

[5] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2026/jan/26/ukraine-russia-us-greenland-europe-trade-deal-nato-latest-news-updates>

GENOCIDE IN PALESTINE

A testing ground for Iran war

by Leila Ryan

The long-threatened, unprovoked, illegal and, it was said, precision-targeted US-Israeli air war on Iran which began on 28 February was appropriately inaugurated with a war crime. The US chose the defenceless Shajarah Tayyebah primary school in the southern town of Minab for an air attack, killing 168 people, mostly schoolgirls. There were at least two strikes, some eye-witnesses said three, deliberately targeting those coming to help earlier casualties. It sounded familiar because attacks on emergency workers, and how Western media framed the narrative - belatedly, blaming first the 'enemy' then AI, then letting fresh news bury the outrage - are straight out of the Gaza genocide playbook.

Israeli weapon systems and tactics applied elsewhere are often touted and priced as "battle-tested" on Palestinians, but the way the aggressors are conducting their current war on Iran and Lebanon indicates that a strategy aimed at destroying the resistance and its social and material basis, trialled during the genocide and practically synonymous with it, is now being applied beyond Gaza.

Speeding up genocide

The key lesson here, however, is not military but political. Israel's periodic, shockingly disproportionate and mainly airborne slaughter of Gazans from 2008 (Operation Cast Lead) to 2019 (Gaza's Great March of Return), cynically termed "mowing the lawn", failed to intimidate the population while the solidarity movement across the world developed unevenly in numbers but



PHOTO BY ALISDARE HICKSON

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions a world-wide movement

steadily in influence and experience. The political cost of controlling a captive population by violent repression - "slow" genocide - was unsustainable. Operation Al-Aqsa Flood - the killing, wounding and abducting of Israeli civilians and security personnel by Hamas-led fighters on 7 October 2023 - triggered Israel's switch to fast-track genocide; the "lawn" would no longer be mowed from time to time, but ploughed up once and for all. [1]

The failure of Western allies and world opinion to enforce international law against the construction and expansion of illegal Jewish-only settlements in the West Bank or East Jerusalem allowed Israel to evade international law as an empty threat compared to the reality of settlements as "facts on the ground." This, added to the world's failure to impose Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) measures against Israel for its repressive practices that amounted to "slow" genocide, meant it could gamble

on getting away with fast-track genocide instead, although whether that gamble will pay off is another matter.

Where are wars leading?

All these wars and repressions and their still-unfolding consequences have their origin in Israel's nearly eighty-year-old occupation of Palestine under its brutal system of settler colonialism and apartheid, currently defended militarily and diplomatically by its US patron. But weakening and eventually dismantling that system will open to question all that has been meant to disguise or shore it up.

At time of writing (2 April 2026), the war was a few days into its second month and the current "fog of war" leaves much unclear, but if Iran survives intact, it will matter little whether the US started the war on its own account or was tricked into it by Israel, or whether either aggressor guessed how it would end.

Palestine's regional allies in the "Axis of Resistance" are Iran itself, Hezbollah in Lebanon and Ansarallah ("Houthis") in Yemen. Whichever of them survives current firepower and future subversion from Israel and/or the US, their military could take years to recover to the point where they can deter further attacks, leaving them vulnerable in the meantime and in no position to threaten Israeli targets in defence of Palestinian ones.

Assaults on Palestinians continue

Gazans who survived the genocide are now confined within less than half the space they were in before, and more closely monitored by Israeli occupiers than ever. Israel continues to deny foreign media access to Gaza. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) reported on 31 March 2026 (more than 24 weeks after the "cease-fire" of 10 October 2025) that most Gazans were living in displacement sites in "dire" conditions, made worse by overcrowding, sewage accumulation, inadequate access to drinking water, and "continued airstrikes, shelling, and gunfire". [2]

During the Gaza genocide, enemy assault and forced relocations meant many families fleeing for their lives lost, or left behind, any deeds not already destroyed that could prove ownership of their homes or properties, now leaving them permanently homeless. Most Gazan families trace connections to Palestinian villages in 1948 Israel from which parents or grandparents earlier fled Zionist terror; some families thus find themselves homeless twice-over. Also in Gaza, Israel sponsors criminal gangs to sow division and attack the almost certainly weakened armed resistance.

In the occupied West Bank, Israel is re-introducing former land-registration methods to disenfranchise yet more Palestinians and

accelerate Jewish-only settlements, pending the territory's intended, wholesale annexation. At the same time, increased military support is given to already-armed settlers who attack their largely unarmed Palestinian neighbours.

Applied to the whole of occupied Palestine, and 1948 Israel too, a blatantly racist law recently passed in Israel's parliament creates a default death penalty for those convicted of broadly defined acts of "terrorism" but only if they are Palestinians; Israelis convicted of murdering Palestinians face no such sentence.

Palestinian freedom essential to the world

Whatever the outcome of the war on Iran and Hezbollah, and however Israel's apartheid system intensifies, the liberation of Palestine remains essential to a progressive agenda anywhere. As Nelson Mandela famously said of South Africa in 1997, "We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians".

Under African National Congress (ANC) leadership, armed resistance to the apartheid regime was combined with a global boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign, in which the British people played an outstanding role. The call issued by the Palestinian Boycott National Committee (BNC) in 2005, adapting ANC experience to its own conditions, remains a beacon for liberation, whatever other means the Palestinians themselves consider appropriate. [3] The call for boycott, divestment and sanctions against apartheid Israel addressed civil society, governments and corporations across the world to help dismantle apartheid in line with international law defined and reiterated by the United Nations. BDS campaigning has grown enormously in the past two decades but realising its full potential, at all levels and with mass participation, could prove critically important, perhaps

even essential, to the future of Palestine and regional stability.

The interdependence of the Middle East and the wider world, which the war on Iran underlines, and which the US tries to exploit in its longer-term designs on Russia and (especially) China, means that a campaign for Palestine is also, in effect, a campaign for the UN, international law, and a safer, multipolar world, and there is scope for scaling-up solidarity with Palestine based on that understanding. One Palestinian writer, Ramzy Baroud, has recently made broadly similar claims for the centrality of Palestine in emerging regional and global politics, and its relevance to the solidarity movement. [4] Another, Ayman Odeh, a member of the Israeli Knesset (parliament), with a similar view on Palestine as key to wider outcomes, adds that the enormous cost of waging wars against its neighbours may constrain Israel's future policies. [5]

Given the scale and pace of current geopolitical change, discussions of these kinds are most helpful when they point to practical action as an answer to threats, setbacks and confusion. The rest of this article therefore argues why prospects for resurgent solidarity and BDS campaigning are more promising than might be assumed from the dire situation currently facing Palestinians.

Reasons to be ambitious

There may well be others, and it's hard to predict which will end up most important, but the following opportunities favour intensified BDS campaigning for Palestine and for wider progressive aims:

■ The breadth and depth of the present oil crisis (which is not only about oil) into which the Trump and Netanyahu cabals, apologists in tow, have plunged the world, including the "man or woman at the petrol pump". People are already being encouraged to blame the crisis on



PHOTO BY WAFA

Palestinians made homeless by Israeli bombing in Gaza

Iran but many will be interested in more convincing arguments

■ The two years from 7 October 2023 to 10 October 2025 were the deadliest phase of Israel's continuing occupation of Palestine. [6] Those responsible have yet to be held to account, but opinion against them is strong and growing. [7] Thanks to TV and social media, never before in history has a global audience witnessed a genocide in real time. For millions of witnesses, including many new to campaigning for Palestine, prolonged recognition of Palestinians as ordinary people facing an inhuman ordeal has prompted serious conversations, deeper understanding of the issues and an unprecedented readiness to take action around BDS.

■ A reminder to keep up the pressure is the exemplary *ṣumūd* (steadfastness/resilience) of generations of Palestinians, old and young, injured, uninjured, and almost all bereaved

by the loss of someone they knew. BDS includes small acts of solidarity anyone can make.

■ Israel's "own goal" failure to win world support for its ethno-nationalist (racist) policy and practice, and its failure to retain support of former friends it could once count on. Already a toxic brand from decades of apartheid repression, and even before its unprovoked attacks on Iran and Lebanon, Israel's reputation has hit a new low from which it might never recover. An opinion poll of American Jews – historically Israel's biggest fan-base - on 2-9 September 2025 found that among those aged 18-34, as many as 50% considered Israel was committing genocide and as few as 34% felt "emotionally attached" to Israel. [8] These findings that show not just that pro-Israeli propaganda has no answer to public knowledge of live-streamed genocide but also that the younger of those who object to apartheid being practised in their name will have more time histori-

cally to denounce it than its older apologists will have to defend it. BDS is a practical alternative to apartheid and all forms of racism.

■ Finally, but on a global scale, the irony that, in seeking to "make great again" his own genocide-enabling country, President Trump reveals to the world its true imperialist character. If non-nuclear-armed adversaries are its targets today or tomorrow, then future confrontations could trigger World War Three. At a time when the need for negotiated solutions to such problems has never been greater, the US sanctions its perceived enemies at will. With Israeli help, [9] it attacks or defunds United Nations agencies and personnel, and the International Court of Justice. Trump has also withdrawn the US from treaties and agreements managing nuclear weapons and climate change. The so-called Board of Peace, which Trump and Netanyahu seem to hope will give them funds and diplomatic cover for their illegal, profit-driven and geostrategic plans

to “reconstruct” Gaza and turn its shattered seafront into an exclusive money-spinning resort, is another attempt to diminish the United Nations. Not only by cancelling its long-established safeguarding role in the Occupied Palestinian Territories but also by extending the Board of Peace’s remit to post-conflict zones elsewhere. [10] The case for BDS is also a case for the UN, peace and a sustainable future.

Objectives of BDS

It is up to the solidarity movement to find the ways to turn these or other opportunities to advantage in organised, coherent BDS activity. But the ultimate objectives of BDS are set by the Palestinians themselves. In short, there can be no solution to the present instability of the Middle East, or worldwide, unless it meets the three demands of Palestinians for:

FREEDOM from Israel’s occupation and colonisation of all Arab lands occupied in 1967, and seized from

southern Lebanon in the current war against Hezbollah. And by dismantling the Apartheid Wall

EQUALITY of legal rights for Palestinian citizens of Israel

JUSTICE through the right of return of Palestinian refugees to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194

[1] <https://al-shabaka.org/podcast/israels-scorched-earth-doctrine-with-amjad-iraqi/>

[2] <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-215-humanitarian-crisis-gaza-strip-and-occupied-west-bank>

[3] Omar Barghouti, *BDS: Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, the global struggle for Palestinian human rights*. (Chicago, Haymarket Books, 2011).

[4] <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/will-the-us-israeli-war-on-iran-open-the-road-to-palestinian-freedom/>;

[5] https://zeteo.com/p/palestinian-israeli-conflict-middle-east-solution-ayman-odeh?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email&hide_intro_popup=true

[6] Two years of Israel’s genocide in Gaza: By the numbers | Israel-Palestine conflict News | Al Jazeera

[7] Many ongoing initiatives spotlight complicity in Israel’s genocide; an excellent one focusing on the UK is *The Gaza Tribunal: A Question of Complicity*, a 25-minute documentary from Alborada Films, available free on YouTube: What role has the UK played in Israel’s war on Gaza? | People & Power Documentary.

[8] Sept. 2-9, 2025, Washington Post Jewish Americans poll - The Washington Post [unitedwithisrael.org/strong-majority-of-americans-continues-to-back-israel-new-poll-finds/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2025/09/02/united-with-israel-strong-majority-of-americans-continues-to-back-israel-new-poll-finds/);

[9] <https://www.rfi.fr/en/international/20260331-unrwa-chief-steps-down-seeks-probe-into-killing-of-hundreds-of-staff-in-gaza>;

[10] <https://electronicintifada.net/content/trumps-board-peace-billionaires-cronies-and-genocidaires/51179>

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THE GENERAL STRIKE 100TH ANNIVERSARY

by Kaye Forrester

It is one hundred years since the only general strike to have taken place in the history of the British labour movement started on 3rd May 1926, lasting just 9 days. Even a hundred years on, that high point of class struggle provides many essential lessons about the nature of the movement, the role of the capitalist state and the potential power of the working class to organise in its own interests. Indeed there were echoes of all of this in the great miner's strike of 1984-85. Yet events which might have generated a general strike have failed to do so since 1926. Though there was tremendous solidarity with the miners across the trade unions and in working class communities in 1984-85, that did not take the form of a general strike in support. Nor did the wave of strike activity against the Tory government and public sector and private employers which started in 2022. It involved hundreds of thousands of workers in the rail industry, the National Health Service, postal workers and many others across the economy. Despite the widespread nature of the strikes and extensive public support for the strikers after the Covid pandemic and with many facing a cost of living crisis, it did not become a general strike. Individual unions essentially fought their own battles. Indeed the TUC stated that it was not its role to organise a general strike.

Looking back

Marking the 50th anniversary of the General Strike in 1976, the Glasgow Junior Workers Committee of the Amalgamated Union



of Engineering Workers (AUEW) produced a pamphlet recounting the history of the strike and analysing its causes and consequences. It remains a valuable source. It is summarised, with extracts reprinted, below. [1]

The pamphlet had a forward by Hugh Scanlon, then President of the AUEW. He said,

'After the Great War, employers at home found it more and more difficult to accumulate profits as the world's economic climate worsened and Britain's control of her empire weakened. They determined to restore their fortunes at the expense of the working class helped by the Government...The workers took up the challenge and the clash between capital and labour came to a head in the General Strike...This pamphlet commissioned by the Glasgow Junior Workers Committee and written by one of our members looks back at that struggle. It will undoubtedly help young workers to look critically at the experience of the General Strike which still carries many lessons for the Labour Movement today.'

The pamphlet's stated aims were to bring out:

1. The decline in British Capitalism and its weakened position in relation to other Capitalist States after the Imperialist War of 1914-1918.
2. The fact the Employers put the onus on the workers to pay for the crisis.
3. The State acting openly, using all its arms (Army, Police, Courts etc.) on the side of the Employers.
4. The unwillingness and inability of the leadership of T.U.C. to lead or fight.
5. The ability of workers to run society without capitalists.'

Background to the strike

Workers were to bear the brunt of the deepening crisis of British capitalism following the first world war as it lost ground to the rising power of the United States. '...as Prime Minister Baldwin made clear. "All the workers

of this country have got to take reductions in wages to help put industry on its feet.” Attacks by the Government and employers on the workers went on all through the early 1920’s.’

At the forefront of resisting the government and employer’s plans, attacks on miner’s wages and conditions were the catalyst for the strike. An earlier defeat when the miners were left to fight alone and the subsequent attacks on other workers lead to a greater determination that workers should stand together to fight this onslaught. Against this background nearly two million workers joined the general strike when it happened.

Signalling the determination of the government and employers to beat the workers they prepared in advance of the strike to crush the movement. Emergency Powers Acts were introduced giving the government near dictatorial powers and trade unionists and communists were arrested and charged with sedition. The first ever Labour government which came into office as a minority government in 1924 was not immune to establishment thinking and attempted to use these powers. ‘J. R. Campbell, the Acting Editor of the Communist Party’s “Worker’s Weekly”, was arrested in 1924 for writing an editorial directed at soldiers: “let it be known that neither in the class war not the military war, will you turn your guns on your fellow workers.”...This first Labour Government attempted to prosecute him but the united opposition of the entire labour movement compelled it to be withdrawn.’

This led to the downfall of the government as the Liberals withdrew support. The red scare continued with the publication of the fabricated Zinoviev letter, which purported to evidence a

Soviet conspiracy to subvert the forthcoming election in favour of revolutionary objectives, implicating the Labour and Communist Parties. Four days later the Tories won the general election. ‘This was neither the first, nor the last, “dirty-trick” employed by capitalism to channel the people’s hard won democratic rights into support for those defending capitalism.’

There was an initial confrontation prior to the general strike in 1925, when further attacks on the mineworkers were met by united opposition.

‘On 30 July a special committee of the TUC issued instructions on the halting of coal imports and exports and the delivery and supply of coal...Baldwin for all his bluster about the absolute necessity of workers taking wage reductions etc., caved in, granting a subsidy to the coal industry for nine months... It was “Red Friday”. A great day in working class history. A day which showed the power, strength and organisation of the workers. It also reflected the balance of class forces. Churchill, at that time, Chancellor of the Exchequer, when referring to Red Friday said that, “we therefore decided to postpone the crisis in the hope of averting it, of coping effectually when the time comes.”

The period from 31 July 1925 (Red Friday) until the government subsidy ran out on April 30 1926 was a period of definite and detailed preparation by the capitalist class, and their state. Contrary to this the labour movement’s preparation for the coming struggle was indefinite and ineffective.’

The ruling class prepares

Aware that a major class confrontation was coming and having already awarded itself emergency powers to use repression against the workers,

the state went on to make further preparations to counter any strike action.

‘On 25 September, 1925, the press announced the formation of a body which called itself “Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies.” [O.M.S.]

Its first official communiqué set out its aims clearly: “For many months past it has been evident that a movement is being organised to take advantage of a trade dispute, exceptionally difficult to solve, to promote a general strike...the object it (O.M.S.) has in view is to register and classify those citizens of all classes and of either sex who are prepared to render voluntary assistance in maintaining the supply of food, water and fuel and the efficiency of public services indispensable to the normal life of the community... (it) will place its entire resources at the disposal of the constitutional authorities.”

The same communiqué announced the leadership. The President was Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, a high-ranking former civil servant and ex-Viceroy of India. The Central Committee also included high-ranking military officers and other establishment figures.

‘Although in the first announcement the O.M.S. was presented as an “independent”, “non-political” body its direct connections with the government and State was soon acknowledged by Joynson-Hicks (“Jix”), the Home Secretary in a letter to “The Times” of 1 October. “I have known of the inauguration of this body for many weeks past; in fact the promoters consulted me as to their desire to form some such organisation...I told the promoters of O.M.S...that it would be a very great assistance for us to receive...classified lists of men in different parts of the coun-

try who could be willing to place their services at the disposal of the Government.”

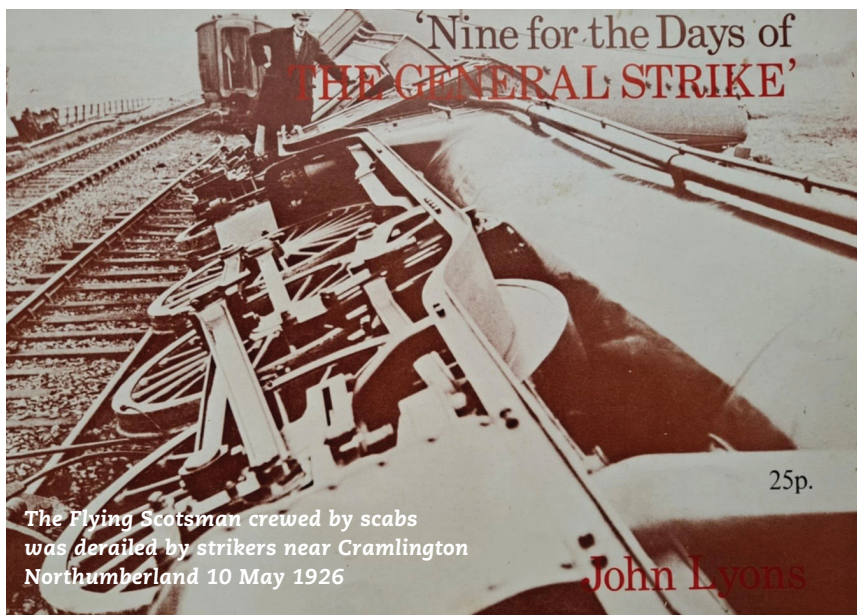
‘England and Wales were divided into ten “Divisions” each under a Minister acting as a Civil Commissioner...The Divisional Officers had full powers under the Emergency Powers Acts, they could requisition, fix prices, order a policeman to make an arrest...In December and again in January 1926 conferences were held on questions of transport and police between national and local officials. Two more conferences were held in March. The signal for the operation of the plans was to be in receipt of a telegram from Whitehall containing the sole word “Action”.

Alongside these moves “Jix” also spoke of how the Government were “keeping under observation the activities and speeches of Communists in the country, with a view to such actions as might be appropriate at the time...” Within two weeks 12 members of the Communist Party’s Executive had been arrested, and were later convicted on charges that virtually rendered the party an illegal organisation. Miners in South Wales were also jailed.’

During the strike the government printed its own propaganda newspaper, requisitioned all newsprint and working class publications were suppressed. ‘...the preparation and distribution of Strike Committee Bulletins became the most frequent basis of arrest and sentence in the course of the General Strike.’

TUC Unprepared

Despite the obvious preparations being made by the ruling class to crush any general strike, and although many in the movement could see the need for the trade unions to prepare, the TUC leader-



ship did no planning. It was a fight it did not want from the outset.

Ernest Bevan, leader of the Transport and General Workers Union later reflected, “With regard to preparations for the strike, there were no preparations until 27 April [1926] and I do not want anyone to go away...under the impression that the General Council had any particular plan to run this movement. In fact, the General Council did not sit down to draft the plans until they were called together on 27 April.”

Yet only a few days later, ‘On Saturday 1 May the Conference of Trade union executives met, and by 3,653,527 to 49,911 gave support to action. By a similar majority they agreed to hand over to the T.U.C. the conduct of the General Strike. So on 3 May the strike began; first reports were outstanding, even the T.U.C. were surprised by the solidarity. “Reports have surpassed all our expectations”, and within days all over the country Councils of Action and Strike Committees were being set up.

From all areas, South Wales, Scotland, London, North East etc., reports were coming in of how solid and how effective the strike was. All

sections called on had responded, railway men, transport, printers, iron and steel and building workers, the “first line”. The strike was going well despite the unpreparedness; local initiative was playing an important part. In response to the effectiveness and growing strength of the strike the Government took a number of vital steps. The “British Gazette” was published to supplement the role of the B.B.C. in churning out “stories” of returning strikers, solidarity weakening and regular appeals for scabs.

At the same time troop movements were reported all over the country, battleships and destroyers were positioned at the mouth of the Tyne, Clyde and Mersey.’

The nine days of the strike

With nearing two million workers out the strike was virtually completely solid and much of the economy ground to a halt. Solidarity and working class action extended beyond the actual strikers and their unions.

‘The workers ability to run things without capitalists was shown conclusively during the Nine Days.

The fact that the wealth of the country was produced by labour was clear. The organisation of the workers through their Trades Councils and Councils of Action, was inspiring and efficient. It involved so many more people in decision-making about how their lives could and should be run than did the “normal” democratic channels of “normal” times. Thus the creative energy of hundreds of thousands was released in a fantastically constructive and inspiring way.’

Examples of this quoted in the pamphlet included setting up defence corps to fight off police violence. In Methil in Fife the corps reached 700 strong – a disciplined force armed with pick-shafts and patrolling regularly. It successfully ensured the right of workers to picket.

‘...in Newcastle the Government’s Commissioner was forced to go to the Joint Strike Committee with a suggestion for dual control of food services in view of the breakdown of efforts by the O.M.S.’ This was far from an isolated instance of the authorities and employers going cap in hand to the strikers.

‘A [...] sense of power was imparted by the simple sight of cars and vans bearing the black on yellow labels “BY PERMISSION OF THE T.U.C”.

The slogans of “Unity is Strength”, “Unity of the Working class” and “Workers of the World Unite” took on concrete meaning. During the strike the workers helped each other sharing the little food they had and all “mucking in” during times of difficulty. Comradeship among the workers and their families born through social labour was deepened by the struggle. Solidarity from workers throughout the world was forthcoming. The International Transport Workers Federation was

successful in blocking cargoes bound for Britain. The Soviet trade unions on 5 May called on their members to subscribe a quarter of a day’s pay in aid of the British workers. That day they transferred £26,427. On 7 May they sent a further £200,000. On 9 May the General Council rejected the aid.’ Though this money was returned, subsequently Soviet trade unionists sent £1,100,000 which was accepted by the Miners Federation to aid locked-out miners.

The end of the strike

Although the strike was solid and growing in effectiveness and support, with the “second line” of workers, including shipbuilding and engineering workers called out to join it on 11 May nevertheless secret negotiations had been taking place all along between the TUC leadership and the government which would lead to a swift capitulation and the end of the strike on that very day. It was clear that the TUC leadership was not only ineffective but did not want this level of class struggle, challenging capital.

The negotiations had not involved the miners and their view of the agreement was that still meant a reduction in their wages and negotiating position. They were right but were left to fight on alone. There was widespread disbelief that the strike had been called off without achieving its objectives. In the aftermath active trade unionists were victimised and the government passed further anti-trade union legislation.

The pamphlet draws the conclusion that, “Three particular features characterised the strike:

1. The open, partisan nature of the Government and State apparatus on the side of the employers;
2. The unwillingness of the majority of the T.U.C. and Labour Party

leaderships to give a lead to the fight...and eventually to sell out;

3. The power, organisation, solidarity and ability of the workers, showing their potential to run society without capitalists.’

Subsequent struggles have had echoes of the momentous days of the General Strike, and testified to its lessons. But the failure to approach the level of united struggle shown during the general strike leaves us with serious questions about the nature and decline of the movement since then and the nature of the British working class today.

Afterword

An afterword to the pamphlet was provided by Kenny Crawford, then secretary of the Junior Workers Committee (JWC), and gives us a glimpse of trade union activity among young workers in 1976. Examples of its work he describes include:

- Increasing the number of JWCs in factories from two to seven in three years.
- Successful action over pay.
- Organising leaflets and meetings in support of the campaign for Britain to leave the European Common Market (now the European Union).
- International support for workers in other countries such as Vietnam, Spain and Chile, and those fighting for socialism.
- Producing news sheets and educational activities.

[1] ‘*Nine for the Days of the General Strike*’ by John Lyons, edited by Brian Filling, Glasgow District AUEW Junior Workers committee. 1976 – all quotes are from the pamphlet.



The British State

Like the Hydra of Greek myth, the British state has countless heads whose purposes and powers are unified at root. Some wield power directly; others act on behalf of the ruling class in less visible ways.

The bourgeois state reaches into all aspects of life, constantly developing its forms and methods. It responds ruthlessly to serious challenge, however small. In a period like this one, where a huge transfer of wealth away from the working class to an ever-smaller section of the oligarchy is well underway and a major war is in preparation, all bodies of the extensive state have to work harder to stifle opposition.

The more visible ‘heads’ of the British state – the armed forces, the police force, the monarchy, Parliament etc. – are not the subject of this series of articles, which will instead look at some of the smaller bodies performing essential functions for the state, often going unnoticed.

THE OLD GANG

The powers and purpose of the Privy Council

by Clare Bailey

The UK’s famously unwritten constitution means the country is effectively governed by the Privy Council and its executive committee the Cabinet, composed of what John McLean called ‘the Old Gang’ in his *Open Letter to Lenin* (1921). Its longevity is testament to the continuities of class rule in this country.

The Council and its Judicial Committee wield their powers without scrutiny or accountability, amounting to a sort of ‘black hole’ at the centre of things, as Dr Paul Scott of Glasgow University’s School of Law puts it. They are instrumental not only in managing the Overseas Territories, the significant residue of empire, but also in ensuring the main levers of state power remain outside Parliament’s control.

‘The seed from which all else grew’

The almost complete continuity of the Privy Council since the 13th century is remarkable. In constitutional terms it has been described as the seed from which much, if not all, else grew. It developed by degrees out of the *curia regis*, the King’s Council, in the course of the Plantagenet period and emerged as a fully separate body in the 14th century. Its earliest written records date from 1386. Constitutional theorist A .V. Dicey wrote in 1887,

“The three centuries intervening between the Norman Conquest and the reign of Richard II (1066-1376), are the period during which English institutions assumed a form from which they have never essentially

varied. At the end of this period, there is found in existence a Parliament of two Houses, distinct Law Courts, and a Council, with peculiar powers, and distinguishable both from the Law Courts and from the Parliament...”

The one interruption to its existence was in the 17th century during the Commonwealth. Widely seen as an instrument of despotic rule, the Privy Council was abolished in 1641 by the Long Parliament and replaced by an elected council, which served until the Restoration. Charles II reinstated the Privy Council, shorn of its enforcement wing the Star Chamber, and greatly expanded its numbers. At the same time he reduced its workings to an inner circle, a ‘cabinet’ of ministers known in his reign as the Cabal.

Members of the Privy Council are still appointed by the King or Queen, on the advice of the Prime Minister, which gives him/her considerable power of patronage. Membership is for life and there are no limits on numbers. There were 19 members in 1404; there were 747 in 2025. Current membership is listed publicly and consists largely of politicians current and former, appointed peers and members of the hereditary aristocracy, bishops and archbishops, senior civil servants and judges, and some politicians from Commonwealth countries. Members of the armed forces are conspicuous by their absence.

Royal prerogative

A.V. Dicey’s description of the actual powers of the Council as ‘peculiar’, meaning ‘special’ or ‘particu-

lar' to it, falls short of defining what they were. They have always been an expression of royal authority in one way or another, but the extent of royal authority has not been a constant. In earlier centuries it fluctuated with the changing balance of power between monarch and different factions of the feudal aristocracy, who in certain periods captured more of government and influenced the composition of the Council in their favour. The Council had as much power as it could take.

The Council had and still has no written constitutional powers set out in law.

few historians of the Privy Council and its Clerk for 25 years, describes the Orders in Council and their function clearly, "...with the growing difficulty in getting Bills through Parliament they have appealed both to puzzled draftsmen and harassed Ministers as a convenient mode of forestalling or fending off obstruction..." He adds that "...the formula 'it shall be lawful for His Majesty by Order' to do this or the other has become a very useful expedient..." [2] Democratic process and accountability are defined as obstructions.

The use of the Orders in Council can be extended to cover "civil

armed forces is that their government and command are vested in Her Majesty... For overseas operations, the political decision to deploy the armed forces rests with the Prime Minister or Cabinet through their exercise of the Royal Prerogative."

This means that war can be declared or troops deployed abroad simply by Order in Council. The Paper goes on, "...the prerogative powers could allow the government to send armed forces into armed conflict abroad without any Parliamentary discussion or debate, or without Parliamentary



The setting of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council

PHOTO BY CHRIS VTG

The contemporary Privy Council acts in two ways: through statutory powers which are derived from Parliament, covering matters like coinage and university charters; and by royal prerogative using what are called Orders in Council. These Orders in Council, defined as deriving their force from the Crown, are made without reference to Parliament and have the force of law. [1] In the words of a 1932 report on cabinet ministers' powers, the prerogative powers are "what is left of the original sovereign power of the Crown to legislate without the authority of the Houses of Parliament."

In his 'History of the Privy Council' (1928), Almeric Fitzroy, one of the

convulsion or the outbreak of war" according to Fitzroy, who ascribes the readiness of the British state at the onset of World War I to the Privy Council acting as the "pivotal point of the collective machine." Churchill relied on the Privy Council throughout the Second World War, when it played a crucial role in managing and directing the war economy. He kept the extended powers for some years after the end of the war.

The Council is not only active in time of war, it is instrumental in war being declared (rare) or armed forces being deployed abroad (frequent). According the Command Paper War Powers & Treaties: Limiting Executive Powers (2007), "The constitutional position of the UK

consent." It adds, "In practice it is inconceivable that any government could make such an important decision without the support of the House of Commons..."

The authors had short memories. Just four years before the writing of this Paper, Blair had sent troops to Iraq using an Order in Council.

Command of the armed forces is not the only power exercised via the Privy Council. Parliament can be prorogued or suspended by an Order in Council. While this happens annually by custom to bring a session to a close, there is nothing in law to prevent it happening at other times should the Privy Council so decide. Inter-

estingly, when the Johnson government prorogued parliament in August 2019 (with Rees-Mogg in the role of Lord President of the Council) in order to prevent parliamentary scrutiny of the proposed no-deal Brexit bill, the Order was quashed by a Supreme Court judgement citing precedents from 1611 and 1765. [3] This might seem to suggest there is a body with powers higher than an Order in Council, but in fact this was a case of one committee of the Privy Council, the Cabinet, effectively being overruled by another. Judges of the Supreme Court are also judges of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

The royal prerogative can also be used to declare a state of emergency at any time the government decides. During the General Strike of 1926, even as the government was in negotiations with the Trade Unions, the Privy Council was “drawing up the necessary Emergency proclamations for the inevitable conflict,” as Rajani Palme Dutt noted in his pamphlet ‘The Meaning of the General Strike’. Between 1920 and 1974 there were twelve such proclamations, all relating to industrial action, and in 1984 the Thatcher government banned union membership at GCHQ by an Order in Council.

Use of the royal prerogative reveals where real power lies in the British state.

The colonies, the Privy Council and its Judicial Committee

The Privy Council has always been the main instrument of the state in the management of empire.

Ireland

The bloody subjugation of Ireland in the Tudor period was conducted through the Privy Council, when the Lord Deputy of Ireland acted for the Crown through the Council, reporting directly to it and requesting

soldiers and supplies from it. The appointment of the Lord Deputy was made on the advice of the Council.

Of twelve Committees of the Council created in the early 17th century, the fact that *The State of Ireland* heads the list shows the importance accorded to the safeguarding and management of the plantations established through the preceding century. As part of the process of organised settlement and colonial extraction, the Council also concerned itself with the anglicisation of the sons of Irish noblemen, as Fitzroy notes with approval: “The practice of sending the sons of Irish noblemen and leading gentlemen to England for some part of their early and impressionable years was extensively followed, with what seems to have been good results.” The idea was to have the Irish “nobilitie as the principall gentry trayned up in this realme to civilitie and religion,” as one Privy Council letter from the period shows.

America

In North America, throughout the 18th century the Privy Council, Fitzroy tells us, “continued to guide and stimulate colonial expansion and development with all the energy and resources at its disposal, until the blunders of George III and his advisers precipitated the fatal conflict with the American settlements.” This account presents the Council as directing and reining in not only the breakaway ambitions of individuals and of colonial politicians establishing potentially threatening bases of power, but also the Crown itself. Its contemporary purpose could be construed in the same way: to prevent fracturing within the state machine and to strengthen the coalitions that unify the centre.

The East India Company

Relations between the Council and the East India Company were difficult from the start and continued to dramatise the struggle for control



PHOTO BY PAVEL GOLOVKIN

Tony Blair used Order in Council to send troops to Iraq

of the profits of colonial expansion. The Council had opposed the formation of the East India Company at the end of the 16th century, blocking royal assent to the petition of London merchants aiming to challenge Spanish domination of the trade routes and extraction of resources. But as the spoils became more and more attractive to the Crown, the Council relented and the charter was granted a year or so later. It was afterwards extended every 20 years, providing the Crown and Council with some measure of influence over a company with fabulous wealth and its own armies; the Company was constrained, for example, to disclose its accounts from time to time. It was not until 1862, however, that the British state, acting via the Council, secured full control of the courts in India; until that point there had been a parallel system of state and company courts.

The first appeals to the judges of the Privy Council from Indian rulers of territories being marauded by the East India Company appear towards the end of 17th century. The role of the British government/Privy Council in relation to the Company is analysed in detail by Marx in his essay of 1853: *The East India Company - its History and Results*. [4]

Palestine

In 1922, five years after Balfour's Declaration in 1917 promising a Jewish state in Palestine, as part of the formalisation of the British Mandate a constitution for Palestine was put in place by an Order in Council under Balfour's leadership. [5] In his history of the Privy Council, Fitzroy, who was personally present at the signing of a constitution which had been immediately rejected by the leadership of the Palestine national movement, describes with colonial complacency the writing of it, "The difficulty of composing within one instrument the claims of jealous races and contending creeds was met with great wisdom and adroitness, and the adjustment of rival pretensions is conspicuous witness to the prudent statesmanship that has watched and tended the growth of the new State."

Balfour made a second, less well-known Declaration in 1926 as Lord President of the Privy Council, announcing what was termed a 'co-equal' relationship between the UK and its Dominions in an attempt to shroud real power relations in a mist of small concessions and head off support for independence movements.

The Overseas Territories

Britain established and then governed its early empire through the Privy Council. Since 1833 this role has been assigned to the Judicial Committee, which now governs what remains of empire in the form of the Overseas Territories:

Anguilla; Bermuda; the British Antarctic Territory; the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT); British Virgin Islands; Cayman Islands; Falkland Islands; Gibraltar; Montserrat; Pitcairn Islands; St Helena; Ascension and Tristan da Cunha; Turks and Caicos Islands; and the Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs) of Akrotiri and Dhekelia on the island of Cyprus.

These territories have no representation in Parliament, which means there is no obligation for the UK government to act on behalf of any of the people living in them, as was abundantly clear when the Chagos islanders were summarily displaced by an Order in Council to facilitate the development of the joint US-UK military facility on Diego Garcia.

The Privy Council's curated public face is that of an exclusive club, with coveted membership conferred on deserving politicians and civil servants at the end of their careers.

Policy for the Overseas Territories is made and their laws enforced by the Privy Council which acts, according to Dr Paul Scott, as a firewall between the domestic and imperial constitutions, preserving the latter from the control and scrutiny of the former. [6] In this way it prevents the British people from seeing and understanding what goes on in their name, and guarantees the safety of the vast sums of money banked in many of the territories.

These funds are not just deposited there by individuals looking to evade taxation and park assets. The Cayman Islands are currently home to 75% of the world's offshore hedge funds, which are themselves the largest holders of US debt. [7] Investment funds registered in the Caymans hold \$8 trillion in assets, while over 400,000 companies are listed in the tiny Virgin Islands.

The Caymans are just one element in a network of havens. According to American think tank Global Financial Integrity, 'The UK's offshore tax

havens are estimated to facilitate nearly 40% of the tax revenue losses suffered annually by countries around the world." More than a third of the world's money laundering is managed through one or other of the UK territories under the benign eye of the Judicial Committee. Periodic exposés and leaks like the Panama Papers ruffle the surface of this system, leading to debates and occasionally new laws, but undertakings to clean up the networks soon founder and little meaningful action has been taken. In the view of Paul Mitchell, writing in the *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* in 2016, the Judicial Committee's modus operandi has been to create 'a network of ambiguities and equivocations that it [takes] great care not to resolve'. In concert with financial institutions in the City of London which design the offshore structures, it enables the City to compete with Wall Street and has reinforced the UK's global influence by refusing to submit itself to accountable legal consistency and has instead followed a snaking path of opportunist, arbitrary rulings.

Judge of the Privy Council, Lord Haldane's description of the Judicial Committee's role as 'assisting in holding the Empire together' is succinct and accurate. Dr Paul Scott goes further. In his view: "...any attempt to remove the Privy Council from our constitutional order, or to turn its relative formality into absolute formality by depriving it of all substantive powers, is highly unlikely. To do so would require the UK to grapple not only with the considerable constitutional legacy of empire, but also with its ongoing reality." That is, it holds everything together.

The invisibility cloak

Operating what amounts to a shadow constitution via royal prerogative and its Judicial Committee, the Privy Council is careful to remain in those shadows, "You cannot

learn much about it from documents... Its constitution is mainly unwritten, and its conventions are unwritten; so that unless you have lived in it and in the atmosphere, you do not know what happens there." Lord Haldane addressing the Law Society in 1921

The shyness extends to its online presence where recent Orders in Council are not easy to find and when accessed via The National Archive exist patchily and then only by title and not in full text. There is the appearance only of compliance with freedom of information. Trying to find Orders passed in the year 2009-10 when Peter Mandelson was Lord President of the Privy Council proved impossible. Its own website is courteously unhelpful.

The Privy Council's curated public face is that of an exclusive club, with coveted membership conferred on deserving politicians

and civil servants at the end of their careers. In a masterly piece of misdirection, a 2003 BBC report, possibly timed to coincide with Blair's Privy Council briefing of opposition leaders on his mendacious Iraq 'dossier', described membership of the Council as 'a prestigious must' and its function as largely symbolic.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Privy Council works tirelessly by obfuscation and under the cloak of the monarchy to conceal both its powers and the interests it serves. By invoking the spectre of 'civil unrest' and 'special circumstances' in its dealings with the legislature, it keeps its emergency powers in place and its room for manoeuvre open. Having been abolished, briefly, by one revolution, it has no intention of allowing another to happen; in fact, this could be seen as its primary purpose.

[1] <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7460/CBP-7460.pdf>

[2] <https://archive.org/details/historyofprivy-co0000fitz/page/n16/mode/1up>

[3] <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/decision-of-the-supreme-court-on-the-prorogation-of-parliament/>

[4] <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/07/11.htm>

[5] <https://www.miftah.org/Display.cfm?DocId=443&CategoryId=9>

[6] <https://nilq.qub.ac.uk/index.php/nilq/article/view/315/7167>

[7] https://savageminds.substack.com/p/britains-offshore-empire?r=5j6fs&utm_medium=ios&triedRedirect=true

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DESTROYING LABOUR IS IN THE INTERESTS OF RULING CLASS

by Gary Lefley

Disillusionment with Keir Starmer's Labour government prevails. The period of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership gave socialists hope. The disappointment in the return to the class-collaborationist politics of previous Labour administrations is exacerbated by the preceding four years of optimism. The irony is that after less than two years in government, Starmer is now unelectable. Social media is littered with comments like, 'I'm never voting Labour again'. Anger is fully justified. But if you are a socialist, or a democrat, 'anything but Labour' is a dangerous sentiment. A Tory Party moving to the far-right? Reform UK? These are 'anything but Labour'.

Starmer and his leadership team do not pretend to be socialists, or even reformists. They are advocates of the status quo, establishment managerialists of a socio-economy in enduring crisis, and a foreign policy in service to British imperial interests. Like previous administrations, they want to offload the crisis onto the working classes, at home and abroad.

But it is not enough to bemoan the current Labour leadership and to equate that leadership with the Labour Party as a whole, dismissing the latter by reference to the former. That critique, by itself, gets us no nearer to identifying and building an achievable alternative, and a potential future vehicle for socialist transformation. A damning critique of the Labour government and Labour Party leadership has to be in tandem with the articulation of a constructive, achievable way

forward - in the context of the rising threat of fascism.

No shortcuts

Over the past 40 plus years there have been several shortcut attempts to launch a new 'Labour' party without first securing the support of the wider labour and trade union movement. They all began with great urgency and optimism. They have all failed, withering on the vine of unresolved political differences, the absence of significant trade union backing, and a dearth of resources.

The Tories are backed by monopoly and finance capital. Reform UK is backed by ex-Tory multi-millionaire donors. [1] The Labour Party is backed by the unions. Without union backing, a new 'Labour' party will be stillborn.

The Green Party is experiencing a recent rise in popularity because the more socially conscious middle-strata are alienated by Starmer's rightward drive. Yet some will remember when, in 2010, a swathe of Labour voters switched to the Lib-Dems because they'd had enough of Blair-Brown and war. The result was Labour lost a 66-seat majority and the return of a Tory government - in coalition with the Lib-Dems!

Although Zack Polanski has been meeting with union leaders there is no serious prospect of the Greens securing large scale support and funding from the trade unions. Maybe they could adapt their policies to attract big business investment, which is feasible - for exam-

ple, they support rejoining the EU. However, they will almost certainly remain a fluctuating middle-strata party buoyed by protest votes.

Though the Green Party is not capable of rising to government, it has an electoral presence sufficient to seriously weaken the Labour vote share. As such it has its uses for the Establishment.

Problems for new parties

Enthusiastic supporters of a new party often argue that if "you build it they will come", but that is wishful thinking. All attempts to create new parties must grapple with the problems of organisation and funding, a socialist consciousness to sustain the party and for it to be achievable quickly enough to take on the immediate struggles against the rise of the far-right.

It took the Labour Party, formed in 1900, over 20 years to replace the Liberals as the main opposition to the Conservative Party - and that was with the affiliation of fully established founding organisations like the Independent Labour Party which already had 28 MPs, and the financial and organisational backing of the trade union movement. It was 1923 before they had more seats in parliament than any other Party (but without an overall majority) and 1945 - 45 years after its founding - before it finally won an overall parliamentary majority.

An embryonic new Party, struggling to be born, will have to overcome its own divisions: the EU - in or out? NATO - in or out? Arms to Zelensky or not? Scotland - independence or



Trade Union action

PHOTO BY JIM OSLEY

not? Trans and women's rights - to name a few. It will need to achieve some basis of unity on all the major domestic and international policies, but on a host of important issues the ideological unity is simply not there. Would-be members are likely to organise and re-divide on key issues and 'points of principle', with a fractious, ever-shrinking membership as the most likely outcome. This has been demonstrated in the continuing conflicts in Your Party where the splits and collapse of enthusiasm are the inevitable outcome of a misconceived project where the ideological unity, class consciousness, and organised working class foundations were absent from its inception. The damaging result is that an initial burst of optimism has been replaced by disillusionment, scepticism, and at least temporary disengagement from political activity by another generation of young people.

Splitting the Labour Party now could hardly be more ill-timed. Opposition to the Starmer clique is growing - within parliament, the Labour Party, the trade union & labour movement and the public at large. Labour MPs are in revolt. Starmer's days in office are numbered.

Socialist consciousness

The level of socialist consciousness amongst the working class that is required to create and sustain a new mass socialist party is simply not there. Steve Howell, Jeremy Corbyn's former Deputy Director of Communications, wrote two years ago on Facebook (24/3/24):

"We should reflect on why the Corbyn project was defeated. Obviously, the media smears, PLP sabotage etc., played a big part but we have to build a movement that is strong enough to overcome such destabili-

sation - and worse. The main problem was that the diverse coalition supporting Corbyn lacked political clarity and unity when confronted and put to the test over the EU. A large proportion were Remainers and saw the EU as an embodiment of social democratic values. When the 2019 general election was lost, that portion of the Corbyn coalition were easily taken in by Starmer's pledges because they had not seen his manoeuvring to get a second referendum for the deceitful sabotage it was.

The implications of this are twofold. Firstly, the base for an alternative to Starmer's Labour is not as big as the support for Corbyn suggested. Issue by issue, the Corbyn manifesto policies were hugely popular but, for most, that doesn't translate into ideological clarity or even any real conception of capitalism as the root problem. Most

Realistically a new mass socialist party would need to be driven by the organised working class, including, not only left-wing unions like the RMT, FBU and CWU, but also the big unions - UNITE, the GMB and UNISON, three unions which account for over 50% of all UK trade unionists.

did not see the change needed as going further than redistributive taxation and a limited expansion of public ownership - important demands but not socialism.

This ties to the second point, which is that this generally low level of class consciousness is reflected in the unions, even the better ones, where there is absolutely no appetite for building an alternative party. Even Mick Lynch [then leader of the RMT] has rejected the idea.

Staying in the Labour Party does not mean investing vast amounts of time in factional in-fighting - though sometimes those battles have to be fought. The priority for everyone - whether retaining Labour membership or not - should be building the mass movements and deeper political understanding through which change will come. The lesson of the Corbyn period is that these were not as strong as it appeared or as was needed to win through."

Fight in Labour

Realistically a new mass socialist party would need to be driven by the organised working class, including, not only left-wing unions like the RMT, FBU and CWU, but also the big unions - UNITE, the GMB and UNISON, three unions which account for over 50% of all UK trade unionists. This is clearly not on the cards. If there is not the basis for a new party then that leaves the alternative - to develop a strategy for transforming the existing Labour Party, with its affiliated unions and UK-wide network, into a mass socialist party.

The forces for democracy will need to mobilise en masse to defend against the rise of far-right authoritarianism and militarism. The only beneficiaries from the demise of the Labour Party - as opposed to a qualitative change in its leadership and direction - would be draconian monopoly capitalism and the military-industrial complex.

There are dedicated socialists who are active and channelling their political commitment through broad movement organisations. They are making a serious contribution to developing the political consciousness which is required to educate and build the forces for socialism, while organically transforming the trade union and Labour movement. Their energies are not wasted or sidetracked. And their work can impact on the task of galvanising the Labour Party as an instrument of the working classes. Sometimes the fight looks bleak. But socialists have to look beyond the frustration and demoralisation of the here and now. With collective working class intervention, change can come, sometimes quickly. And with those developments comes the potential for a rapid, radical change in mass consciousness.

Over the past four years there has been a resurgence of trade union militancy and a number of successes. Workers engaged in those industrial struggles are learning from their experiences, not only that the narrative of the Establishment and its media does not correspond to their lived experiences, but also how to fight and win.

There has also been an unparalleled level of protest against the genocidal war on Palestine with over 30 successive massive demonstrations in London since October 2023 - half a million people marched through the capital on the 28th March. Beyond London, hundreds of thousands have been marching on the streets of Britain every month, and multi-millions worldwide. Participation in the global campaign for a ceasefire in Gaza and a Free Palestine is opening minds to a very different world view. That rise in consciousness is being augmented experientially when the repressive machinery of the state is mobilised to suppress democratic protest.

At the time of writing, Starmer's position as Labour leader and

Prime Minister is precarious. There is organised opposition to him from within the Parliamentary Labour Party and the wider labour movement, and not just from known left-wing MPs. Labour centrists are looking at the opinion polls and realise they will almost certainly be out of a job after the next general election if Starmer remains leader.

Why leave when a change of leader and of political direction is an achievable prospect? Why form another divisive splinter group when left-Labour MPs, trade union leaders and the wider movement can determine Labour's future orientation, including who replaces Starmer's Establishment coterie? In that context it is concerning that major unions, in particular Unite, have thrown their affiliation to the Labour Party into question, without posing any alternative that would represent working class people politically.

The burning question

Capitalism, at home and abroad, is in an enduring crisis. Starmer's dogged adherence to neo-liberal and imperialist policies is manifestly failing. The socio-economic policies of the near two decades since the 2008 economic crash - moderated but essentially repeated - are reproducing similar outcomes. The threat of transcontinental war is escalating. The need for an alternative socio-economic strategy and foreign policy is becoming clearer and ever more urgent.

The burning question remains: is there any real alternative to Labour? This question should not be side-stepped. Our class enemies will welcome adventurism, dissonance and division as they ramp up the drive towards authoritarianism.

The Labour Party today is not a champion of the people. But is an arena of struggle, at all levels, from local branches, to constituency par-



PHOTO BY WELDON KENNEDY

Labour Students campaign

ties, to annual conference, to affiliate organisations, to the parliamentary party. At a local level many branches and CLPs are doing good work in their communities. If all the socialists leave the Labour Party then those battles are concluded in favour of capital. If some of those socialists join the Greens, or try to salvage Your Party, or set up yet another new Party, then the Tories, right-wing Labour and the ruling establishment will celebrate having a free run, untroubled by embryonic, under-funded, essentially impotent middle-strata sects, destined to disintegrate. It is lose-lose for the working class and for socialists at a critical moment in national and global political developments.

Labour Party socialists may find other channels for their activism. Since Starmer became Labour leader - on a left manifesto programme he had zero intention of implementing - sometimes there has seemed little point in sitting in dire meetings with a declining attendance, where the agenda and debates are manipulated to the point of eliminating any serious political discussion. But socialists can pour their political energies into campaigning against the genocide in Gaza and for a Free Palestine; against the US and Israeli wars on

Iran and Lebanon; against Britain's membership of NATO or any EU military alternative; against multi-billion pound increases in military expenditure - and the concomitant cuts in welfare, education, the NHS, and social services. These campaign activities help raise the class and political consciousness of British workers, and the trade union movement in particular, which is fundamental to future social transformation.

So why assist the factionalised Starmerites by resigning from the Party? Why give them exactly what they want: a free run at ridding Labour of any meaningful association with the class from which it took its name?

[1] <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/dark-money-investigations/reform-uk-funders-nigel-farage-5-million-donations-fossil-fuels-tax-havens/>

Averting climate catastrophe

by Brian Durrans

Last November, Brazil hosted COP30 – the United Nations 30th annual Conference of Parties, devoted to saving the Earth from apocalyptic warming.

The event marked the 10th anniversary of the 2015 Paris Agreement which committed its signatories (194 states plus the EU) to limiting the rise of global warming by the end of this century to within 2°C (ideally 1.5°C) above pre-industrial levels. The core of the Agreement was that the main polluters, the richer and longest-industrialised capitalist West, would curb their current greenhouse gas emissions (mainly carbon dioxide) and help fund poorer, historically less-polluting and still-developing countries, many their own former colonies, to curb theirs. If this deal only partly atoned for historical injustice, present imperialist and non-imperialist nations could agree, at least for the time being, on the urgent need for shared, sustainable development as the only way to avert the suicide of our species.

How is the world doing?

Well before this article was written in early April 2026, anxiety about reaching the Paris targets was already being openly expressed. To take two examples: the Climate Action Tracker (CAT) update from COP30 last November which says, the most serious concern now is that the progress shown in the

first five years after Paris, up until around 2020, has flattened off (as can be seen in Fig.1) just as visible signs of dangerous climate change have emerged vividly around the planet [1]; and second, a more recent warning by UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Simon Stiell at a “sustainable business” meeting in Brussels in March 2026 about the climate impact of war and continued reliance on fossil fuels. He said,

“Some responses to the fossil fuel crisis – incredibly – argue for doubling-down on the cause of the problem and slowing the shift to renewable energy, even though it is clearly cheaper, safer, and faster to market. This is completely delusional, because history tells us, this fossil fuel crisis will happen again and again. In this new world disorder where some major powers do as they please, unconstrained by economic logic or current alliances... meek dependence on fossil fuel imports will leave Europe forever lurching from crisis to crisis, with households and industries literally paying the price. All as climate disasters wreak havoc the world over – pushing costs up and economic growth down and taking a massive human toll... While the fossil fuels that supercharge disasters rake-in trillions in taxpayer-funded subsidies globally. Money that could be better spent.” [2]

Fig.1 Climate Action Tracker from Climate Analytics showing impact of the Paris Agreement from the lead up in

2009 to targets set in 2025. NDC (on left of chart) refers to each country’s Nationally Determined Contribution [i.e., its target for mitigating global warming]. (see right)

Whilst the CAT update is a blunt warning, Stiell talks as a diplomat, but that only emphasises the gravity of what he says. Both examples reflect the crucial difference between acknowledging the danger and actually stepping back from the brink. Neither, however, addresses the attendant risk of a complete collapse of the Earth’s life-support system. Recent record temperatures are already impacting winds, rainfall, pollination, ocean currents and other phenomena. These are closely inter-dependent, along with living systems - plants, animals and ourselves. Current temperatures are unprecedented. If any of these phenomena departs radically from its normal variability there is a risk that others will follow suit and trigger a swift collapse of the whole system. The odds of such an event are hard to quantify but the risk is another reason to reduce global warming as much and as soon as possible [3] Even more seriously, instead of explaining how it was possible for the Paris Agreement to stall on its way to a sustainable future, the commentators just urge participants to try harder.

Real progress registered in the first few years following the Paris Agreement can be partly explained by the optimistic mood generated by the process of reaching the agreement itself, and perhaps the “low-hanging fruit” of its initial targets, selected because they were easiest to achieve. During Covid (2020-2022) greenhouse gas emissions actually fell. Although COP30 took account of China’s reaching its peak emissions target ahead of schedule, the global prognosis remained poor, due to continuing crises of capitalism, war and militarisation, US withdrawal from the Paris process and the preference mainly of Western fossil fuel companies for

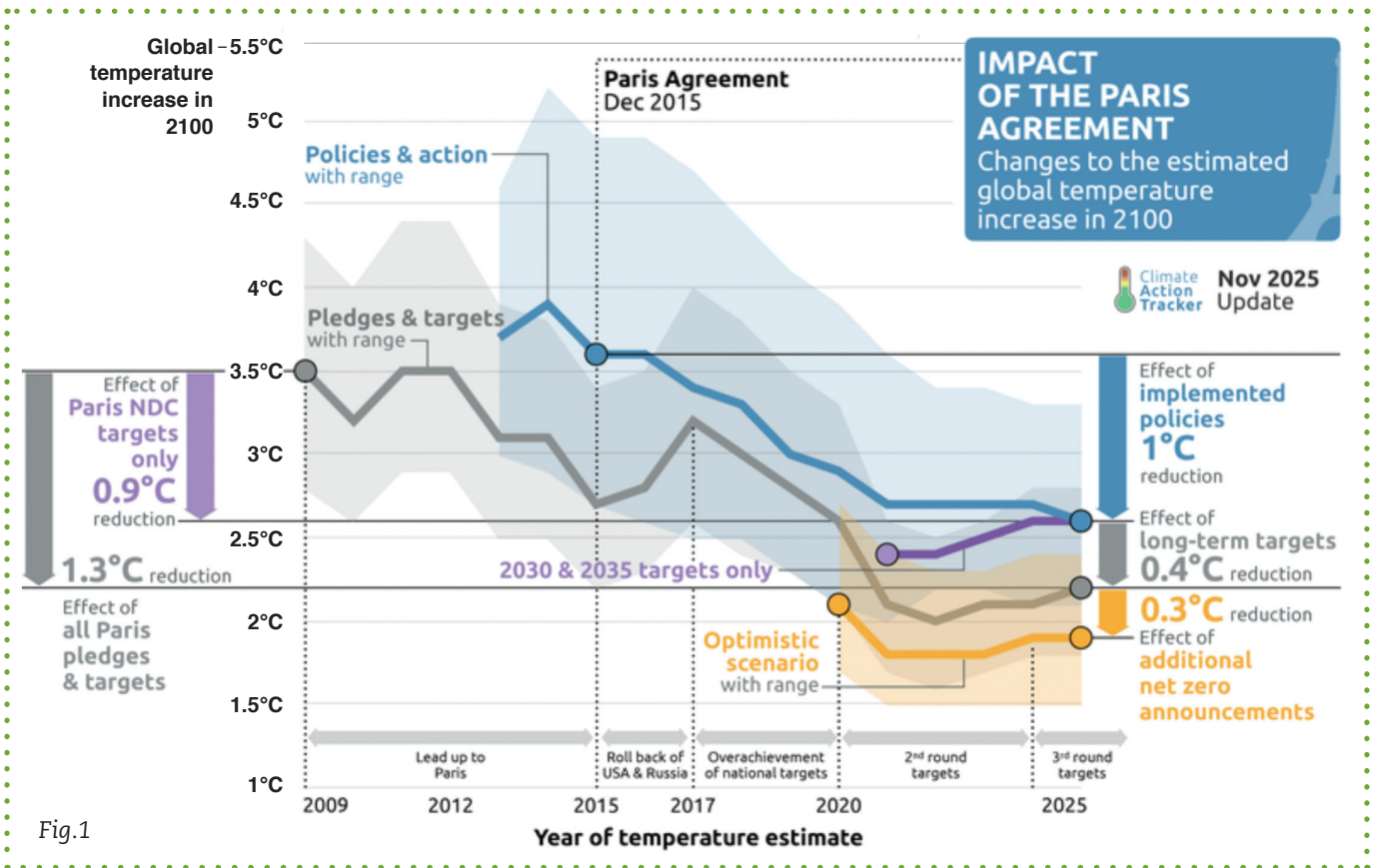


Fig.1

short-term profits over humanity's longer-term survival.

Paris failure?

Before the Paris Agreement, the world could anticipate around 3.6°C of warming by 2100. By COP30 in 2025 (see Fig.1), after ten years of trying to reduce that figure to the agreed ideal of 1.5°C, or even just the “optimistic” 2.0°C, the projection had been reduced by only 1°C down to 2.6°. A tiny fall of only 0.1°C between 2024-25 ominously suggests not just missed targets for 2100 but further warming into the next century. As Climate Analytics put it: “Our global temperature projections based on this year’s policy developments and 2035 targets have almost come to a standstill: it has barely moved over the past four years. The warning signs are clear: we are heading in the wrong direction.”

It would seem that the only response to this dismal assessment of an initial promise levelling off and heading for failure is to double-down on the Paris Agreement. In their book, *Overshoot: how the world surrendered to climate break-*

down (2024), anticapitalist climate analysts Andreas Malm and Wim Carton reject this view, arguing that since capitalism has been able to evade or accommodate its restrictions, the Agreement is unfit for purpose and that the only chance of saving humanity is urgently to dismantle capitalism itself. Ian Angus, in his more recent book, *Metabolic Rifts* (2026), takes a similar view: the Paris Agreement is dead and humanity’s only hope is a socialist or “eco-socialist” revolution.

Malm and Carton document precisely how some powerful capitalists have subverted the Agreement to their own ends by continuing to profit from high-emission fossil fuels, and doing so covertly, by “greenwashing” or obfuscation. When they break cover at all, they offer the comforting thought that the catastrophe, which they can’t deny business-as-usual will make inevitable, can be averted just in time by some currently unimaginable technological marvel.

Pretending business as usual can solve global warming shows capitalism or its apologists have no

monopoly on wishful thinking: its opponents are also susceptible but have fewer excuses. Malm, Carton and Angus may well be right in their critique of the Paris Agreement and their conclusion that only overthrowing capitalism can save us, but since they offer no perspective on how this might be done at the speed and scale required, the galvanising potential of their argument is lost.

The essential - because existential - goal is averting climate catastrophe. How to achieve this poses two questions: before it’s too late, what forces can be mustered and how can contemporary capitalism be persuaded to help or, if not, be replaced?

Political environment

Environmental issues affect the lives and livelihoods of everyone, and of unborn generations. This is reflected in the “green” agendas of national and devolved governments, local authorities, political parties and in the activities of many local, regional and national organisations.

Mainstream media usually treat such issues like other subjects, in isolation from their real contexts. Environmental politics thus tends to be discussed more as environment than as politics. This means that global warming (for example) is often bracketed with the homely triviality of TV weather forecasting, and existential anxiety is deflected into irritation about activists blocking motorways. More seriously, this treatment reduces collective responsibility and political action to personal behaviour about recycling or the aesthetics of multiple wind turbines. As a result, people tend to think of environmental issues more in connection with specialised campaigning organisations like Greenpeace or Friends of the Earth, or the Green Party, rather than the main political parties or trade unions with other policies on their agendas (to the extent that the Green Party aspires to form or join a government it has to expand its policies into other issues).

One result of such “framing” is that green politics is not just semi-detached from “machine” politics more generally but appeals, unsurprisingly, more to sections of the middle-class interested in lifestyle than to workers interested in jobs and wages. A vast amount of work and debate on key environmental and closely linked standard-of-living issues like global warming and pollution (rather than litter or veganism) has been and continues to be done within the structures of the organised labour movement, in which there is a clear trajectory from local branch and constituency to national, parliamentary and international levels. Such work and its trajectory have certainly been obstructed by right-wing factionalism but remains a resource and a practice primed for rapid development and deployment by those with a class outlook.

As for alternatives, since the 1970s there have been five main “waves of global environmental social move-



PHOTO BY PALACIO DE PLANALTO

President of Brazil, Lula da Silva at COP30

ments” [4] mostly confined to the industrial or post-industrial West, with few links to the organised working class. The most recent, such as “Insulate Britain” and “Just Stop Oil”, have been little more disruptive than earlier, often widely supported, Greenpeace activists yet have faced punitive fines and imprisonment for their actions, and in the US comparable groups are proscribed as environmental terrorists. There is nonetheless great energy, expertise and cross-community reach in such groups, but given the short time available, their potential can probably be realised only in collaboration with organised labour.

International action

Is it delusional to imagine that some capitalists can be more realistic than others? Not if we take the example of Western anti-fascist allies in World War Two, or of Simon Stiell’s recent reminder to “Europe” that shelving short-term interests in favour of long-term ones was something it has done before (no matter that Stiell’s “Europe” has never been everyone’s friend even in Europe itself). It’s also worth recalling that capitalism has always been pragmatic about making such deals despite wrapping itself in the mythology of free competition: with-

out that, state monopoly capitalism and transnational corporations would never have developed.

Capitalism has never operated as a single global system, despite (or even because of) attempts by the US or by previous imperialisms to increase their dominance. The current geopolitical flux includes not just shifting alliances within or between capitalist blocs and in networks of transnational corporations, but also the rise of China.

Such changes are reflected in the struggle to defend and advance the United Nations, including its Paris Agreement and in continuing attempts to reduce the risk of nuclear war. Within and between most nations these struggles will sharpen as the crises of capital and climate worsen, and the institutions and practical experience are available (or, if necessary, can be created) for global transformation. Even if we had the time to do so, it might make as little sense to reconstruct the whole apparatus as to ignore it altogether.

For all their shortcomings, however, the climate control efforts of the United Nations have clarified the nature and scale of the problem we face. Even though here in Britain the

problem is much less severe than elsewhere, especially in the global South, it is increasingly obvious that only the UN can provide the infrastructure to protect the economic supply chains and interlocking ecosystems on which we all depend – and that this demands transparency about future risks and the inadequacy of what is being done to mitigate them. That transparency is especially necessary in those countries, most of them seriously long-term polluters, with developed economies and techno-scientific capacity to monitor changing environmental conditions. Some such countries – the US and the UK among them – also have the means and sometimes the motivation to misrepresent or suppress climate-related information which their own populations and the rest of the world would benefit from knowing.

Dangerous information

In January 2026, an article in *The Times* and another in *The Guardian*, elaborated in February in a longer piece in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (BAS) in the US, [5] revealed that UK intelligence contributed to a DEFRA-commissioned report on *Global Biodiversity Loss, Ecosystem Collapse and National Security*. This was scheduled for publication last autumn but after it was held back by Downing Street as far too negative, a version of it was published on the DEFRA website. Next day *The Times* reported that an internal, unabridged version of the assessment included warnings much graver than the public-facing report: overwhelming mass migration to Europe, increasingly polarised and populist politics in the UK, NATO conflicts over collapsing food production in Russia and Ukraine, and escalating tensions between China, India, and Pakistan that could potentially lead to nuclear war.

There may be rather more to this than the suppression of climate-related projections that could cause unnecessary or even counterpro-

ductive panic. One reason for the secrecy could be embarrassment that so little is actually being done to comply with the Paris Agreement, despite public and official assurances to the contrary. Another reason might well be geopolitical. When the intelligence services have a hand in environmental risk assessments that refer to migration and potential conflicts involving NATO and those it considers its enemies, it's unlikely that climate control for the good of humanity is the only item on the agenda. This is a possible factor in the US as well. As the longer article in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* reports, "the Office of the [US] Director of Intelligence insists that it must keep a 2008 National Intelligence Assessment on the *National Security Implications of Global Climate Change to 2030* classified. After almost two decades, the report remains classified, albeit at the lowest level of national security secrecy."

As if securing a sustainable future were not challenging enough, the avarice and myopia of imperialist elites and their facilitators are impediments we could do without. The BAS article doesn't single-out President Trump's well-known views but refers to current National Intelligence Director Tulsi Gabbard's decision to excise any mention of climate change from the spy community's most recent Annual Threat Assessment, which it sees as part of a "pattern of climate denialism and suppression within the Global North intelligence apparatus".

It's helpful to know what we're up against. If climate catastrophe is to be averted in time, so that there is at least a world in which socialism can defeat capitalism, both existing structures and new initiatives will be necessary everywhere, in the home and workplace, on the streets, in conference halls and community halls, at board meetings, union meetings, through the media and via the ballot-box. It might even be enough.

[1] The Climate Action Tracker, which summarises findings from 34 countries responsible for about 80% of Greenhouse Gas emissions, is a clear indicator of current trends.

[2] <https://unfccc.int/news/un-climate-chief-in-brussels-fossil-fuel-dependency-is-ripping-away-national-security-and>

[3] Ian Angus, *Metabolic Rifts: Capitalism's Assault on the Earth System*. (2026), pp210-214.

[4] Maslin M, Lang J, Harvey F. *A short history of the successes and failures of the international climate change negotiations*. *UCL Open: Environment*. 2023;(5):08. (pp6- 8) Available from: <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444/ucloe.000059>

[5] <https://thebulletin.org/2026/02/deny-delay-downplay-how-governments-hide-climate-change-intelligence/#post-heading>

From The Socialist Correspondent 10 years ago

Is the European Union undemocratic?

"The idea that the EU is a force for peace is a myth. Wars in Europe are on the rise and growing increasingly dangerous...there was the dismantling of Yugoslavia...now there is the continuing war in Ukraine...As the EU has grown, so has its military component, along with pressure for the establishment of a permanent EU military structure...Most wars in the Middle East have been supported, or even led, by EU member states alongside the US."

Issue 25 Summer 2016

by John Moore

AFTERMATH OF REGIME CHANGE IN BANGLADESH

by Pat Turnbull

On 12 February 2026 elections were held in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) took 212 seats, with an alliance led by Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami taking 77 seats and becoming the official opposition. The Election Commission put voter turnout at 59.44%.

Awami league banned

The Bangladesh Awami League (BAL), Bangladesh's oldest party, founded on 23 June 1949, was banned from participating in the election. The BAL was the leading force in the 1971 liberation struggle which resulted in the creation of Bangladesh, and was last in power between 2009 and 2024. In May 2025, the unelected interim administration led by Dr Muhammad Yunus had issued a decree that banned the BAL. All political activity, public meetings, publications, social media content and even any publicity in support of the party were criminalised. Despite a formal United Nations communication sent on 29 December 2025 raising serious concerns about the banning, on 8 April 2026 the BNP-led government passed the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Bill, carrying the ban into permanent law.

Vijay Prashad and Atul Chandra describe the 2026 election as 'a political process that began... in the strategic calculations of sections of the Bangladesh oligarchy and their patrons in the Global North' giving the following further context: 'The United States, which has sought to reassert control over

the Western Hemisphere, is trying with all its instruments to prevent the growth of sovereignty across Asia and Africa as well... The Awami League's primary offence, from Washington's perspective was... its strategic autonomy: its balancing act between Beijing and Washington, its acceptance of Chinese infrastructure investment, and its resistance to full integration into the US-led Indo-Pacific architecture... For Washington, Bangladesh is a critical node in the containment geography being constructed around China, linking the Indian Ocean to Southeast Asian maritime chokepoints.'

The two writers characterise the difference between the two parties, 'The BNP, rooted in the military-bureaucratic establishment rather than the Awami League's secular-nationalist tradition, has historically been amenable to US preferences on market liberalization and security cooperation.' [1]

The previous elections on 7 January 2024 were won by the Awami League and boycotted by the BNP, in what looks like an attempt to undermine the legitimacy of the Awami League government. A violent uprising in July 2024, making use of youth protests against a quota system for public sector jobs to mount a regime change operation, resulted in the flight of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on August 5 to India where she remains, and the 8 August 2024 appointment of an interim government under Muhammad Yunus.

Biased reporting

Not for the first time, the United Nations showed itself as far from impartial. On 12 February 2025 United Nations human rights chief Volker Türk reported on a human rights office mission to Bangladesh starting on 16 September 2024. Introducing the lengthy report, he said, "There are reasonable grounds to believe that officials of the former government, its security and intelligence apparatus, together with violent elements associated with the former ruling party, committed serious and systematic human rights violations." Türk is an Austrian lawyer who has worked in the UN since 1995 and has been the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights since October 2022. In taking this approach, he gave the Interim Government backing in the actions that would follow. [2]

On 3 March 2025 the Awami League published comments on the UN Human Rights Report. The response said, 'The Awami League wholly rejects the OHCHR (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) report and serious flaws in its investigation methodology and calls for a new and impartial inquiry. Bangladesh desperately needs an investigation that accounts for and properly documents the unrest that has run rampant up to and since August 15. This would include the organised killings and unlawful detentions of members and supporters of Awami League (the country's biggest and oldest political party), the escalating attacks on religious and ethnic minorities, the suppression of media outlets

and individual journalists, and the creeping radical Islamisation of the country's cultural and political life.

'...A critical weakness of the report is that it does not cover the post-August 15 period, meaning that many of its observations fail to address the Bangladeshi people's most urgent concerns. The OHCHR report itself acknowledges this flaw in its terms of reference. It also admits that it cannot supply levels of proof that would satisfy a criminal court that its allegations of Awami League involvement in human rights abuses are true. For the record, Awami League categorically denies and rejects the report's claims that some of its senior leaders, including the Prime Minister herself, were personally responsible for or directed the use of lethal force against crowds; or were involved in or had knowledge of mistreatment of detainees.'

'These allegations rest entirely on biased evidence supplied by the Interim Government, while other records have been withheld that would exculpate the Awami League and incriminate members and supporters of the Interim Government. For example, the OHCHR flagrantly errs in accusing Awami League government of failing to take steps to seek accountability for the breakdowns of discipline among some of those tasked with law enforcement that led to regrettable deaths, violence and destruction in late July. In fact, in early August the Government publicly established an inquiry commission, later dissolved by Dr Yunus, to investigate those matters. Moreover, and at the same time, the UN itself was invited by the Awami League-led Government to observe events on the ground.'

'Those who have lost their lives or continue to endure violence and discrimination deserve better than this OHCHR report. Victims include the scores of policemen brutally murdered in undocumented lynchings, hangings, burnings



PHOTO BY MID JONI HOSSAIN

and other revenge attacks during and after last year's uprising. The OHCHR references just 44 such killings but suppressed documentary evidence shows there were many more. Bangladesh needs a fully independent review carried out by an impartial investigator without fear of reprisals.' [3]

No fair trial for Sheikh Hasina

On 10 November 2025 Doughty Street Chambers sent an appeal on behalf of Sheikh Hasina, to the UN Special Rapporteur on extra-judicial, summary or arbitrary executions. It set out, '...serious concerns about the lack of fair trial rights and due process issues arising from her in absentia prosecution before the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT)...In July 2025, Sheikh Hasina and two other senior officials were indicted by Bangladesh's ICT for alleged crimes against humanity said to have arisen from the government's response in Bangladesh in July and August 2024.... A verdict is due soon with Sheikh Hasina facing an almost certain sentence of death. The Urgent Appeal highlights how the ICT has chosen only to prosecute members of Sheikh

Hasina's former government. It is said that the interim government has decided that those who made the "uprising successful will not face prosecution...for their acts between July 15 and August 8".'

'The Urgent Appeal sets out how the trials before the ICT are being carried in an environment charged with political vengeance, under an unelected interim government which itself has no democratic mandate, and raises multiple serious concerns regarding violations of Sheikh Hasina's right to a fair trial, including that:'

'Sheikh Hasina has not been tried by an "independent and impartial tribunal" as required by Article 14 [1] of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The political association of the ICT's judges which tried Sheikh Hasina's case with political parties opposed to her Awami League raise serious questions of both actual and perceived bias. Moreover, the Chief Prosecutor also suffers from the appearance of bias, himself having appeared at political rallies calling for the ban of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League.'

'Sheikh Hasina has been tried in absentia for very serious crimes... She has received no formal notification of the charges against her. Moreover, lawyers who have previously acted on behalf of or associated with the Awami League have been attacked and are unable to carry out their professional duties without intimidation. As a result, Sheikh Hasina is being represented by a state appointed lawyer with whom she has had no communication and given no instructions.'

'Against the backdrop of such serious fair trial and due process violations, the imposition of any death sentence following such a manifestly unfair trial would effectively amount to summary execution and a clear violation to the right to life guaranteed by Article 6 of the ICCPR.' [4]

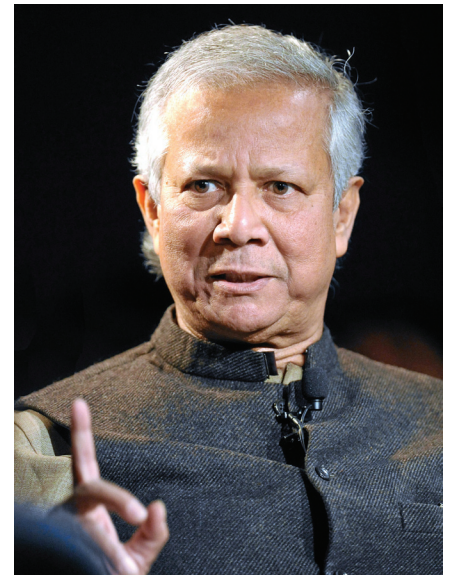
Sheikh Hasina was convicted and sentenced to death on 17 November 2025. The Bangladesh International Crimes Tribunal (BICC) was set up in 1973 to try those accused of violent crimes during the nine-month long 1971 Bangladesh independence struggle. The United Nations communication to the Yunus government of 29 December 2025, after Sheikh Hasina's conviction, also raised 'serious concern' about fair trial guarantees before the BICC. The persecution of the Awami League has continued under the BNP government. At time of writing the most recent and possibly most striking example is the arrest of Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, 59, who had been the first female parliamentary speaker of Bangladesh, elected on April 30, 2013 and holding the post till her resignation in September 2024. Advances for women were one of the chief achievements of Sheikh Hasina's government. In contrast, in the 2026 elections, only a tiny number of female candidates were successful. The BNP fielded 10 female candidates, the National Citizen Party just two, and Jamaat-e-Islami none.

Conflict created by imperialism

Bangladesh is the eighth most populous country in the world and one of the most densely populated with a population of over 174 million. Its origins lie in the British partition of India.

Progress Publisher's *Short History of the World* summarises, 'Towards the close of 1945 and early in 1946 anti-imperialist and anti-feudal actions of the peasants [in India] grew in number...Great Britain was no longer able to exercise complete sway over India. The partitioning of India into two states seemed to the British to be the only way of controlling the anti-imperialist movement and maintaining their status...' [5] On July 18, 1947, the British Parliament passed the Indian Independence Bill, which partitioned India into two independent Dominions, India and Pakistan. Palme Dutt quotes the Soviet Zhukov, 'Britain is being forced to take a page from America's book and copy her policy in the Philippines – to give a nominal false freedom. In other words, to clear out so as to remain.' The evil of partition, according to Palme Dutt, was that it 'divided state boundaries, not on lines of linguistic, cultural or national divisions, but on lines of religious division...it meant the reproduction and multiplication of this division in every town and village area of India...[it] let loose the most hideous communal conflicts, massacres, and flight of millions of refugees without parallel in Indian history.' [6]

In the partition of India, East Bengal was allocated to Pakistan, with the territory of India between the two parts. Even before partition, in 1946, Palme Dutt describes 'the Moslem League "Direct Action" Day in Calcutta in August followed by the riots in East Bengal in October, and the anti-Moslem riots in Bihar, all resulting in thousands of killed, many more thousands wounded and rendered homeless, wholesale



PIC BY MICHAEL WUERTENBERG

Muhammad Yunus, installed as leader of Bangladesh after Sheik Hasina's ousting

massacre, arson, looting and horrors beyond record.'

In the process of partition 'The boundary dispute between Bengal and Pakistan culminated in massacre and destruction on religious grounds unprecedented in scale. It is estimated that over 500,000 lost their lives, while the number of those who suffered one way or another during the strife and shifting of populations reached 12,000,000'. [5]

From the start, the fusion of western Pakistan and East Bengal was an uncomfortable one. While East Bengal had a slightly higher population, the political power and economic advantages lay in West Pakistan, with the leaders even insisting that Urdu should be the only official language, when the vast majority of people in East Bengal spoke Bengali and were proud of the long cultural Bengali tradition. The Language Movement in resistance began in 1948.

The militaristic Pakistan regime's 'methods of dictatorship' as Palme Dutt put it added to the dissatisfaction. 'When in the East Pakistan elections in 1954, the anger of the people routed the discredited Moslem League leadership and returned

the United Front [which included the Awami League] on the basis of a progressive programme with 93 per cent of the votes, the ministry thus elected was immediately deposed from office by fiat from above (under section 92 of the Government of India Act of 1935, the act passed by the British Tory government of Baldwin) and a military dictatorship was established.' [6]

In 1970 in the first general election based on universal suffrage in Pakistan's history, the Awami League won 288 of the 300 seats in East Pakistan's provincial assembly. The refusal of the Pakistan military junta to transfer power led to the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971.

'Against the backdrop of such serious fair trial and due process violations, the imposition of any death sentence following such a manifestly unfair trial would effectively amount to summary execution and a clear violation to the right to life guaranteed by Article 6 of the ICCPR.' [4]

On the night of March 25 1971, the Pakistan military launched Operation Searchlight, taking military control of the major cities in East Pakistan, eliminating all opposition through systematic killings, with some estimations counting as many as three million deaths. The Bengalis mounted a well organised guerrilla campaign, but it was the intervention of India in December 1971, after Pakistan, without provocation, raided its airfields, that quickly put paid to Pakistan's campaign, with the surrender of 93,000 members of the Pakistan armed forces. (7)

Main Currents of Indian History says, 'In 1971, President Nixon's partisan attitude during the Indo-Pakistan war and the sending of a task force of the US Seventh Fleet into the

Indian Ocean to assist Pakistan in boosting its morale, brought India closer to Russia with whom she signed the Treaty of Friendship in 1971.' [7] Bangladesh too had good relations with the Soviet Union.

The path of Bangladesh continued to be marred by violence. In 1975 Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, joint founder of the Awami League and Prime Minister of Bangladesh, was assassinated with all the members of his family who were in Dhaka at the time, even down to his ten year old son. [8] His daughter, Sheikh Hasina, and her sister, only escaped because they were not in Bangladesh at the time.

Problems continue

It is significant that in the riots of 2024, the Independence Museum was vandalised and looted. The museum has still not been restored. It included a replica of the table on which the Eastern Commander of the Pakistan Army signed the surrender document on December 16 1971, and a fountain 'symbolising the tears of the mothers of millions of martyrs and women who were victims of torture'. [9]

While Sheikh Hasina is the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the new BNP Prime Minister, Tarique Rahman, is the grandson of the founder of the BNP, Ziaur Rahman, whose daughter Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman's mother, also served three terms as Prime Minis-

ter. Lawrence Lifschultz says, "The evidence clearly points to the fact that General Ziaur Rahman had prior knowledge of the coup d'etat in which Sheikh Mujibur and his family were killed in 1975. [8] After coup and counter coup that year, he became head of state under martial law. In 1978 he founded the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, subsequently facing many coup attempts before his assassination in one of them on 30 May 1981.

It does not look as if the banning of the Awami League will be 'the end of history' in Bangladesh.

[1] *Bangladesh at the Crossroads: Elections and the Future of the World's Eighth largest Country*, Vijay Prashad and Atul Chandra, 15/2/26, *Countercurrents*

[2] *Bangladesh protests probe reveals top leaders led brutal repression*, United Nations, 12/2/25

[3] *Awami League comments on UN Human Rights Report*, 3/3/25, Bangladesh Awami League

[4] *Urgent Appeal filed with UN raises serious fair trial due process issues in trial of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina before Bangladesh's "International Crimes Tribunal"*, 10/11/25, Doughty Street Chambers

[5] *A Short History of the World Volume II*, ed. Professor A.Z. Mantred, *Progress Publishers*, Moscow, 1974

[6] *India Today and Tomorrow*, R. Palme Dutt, *Lawrence and Wishart*, 1955

[7] *Main Currents of Indian History*, R.C. Majumdar, P.N. Chopra, *Sterling Publishers*, New Delhi, 1985

[8] *Bangladesh and "Unfinished Revolution"*, Anisur Rahman interviews Lawrence Lifschultz, (undated), *Frontier*

[9] *Bangladesh's Museum of Independence still remains sealed*, Misbah Jamil, 25/3/26, *Views Bangladesh*



Tam McFall

Working-class leader and internationalist
(21 July 1946 – 26 December 2025)

An Appreciation by Brian Filling

Tam McFall was an outstanding fighter for the working class, a deeply committed socialist and internationalist, a great supporter of the journal, *The Socialist Correspondent*, and a fine advocate for peace and many progressive causes. Tam's passing is a great loss to the working-class movement.

He was born and brought up in Parkhead, a poor working-class neighbourhood in the east end of Glasgow and he experienced difficult times in the immediate post-war period. The east end of Glasgow was an area where you had to stand up for yourself, often physically, and as the saying goes, "you had to watch your back". He was best pals with Thomas Watson, they were known as the "Two T's", and they got into many scrapes with them ending up in borstal.

Tam later met Jessie Bradley and soon they were married. They moved into their first place together in Bridgeton, also in the east end, and Jessie helped stabilise his life. Tam found steady employment, labouring on building sites for Glasgow City Council and with the arrival of their daughter, Liz, Tam's responsibilities grew. Two other children, Charles and Thomas, followed.

Tam learned to use every bad experience he had had in his young life as a lesson. That, along with his extensive reading led him to the Communist Party and into becoming a working-class leader.

I was introduced to Tam in the mid-1970s by Willie Kennedy, a close

friend and comrade of mine, who was a leading shop steward in the steel industry before its closure and then Convenor of shop stewards at the Albion Motor Works in Glasgow. He and Tam were the leading members of the Shettleston branch of the Communist Party.

I used to speak at the Shettleston branch and got to know, and work with, several of the comrades very well. These included Jim Smith, who died at a young age of asbestosis caused by his work as a lagger/pipe fitter working with red lead. His family, after a fight, managed to get asbestosis as the cause of his death on his death certificate. Unfortunately, it didn't lead to any compensation. Another comrade still with us is Pat McDonagh, who worked closely with Tam in many industrial struggles and who became the key organiser of numerous cultural events in Glasgow's east end as part of the Anti-Apartheid Movement's 1990 *Sechaba Conference and Festival: Cultural resistance against apartheid*.

Commitment to learning

Tam and I worked together on many issues for over forty years. We used to meet regularly after work when we would discuss the

political situation, actions that should be taken and what we could personally do. Tam understood very well that the root problem facing the working class was capitalism and from that basic understanding he embarked on a life of learning and struggle. He regularly attended political education schools. Although he had not benefited much from formal education, he took to these education schools and contributed much to the discussions through his life experience and his book-reading.

His political understanding grew and this deepened his attributes as a leader. He was held in great esteem by his fellow workers and became Convenor of shop stewards in Glasgow Council's Direct Labour Organisation (DLO). He was principled, a tough negotiator and fought tirelessly in defence of his fellow workers' rights and struggles for better wages and conditions.

Solidarity with the miners

During the miner's strike of 1985-86 Tam did a phenomenal amount of work. This included fund-raising, joining picket lines, providing food for miner's families and speaking at many meetings in their support. His class consciousness meant that

he understood that the struggle of the miners and their communities was an important struggle for the whole working class. He also understood that it was a political struggle with the capitalist state led by Prime Minister Thatcher who mobilised the whole apparatus of the capitalist state machine to defeat the miners.

Political work in the community

Tam also worked in the community and was instrumental in making many positive things happen including the *Rock for Jobs* event featuring the band, *Scheme*, one of whose band members was John Smith, brother of Jim Smith who, as mentioned earlier, had died of asbestosis. *Scheme's* music and lyrics were strongly influenced by Tam. *Scheme* also played to sell-out concerts in the Kelvin Hall and Apollo, large venues in Glasgow, in aid of the miners. Tam took part in the *Peoples March for Jobs* in 1981 and was one of the platform speakers when it reached London.

He was extremely active in his working-class community over the years including leading the campaign for Kinship Carers' rights. Tam and Jessie had taken on the full-time care of their son Thomas' daughter, as Thomas had a drug addiction, an unfortunately all too common problem in working-class communities, especially in Glasgow. Tam got involved with a group of grandparents, who were not receiving any financial support from the state. As Tam's daughter, Liz, commented, "Some of these grandparents were living in poverty due to raising several kids but whilst my parents didn't have the same financial pressures, Dad, being Dad, created and led a committee of these grandparents to campaign on the issue. It was a long, tough journey, but they were persistent and finally won the financial support which these families deserved." The campaign

which led to a change in legislation helped thousands of kinship carers and their families.

Internationalist

Tam was also a great internationalist. He understood that the struggle of the working class in Britain is linked to the struggles of the working class world-wide. This led to him reading and studying more. However, it wasn't just reading that deepened Tam's understanding of the world as he also travelled extensively and for lengthy periods. These trips included driving his family on long holidays throughout Europe. This was possible because Tam saved up his holiday entitlement and Jessie worked as a catering manager in a school, so she only worked during term-time. One year Tam decided that the best rehabilitation programme for his son, who suffered from drug addiction, was for him and Thomas to travel to India and explore it for six weeks. When they returned Thomas was drug-free but, unfortunately, this was short lived.

Tam's reading and political education, enhanced by his travels, led to him and Jessie becoming involved in many international issues. One example of Tam's internationalist commitment that I remember very well was when the United States bombed Libya in 1986. Tam and I met and agreed that something needed to be done urgently. Many organisations are slow to respond partly because decisions need to go through committees which takes time. So, we agreed that, given my position as Vice-Chair of the Scottish Council of Liberation (formerly the Movement for Colonial Freedom), I was in a good position to initiate the calling of a demonstration in protest. I quickly consulted with the other officers of *Liberation*, and with their agreement contacted various organisations including CND, trade unions, the Indian Workers Association and the Pakistani Peoples Party in Glasgow to inform them

Tam understood very well that the root problem facing the working class was capitalism and from that basic understanding he embarked on a life of learning and struggle.

about the proposed demonstration and sought their support.

Tam and I then worked together to organise the demonstration with Tam getting trade unions and shop stewards committees to attend and organising posters, banners and stewards whilst I worked to get the other organisations to mobilise their supporters and provide speakers. I also liaised with the police, who were not happy about the demonstration being called at such short notice. The demonstration assembled a few days later in Blythswood Square and marched to a rally in Glasgow's City Halls. It was a fantastic demo and the rally was addressed by a wide range of speakers from an array of different organisations. From the platform it was great to see the City Halls filled to capacity with several thousand people attending. This showed the strength of feeling, especially since it had been called at such short notice. The opposition to the bombing of Libya had resonated with the feelings of masses of people.

I had been a bit sceptical that we could do this successfully at such short notice but Tam, in his inimitable way, insisted that we should do it as it was necessary and that we could make it happen. This kind of determination was another outstanding attribute of Tam.

Anti-apartheid activist

Tam and Jessie were activists in the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) and led the AAM's Glasgow East Group when I was Chair of the AAM's Scottish Committee. The boycott of apartheid South Africa included activities such as local groups picketing shops stocking Apartheid South African foods. Other activities included organising solidarity events with the *African National Congress*. The AAM Glasgow East Group held a very successful Burns Supper in solidarity with the struggle of the people of South Africa at

which I delivered the Toast to the Immortal Memory of Robert Burns. Burns Suppers involve a great deal of work – hiring a hall, arranging speakers for the various items, getting an attendance and then preparing the haggis, neeps and tatties and other food. The success of the event was largely due to the work of Tam and Jessie as was obvious on the night.

Memorably, Jessie was one of the 25 Mandela Marchers (one for each year of Nelson Mandela's incarceration at that point in 1988) who marched to London from Glasgow after a demonstration and rally in Glasgow Green, addressed by *African National Congress* leader O.R. Tambo, calling for the release of Nelson Mandela. The marchers, including Jessie, were on stage at the 30,000 strong rally in Glasgow Green, after which they set off to walk to London. One month later the marchers were greeted on-stage at the rally in Hyde Park attended by some 250,000 people. Jessie was an unassuming woman, but she was a dedicated activist for good causes at the same time as working and being a mother and bringing up a family. It would not have been easy.

It was a wonderful day for us when Nelson Mandela, having spent 27 years in prison, came to Glasgow on 9 October 1993 to receive the Freedoms of 9 UK cities and a huge rally was held in George Square to greet him. The following year Nelson Mandela was elected President of South Africa bringing apartheid, 'that crime against humanity', to an end.

I am only sorry that Tam and Jessie, who died in 2024, will not be there to see the unveiling of Nelson Mandela's statue in Nelson Mandela Place, Glasgow, organised by the Nelson Mandela Scottish Memorial Foundation on 9 October this year, the anniversary of Mandela's visit to the city.

Socialism

Tam as a member of the *Communist Party (CPGB)* was firmly opposed to the reformist policies and actions of the Eurocommunists and opportunists who led the Party. These people were eventually successful in dissolving the *Communist Party* in 1990. On a wider scale, Tam and I agreed that the defeat of the Soviet Union would lead to a more dangerous world and, unfortunately, so it has proved. With the dissolution of the Communist Party and the defeat of the Soviet Union Tam did not abandon his socialist principles but continued to work politically including supporting the journals, *Straight Left*, and later, *The Socialist Correspondent*.

Shortly before his death I talked to Tam and, although he was very ill and largely bed-ridden, he was concerned about the increasing dangers of war. Our conversation took place during the Israeli genocide in Gaza but prior to the latest US/Israeli war on Iran and Lebanon. Tam talked scathingly about Britain's complicity in Israeli war crimes but he also talked positively about the world-wide opposition to US imperialism.

Tam was a great family man and so it was good that he managed to join his large extended family including his daughter, Liz, and son, Charles as well as his many grandchildren and great-grandchildren for dinner on Xmas Day 2025 before passing away next day.

Tam McFall was one of the very best of the working class in the struggle to end capitalism and win socialism. He made a lasting impression on countless people's lives.