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FOR THEIR CRISIS!**

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Workers Power

BM 7750

London WC1N 3XX

info@workerspower.uk

WE TAKE THE WORKERS' STANDPOINT

MARXISM

Workers Power is a paper on the side of workers and the oppressed. It uses a Marxist method to explain capitalism, crisis, war and oppression, and to argue for the strategy needed to change society.

CLASS STRUGGLE

Workers Power argues that socialism is the self-emancipation of the working class. It supports rank-and-file organisation, democratic control from below, and every effort by workers to organise and lead their own struggles.

REVOLUTION

Workers Power is about more than highlighting the injustices of the system or backing individual struggles. It argues that capitalism must be overthrown and replaced by workers' power, common ownership and democratic planning. This paper exists to help win people to that politics.



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Defend the Palestine solidarity movement

EDITORIAL

Israel is committing genocide in Gaza, with British arms, diplomatic cover and military cooperation. That is why the state wants to silence the Palestine movement. Far from responding to the overwhelming demand to end Britain's complicity, Keir Starmer is exploiting real anti-semitic attacks to restrict the right to protest, assemble and speak.

We condemn without qualification the recent antisemitic attacks: the Heaton Park killings on Yom Kippur, the arson against Hatzola ambulances, and the stabbing of two Jewish men in Golders Green.

But there is no evidence linking these crimes to the Palestine movement. That link has been manufactured by the state, the press and the pro-Israel establishment. More than 32 national demonstrations have taken place since October 2023. They have been overwhelmingly peaceful, multiracial and anti-racist.

Yet Met Commissioner Mark Rowley has accused organisers of routing marches past synagogues. Police have threatened arrests over the slogan 'globalise the intifada', with no act of parliament and no court ruling. Keir Starmer's 'anti-terrorism advisor' Jonathan Hall KC demands a moratorium on Palestine marches. The Chief Rabbi denounces the movement as 'hate marches' and Kemi Badenoch calls them 'a cover for violence and intimidation against Jews'.

The 10 May 'rally against antisemitism' in Whitehall showed where this campaign leads. Conservative and Reform politicians were cheered, Labour's Pat McFadden was booed. Nigel Farage was invited but Zack Polanski, the Jewish leader of the Green Party, was not. A rally called in the name of fighting antisemitism welcomed the hard right and treated Jewish anti-Zionists as a threat.

This is the point of the smear campaign. Britain arms Israel, trades with Israel, shares intelligence with Israel and protects Israel diplomatically. The UK-Israel 2030 Roadmap commits both states to strategic cooperation and opposition to BDS. The Palestine movement exposes that alliance and demands its end. That is why it must be branded antisemitic, criminal, extremist or terrorist.

The repression targets everyone. Palestine Action has been proscribed

under terrorism legislation. More than 500 people were arrested in April for protesting that ban. PSC's Ben Jamal and Stop the War's Chris Nineham have been convicted over a peaceful demonstration. On Nakba Day the Met has refused the Palestine movement its proposed route and handed central London to Tommy Robinson's anti-Muslim hate marchers.

'From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free' demands freedom and equality for Palestinians and Jews in all of historic Palestine. 'Zionism' names the ideology of a settler-colonial state, not Jews. 'Intifada' means uprising. None of these slogans is antisemitic. The attempt to ban them is political policing.

But the smear does more than silence Palestine solidarity. It erases the thousands of Jewish people who oppose Zionism and reject Israel's claim to speak for them. It tells Jews that their safety is bound up with Israel, and tells Palestinians that their liberation is a threat to Jews.

That does not fight antisemitism. It feeds the conspiracy politics on which antisemitism grows. When the police, ministers and press insist that anti-Zionism is antisemitism, they make it easier for real antisemites to present Israel's crimes as the responsibility of Jews collectively. Now senior figures in the state, including Met Commissioner Mark Rowley, are not just enforcing protest restrictions but promoting this dangerous conflation themselves.

Antisemitism is real. Its loudest exponents are on the far right: the same forces now posturing as defenders of Jews while whipping up hatred against Muslims, migrants and the left. The answer is not to ban Palestine marches. The answer is to break the link between British imperialism and Israel, defend Jewish anti-Zionists, and fight antisemitism, anti-Muslim racism and anti-migrant racism together.

- Defend the right to march on Nakba Day.
- End British arms sales and military cooperation with Israel.
- Repeal the proscription of Palestine Action.
- Drop the charges against protesters.

Elections: Labour punished, advances for right and left

Keir Starmer won 411 seats and a huge parliamentary majority in July 2024 on a single promise: 'change'. On 7 May, voters answered: what change? Their verdict was one of Labour's worst results in modern history.

Local elections in Britain have always had a double meaning. They judge councils that empty bins, organise care, manage housing lists and pass planning decisions. But councils operate inside a state machine that keeps real power in Whitehall and the Treasury. No wonder millions use local elections as the only referendum on Westminster between general elections.

The BBC's projected national vote share put Reform on 26 per cent, the Greens on 18, Labour and the Tories on 17, and the Lib Dems on 16. Sky's national equivalent vote suggested that, if repeated in a general election, the result would produce a hung parliament with Reform as the largest party: 284 seats, Labour on 110, the Tories 96, Lib Dems 80 and Greens 13.

Hubris

This was more than the usual mid-term tantrum priced in by governing parties. Labour's 2024 landslide was always weaker than it looked: not a popular mandate for the empty vessel of Starmerism, but the product of a split right-wing vote, low turnout and a first-past-the-post system that turns minority support into parliamentary domination.

The political "geniuses" around Morgan McSweeney and Labour Together mistook an inflated majority for social consent. Now Labour has been punished in every direction.

To its right, Reform has broken out of protest politics and into local administration. Farage's party feeds on anger created by collapsing services, insecure work, housing scarcity and a Labour government that offers no future. Its answer is reaction: attacks on migrants, Muslims, refugees, "woke councils", net zero and trade union rights.

More dangerous still, a British ruling class faced with a discredited Labour government and a hollowed-out Tory party could turn to Farage as the next vehicle for austerity, racism and Atlanticist nationalism. When Labour accepts the limits set by the markets, the Treasury and Nato, and joins the right in treating immigration as the problem, it legitimises Farage's attack lines. The crisis in housing, services and the NHS is not caused by migrants or refugees but by austerity, privatisation, landlordism and decades of underinvestment. By refusing to name those causes, Labour leaves Reform to turn social anger into racism and reaction.

But Labour was also punished to its



left. The Greens advanced in cities, among renters, younger voters and communities radicalised by Palestine, climate breakdown and the cost of living crisis. Their gains in Hackney, Lewisham and other Labour strongholds express a rejection of Labour's policies and contempt for its supporters.

What comes next?

Now comes the real test. Green councillors and mayors will be told there is no money. If they accept that framework, they will administer capitalist austerity with better press releases. If they want to represent the people who elected them, they must refuse cuts, open the books, mobilise tenants, workers and service users, and demand that the Labour government restores the local government grant cut since 2010.

Every Green council, every Labour council and every independent left councillor faces the same choice: manage decline or organise resistance.

Inside Labour, the knives are out. Starmer and Reeves have taken Labour to disaster. Demands for policies that "help working people" are, belatedly, being made by everyone from Unison general secretary Andrea Egan to right-wing MPs like Josh Simons.

But here too the central question is being evaded. Serious reforms now mean confrontation with capital. Restoring council funding means taxing wealth, profits and property. Ending poverty means confronting landlords, banks and the City. A serious foreign policy break means ending arms sales to Israel, opposing Nato rearmament and refusing Britain's role as Washington's junior partner. Maintaining climate commitments means taking energy, water and land into social ownership and running them under democratic planning.

The Labour left, union leaders and new formations to Labour's left cannot simply call for left-wing policies without explaining how they would be defended against the markets, courts, civil service, press and Labour right. The lesson of the last decade is not that a left-talk-

ing leader should manage the same machine. It is that working-class politics needs its own organisation, programme and power.

The Socialist Campaign Group and Trade Union Coordinating Group have put forward a 10-point programme of mild reforms, alongside demands to 'restore' Labour Party democracy. The programme barely touches what is needed to combat the rising cost of living and youth unemployment, now 15.8 per cent. The democracy demand ignores Labour Together's grip on the parliamentary party and the Millbank machine.

The first electoral test of Your Party underlined the same problem. Despite courageous and energetic campaigns by socialists backed by Your Party branches, especially in London, Jeremy Corbyn's leadership refused to turn the new party into a clear national challenge to Labour rooted in unions, workplaces and campaigns. Instead it offered scattered personal endorsements, local deals and a deliberately limited strategy.

The result was not a fighting political alternative but another proof, as if one were needed, that Labourism survives outside its host party: electoral combination over class organisation, personal intrigue over political principle.

Times are changing

The splintering of the old two-party system reflects the exhaustion of the settlement that held Britain together after Thatcher and Blair. British capitalism is weaker, more dependent, more regionally divided and more unsure of its place in the world. Brexit was the sharpest expression of that crisis: not a solution, but a moment in the ruling-class struggle over whether Britain should align more closely with the European Union or the United States.

The Conservatives can no longer monopolise the right. Labour can no longer monopolise the working-class vote. Substantial parts of Scotland and Wales are deeply alienated from Westminster and its parties. Metropolitan centres, deindustrialised

towns and rural counties are moving in different political directions. First past the post can distort this process, but it cannot hide it forever.

Changing the leader will not solve Labour's problem. An Andy Burnham, Angela Rayner or Wes Streeting leadership might change the tone. But unless Labour breaks with fiscal restraint, rearmament, refugee-bashing and partnership with business, it will remain trapped inside the same crisis.

That crisis will deepen as the Iran war and the energy shock hit Britain. The labour movement needs a different answer. Trade unions should demand an emergency programme: restore council funding; impose price controls on rent and essentials; raise wages and benefits and link them to prices; build council housing; tax wealth; nationalise energy, water, transport and the banks under democratic and workers' control; scrap the anti-union laws; and cut the mushrooming defence budget, including a ban on all military exports.

But demands on Labour are not enough. Workers need organisation in workplaces, estates and unions capable of forcing them through. Councillors who claim to oppose austerity should refuse to vote for cuts and help build local resistance. The unions should stop funding politicians who attack their members and start organising coordinated action against the government and employers.

The need for a new working-class socialist party has not gone away. It has become more acute since Labour took office. For now, it is blocked by trade union leaders and left MPs who refuse to break from Labour, and by Jeremy Corbyn himself, who squandered the opportunity to build such a party in order to protect his own unaccountability.

These elections show that millions are looking for a way out. If the working-class movement does not provide one, Farage will. That is the message of 7 May.

KD Tait

Welsh Labour's historic fall

Labour's first MP, Keir Hardie, was elected in Merthyr Tydfil in 1900. From 1922, Labour was Wales's most popular party at every general election and, since 1999, at every election to the Senedd, the Welsh parliament.

That is 104 years of dominance: one of the longest unbroken periods of electoral success achieved by any party in a democracy. The old joke that you could pin a red rosette on a donkey and it would win in Wales was funny because it was nearly true.

But those days are over. The writing was on the wall after the Caerphilly Senedd byelection in October 2025, when Labour's vote crashed from 46% in 2021 to 11%, leaving Plaid Cymru to beat Reform UK by 47% to 36%.

Two-horse race

Caerphilly was not a byelection blip but a fairly accurate reflection of the national mood. Plaid leader Rhun ap Iorwerth predicted a 'two-horse race' between a 'choice of two futures': the conflicting nationalisms of Plaid and Reform. The results bore him out.

In the most proportional election yet held in the UK, Plaid won 43 seats with 34% of the vote, against Reform's 34 seats and 29%. Labour trailed far behind with nine seats and 11%.

With the Senedd expanded from 60 to 96 seats, it is hard to calculate the scale of Labour's fall, but the party is estimated to have lost the equivalent of 34 seats, including that of its leader, Baroness Eluned Morgan of Ely. Other parties were squeezed by the two-horse messaging, with the Tories on seven seats, the Greens on two and the Lib Dems on one.

Now begins the horse-trading. The PR system makes outright winners unlikely. Plaid would have preferred a government with the Greens and Lib Dems, but the numbers make that impossible. A minority government, with a confidence-and-supply deal with Labour, is more likely. Since Labour's manifesto differed little from Plaid's, that would signal continuity rather than the change Plaid promised.

Issues

Wales is the second most deprived region in the UK, just above the North East of England. Child poverty is acute: 29–32% of Welsh children grow up in low- or no-income families, according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, while wages are typically 5–8% below the British average.

The NHS is a particular concern, with 600,000 people on waiting lists. Although Welsh Labour rejected privatisation in health and education, it failed to invest by using the tax-raising powers available under devolution, so the squeeze on public finances continued. Only Reform promised to change tax rates — by lowering them — so there is unlikely to be any improvement here.



Reform tried to make immigration an election issue, claiming the other parties favoured unlimited immigration and threatening to end Wales's Nation of Sanctuary status. Labour launched this initiative in 2019, but has spent just 0.05% of its budget welcoming refugees. Ukrainians accounted for 91% of the total spend, exposing the racial hierarchy built into Labour's version of sanctuary. In practice, the "hostile environment" for migrants and asylum seekers remains much the same as elsewhere in the UK.

Nigel Farage's right-wing party also tried to whip up reactionary rage against net zero, especially the 20mph speed limit on roads in built-up and residential areas. In fact, the 20mph default limit on restricted roads in Wales was never primarily a carbon-cutting measure, but was designed to reduce deaths and injuries. Since its introduction in 2023, casualties on 20mph roads have fallen by nearly a quarter.

Independence

Welsh independence was not an issue in this election. Plaid has evolved considerably since its origins in 1925 as an independence party marked by reactionary and authoritarian influences. In the 21st century, it has positioned itself slightly to Labour's left as a more traditional social-democratic alternative.

This also reflects the weakness of Welsh nationalism compared with its Scottish counterpart, which it generally follows. First, Wales is smaller and poorer. The defeat of the 1984–85 miners' strike led to the collapse of coal mining, while the related steel industry is hang-

ing by a thread in Port

Talbot and Llanwern. Outside south-east and north-east Wales, there has been little investment. As an independent state, Wales would struggle to survive.

Second, its historic grievance over language discrimination has largely been resolved. Language rights have been a rallying cry since the horrific use of the "Welsh Not" to beat the language out of children. But successive Welsh Language Acts, the most recent passed last year, have dramatically increased the use of the language, which has for some time enjoyed equal status with English. Altogether, this led Plaid not to promise a second independence referendum, but to demand more devolved powers instead.

Labour's fall

Welsh Labour's decline has been steady since the Senedd's creation in 1999. The then leader, Rhodri Morgan, coined the phrase "clear red water" to define the party's strategy: related to, but distinct from, Westminster Labour. The plan worked reasonably well until the 2008–09 recession, which pushed living standards down to poverty levels.

During Tory austerity, Labour could blame its shortcomings on Westminster, and even managed a relative revival under Mark Drakeford (2018–24), helped by Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of UK Labour (2015–20). But the strategy unravelled rapidly amid a succession of leaders, a corruption scandal in Cardiff and Keir Starmer's unpopular premiership in London.

The catastrophic Senedd results will now feed Labour's turmoil, with anxious

MPs and activists facing annihilation. To add to the woes of socialists in Wales, Corbyn has surely scuppered Your Party's chances of leading a leftward break from Labour by refusing its "members" the chance to stand in the election. TUSC performed miserably.

The need for a fightback is more urgent than ever. The current economic crisis is likely to tip into recession because of the war in Iran (see pages 14–15), while Reform's strong performance will embolden racists and reactionaries to take to the streets, blaming migrants and an "extreme woke ideology" — Reform Wales leader Dan Thomas's phrase — for capitalism's social ills.

New party

As for Welsh and British Labour's collapse, we shed no tears. They made their own demise, and Baroness Morgan will no doubt now disappear into the House of Lords. But the burning need for a new party of the working class still exists, as the huge initial response to Your Party in July 2025 showed, including in Wales.

Neither Plaid nor the Greens are the answer. They offer only another variant of liberal reformism, and they will be found out when the huge coming cost of living crisis arrives in the autumn.

To prepare for that, we need a fighting socialist party. For us, that means a revolutionary party, but all socialists should get involved. We must also prepare for battle. Whether the attacks come from London, Cardiff or both, Welsh workers must join the fight against job cuts and inflation, war and racism.

Jeremy Dewar

Reform UK: A bosses' party in populist clothes

On 7 May Reform UK took ten English councils, won seventeen MSPs in Holyrood—its first ever—and became the second largest party in the Senedd with thirty-four AMs. We carry a separate piece in this issue on what those results mean. Here we look at what kind of political project is Reform, whose interests does it serve, and how should socialists respond to the claim that it now speaks for the working class?

Reform UK is the latest vehicle of a current with a much older lineage. Its roots run through the little-England chauvinism of the post-imperial Tory right—the Bruges Group, the Maastricht rebels, the Referendum Party, UKIP, the Brexit Party—defined by hostility to European integration, to immigration, and to the regulatory commitments that came with both. For most of its history this was a minority current on the right of British politics.

Brexit changed that. The 2016 referendum turned a fringe tradition into a mass political force, and gave a particular fraction of British capital a vehicle for a concrete class project: to break from the EU whose rules on labour, environment, welfare, state aid and human rights set limits, however weak, on employers hiking exploitation at home and abroad to reverse imperialist Britain's decline.

That required deregulating labour and government; attacking welfare spending and accelerating NHS marketisation; ditching net-zero to bear down on highly profitable oil and gas industries; freeing finance from European oversight and open trade deals with the United States. The positive vision, in so far as there was one, was a low-tax, low-regulation, finance-led economy oriented to growing, profitable circuits of international capital in the US, the Gulf and Asia rather than the European market. Its patriotism pointed towards rearmament a more aggressive posture abroad, hence Nigel Farage and Richard Tice arguing Britain should support Trump's Iran war until they u-turned due to its unpopularity.

Naturally this project could not be stated openly to voters. A campaign to lengthen the working day and privatise public services would not have won a referendum. The fraction of capital behind Brexit did what such fractions have always done: it built a mass base on racist, nationalist and authoritarian slogans, manufacturing a "crisis" to channel legitimate working-class anger towards reactionary policies. 'Take back control' was the formula—but the control to be taken was capital's, not labour's.

Moving on from Brexit

Reform UK continues that project. Although the Tories delivered a more-or-less hard Brexit, the rapid change in the international situation after the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and Trump's protectionism made a freebooting Britannia a more difficult proposition. Reform instead claimed that the singular promise of Brexit — to take back control of the borders — was betrayed by the Tories whose dithering and new trade deals reduced economic growth and European immigration but increased non-white immigration while claiming Labour secretly yearns to rejoin the EU.

Reform's donors represent the same fraction of capital that financed Brexit, consolidated around it: the most speculative and rapacious financial sectors — hedge-funds and crypto-billionaires (Jeremy Hosking, Christopher Harborne), as well as a transatlantic networks between the British right and MAGA axis, the US fossil-fuel lobby, and its policy machinery of far-right and free market think tanks. Reform has tapped a growing ideological apparatus around Britain's National Conservatism wing: the Cambridge theologian James Orr, post-liberal and national-conservative writers, as well as GB News presenters acting as in-house propagandists.

Reform's policy platform has moved right since the Brexit project, emboldened by rising support and Trump's example. Withdrawal from the European Convention on Human Rights is now combined with anti-migration policies modelled on America's ICE. Deep tax cuts for business and high earners will be financed by cuts to public spending. Abolition of net-zero commitments will protect fossil-fuel interests. 'Insurance-based' reform of the NHS presents privatisation as choice. An authoritarian culture-war and policing agenda will target trade unions, protestors, climate activists and minorities. Racism does the work of explaining away the housing crisis, wage stagnation and the collapse of public services from four decades of neoliberalism. Blame the asylum seeker, woke constituencies and the Westminster 'blob'; spare the landlord, the shareholder and the City.

Reform's elite character is shown plainly by the procession of senior Tories defecting to it: Andrea Jenkyns jumped ship to be elected Reform mayor of Greater Lincolnshire, followed by an autumn influx of MPs Robert Jenrick, Suella Braverman, Danny Kruger and Andrew Rosindell as its new MPs. Malcolm Offord crossed from the Lords to lead Reform in Scotland and now sits in Holyrood. This is a right-populist party, thoroughly capitalist in its finance, ideology and leadership while cloaking its pro-rich policies in common-sense

prejudice while Farage smiles for the cameras, a pint and a cig in hand.

The 'white working class' myth

Despite attempts by a well-financed and influential lobby paid to argue the opposite, Reform's social base is fundamentally found among ex-Tory self-employed, small employers, retirees and middle-class voters in southern and coastal England — layers historically receptive to anti-immigrant feeling and hostility to redistribution. But Reform is also attracting mostly-older workers from deindustrialised regions like Sunderland, Tameside, the Welsh valleys, the Durham coalfield, where Labour and the trade unions' long retreat from their working-class base has hollowed out class loyalties.

However this so-called 'white working class' is an ideological construction not a sociological reality. It racialises class, treating Black and Asian workers as anomalies, and overrides real class divides between the self-employed and wage workers. Its "war on woke" pits oppressed and the poor into the opponents of left-behind towns and council estates. Reform — and Blue Labour — use class language to present an attack on workers as a defence of their interests, to pull Labour rightwards on migration, welfare and culture.

For some of these voters, a Reform ballot is less an endorsement of Farage than a protest at the 'establishment'. In reality it is more than that, it means accepting Reform's ever more right-wing, openly racist policies: stripping rights from non-white British citizens, mass deportations and detention camps modelled on Trump's America. That's

not an anti-establishment vote, it's a vote for a right-populist programme.

There is no doubt that Reform has attracted a substantial proportion of working class and even former Labour voters. Labour is largely to blame. It has never challenged the anti-immigrant hostility as the default explanation of housing shortages and unemployment, and is in part responsible for these, fueling the general sense of decline.

What is to be done

Labour bears a heavy share of the responsibility for Reform's rise. Decades of retreat from working-class organisation, triangulation on welfare and migration, and accommodation to the bosses' agenda produced the political vacuum Reform and the Greens now fill — indeed many Reform victories in working class areas result from Labour losing a portion of its vote to the Greens, resulting in a small margin for Reform. In office, Starmer has continued that work with tougher rhetoric on borders, on protests, on welfare, on defence, combined with austerity making workers worse off, a toxic mix. The party that says it is confronting Reform is clearing its road.

What can confront Reform is the rebuilding of working-class power. Class-struggle anti-racism and anti-fascism in workplaces, unions and communities. An anti-capitalist programme on the conditions Reform exploits — housing, wages, public services, and democratic rights — turned on the employers and landlords, the kind of confrontation with capital and the establishment that neither Labour nor the Greens are willing or able to organise.

KD Tait



Pete'll fix it! The rise and fall of Peter Mandelson



The Mandelson scandal exploded at the worst possible moment for Labour's leadership. Already losing support among working-class voters, MPs and ministers, Keir Starmer's government now faces public anger over why he appointed Peter Mandelson as ambassador to Washington despite his known links to Jeffrey Epstein and his record of forced resignations from government.

FOR ALL the leadership's talk of 'integrity' and 'professionalism', the crisis has exposed the grip of a layer of political fixers whose loyalties lie not with the working class but with capital, the state and their own networks of influence.

Labour Together, the right-wing party faction that organised Starmer's leadership campaign, won support on pledges designed to reassure Jeremy Corbyn's base. Through Morgan McSweeney, it shaped the Starmer project until McSweeney's resignation in February. Mandelson was not an outsider to that world, but one of its central figures.

Court politician

Mandelson's rise was inseparable from Labour's transformation in the 1980s and 1990s. As one of New Labour's chief architects, he helped adapt the party to a Thatcherite world of deindustrialisation, financialisation and defeated, increasingly bureaucratised trade unions.

The abandonment of Clause IV, which had formally pledged Labour to common ownership of the means of production, the embrace of finance capital and the subordination of working-class interests to electoral strategy were conscious decisions. The layer around Tony Blair remade Labour as a party less reliant on

organised labour and more acceptable to British capital than the crisis-ridden Tories.

Mandelson's role was central. A master of media manipulation and internal discipline, he functioned as a political courtier: a fixer who aligned the party with the needs of the ruling class while neutralising opposition inside its ranks. His nickname, the 'Prince of Darkness', captured the opaque, unaccountable character of his power.

His scandals are often presented as personal failings. In reality, they reveal something systemic. His first resignation in 1998, over an undeclared loan from Geoffrey Robinson, and his second in 2001, in the Hinduja passport affair, were expressions of a politics embedded in elite networks, where access, favour and influence are the currency of power.

The fact that he returned each time to positions of authority demonstrates the moral and ideological bankruptcy of the Labour right. To them, Mandelson was too useful to discard. His skills in managing the intersection between government, business and the media are indispensable to a party committed to administering capitalism.

His return to government in 2008, at the height of the global financial crisis, underlined his real function. As Business Secretary, he did not represent a break with the casino economy that had crashed. He became a leading defender of the Brown government's rescue of British capitalism: a rescue that socialised losses while preserving the system.

This was New Labour's project in its purest form: the use of state power not to transform society, but to defend capital in times of crisis. Mandelson's advisory roles, consultancy work and connections with oligarchs and corporate elites

always blurred the line between public service and private gain.

From Corbyn to Starmer

Keir Starmer's ascent to the Labour leadership was, from the standpoint of the Labour right, a decisive victory over Corbynism. Jeremy Corbyn mobilised hundreds of thousands who wanted a break with austerity, inequality and war, even if that potential was never realised.

For figures like Mandelson, the priority was to steer Labour back to Blairism. He was central to Labour's internal opposition to Corbyn, telling the Guardian in 2017: 'I work every single day in some small way to bring forward the end of his tenure in office.'

That meant reasserting Labour's role, in Blair's phrase, as a 'party of government': disciplined, pro-business and safe in the eyes of the ruling class. The purge of the left, the marginalisation of Corbyn's supporters and the rehabilitation of New Labour figures were all part of the same project.

But the restoration came at a cost. Corbynism, whatever its limitations, expressed a deep social crisis and a widespread rejection of austerity, inequality and war. Starmer has neither the intention nor the capacity to address those demands. Instead, he has tried to suppress them.

Labour's electoral victory was therefore less an endorsement of Starmer's vision than the product of the fragmentation of the Tory vote, including its haemorrhage to right-wing populism. Labour was handed a parliamentary majority without a corresponding surge in popular enthusiasm.

Starmer's net favourability now sits at minus 46, according to YouGov. Without a programme capable of addressing the cost of living crisis, ongoing wars or the discontent driving political volatility, the government's support is extremely fragile.

Labour Together represents the consolidation of a right-wing leadership committed to continuity with Blairism and partnership with business. Its task is not to improve society, but to stabilise capitalism under conditions of mounting crisis.

Yet here lies the contradiction. New Labour's methods were developed in a period of relative economic stability and political consensus. Today's conditions are far more volatile. The old formula no longer works.

The Washington job

Mandelson's appointment as ambassador to Washington was not a normal diplomatic posting but a political appointment, and a clear signal that Starmer intended to follow the New Labour blueprint.

His role was to manage relations with

the world's dominant imperialist power and the second Trump administration: reassuring investors, strengthening strategic ties and limiting the damage from Washington's protectionism and unpredictability. The logic was clear. Mandelson's attraction was precisely that he moved in elite networks. The problem was that those networks included Epstein.

Mandelson's association with Epstein points to the social milieu in which he operated: circles defined by extreme wealth, privilege and a profound lack of accountability. For a party that claims to stand for equality and justice, such connections are politically toxic. They are the by-product of a strategy that integrates Labour into the highest levels of capitalist society.

Labour's leadership is trying to govern with the tools of a previous era, relying on figures whose methods are increasingly out of step with the mood of society. The result is a party in government but not in control: beset by crises, losing support to Reform, the Greens and the nationalists, and increasingly unable to command legitimacy.

A party that rejects class struggle in favour of electoral management, that seeks the approval of capital rather than its overthrow, will inevitably produce and depend on political operators of the Mandelson type.

Blairism strained the central contradiction of the Labour Party—resting on the working class while delivering the bosses' agenda—to breaking point. Starmerism continues the same trajectory under less stable conditions and with diminishing returns.

For a class-struggle party

For socialists, the lesson is not to demand a 'cleaner' or more ethical Labour Party, nor simply to call, as John McDonnell has, for its democracy to be 'restored'. The problem is structural. The task is to resolve the contradiction in favour of the working class by breaking Labour's grip on it.

Labour's crisis reflects a deeper crisis of representation. The working class is searching for answers in a period of intensifying economic and political instability. Corbynism expressed that search but failed to break with Labour's pro-capitalist programme. Starmerism responded by trying to close it down altogether.

As Labour loses its ability to absorb and deflect opposition, new political forms will emerge to the left and the right. The task for communists is to intervene in that process and fight for an independent, democratic and revolutionary working-class party that can challenge both Labour's failures and the danger of reaction.

Rebecca Anderson



Corbyn expels socialists

What now for Your Party?

On 12 April 2026, the Central Executive Committee of Your Party voted to exclude members of organised socialist groups from membership unless those organisations were approved by the leadership.

Your Party was launched last year by Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana. Thousands joined hoping it would become a genuine break to the left of Labour, which under Keir Starmer has continued its drift to the right. Instead, within months of its founding conference, the leadership has turned on the party's socialist left.

The expulsions close a chapter. They settle, for now, the question of what kind of formation Your Party will become: not a democratic workers' party, but

a bureaucratically managed electoral vehicle, populist in form, politically formless in content, and hostile to organised opposition from its left.

The episode matters beyond Britain. It shows, in compressed form, the bureaucratic reflexes of left populism when confronted with the prospect of its own politicisation.

An injury to one

The leadership's move is a declaration of war on the active membership. It is an attempt to smash organised opposition, silence political debate and ensure Your Party develops as a controlled electoral vehicle rather than a democratic party of the working class.

The forces around this leadership squandered the best opportunity in a

generation to build a mass socialist party in Britain. More than 800,000 people initially registered interest in the project. By the time membership was formally counted, the figure had fallen to around 50,000–55,000. Control from above, organisational chaos and the absence of serious campaigning drove many away from organised politics altogether, while others drifted towards the Greens.

Instead of building branches, backing strike solidarity, or launching national campaigns against war, racism and the cost of living crisis, the CEC prioritised an internal purge that will exclude many of the party's most active members.

The leadership claimed the expulsions were necessary for "democracy, transparency and accountability". It argued that member-led decision-making is

possible only when every member can trust that others put Your Party's interests first. The formulation treats organised socialists as an inherent threat to unity. In reality, the decision is not about unity but control.

The right to dual membership, written into the party's founding arrangements, is now being torn up in practice. The CEC insists dual membership technically remains possible for organisations it approves. But that only proves the point: rights exist at the discretion of the centre.

At the founding conference itself, delegates were denied a clear vote on an amendment that would have prevented bans on socialist groups, despite its popularity. This was typical of the pseudo-democratic procedures and



leader-centred style that Corbyn and his circle now indulge in—features common to left-populist formations from Spain to France.

The demand that members engage with Your Party only as isolated individuals, and abstain from organising with like-minded members, is dishonest. Not all factions will be subject to the same rules. Those around the leadership will remain untouched. The purge may begin with the revolutionary left, but its real target is any organised opposition to the leadership's future opportunism.

Bureaucratic reformism

The move against revolutionary socialists mirrors the experience of Labour under Corbyn between 2015 and 2020. In both cases, the decisive obstacle was not simply pressure from the right or the media, but the power of a bureaucratic reformist layer embedded in the institutions of the labour movement.

That layer exists to regulate and contain struggle. It prioritises electoral management and internal stability over political clarification and mass mobilisation.

Under Corbyn, Labour briefly became a site of mass politicisation and radical expectation. Hundreds of thousands joined, many of them young people entering organised politics for the first time. Yet the party's bureaucratic core—the parliamentary caucus, unelected officials and trade union leaderships—moved repeatedly to narrow debate, marginalise the organised left and block programmatic radicalisation.

Corbyn accommodated himself to these restraints. By the end, he used them against the membership's clear will: on immigration, the second Brexit referendum and the handling of anti-semitism allegations. His parliamentary socialism led him to concede to right-wing MPs because he believed office could be won only by preserving Labour's existing electoral coalition.

That schema failed in Labour. But its essence—left Labourism—lives on in Your Party.

The new party is repeating the same trajectory in compressed form and on a smaller scale. Once again, a reformist leadership confronts the prospect that politicised members, especially those organised around revolutionary socialist programmes, will force real debate over what socialism means, how it can be achieved, and what confrontation with the state, capital and the existing political order it requires.

As in Labour, the response is not to open those debates but to close them administratively.

The language has changed. Where the New Labour right spoke of 'electability', and Corbyn's apparatus of 'broad-church unity', the Your Party leadership speaks of 'eligibility', 'clarity' and 'trust'. The logic is familiar. Organised politics is treated as a threat, and organised political tendencies are objectively disloyal. Democracy is reduced to a passive ratification of decisions taken elsewhere.

The parallel is not accidental. The milieu of advisers, former Labour staffers, trade union full-timers and professional campaigners who clustered

around Corbyn in Labour has reassembled around him in Your Party. They have brought with them the instincts acquired inside a mass reformist apparatus. Those instincts are not socialist. They are the reflexes of a social layer whose position depends on managing the relationship between the organised working class and the capitalist state: containing the former, reassuring the latter.

What can be salvaged?

The struggle over Your Party's character has now been concluded from above. The expulsions are a fact. The question is what can be salvaged.

Thousands joined Your Party to build something that would put the working class first, at home and abroad, and challenge the machine politics of the official labour movement. That aspiration persists, even if this vehicle has been crippled by its own leadership. Branches were formed. Campaigning networks were built. New militants entered organised politics for the first time. None of that disappears because the apparatus has chosen this course.

The most useful next step for surviving branches, socialist organisations and individual activists is to turn outwards: to the fight against council cuts, the cost of living crisis, solidarity with striking workers, the defence of migrants, opposition to racism and the far right, and resistance to rearmament.

A united front on that basis, directed towards trade unions, workplace militants and community campaigns rather than confined to the organised left, could

give concrete political content to the call for a workers' party. It could keep the best forces of the Your Party experience together in common struggle while the wider questions of programme and organisation are fought out.

Those questions cannot be settled by manoeuvre. They require serious political debate within whatever association of branches and socialist tendencies emerges from the wreckage, on the basis of the open right of tendencies to organise and argue for their positions.

A revolutionary organisation should not pretend it has all the answers. It must be prepared to learn from the class. But a political programme—a strategy to lead today's struggles towards socialism—cannot be gleaned from local branch work alone. It has to address the great questions of the day. The greatest remains the one Your Party's collapse has posed again: reform or revolution?

For socialists internationally, the lesson is familiar. Left populism offers an apparently shorter road to political influence than the patient construction of a revolutionary workers' party. It substitutes the authority of a leader, an electoral brand and a technocratic apparatus for the collective political life of the class. When tested by real struggle, or by the simple pressure of its own politicising members, its bureaucratic core reasserts itself against its base.

Podemos, La France Insoumise, Syriza and now Your Party: the details differ, but the basic dynamic does not.

The task remains to build, in Britain and internationally, a revolutionary party rooted in the working class, open in its debates and armed with a programme capable of leading struggle towards power. Anything less reproduces, under new branding, the same limits that have repeatedly blocked the emergence of a mass socialist alternative.

Rebecca Anderson and KD Tait



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Authoritarianism and the weaponisation of antisemitism

On 29 April 2026, Essa Suleiman allegedly carried out a series of knife attacks in London. Two Jewish men were stabbed in Golders Green; prosecutors also say a third man, Ishmail Hussein, was attacked earlier the same day in Southwark.

The Metropolitan Police are treating the Golders Green attack as a terrorist incident and are investigating a possible antisemitic motive. But the full motive has not yet been established, and the earlier Southwark attack complicates the attempt to present the case as a simple story of ideological violence.

The suspect has been reported to have had serious mental health issues. Yet before the facts had been established, much of the political and media establishment seized on the attack to advance a familiar argument: that the Palestine solidarity movement is responsible for rising antisemitism.

Rather than ask what happened, how the victims and the wider community should be protected, and what role failing mental health services may have played, most pundits chose to frame the tragedy for political ends.

Antisemitism

In the name of 'protecting British Jews', Keir Starmer used the aftermath of the attack to threaten prosecutions against people using the slogan 'Globalise the Intifada', long a target of pro-Israel lobby groups. Ministers and commentators then attempted to shift blame onto pro-Palestine marches and anti-genocide activists.

Politicians and media outlets did not wait for the attacker's history or motivations to be established before using the tragedy to score political points and justify a more repressive state response. Whatever further investigation may reveal, this is an example of a familiar tactic: capitalising on fear to present anti-Zionism as antisemitism.

The attack itself was deeply shocking and traumatising for the community, and must be condemned without qualification. Given the recent spate of attacks against Jewish people and institutions, including a Manchester synagogue attack and several arson attacks, it is impossible to deny that violent antisemitism is rising in Britain.

But blaming that rise on the movement for Palestinian liberation is a distortion. Palestine marches have been widely attended by Jewish people, many of whom risk ostracism from families and communities to oppose the genocide being committed in their name. Jews have a long history of participating in struggles against imperialism, oppression and exploitation. Anti-Zionism has been part of Jewish life, religious and secular, for as long as Zionism has



existed.

One driver of contemporary antisemitism is the brutality of the Israeli state, which claims to represent all Jews, and the genocidal ethnonationalist project it is carrying out in Palestine. The confusion is deepened by the constant conflation of opposition to apartheid and genocide with antisemitism, leading some to conclude wrongly that antisemitism itself must be fictional or exaggerated.

Historically, Zionist politics has drawn strength from antisemitism. Fear and persecution have been used as recruitment arguments for settlement and as justification for atrocities committed in the name of building a supposed 'safe homeland' for Jewish people on the land of the indigenous population of Palestine.

Antisemitism and Zionism are therefore politically entangled. Zionism rests on the premise that Jews cannot live safely as equal citizens in other societies and must therefore have an ethnically exclusive state of their own. Without antisemitism, Zionism would lose one of its central justifications.

Authoritarianism

Shortly after the attack, Green Party leader Zack Polanski, one of the few Jewish leaders of a major British party, reposted criticism of the police response. The post alleged that officers repeatedly kicked the suspect in the head after he had been Tasered and was on the ground.

That provoked a highly unusual public intervention from Metropolitan Police Commissioner Mark Rowley, who defended the police and accused Polanski of fuelling tensions. The criticism was then echoed by the media and by Starmer. Under pressure, Polanski retracted the post and apologised — a retreat that must have given many former Corbyn supporters a sense of déjà

vu.

The incident shows that the machinery of state is far from neutral when questions central to British imperialism are involved. Capitalist democracy claims to defend free speech, democratic rights and personal autonomy. In reality, those rights are conditional, and can be narrowed rapidly when they obstruct the interests of the state.

The selective framing of the Golders Green attack comes amid a wider authoritarian turn against the Palestine movement. The clearest example has been the proscription of Palestine Action.

The High Court ruled the ban unlawful. The government has appealed. Yet thousands have been arrested under terror legislation after holding signs saying, 'I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action'. The legal fight continues, but the political message is already clear: solidarity with Palestine is being treated as a threat to public order and national security.

In the same period, the government has pushed through new anti-protest powers allowing police to take the 'cumulative impact' of repeated demonstrations into account when deciding whether to impose restrictions. This is one of the most repressive recent curbs on protest in Britain, and it is plainly aimed above all at sustained Palestine demonstrations.

Zionism and imperialism

Israel has long functioned as a gendarme of European and US imperialism in West Asia. From the Balfour Declaration to the present, British imperialism has used Zionism as a prop for its regional strategy while allowing Jews to be made a scapegoat for crimes committed by Western states.

The Nazi Holocaust is rightly remembered as one of history's greatest crimes. But in British bourgeois mythology, that memory is used selectively. It is invoked

to present Israel as permanent victim rather than colonial power, while the crimes of British and Western colonialism are minimised or displaced.

As Israel's atrocities in Gaza become impossible to conceal, the contradiction sharpens. The state and media identify Israel with Jews as a whole, then accuse all opposition to Israel of antisemitism. This does not protect Jews. It encourages the very confusion on which antisemitism feeds, by telling people that Jewish safety depends on defending Israel.

This is especially dangerous in a period of imperialist decline. As Western capitalism becomes less able to guarantee rising living standards, the ideological justification for imperialism becomes harder to sustain. State institutions are questioned. British claims to liberal tolerance are exposed by the export of war, repression and devastation abroad, and by the restriction of protest at home.

Since the Gaza genocide began, successive governments have been alarmed by growing sympathy for Palestine and disaffection with Israel. A mass protest movement, disruptive direct action and widespread opposition to Zionism, including among British Jews, threaten the West's material and ideological support for Israel.

That is why the British state is using propaganda, policing and the law to reverse the trend and silence dissent. It is not defending Jews from antisemitism. It is defending an imperialist alliance.

That is also why these repressive laws must be denounced and defied. The thousands arrested for displaying placards in support of Palestine Action have taken an important stand. Their action defends the right to protest, pushes back against authoritarian legislation and adds to the pressure to isolate the Zionist state.

Alex Rutherford



Back the doctors' strike to defend the NHS

Resident doctors in England are in their 15th round of strike action since 2023. The latest six-day walkout is the longest in the dispute so far. They are striking over two connected issues: pay that has fallen sharply in real terms since 2008, and a jobs bottleneck so severe that tens of thousands of doctors are competing for a limited number of specialty training places.

Both problems flow from years of underfunding. Both now confront a government that has chosen to treat the doctors as the problem.

The demands are clear. The BMA wants full pay restoration to 2008 levels, enough training posts to meet the NHS's own workforce needs, and an end to a pay progression system the government can rewrite at will. The latest offer was a 3.5 per cent rise this year, with pay progression changes spread over three years and tied to productivity conditions. The BMA's Resident Doctors Committee rejected it as a deal that, at best, barely treads water.

Wes Streeting then withdrew the promised 1,000 additional training places, saying the doctors had forfeited them by striking. Even that supposed concession was thin. Most of it came from promises the government had already made. The jobs issue remains one of the government's weakest points, because it connects directly to staffing shortages, waiting lists and the daily reality of a service that cannot cope.

With around 48,000 patients waiting more than 12 hours for emergency admission in April, and the elective waiting list still at 7.11 million cases, the government's answer to a workforce crisis is to punish staff and patients alike.

Government case doesn't hold up

Labour ministers insist the doctors have already been offered enough. Streeting's headline claim is that resident doctors would be 35 per cent better off than they were four years ago. That figure rolls together different increases across different years. It is meant to make the strike look like greed.

What it hides is the actual point at issue: pay remains well below its 2008 value. The BMA says full pay restoration

would cost £1.7 billion, less than one per cent of the NHS budget. The money exists. The question is what the government chooses to spend it on.

That question matters beyond the resident doctors' dispute. Another cost-of-living squeeze is taking shape. Prices remain high, rents are rising again, and workers across the economy are being told to settle for less. Doctors are not asking for something exceptional. They are one section of workers refusing another round of managed decline.

Streeting's language of NHS reform covers a broader programme of restructuring. Cuts are rebadged as efficiency savings. Outsourcing to private providers expands. Public money continues to flow into corporate profit. Private firms cherry-pick the easiest work, while NHS staff deal with complications, emergency pressure and the staffing crisis.

This is not a temporary squeeze while the books are balanced. It is a political project to reshape the NHS and narrow what it is for. The doctors' dispute sits squarely in its path.

Strike isolated

Other union leaders have not rushed to show solidarity. On the eve of the strike, senior figures from other health unions briefed the Guardian anonymously that the BMA was making their own deals harder to defend. One admitted the point directly: the doctors' refusal to accept 3.5 per cent was making below-inflation settlements a much tougher sell.

Another complained that resident doctors themselves were leading the BMA negotiations rather than leaving them to professional negotiators. In plain terms, members who know what they are fighting for are harder to manage than officials who know what they are prepared to accept.

What neither source mentioned was that last year's Agenda for Change settlement, covering nurses, midwives, paramedics and most other NHS staff, was rejected in indicative ballots by Unison, Unite, GMB and the Royal College of Nursing. Those ballots were structured to exclude any mandate for industrial action.

The bureaucracy's real problem with the doctors is not that they are negoti-

ating badly. By refusing to lose quietly, they expose the low ambitions of other health unions, whose leaders have put stable relations with the employer—and above all with a Labour government—ahead of their members' interests.

Anyone in a hospital knows the pressure does not stop with doctors. Unsafe rotas, disappearing breaks, impossible workloads: nurses, healthcare assistants, physios, porters, domestics, admin staff and lab workers are all trying to hold together a service that is permanently overstretched.

More than 40,000 nursing vacancies tell their own story about NHS pay. This year's 3.3 per cent Agenda for Change settlement does not come close to addressing that.

Coordinated struggle

The 2022–23 strike wave showed what was possible when NHS anger found collective expression. It also showed what the union leaderships did with that anger. They brokered below-inflation deals and channelled the energy behind a Labour government that is now deepening the same restructuring and privatisation drive it inherited from the Tories.

Labour will try to make the argument sectional. Doctors will be presented as the group that asked for too much, while everybody else accepts what is on offer. But other NHS workers need more as well. Cutting the doctors down will not improve anybody else's position. It will make it easier for the government to hold the line across the whole service.

That is why some union leaderships are helping to make the government's case. The answer is to back the doctors, fight for more for every section, and push for coordinated struggle across the whole NHS workforce.

Fifteen rounds of action over three years show real determination. They also carry a warning. Ballot turnout has fallen from 77.5 per cent in early 2023 to 52.5 per cent in February 2026. Public support has fallen too. Repeated short strikes by a single group, without escalation and without the fight widening, tend to produce exactly that result. Workers get tired, the public grows impatient and the government can wait it out.

Ministers are counting on that. The method has to change before the dispute is worn down further. A doctors' fight has to become an NHS fight, and an NHS fight has to become a political problem the government cannot sit out.

Turn a doctors' fight into an NHS fight. The lesson should be obvious. The government's strategy is to divide the fight profession by profession and wait for each section to burn out. Hospital workers should not repeat that mistake.

There should be joint meetings in every hospital. BMA, RCN, Unison, Unite and GMB members should discuss common demands and common action. Picket lines should be backed. Collections should be organised. Delegations should be built. Pressure should be put on the union leaderships to stop treating every dispute as a separate problem with a separate ceiling.

This is not just a trade union question. Governments always reach for the same argument: patients may suffer, so staff must accept what they are given. But patients already suffer every day from understaffing, delays and a service kept running through overtime and overwork.

The fight to defend the NHS cannot be won by any one group of workers alone. It needs a combined staff campaign and a wider mobilisation of patients, carers and community organisations that can turn an industrial dispute into a sustained political problem for a government running the service on the cheap.

That is why the fight for a new workers' party matters. The doctors' dispute needs a political force that can turn industrial solidarity into sustained pressure on the government: one active in the workplaces and communities carrying the cost of this crisis, not one that appears only at election time.

The doctors are not asking for anything extravagant. They are trying to claw back what they have lost. In doing so, they are holding a line that every NHS worker has an interest in defending. The task now is to stop this fight being fenced off and worn down in isolation, and use it to raise the wider question of pay, staffing and what the NHS is actually for.

KD Tait

The 1926 General Strike: Britain's missed revolution?

We study the great moments of past class struggle not merely to recall the heroism of our forebears but to draw out the lessons they hold for today. It is in that spirit that Workers Power has expanded and re-issued this pamphlet on the 1926 General Strike for its centenary.

This pamphlet examines the reasons for the strike's defeat — though that takes nothing away from the courage and determination of the rank and file. In Fife and Glasgow, Liverpool, Newcastle, London and the South Wales valleys, elements of dual power existed and could have been developed. A pre-revolutionary situation gripped Britain. The only thing that prevented it maturing was the non-revolutionary policy of the trade unions, the Labour Party and the Communist Party. So while commemorating the working class in struggle, we must also learn from its failure.

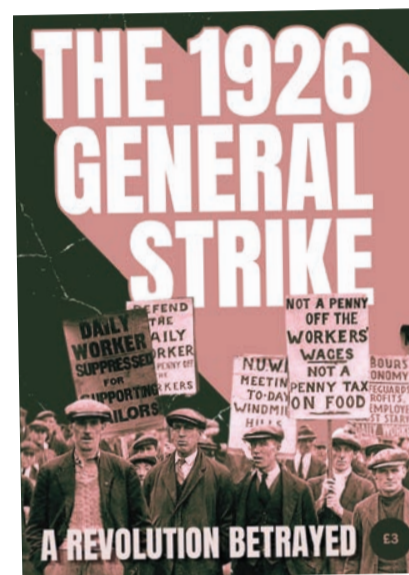
The first lesson is that the trade unions — instruments to raise wages, defend conditions and win reforms — are also a basis for socialist revolution in Britain. But on their own they cannot lead that revolution while the permanent officialdom, the bureaucracy, retains control of them. This remains true today, despite the changed composition of the class. The unions still represent only a minority of workers, so, as the revolutionaries of the 1920s saw, we must expand them by organising the unorganised, the downtrodden and the unemployed. At the same time we reject the notion, popularised by the likes of Unite's Sharon Graham, that the unions should remain clear of politics. Socialists must fight 'pure and simple trade unionism' as an ideology — and this work begins today, not at the last minute.

The second lesson is that the idea Britain does not face the question of

revolution—that a 'democracy' immunises workers against revolutionary ideas is false. Just two years after the first Labour government, millions struck against an elected Tory government and hundreds of thousands fought the forces of the state. The ruling class declared that class-wide solidarity with a million locked-out miners was a challenge to the constitution and had to be smashed. A section of the trade union and Labour leaders agreed with them — and held power in our movement at the decisive moment. Similar conditions recurred in the 1970s and 1980s, and on a smaller scale in the two-million-strong public-sector strike of 30 November 2011, each sold out by the union leaders.

The third lesson is that in the epoch of imperialism an apparent trade dispute can escalate, by its own dynamic, into a struggle for power. A general strike that is more than a one-day demonstration poses, as Trotsky said, 'who shall be master in the house'. The Miners' Strike of 1984–85 posed this too: not a trade dispute but a planned government assault, Thatcher's as Baldwin's had been, aimed at breaking the working class and its vanguard. Only mass solidarity action — a de facto general strike by key unions — could have beaten her. The failure to fight for it was paid for by the whole class. To realise this potential, workers must build councils of action and workers' defence corps. That is why, in every significant class-wide struggle — most recently the 2022–23 strike wave — communists must raise the necessity of such organisations.

The fourth lesson is that militants who trust the left-talking wing of the bureaucracy must maintain their independence and build the nucleus of an alternative leadership, answerable to the democratic decisions of the members. Most left groupings in the unions today are Broad Lefts, focused on elect-



ing and protecting left officials. This is futile, as the capitulations of figures far more militant than today's leaders — Scanlon and Jones in the 1978–79 Winter of Discontent, the betrayals of 1984–85 — have shown. We need instead a rank-and-file movement independent of every wing of the bureaucracy. We support left officials against the right where they back democracy and militancy, but the rank and file must set their own goals and methods, including the fight to abolish the wages system: socialism must be written on its banners. As Trotsky put it, this means the 'perpetual, systematic, inflexible, untiring and irreconcilable unmasking of the quasi-left leaders of every hue'.

The fifth and final lesson is the necessity of a revolutionary party. Only such a party, rooted in the class and influential in its combative organisations, can guide workers through the twists of struggle and build a bridge from reformist to revolutionary consciousness. Trotsky knew the young CPGB might not lead the workers to victory at the first attempt, but that an inconclusive outcome would

afford it later opportunities—provided it held a correct line. As he wrote on 6 May 1926: 'The results of the strike... will be the more significant the more resolutely the revolutionary force of the masses sweeps away the barriers erected by the counter-revolutionary leadership.' This stood in stark contrast to Zinoviev and Stalin, who gave up on the CPGB and sought a short-cut through the trade union lefts of the Anglo-Russian Committee.

This matters today, when it is fashionable to dismiss the 'sects' — small, programmatically based groups. The antics of the SWP and Socialist Party have alienated many, but the need for revolutionary clarity cannot be dismissed: you don't reject the need for a bicycle because there are two broken bikes in the shed. The decisive force in 1926 was not the 50,000-strong Independent Labour Party but the CPGB, one-twentieth its size, with a democratic-centralist structure, a correct programme (for a time) and, through the National Minority Movement, influence among the most militant workers. That programme needs refining — even mid-struggle — but the idea we can do without one must be rejected outright.

A revolutionary party must also embody its programme in strategy and tactics for the concrete struggle: a correct assessment of the political issues, of the existing leadership, and of the forces with which a united front can be built. There is no party in Britain today capable of providing an alternative to the bureaucrats, right or left. That remains to be built, on a programme linking today's struggles to the revolutionary abolition of capitalism. That is why we urge workers, women and youth to read this pamphlet, discuss it with Workers Power—and, if you agree with us, to join us.

Jeremy Dewar



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Kick Palantir out of the NHS

The NHS can still break its £330 million contract with Palantir, but that window closes in March 2027. If ministers do nothing, the NHS faces another term tied to one of the world's most controversial tech suppliers.

On 16 April, several MPs spoke against renewing Palantir's NHS contract. Liberal Democrat Martin Wrigley questioned whether the contract is a sensible solution at all, and whether the Federated Data Platform (FDP) built by Palantir works as promised. Jeremy Corbyn and independent Shokat Adam went further, questioning the use of Palantir's platform in the Gaza genocide and in ICE operations, and the 'ethics' of the company as a whole. As Labour MP Ian Byrne put it, Palantir deals in 'chaos, oppression and war, all in the pursuit of power and profit—the antithesis of the values that our NHS was built on'.

The Westminster Hall debate was a significant step in the struggle to purge this bloodthirsty company from our public services. But it provides no guarantee and no mechanism to force government action. Parliamentary pressure alone has never been enough to challenge the interests of capital embedded in public institutions. The history of NHS privatisation proves it: decades of motions, debates and promises, while outsourcing marched forward.

The pressure has been building for years. In summer 2025 the BMA passed a resolution to lobby at national level for the termination of all existing NHS contracts with Palantir, calling it 'an unacceptable choice of partner'. Foxglove began campaigning against Palantir in the NHS back in 2021, alongside numerous other organisations. Even before the contract began, Amnesty International had raised concerns over Palantir's contracts with ICE and human rights violations against migrants and asylum seekers.

Down the Hobbit hole

Palantir's relationship with the NHS did not begin with the FDP. The first contract, to build a Covid database, was awarded in 2020 for the symbolic price of £1, with no competition, under emergency procurement rules. Even before that, leaked files suggest a meeting took place in 2019 between Boris Johnson, Dominic Cummings and Peter Thiel, with no offi-

cial records kept.

The initial terms of that first contract were only revealed after pressure from campaign groups. A second £23 million contract followed in December 2020, again with no competition. Then came the £330 million FDP contract in 2023—the largest deal in NHS history—with a one-month deadline for bids, highly unusual for a contract of this size. Palantir competed against IBM and Oracle, the latter already embedded in the NHS in a different capacity. It was considerably easier for Palantir to win: it had already been performing a similar role in the NHS for years.

The contract can run for seven years, but only if it is extended after the first three. That first term ends in March 2027, and the break-clause window is still open.

The contract delivers no permanent software asset; it is a subscription service that deepens NHS dependence on a US company. If Palantir is removed, the money is gone and all patient data leaves with it. All intellectual property written specifically for the FDP belongs to Palantir, and all rights are retained by the supplier on termination. Foundry, the software on which the FDP is built, is accessible only to Palantir engineers, making it impossible for NHS analysts to understand how the code works.

Wrigley described it as a permanent lock-in and a single point of failure. The argument against pulling out now is that the NHS already struggles to operate—losing its main cloud provider would cause massive disruption. Without building alternative services in parallel, exit is impossible. But building those alternatives would take years, and even starting now they almost certainly will not be ready by 2027.

This contract leaves control of the NHS, and the databases of the whole state, in the hands of a huge US multinational and the US state — another big step in an integration that already exists elsewhere, for example at GCHQ.

The US CLOUD Act allows American law enforcement to access data held by any US-registered cloud provider without the consent of the party using it, even if the data centre is located in the UK. We have already seen Trump threaten trade agreements with the UK over military support. Palantir in the NHS is one

more pressure point. Switzerland and Germany have both pulled out of deals with Palantir over exactly this risk.

The FDP was sold as a solution to one of the NHS's most persistent problems: departments that cannot talk to each other. If a paramedic needs to access a patient's GP records, they cannot do it directly—they must go through the Palantir system. The reality is that Palantir has made itself the mandatory intermediary, collecting all the data it can in the process, without solving the underlying problem.

What it has solved is Palantir's own connectivity. Foundry is fully compatible with Gotham, Palantir's military-focused software, whose use has expanded across the UK public sector. Despite official promises that these databases will not be connected, there is no real mechanism to ensure it stays that way.

Eye of Sauron

The closer Palantir gets to each government agency, the closer we come to the blueprint already built in the US. DOGE used Foundry to connect the IRS, the Social Security Administration, the Department of Homeland Security and Health and Human Services into a single master database, which was used to generate targets for ICE deportation operations. When a government holds this level of information on its citizens in totality, the result is an Orwellian surveillance state overriding democratic rights, protest movements and resistance. It also increases the state's ability to monitor those receiving social services and to discriminate in their provision with even less accountability.

Peter Thiel is not a typical tech billionaire operating within the rules of capital. He has his own ideology, rooted in anarcho-capitalism, eugenics and authoritarianism. In his own words:

'We could never win an election on getting certain things because we were in such a small minority, but maybe you could unilaterally change the world without having to constantly convince people and beg people and plead with people who are never going to agree with you — through technological means. This is where I think technology is this incredible alternative to politics.'

Palantir is the instrument of that vision, not a neutral supplier that entered

the NHS by accident. It is designed to entrench itself inside public institutions, erode democratic oversight and make exit impossible.

Light the beacons

A company like Palantir has no place in the NHS. That this contract was ever signed reveals not only the failures of UK procurement but the fundamental tendency of capitalist governments, Labour included, to subordinate public institutions to private capital. The March 2027 break clause is the last exit before a much longer lock-in.

Calling on the government to act is not enough. The Labour government awarded and extended these contracts, and it governs in the interests of the same class that profits from them. What compelled every meaningful gain in the history of the NHS—its creation, the defence of its founding principles, resistance to privatisation—was not parliamentary lobbying but organised working-class power.

The NHS workforce—nurses, doctors, paramedics, porters, cleaners, IT workers and administrators—are the people whose labour holds this institution together. They are also the people whose patient data feeds Palantir's systems and whose working conditions are monitored through them. They have a direct interest in removing this company from the NHS. The BMA has committed to removing Palantir from the NHS; it should launch a joint industrial campaign with the other healthcare unions to draw the rank and file into the struggle. The campaign against Palantir must be built in the workplaces of the NHS. It must link up with the broader labour movement—particularly the PCS civil service union—and with the anti-war and pro-Palestine organising that has already identified Palantir as a key target.

Ultimately the issue raises a question: should public institutions be run for the needs of the people, or administered as data infrastructure for private capital, welfare bureaucrats and the security services, here and in the USA? A publicly owned, democratically accountable digital infrastructure for the NHS — built and controlled by workers and users — requires a movement willing to fight for it.

Lina Ross

War in the Persian gulf threatens economic chaos

When Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu launched Operation Epic Fury on 28 February, they had ‘a very simple message’: Iran ‘will never have a nuclear weapon’. After the first two weeks of devastating bombing, oil prices spiking and markets falling, Trump has gone back and forth, changing the timelines, claiming victory (‘total and complete victory — 100%’ on 9 April) before making new threats. Yet the Iranian regime remains in place and the Strait of Hormuz closed — the narrow chokepoint through which a fifth of the world’s petroleum products normally pass.

On 4 May the US compounded this with its own blockade of Iranian ports, ‘Project Freedom’, promising to escort ships through the strait. Two days later Trump declared the operation over but threatened more bombing ‘at a much higher level and intensity than it was before’ if Iran does not accept his deal — which, making no concessions to the regime, it is unlikely to do.

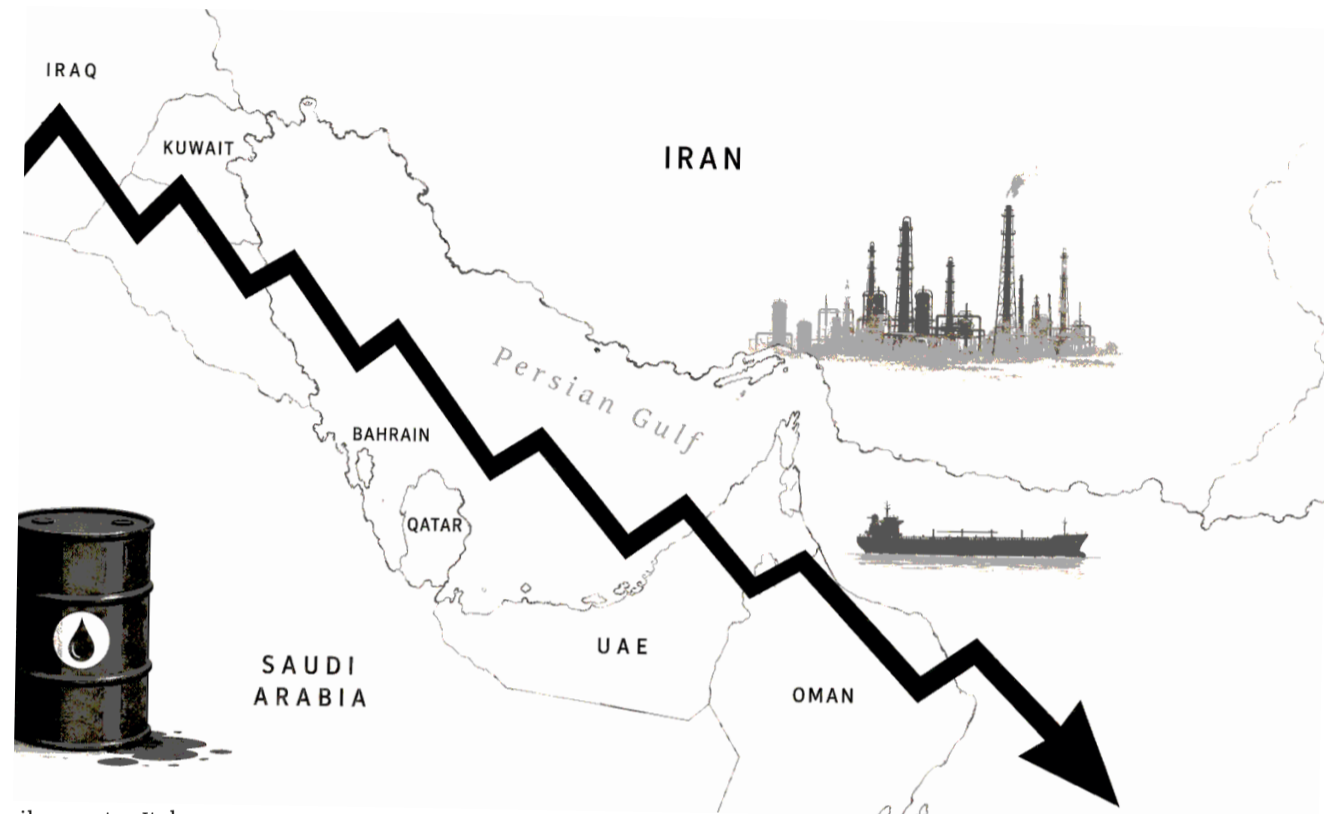
The USA cannot retreat, but after two months it has not beaten Iran. All of Trump’s bluster, boasts and renewed threats are simply compounding the economic uncertainty, with no end in sight. The global economic consequences continue to mount.

On 20 March the International Energy Agency (IEA) released a report assessing the scale, likely duration and possible mitigations of the crisis. Its conclusion was unambiguous. The fallout from this war will create the ‘worst fuel shock in history’, larger than 1973, 1979 and 2022 combined, removing more than twice as much oil from global circulation as the 1970s crises did at their peak.

IEA member nations have approved the release of 400 million barrels from emergency reserves, the largest such release in history. It is a measure of how seriously the world’s energy institutions are treating this crisis that they have reached immediately for their most extreme tool. But as the IEA itself acknowledges, strategic stock releases offer only temporary relief. They cannot resolve an ongoing supply disruption with no end in sight.

Inter-imperialist tensions

US strategy in the Middle East can be understood through the prism of inter-imperialist competition. Israel functions as a regional gendarme, the guarantor of US interests in this strategic region. Iran represents the principal challenger, with deep economic links to China and India through its



oil exports. It has been a member of BRICS since 2024, an emerging alternative economic bloc around China, organised in competition with the US-led blocs and institutions.

Although China has diversified its domestic energy supply and has a large uptake of electric vehicles among its population, it remains the world’s largest oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) importer. China’s economy is reliant on the Strait of Hormuz, with over one-third of its oil supply — 5.4 million barrels per day — passing through it.

Given China’s reliance on export-led growth, reduced global demand will compound the damage. A sustained blockade does not just harm Iran; it also harms China, as Trump is well aware. But a conflict that damages Chinese economic interests on this scale carries a risk of even deeper tensions between the world’s two largest powers.

The main beneficiary of the war so far appears to be Russia. Moscow benefits directly from sustained high oil prices, which it can now demand thanks to the US relaxing sanctions on its exports, and has every interest in seeing the US bogged down in a prolonged and costly military confrontation while it continues its grinding invasion of Ukraine.

Comparisons to the Iraq War of 2003 are instructive. Then the US was able to assemble a coalition of willing partners and operate with at least the tacit acceptance of its major allies. Today Trump’s aggressive diplomatic posture towards Europe has left the US and Israel essentially isolated. EU states are

bearing the economic consequences of a war they were not consulted on and cannot influence — a situation that is deepening the transatlantic fracture Trump has spent years widening.

But Iran is not Iraq. It has spent two decades preparing for exactly this confrontation, developing decentralised military and nuclear infrastructure specifically designed to survive the kind of shock-and-awe campaign now being deployed against it. Iran’s demonstrated ability to withstand US military pressure is undermining American standing as the world’s dominant power.

Having declared mission accomplished, the US cannot now retreat without a severe loss of credibility. Meanwhile the blockade is hitting the economies of China and US allies alike, the world economy and ultimately the USA’s own, where support for the war is already splitting Trump’s MAGA base.

System on the brink

If you were to judge the economic impact of this war purely from US stock markets, you might conclude that the effects were minimal. Markets are at an all-time high. But this picture is profoundly misleading.

The apparent health of the global economy is less a reflection of real productive growth than the product of frenzied investment in artificial intelligence in the US. Vast sums of capital are being poured into AI infrastructure, data centres and technology stocks in anticipation of returns that have not yet materialised and may never do so at the scale being priced in. This has

all the hallmarks of a classic speculative bubble, and is acutely vulnerable to external shocks.

A sharp, sustained rise in energy costs puts enormous pressure on the construction and logistics sectors, including the firms contracted to build the AI data centres on which current market valuations depend. If those building programmes falter, confidence in AI sector valuations could collapse, and with it a significant portion of the financial architecture holding up global markets.

Alongside and intertwined with the AI bubble sits a ballooning private credit market. Since 2008, shadow banking in the form of private credit has expanded dramatically. Unlike conventional bank lending, private credit is largely unregulated, highly leveraged and illiquid. This war did not arrive in a period of capitalist stability. It arrived precisely when the system’s capacity to absorb a major shock is severely degraded. If central banks respond to war-driven inflation by raising interest rates, they risk triggering a debt crisis in the private credit market directly.

Shortages

The most immediate economic consequence of the war is a severe disruption to global energy and commodity supply chains. Brent crude, the global benchmark, has recently hit highs of \$126 per barrel, matching the peaks reached at the outset of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Iran’s military command has warned the world to ‘prepare for \$200 per barrel’.

The scale of the shock is laid bare in the World Bank's April 2026 Commodity Market Outlook. The Energy Price Index rose 41.6% in March. European natural gas increased by 59.4%, exceeding even the 55.7% spike recorded at the height of the 2022 energy crisis, while Brent crude jumped 45.8% by the end of March. Although prices have dropped somewhat as markets reacted to Trump's announcement of 'Project Freedom', they remain around \$100 per barrel and will rise sharply again if a settlement is not reached quickly.

But crude oil is only part of the picture. Refined petroleum products such as diesel and kerosene are even more significantly affected, with direct consequences for transport, agriculture and heating. LNG prices, already elevated as a result of the Ukraine war, are rising rapidly, pushing up household heating costs across the global north.

The conflict has already removed approximately 19 to 20% of the world's near-term LNG supply. Some countries in the global south have already been forced into desperate measures. Kenya, for instance, has weakened its fuel sulphur standard for six months, raising the permitted limit from 10 to 50 parts per million in an attempt to offset supply shortages—a short-term fix with serious long-term consequences for public health, engine infrastructure and air quality.

Less discussed but equally significant are the petrochemical by-products on which the global economy depends. Iran is a major producer of urea and ammonium nitrate, the fertilisers on which modern industrial agriculture relies. The strait also carries vast quantities of helium, a critical input in semiconductor manufacture and other industrial processes.

Maritime insurance costs have compounded all of this further. Before the war, risk premiums were roughly 0.05% to 0.2% of a vessel's hull value. Following the first air strikes, these rose to between 1.5% and 3%. Vessels with connections to the US, UK or Israel—referred to in shipping circles as 'missile magnets'—have seen rates climb as high as 5% to 7.5%. For a standard oil tanker valued at \$100 million, a single seven-day trip through the Gulf that previously cost around \$200,000 in insurance now costs approximately \$5 million to \$7.5 million. This cost is passed on to every consumer at the end of the supply chain.

Stagflation

Fossil fuels underpin all production and transport in the modern economy, so price rises here create a broad swell of inflation. Their by-products inject another round of cost hikes across whole sectors such as agriculture, where food prices hit workers and the poor hardest; and further inputs to industry—plant oils, biofuels, raw materials like cotton—add a third layer of costs.

Workers are already feeling the effects of this crisis at the petrol pump and in the supermarket, but the true economic consequences are still to be felt. The knock-on effects of the blockaded strait will drive up prices and scarcities across the whole global economy and could well push it into recession. Inflation of this nature cannot be managed simply by raising interest rates—and, as noted above, an attempt to do so risks detonating the overstretched private credit market.

For workers in Britain and across Europe, this is not a fresh crisis arriving in a period of stability. The cost-of-living crisis that began in 2022 with the Ukraine war was never fully resolved. Real wages in Britain remain below their 2008 peak across many sectors. Had wages grown at their pre-2008 trend, workers would be approximately £10,000 to £14,000 better off per year.

Food prices are already 50% higher than in 2021. Many homes are heated with natural gas or oil, both hit very hard by the blockade and the destruction of production facilities across the Gulf. When winter arrives this will become a severe and immediate problem for many millions. The working class is being asked to absorb a second major energy shock without having recovered from the first.

The macroeconomic picture for Britain is bleak. GDP growth has been anaemic: 0.3% in 2023, 1.1% in 2024 and an estimated 1.4% in 2025. The OECD has already revised its UK growth forecast for 2026 down from 1.3% to 0.8% as a direct result of the conflict. Forecasts predicting UK inflation to average 3.2% this year seem optimistic. The IMF has warned that in a possible global recession the UK would be the worst hit of the world's advanced economies.

Stagnant growth combined with rising inflation is known as stagflation, a crisis particularly devastating for the working class because it combines falling real wages and rising unemployment with rising prices. This would mark the second such crisis in Britain in four years.

Meanwhile big oil companies around the world are predicted to make immense super-profits if the price of a barrel stays at \$100 or over. British companies are leading the way. Shell has already announced over £5 billion in profits for the first quarter and BP £3.8 billion—both more than double last year's—as they profiteer out of the crisis at consumers' expense.

Global food crisis

The food crisis is perhaps the starkest expression of how war abroad translates into rising prices at home and hunger on a catastrophic scale in the global south. Food prices are already rising as fuel costs feed through to agriculture and distribution.

In the global north the form the crisis takes will be different but no less real:

sustained food price inflation hitting a working class whose food bank usage, rent burden and debt levels already reflect years of declining living standards. In Britain, the Food and Drink Federation has warned that food inflation could dwarf its earlier forecast of 3.2% and hit 10% by the end of the year. In large parts of the semi-colonial world, the food crisis will be catastrophic.

The disruption to fertiliser supply has fallen at the worst possible moment, the sowing season. The Fertiliser Price Index rose by 26.2% in March, driven almost entirely by a 53.7% surge in urea prices. Many farmers are choosing not to plant this season at all, as the cost of fertiliser now outstrips any return they could expect from selling their crop. Input shortages mean that for whatever does get planted, the harvest will be reduced.

This is compounded by a further development that has received insufficient attention: China's decision to halt fertiliser exports has cut off the primary alternative source of supply for much of South Asia. The consequences are particularly severe for rice cultivation—the staple crop for billions across the region, and one that depends heavily on nitrogen-based fertilisers. Multiple countries face disrupted harvests simultaneously, with no alternative supply available at any price.

This is not happening in a vacuum. The Ukraine war produced a severe wheat and sunflower oil crisis in 2022 that drove food prices to record levels globally. Food systems have not recovered from that shock. This is the second major supply disruption in four years, hitting a global agricultural economy already under severe pressure from the climate crisis and the long-term decline of rural incomes. Commodity speculation will accelerate the process further, with financial markets pricing in scarcity before it materialises, generating price rises independently of any actual physical shortage.

The worst of the crisis will be felt most acutely in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and across the Middle East itself—the regions most dependent on food imports, most exposed to fertiliser price rises and least able to absorb the shock. Sudan imported 54% of its fertilisers by sea from the Gulf region in 2024, followed by Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Somalia at 36%, 31% and 30% respectively.

Yemen faces catastrophic deterioration. Afghanistan relies on Iran for 30% of its key imports, with prices of cooking oil and some vegetables already surging by 13% in the past month. Nine million Afghan children—one in three—face severe hunger.

Many countries across Asia and Africa are already in famine conditions as a direct result of years of war, in which the US, the European powers and the Gulf states have been deeply complicit. A series of civil wars, insurgencies and land wars—often treated by the media in the north simply as 'Islamist' ter-

ror—have left millions vulnerable to starvation.

The World Food Programme has estimated that an additional 45 million people will be pushed into acute hunger as a result of this war, reaching a record high of 363 million, with roughly two-thirds in Africa. The result will be food riots and revolts.

Cost of living

The cumulative effect on British workers will be that, by autumn, most households will be significantly worse off, with many already feeling the pinch after years of low wage growth and rising prices. Funds that should be going towards raising wages, rebuilding the NHS and solving the housing crisis are instead being poured into rearmament. We need a united front of the working class and the oppressed to resist the inevitable attempts to make us pay for a crisis we did not create.

Such a united front would draw together socialist organisations, workers striking against falling real pay, community organisations and, crucially, the latent mass power of the trade unions. They could draw up an emergency programme to protect workers from the crisis.

It should demand: a sliding scale of wages and benefits indexed to real prices, as determined by workers' price-watch committees—grassroots bodies that monitor and publicise real price rises independently of official indices; free public transport to reduce dependence on fuel; a price cap on energy costs; rent controls to protect those already pushed to the edge by the housing crisis; and an increase to welfare spending, not defence spending.

Socialists support punitive taxes to seize the super-profits of the energy profiteers, but to solve the energy crisis as well as climate change the whole sector should be nationalised without compensation, under workers' and users' control, and reoriented to renewables.

The united front also needs to be international. As the imperialist powers seek to offload the worst of the crisis onto the slenderest shoulders of the semi-colonial world, we need to extend solidarity by fighting to stop arms exports to warzones, to cancel the crippling debts, and to support all strikes and uprisings against the effects of the crisis. That is the real meaning of 'globalise the intifada'.

This is not just an economic struggle; it is a political struggle against the imperialism that causes such wars in the first place. Socialists can use the struggles against war and the food crisis to build a new revolutionary workers' International, able to coordinate struggles across the globe against the capitalist system. To rid the world of war, poverty, hunger and inequality for good, we will have to overthrow it.

George Banks



Third Gulf War: stalemate and ethnic cleansing

Trump's 'ceasefire' was undermined before the ink was dry. Israel's assault on Lebanon, the collapse of the Islamabad talks and Trump's blockade threat brought the region back to the brink. Several weeks later, the same basic pattern remains: no settlement, no peace, and repeated threats of renewed escalation.

Only hours after threatening to bomb Iran 'back to the Stone Age', Trump posted on Truth Social on 8 April that he would 'suspend the bombing and attack of Iran for a period of two weeks'. He claimed an agreement had been reached to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

Media reports said the ceasefire had been brokered by Pakistan, following a last-minute appeal by China to Iran to agree. But the exact terms of the pro-

posed 10-point agreement were never clear. There was no single agreed version, and the gap between the competing accounts mattered enormously.

Within 24 hours of Trump's announcement, Israel launched air strikes on apartment blocks in Beirut and other Lebanese cities. Iran claimed the ceasefire covered Lebanon. Israel and Trump denied it. Meanwhile, Trump, Vance and Hegseth competed to claim a 'historic and overwhelming victory'. These accounts cannot be reconciled. What they do reveal is the real balance of forces that has emerged from the war.

Israel: saboteur by design

Israel's assault on Lebanon was not simply a refusal to comply with a

ceasefire it claimed did not apply to it. It was a deliberate attempt to destroy the US-Iran deal.

Had Israel's aim been merely to continue the war in Lebanon and consolidate its occupation of the south, it could have paused the bombing temporarily and resumed once the situation had stabilised. Instead, it launched one of the most murderous attacks of the war, with scores of strikes in minutes.

There is a strategic logic to this. Israel's offensives across Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza are not separate operations. They are components of a single project: the territorial construction of Greater Israel. Consent for that project requires a hostile Iran that can be presented as an enemy not only to Israel, but also to US interests. The moment Tehran is received as a

diplomatic equal to Washington, the justification for permanent war and occupation weakens. A peace process does not merely pause Israel's war aims; it contradicts them.

The same logic explains why Israel fought so hard to destroy Obama's 2015 nuclear deal. Iran under the JCPOA posed no credible military danger and was meeting its enrichment commitments. The threat was economic and political: Washington was preparing to reintegrate Tehran into the global economy, and US capital was ready to follow. Netanyahu could not accept that. The drive to sabotage diplomacy with Iran is not an aberration. It is central to Israeli policy.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi put the immediate dilemma plainly: 'The US must choose—cease-

TRUMP'S NEW WORLD DISORDER MEANS WAR ABROAD AND RESISTANCE AT HOME

fire or continued war via Israel. It cannot have both.' Vance claimed the ceasefire 'never included Lebanon'. Yet Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had publicly stated that the US and Iran, 'along with their allies', had agreed to an immediate ceasefire 'everywhere including Lebanon and elsewhere'.

Washington has placed Iran in an impossible position. It cannot accept the exclusion of Lebanon without abandoning a core ally and the terms it understood to have been agreed. But it cannot walk away from the ceasefire without handing Israel the renewed confrontation it is seeking. The resolution — US pressure on Israel to halt — is the one option Washington consistently refuses to take.

Israel has made clear there will be no real let-up in its occupation of southern Lebanon and parts of Syria. Under cover of the war, settler and IDF clearances of Palestinian farms and villages in the West Bank have been stepped up, as has the IDF's partition and near-total blockade of Gaza. Israel will continue to sabotage any serious peace proposal because its expansionist aims remain its overriding objective.

The terms contested

Iran's proposals, accepted by Trump as 'a workable basis', covered five areas: a regional ceasefire including Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq; a navigation framework for the Strait of Hormuz; sanctions relief and the release of frozen assets; war reparations; and a commitment not to seek nuclear weapons.

A second version circulated by Iran went further, demanding outright sovereignty over the Strait, explicit recognition of enrichment rights, the termination of all UNSC and IAEA resolutions, and full US military withdrawal from the region. Washington would not accept any of that as a starting point, and both sides knew it.

The nuclear question remains the structural obstacle. Iran's commitment not to seek a nuclear weapon has been its stated policy for two decades. The claim that it was secretly building one was always a political construction, not a finding of international inspectors. Iran had already agreed in negotiations in 2025 and early 2026 to cap enrichment at civilian levels under IAEA oversight — and was bombed before any deal could be finalised on both occasions.

The US demand for zero enrichment has no basis in the NPT and is imposed on no other non-weapons state. It is the language of surrender, not negotiation.

The limits of US power

The competing victory claims reflect the real balance of forces that emerged from six weeks of war. Iran's closure and disruption of the Strait of Hormuz — through which a fifth of the world's oil passes — was the decisive factor. What

had long been threatened was now demonstrated: Iran could control access selectively, maintain its own export revenues and impose cascading economic costs on US allies across the Gulf, Europe and East Asia.

For Washington, losing effective control of the world's most critical energy chokepoint was strategically unsustainable, whatever Trump claimed about US energy self-sufficiency.

Beyond the Strait, the war has confirmed what Afghanistan and Iraq already showed: US military preponderance no longer reliably translates into political outcomes. Despite overwhelming air power against a country with weak air defences, and despite full naval deployment in the region, Washington has not committed ground forces, has not forced the Strait open, and has achieved neither regime change nor unconditional surrender.

The post-Cold War 'unipolar moment' continues its slow-motion collapse.

The war has also damaged what remains of US soft power: its claimed role as coordinator of the global economy and guarantor of international law. Trump's conduct throughout the conflict, including public ruptures with Nato allies, has left the architecture of US-led order visibly strained.

After Islamabad

The Islamabad talks, held on 11–12 April, were the first direct engagement between the US and Iran since the 2015 nuclear deal. After 21 hours of negotiations, Vance announced no agreement had been reached. Iran said the US had been unable 'to gain the trust of the Iranian delegation' — a pointed reference to agreements reached and then destroyed.

The sticking points were enrichment and the Strait. On both, neither side moved.

Trump's immediate response was to announce a US naval blockade of Iranian ports and the Strait of Hormuz, threatening to interdict ships entering or leaving and to 'finish up the little that is left of Iran'. This is an act of economic warfare directed not only against Iran but against every state dependent on Gulf energy supplies. It carries a real risk of uncontrollable escalation.

The ceasefire has since been extended, but not stabilised. Israel continues to strike Lebanon. Trump continues to threaten renewed attacks. Vance says the US is 'locked and loaded'. Iran warns that new aggression could open new fronts. The blockade remains in place. Diplomacy has not replaced war; it has become one of its instruments.

The fact that the US was forced, even temporarily, to the negotiating table marked a retreat and a political defeat for the Trump administration. It was an attempt to avoid even greater damage to the global economy, US hegemony in the region and Trump's presidency at home.

But given the adventurist character of Trump's Bonapartism, further escalation cannot be ruled out. If the imperialist and Zionist attacks resume, Iran has every right to defend itself. The working class and all the oppressed must fight for the defeat of US and Zionist aggression, just as they must defend Lebanon against Israeli attack and occupation. They must do so without giving any political support to the regime in Tehran or to Hezbollah.

What we demand

The mass movements—the millions who took to the streets in the US 'No Kings' protests, the global solidarity movement for Palestine, and the anti-war movements across Europe, Latin America and Asia — must intensify the pressure to stop this war. The failed talks, the blockade and the continuing attacks on Lebanon make that more urgent, not less.

In Europe, workers' action should target sea and airports to block economic and military supplies to Israel. Trade unions and socialist parties must mobilise against Trump's racism and warmongering. Initiatives such as the Global Sumud Flotilla, which aims to refocus attention on Israel's crimes in Gaza, must be supported and publicised.

Liberation will never come from one of the world's most brutal imperialisms, from an administration that opened this war with genocidal threats and is now enforcing a naval blockade. It will come from the organised resistance of workers and the oppressed — in Iran, Palestine, Lebanon and everywhere else the consequences of this conflict are felt.

We fight for:

- Immediate and permanent ceasefire across Iran, Lebanon, Gaza and Yemen.
- Full lifting of all sanctions on Iran; immediate release of frozen assets.
- No to the US naval blockade — an act of aggression against the global working class.
- Defend Lebanon against Zionist attack; defend Iran against renewed US and Zionist aggression.
- End the genocide in Gaza; end the Israeli occupation of Lebanon, Syria and the West Bank.
- Withdrawal of all US and Israeli forces from the region.
- Break up Nato, AUKUS and all imperialist military alliances; close their bases.
- Liberation for all the peoples of the Middle East from imperialism, Zionism and their own oppressive regimes.

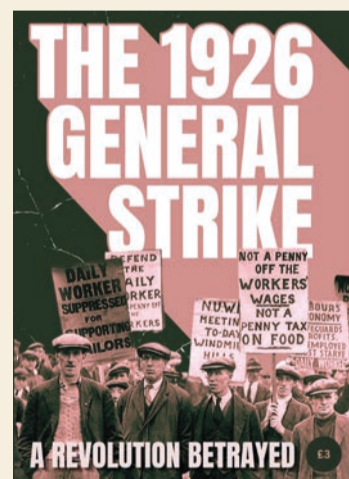
Dave Stockton and KD Tait

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Palestine: A Marxist Analysis

Prinkipo, 2025, 274pp
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The 1926 General Strike

Workers Power, 2026,
www.prinkipo.net

The 1936 general strike and the origins of Palestinian resistance

In 1936, Palestinian workers, peasants and nationalists launched a 175-day general strike against British rule and Zionist settlement. Its defeat exposed the limits of the nationalist notables and opened the road to armed rural revolt.

THE GREAT Revolt, al-Thawra al-Kubra, from 1936 to 1939, was among the largest anti-colonial rebellions before the Second World War, and the most sustained in the Arab world until the Algerian War of Independence. At its height, Britain was forced to transfer troops from across the empire to suppress it. By 1939, tens of thousands of British soldiers and police were deployed in Palestine.

The first phase was a general strike lasting 175 days. Arab workers, the urban poor and the Palestinian national movement tried to grind the machinery of British rule to a halt, as part of a wider revolt to stop Zionist settlement and win independence.

Unlike many other anti-colonial struggles, Palestinians faced a second, dangerous and powerful foe: the Zionist movement. Zionist institutions organised strike-breaking labour under British protection. In return, the British armed and organised Zionist police and paramilitaries to help suppress the insurgency.

The strike ultimately failed. But it was not the end of the revolt. The focus shifted to the peasantry and armed struggle, which at one point saw the British lose control of much of the country.

Perfidious Albion

Britain issued the Balfour Declaration in 1917, promising a 'national home' for Jews in Palestine, then less than a tenth of the population. Palestinians were reduced to 'existing non-Jewish communities', without equal national rights.

At the same time, Britain and France carved up the Middle East after the First World War to preserve control over oil, trade routes and the Suez Canal. The result was an increasingly intense Palestinian nationalism, emerging within a broader Arab nationalism.

The Balfour Declaration was a grossly undemocratic, divide-and-rule tactic aimed at building, in the words of Palestine's first military governor, 'a little loyal Jewish Ulster in a sea of potentially hostile Arabism'. Given a League of Nations Mandate in 1920, Britain protected mass Jewish immigration, settlement and the development of the Yishuv:

the Jewish quasi-state in Palestine. This colonisation was organised and funded on a mass scale by the international Zionist movement, rooted above all in Europe and the United States.

Zionist leaders hardly hid their plans for 'transfer' of the Arab population. Their project of creating a Jewish-majority state in Palestine meant expelling, not exploiting, the native population. That was the distinctive feature of Zionist colonialism and the existential threat it posed to Palestinians.

The deteriorating position of Palestinian farmers, workers and youth under the Mandate made the threat material. Land sales to Zionist companies and organisations meant the mass eviction of Arab peasants to make way for growing Jewish settlements. By 1931, about 20,000 peasants had been evicted, while up to a third of village dwellers had become landless. Thousands of the rural dispossessed swelled the slums and shantytowns around Haifa, Jaffa and other cities.

The Great Depression, combined with an aggressive Labour Zionist campaign for the boycott of Arab labour and products, deepened unemployment and politicised Arab workers, peasants and small traders. Clashes with armed settlers and far-right Zionist groups increased, while British police enforced evictions from the land. It became clear to workers and fellahin alike that defending their most basic class interests meant stopping Zionist immigration and settlement, and waging a national struggle against the British state that protected both.

Palestine's official leadership was dominated by urban landlord families, the 'notables', who had monopolised politics under the Ottomans and continued to do so under the British. They were co-opted through lucrative positions in the Mandate. Formally united in the Arab Executive Committee, they spent most of their energy on political infighting or fruitless negotiations with the High Commissioner over Jewish immigration and settlement. Many were themselves implicated in land

sales.

In the 1930s this status quo continued, despite more radical public rhetoric. At the top of the Arab hierarchy was Mohammed Amin al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and president of the Supreme Muslim Council, both posts created under the Mandate. His family's main rivals, the Nashashibis, were even more moderate.

Disillusionment with the Jerusalem notables saw the rise of the short-lived anti-British Istiqlal, or Independence, party in 1932 in the northern towns. Though damaged by its leader's links to land sales, it reflected a younger, more radical generation that had grown up under the Mandate and continued to organise. Scouts groups, sports clubs, youth and women's associations and trade unions sprang up in the decade before the revolt.

Then, in 1933, Hitler came to power in Germany, bringing Palestine's tensions to a head. US and British immigration restrictions blocked large numbers of desperate Jewish refugees from entering their countries. Many went instead to Palestine. Between 1933 and 1936, the Jewish population rose towards 30 per cent. Haifa became a majority-Jewish city and Tel Aviv outstripped its Arab neighbour, Jaffa.

The Jewish sector boomed with the influx of capital, further driving up land

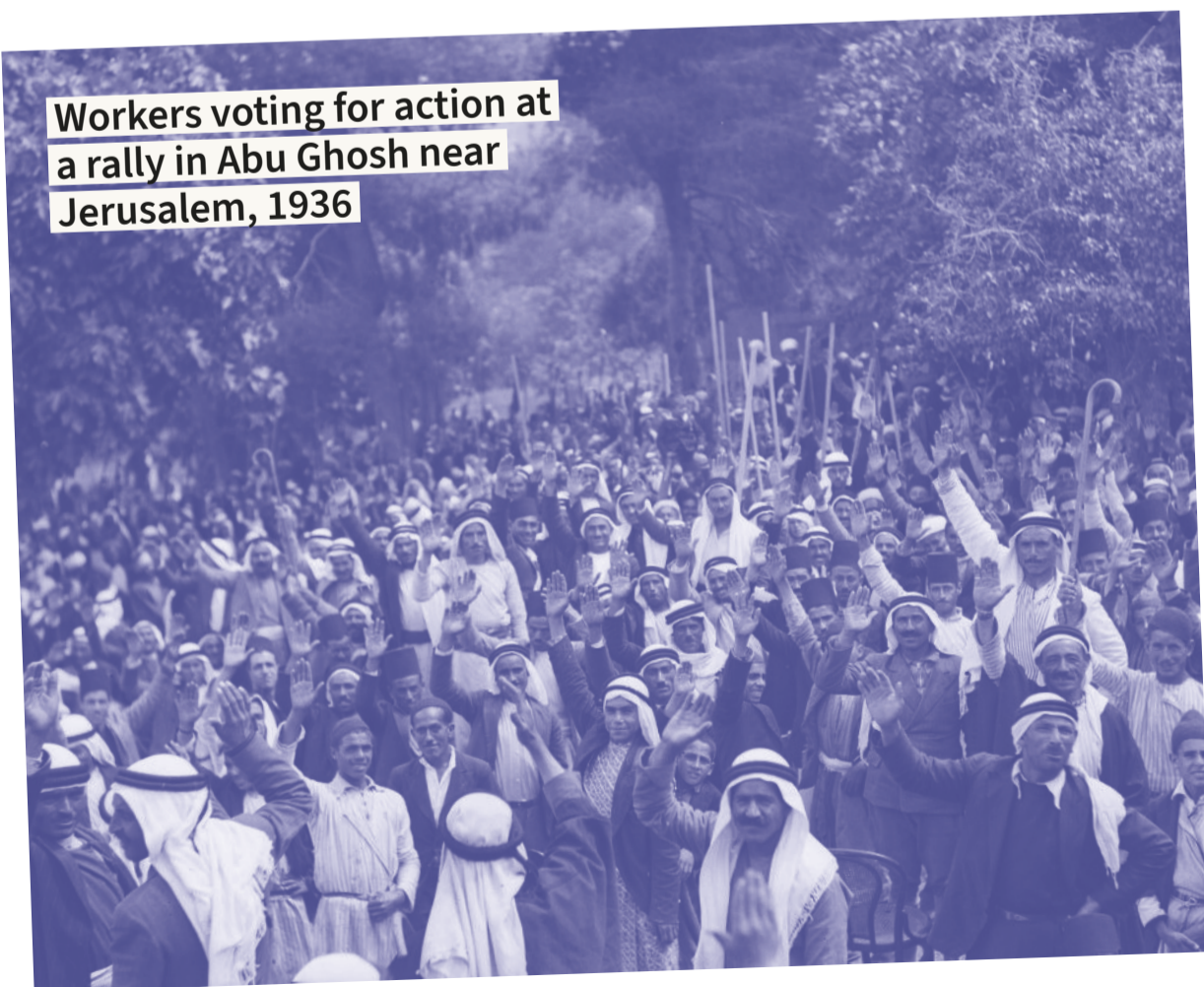
sales and inflation, while the campaign against Arab labour intensified. The Yishuv expanded into the fertile coastal areas, the Jezreel Valley and Galilee, pushing out Arab peasants and threatening to bisect and marginalise Arab areas. The danger of Palestine becoming a Jewish state was now a foreseeable future.

Al-Qassam: the spark

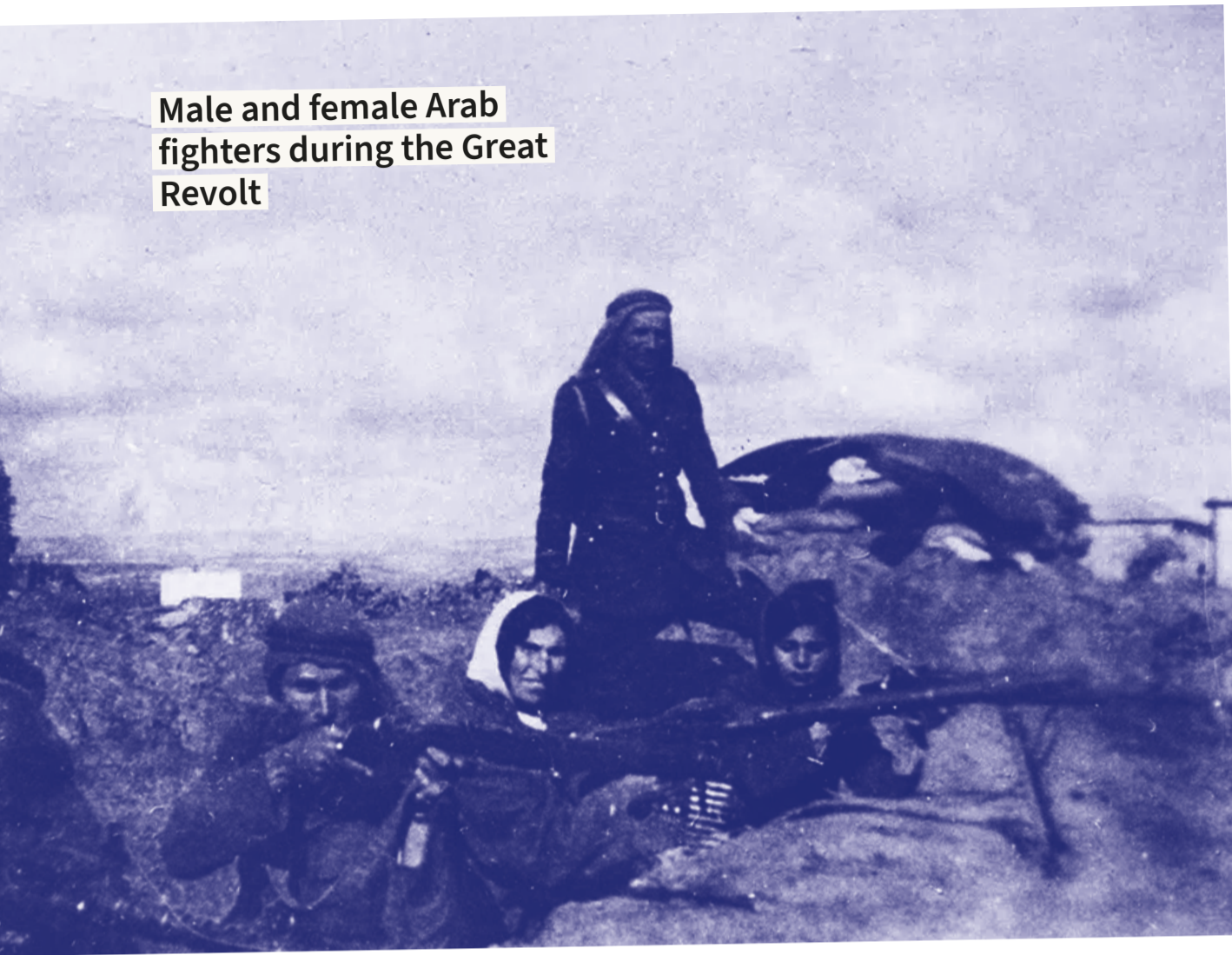
The spark came in late 1935. On 16 October, dockers in Jaffa discovered a secret arms shipment to the Zionist Haganah militia, including 25 machine guns, hundreds of rifles and large quantities of ammunition. It confirmed widespread fears that the Zionists were preparing to take the country by force. Protests swept Palestine and spread across the Arab world.

Then, on 20 November, British troops and police ambushed a small armed band near Ya'bad village, killing its leader, Sheikh 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam. A popular Haifa imam, al-Qassam preached jihad against Zionism and British occupation. He also served as an itinerant sharia judge and president of the Young Men's Muslim Association. Both roles enabled him to agitate and organise across northern Palestine, where he built an underground armed organisation.

Workers voting for action at a rally in Abu Ghosh near Jerusalem, 1936



Male and female Arab fighters during the Great Revolt



Dismissed by the British as a bandit, al-Qassam became a public symbol of militancy, sacrifice and national resistance, in contrast to the notables. The British were shocked when thousands joined his funeral march the next day and Haifa went on strike. None of the major party leaders attended.

The tension continued with mass rallies on al-Qassam's remembrance day on 5 January 1936. By then the political parties were in attendance, trying to catch up with a movement moving beyond them.

Meanwhile, a student revolt in Egypt at the end of 1935 had forced elections, leading to victory for the nationalist Wafd party. In Syria, a general strike in early 1936 forced the French to negotiate concessions. Across the Arab world, movements were pushing back against colonial rule. Palestine, by contrast, was moving towards a more direct clash.

On 15 April, near Tulkarem, a small Qassamite band killed two Jews. In retaliation, Revisionist Zionist activists murdered two Arab workers near a kibbutz. At the Tel Aviv funeral for one of the Jewish victims, Arabs were attacked and an attempted march on Jaffa led to clashes. Scores were injured and houses burnt. The British declared a curfew and martial law across Palestine. These small, tit-for-tat incidents lit the Great Revolt.

The general strike

According to the British High Commissioner, Arthur Wauchope, 'the strike was begun independently and spontaneously in various places by various committees and groups'. In Jaffa, a strike was called on 19 April and a strike committee set up in the port. That same evening activists in Nablus formed a National Committee and called on

Palestinians to launch a general strike, withhold taxes and boycott Jewish goods until Arab demands were met: an end to Zionist immigration, a ban on land sales and a democratic representative assembly. The strike spread like wildfire.

All this took place without the notables' leadership. Public meetings and the press piled pressure on the Mufti, the notables and their parties to support the strike and lead a united struggle. The Mufti, meanwhile, continued assuring the authorities that sermons would be non-political.

On 25 April, representatives from the national committees met in Jerusalem to establish a national leadership. The leaders of the elite parties agreed to join it, otherwise they would lose all credibility, but insisted it should not be an elected body. The Arab Higher Committee was formed, composed of these party leaders with the Mufti as president. It adopted the strikers' three demands.

As one biographer of the Mufti put it, the committee was 'the child of the spontaneous revolt'. For the first months, it did not lead the revolt so much as follow it. Actual leadership lay more with semi-independent national committees controlled by young radicals.

Nevertheless, with its authority and funds, the Arab Higher Committee could enforce its will when needed. More fundamentally, it blocked the movement from generating its own leadership under popular control, preserving the notables' ability to broker deals with the British behind closed doors. It also meant the land question and the crushing debt crisis, owed overwhelmingly to the same Arab elite, remained unaddressed until the later phase of the revolt, when control shifted further to the grassroots.

The general strike lasted 175 days and stood at the centre of a wider popular revolt that brought Palestinian areas to a

standstill. The drivers' association called a nationwide transport strike even before the general strike, effectively closing the roads. Jaffa, second port to Haifa and heart of the fledgling trade union movement, became a leading centre of revolt.

In Haifa, the Palestine Arab Workers Society, founded in 1925 and the first serious

Arab union in

the country, joined the struggle to shut down the city, though with less success. Construction across Palestine, including in the Jewish sector, halted because it relied on Palestinian quarries for gravel. Arab labourers stayed away from building sites, farms and citrus groves. May Day rallies denounced the Mandatory government for the 'Judaization of this Arab country, depriving the worker of his job and the peasant of his land'.

Villages and major enterprises, such as the Neshet quarry and cement plant near Haifa, became hotbeds of nationalist activity and struggle. The semi-proletarian layer eking out a living in the shantytowns was a key source of the strike's radicalism, alongside its landless counterparts in the countryside. Together with workers, they policed the weakest links in the strike: small merchants, transport firms and labour contractors. Nationalist youth groups patrolled the cities.

For months, workers and rebels struggled to stop lorries and trains reaching the harbours, oil depots, quarries and construction sites. The British and the Yishuv were equally determined to keep them open, for fear that Jewish labour would re-emigrate, the drain on British finances would become too great, and the solidarity movement across the region would grow.

Labour Zionism

Here the Zionist movement showed its worth to the imperialists. The Histadrut, a Labour Zionist institution created in 1920, was unique. It was an economic combine, a labour contractor and, only lastly, a trade union. It channelled capital from abroad to become the industrial heart and foremost employer of the Jewish Yishuv, and later of the Israeli state.

The Histadrut dominated the economy under the Mapai Labour Zionist party, whose leader David Ben-Gurion also headed the Jewish Agency, the central institution organising immigration and settlement in Palestine. Mapai made all important decisions affecting the Histadrut before they were ratified by the organisation's own leadership bodies.

The Histadrut's trade union functions were subordinate to its colonial Zionist aims. Its purpose was to ensure that no independent trade unions uniting Jewish and Arab workers took off, to block communist influence, and to sell Zionism to the international labour movement by cloaking its aims in socialist rhetoric.

Without this apparatus, the Yishuv bourgeoisie would have been too weak, fragmented and dependent on cheap Arab labour to construct a new state, even with British support.

The Histadrut led the campaign for Hebrew labour and Hebrew products, and scabbed on Arab strikes, at times violently. Before the revolt, Mandatory authorities were sometimes cautious about the Histadrut's campaign for Hebrew labour because they feared an Arab reaction. Public works maintained discriminatory wage scales, paying Jewish workers up to twice Arab wages, yet still hired Arabs and Jews in equal numbers. That effectively reserved well-paid places for Jewish labour, but it remained an obstacle to complete 'Hebrew labour'.

Now, with full police protection, the Histadrut mobilised Jewish workers and kibbutzniks to scab on a mass scale and replace Arab labour in the Jewish economy.

Strikes, struggles and scabs

The biggest breach in the strike was Haifa, a mixed city with a Jewish majority after recent immigration, which placed intense pressure on the Arab workforce and its unions. There the main Arab contractor supplying labour for the port refused to support the general strike. About 100 of the 250 Arab port workers did refuse to work in April and were confined under police supervision at the port, while Jewish and Syrian migrant workers organised by the Histadrut took their jobs.

The nationalist movement applied pressure on the contractors and workers, offering strike pay as well as threats, but to no avail. The city remained a major breach in the strike until August, a fact Histadrut-published Arabic leaflets used to undermine strikers' morale elsewhere.

At the Neshet cement plant, the biggest Jewish-owned enterprise in the country and crucial to its construction industry, quarry workers struck solidly in April, while the quarry's Arab operator fled the country under nationalist pressure. Neshet's management transferred

his contract to the Histadrut, which arrived on 4 May with 50 Jewish workers from a local kibbutz under police escort. They were accompanied by Palestine Arab Workers Society leader Sami Taha, who had bowed to the pressure.

The priority was to keep the plant open. The Histadrut promised that Arab workers would keep their jobs and pay if the quarry reopened and if they accepted the Jewish workers. Perhaps the failure of the Haifa strike had influenced the strikers' leaders. But it meant breaking the strike and accepting the thin end of the wedge. Arab labour dwindled, and so did pay, in the months that followed.

Where workers stood firm, colonial police and troops proved decisive, tipping the balance in the Histadrut's favour. The Majdal Yaba quarry workers, near Tel Aviv, had resisted attempts to break them in 1934 and again in April 1936. But at the end of 1936 all 400 were fired under Histadrut pressure and replaced by a Jewish workforce, backed by a large police contingent and numerous arrests.

This injustice, and the loss of hundreds of jobs and wages crucial to the local economy, left deep bitterness. A historian later noted that villagers from the area joined the derailment of a train near Ras al-Ain station in October 1937. They came from villages that had direct experience of what Zionists meant by the 'conquest of labour'.

The Arab Higher Committee also compromised the strike's cohesion by refusing to demand that Arab civil servants in the Mandatory government walk out. The Mufti feared that such a demand would apply to the Supreme Muslim Council, which he headed, and that the British would strip him of his posts. Yet a government workers' strike could have brought the Palestinian administration almost to a standstill and increased pressure on railway and public works employees to join the strike.

As the strike wore on without breaking Haifa port or key infrastructure such as the railways, desperation grew and pressure to compromise mounted. Against that stood the nationalist movement, the shantytowns and the insurgent villages. The Arab Higher Committee and national committees set up bodies for food supply and finance, offered strike pay to Arab and even Jewish workers, and would later support the armed rural insurgents.

In August the situation came to a head. For a short time it looked as if the deadlock might be broken in Haifa. As the struggle sharpened, some Arab dockers struck, along with workers at Palestine Railways, the Iraq Petroleum Company, the municipal administration and the Public Works Department.

Now, if ever, was the time to bring the whole public sector out and combine it with an upsurge across every wing of the struggle. The Arab Higher Committee did not. By the end of the week, British troops had effectively occupied Haifa, allowing Histadrut strike-breakers to scab while

army engineers ran the locomotives. This strategic battle was lost. After Haifa, the general strike was living on borrowed time.

The Arab working class had grown quickly, along with industry and the economy, because of the influx of Jewish capital. But this was combined with a step backwards. Competing Jewish labour, protected and privileged by the Histadrut, the Yishuv and the British, limited and undermined Arab workers' development, confining many to smaller workshops and more insecure, seasonal and marginal forms of work.

Zionism strengthened Britain's colonial grip until it turned on its master and conquered the Palestinians. From small economic questions to existential political ones, Zionism was a disaster for the Palestinian people.

Mass revolt

As the strike reached its limits and tensions grew, workers became desperate and the movement radicalised, seeking other outlets. Mid-May saw a wave of bombings in Haifa and Jaffa, and shots fired at Jews and police in Jerusalem. The narrow streets and alleys of old Jaffa became a no-go area for the British. Local armed bands based in villages and the countryside began targeting British and Jewish installations, transport and property. This was the beginning of an elemental rural revolt that would spread before exploding into a countrywide anti-colonial insurrection in 1937-38.

The colonial authorities launched a wave of arrests and deported 60 young radical leaders and activists at the end of May. In response, revolt erupted in the major towns, with dozens of attacks a day on British forces. Wauchope warned the Colonial Office that Palestine was in a 'state of incipient revolution'. Palestinian towns turned into battlegrounds as soldiers, armoured cars and tanks sent to restore order met barricades, stone throwers and snipers.

The colonial authorities then launched the punitive measures that would become systematic counter-insurgency in the later phase of the revolt. The peak of the campaign to retake the towns was the demolition of a large swathe of central Jaffa, officially on public health grounds, in reality to divide the city with an access road for the military. Thousands were left homeless. The countryside remained in ferment throughout the summer.

In September, the British government



British troops expel Arab residents of Jerusalem in 1938

decided to 'crush Arab resistance' and sent in another division, taking the number of troops in Palestine to more than 20,000. The Arab Higher Committee leaders were forced to meet Wauchope and hear his ultimatums. They indicated that they would call off the strike if requested to do so by Arab rulers, whose mediation they would accept. A delegation began a tour of the region's capitals. Those rulers had already conferred with the British and wanted the revolt ended before it spilled over into their own states.

For two decades, the notables had clung to leadership without confronting the growing threat of Zionist settlement. They had set up the Arab Higher Committee and contained the general strike at key points. They had demanded no material solidarity from the Arab rulers. Now, at the rulers' request and without concessions from the British, the committee called off the general strike on 10 October 1936. Its statement, dictated by the rulers of Saudi Arabia, Transjordan and Iraq, called on Palestinians to rely on negotiations and the 'good intentions of our friend Great

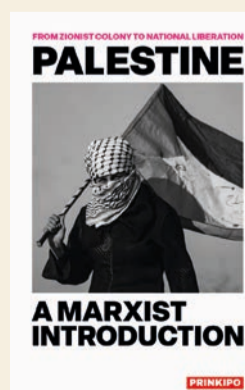
Britain, who has declared that she will do justice'.

The British promised another commission, led by Lord Peel, to examine the issues behind the revolt. They took no chances: armed groups were allowed to disband without arrest and volunteers from outside Palestine were permitted to leave peacefully. The rebellion sank to a simmer as the people watched and waited.

By then, 37 British troops and police had been killed, alongside around 80 Jewish settlers and more than a thousand Palestinians.

Months later, the bombshell hit. The Peel report of July 1937 proposed the partition of Palestine, with the forced transfer of up to 225,000 Arabs to create a Jewish-majority state covering some of the most fertile territory. Palestinians would be attached to Transjordan. Outrage at this betrayal, the greatest yet, saw the Palestinian rebellion rise to even greater heights in 1937-39, the second phase of the Great Revolt.

Andy Yorke



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A People's History of Portugal

REVIEW



Review: *A People's History of Portugal* by Raquel Varela and Roberto Della Santa, Pluto Press, 2026, 297pp

THE NAPOLEONIC Wars, which forced the Royal Court to flee to Brazil, are the starting point of Raquel Varela and Roberto Della Santa's exploration of 200 years of class struggle in Portugal.

A People's History of Portugal deploys a historical-materialist analysis to track the development of capital and labour from the Kingdom of Portugal, structured around the exploitation of its colonies, to the Bonapartist dictatorship of António de Oliveira Salazar and the consolidation of market liberalisation following the counter-revolution of 1975. The book focuses on the working class as an active, sometimes revolutionary subject, and its role in shaping the course of Portugal's history.

As the first global maritime empire, Portugal inaugurated the Age of Discovery but had a weak bourgeoisie dependent on British capital. Profiting from Brazil's gold until the 18th century, it failed to launch an independent industrial revolution. Its status as one of the weak links in the chain of imperialism was demonstrated by the 1890 crisis known as the 'Pink Map'. This set out an inland corridor joining its colonies Angola and Mozambique, but collided directly with Britain's Cape-to-Cairo scheme. King Carlos' constitutional government yielded to Britain's ultimatum to retreat, provoking popular outrage and a boycott of English goods. For Varela and Della Santa, this capitulation hastened the demise of the monarchy.

The monarchy fell in a coup on 5

October 1910, propelled by working-class support in Lisbon and across Portugal, and following a wave of strikes only a month before. While the working class were unable to claim victory, their capacity to struggle prevented the full stabilisation of the Republican regime. During a period of constant crisis, there were seven parliaments in the First Republic between 1910 and 1926. Trade unions—'largely influenced by revolutionary syndicalism'—grew rapidly, but faced intense repression from the authorities.

Salazar's dictatorship

A military coup on 28 May 1926 ended the unstable First Republic, instituting a dictatorial period that would last until 1974. Varela and Della Santa argue that the coup rested on an understanding that capitalist modernisation and accumulation, based on 'cheap labour' in the metropolises and 'forced labour' in the colonies, could not occur under a democratic regime in which workers can exercise their power.

Following the coup, the headquarters of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) was closed and the main trade union, the Confederação Geral do Trabalho (CGT), was banned. In the aftermath of the 1929 financial crisis, the Estado Novo—'an authoritarian, corporatist order'—was established under Salazar's leadership.

In response to the Estado Novo prohibiting strikes and lockouts in November 1933, a general strike 'with anarcho-syndicalist predominance' was organised against the dictatorship in January 1934. A group of mainly communist glass workers in Marinha Grande joined the revolt and took over the post office, the

town hall and the National Republican Guard (GNR) post. Their uprising did not last long, resulting in over 100 arrests, but from then on Salazar designated the PCP as the main force to be fought.

In the colonies, capital accumulation was driven by a system of forced labour accompanied by brute force. The anti-colonial revolts in Portugal's African territories began with the Cotonang uprising in Angola on 3 January 1961. When agricultural workers staged a protest demanding improved working conditions, the Portuguese authorities responded the following day with an air raid, targeting twenty villages in the area and killing hundreds of people. This sparked the Portuguese Colonial War in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau. The book argues that the Portuguese Revolution of 1974–75 'emerged from the military defeat of a regular army by revolutionary guerrilla movements'. Led by Amílcar Cabral, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) controlled more than two-thirds of Guinea-Bissau by 1970.

Revolution

The human and financial cost of a prolonged war, coupled with global factors such as the 1973 oil shock—which drove the yearly inflation rate as high as 20%—propelled Portugal into the Carnation Revolution on 25 April 1974. A whole chapter is dedicated to the revolution, but for a richer account of this period Varela's earlier *A People's History of the Portuguese Revolution* (2019) is highly recommended.

The Portuguese Revolution opened the doors to dual power, where the old capitalist state still stood but new workers' commissions (Comissão de Trabalhadores) and assemblies acted as an alternative authority over the means of production and the government of people. As Varela and Della Santa note: 'For 19 months, 3 million people actively participated in workers', residents' and soldiers' councils, making daily decisions'. But these competing forms of sovereignty are both antagonistic and untenable.

In the end the revolution was defeated not by violence but through a civil counter-revolution led by the Socialist Party (PS) leader Mário Soares on 25 November 1975. The PCP offered no resistance. The authors argue that the PCP never intended to carry out a socialist revolution: adhering to the Stalinist conception of a two-stage revolution, its primary aim was 'to ensure the consolidation of a democratic regime in Portugal'.

The book's final chapter explores the post-revolutionary phase, marked by entry into the European Economic Community in 1986 and a restructuring of the economy that reinforced the dominance of foreign capital. Reliant on large loans since 1990, the Portuguese economy was hit hard by the 2008 financial cri-

sis, resulting in the intervention of the Troika. In return for a €78 billion bailout, Portugal was required to implement a structural adjustment programme, including comprehensive privatisation, a public-sector recruitment freeze, and cuts to salaries and pensions.

This systemic assault on economic and social rights opened a period of class struggle not seen since the 1980s. Beginning in 2011, the General Confederation of the Portuguese Workers (CGTP) organised a series of general strikes, met with police repression of pickets. This anger found expression in the large vote for the Left Bloc (BE) and the PCP in the 2015 election, winning 10.2 and 8.2 per cent respectively.

However, both the BE and PCP subsequently propped up a minority, social-liberal PS government in a pact known as the Geringonça. They continued to support the government even as it mobilised the military to break a national lorry drivers' strike in 2019. Their abandonment of class struggle for government intrigue prompted their swift electoral decline, while also creating the space for an insurgent, far-right Chega (Enough) to present itself as the 'anti-systemic' party in Portuguese politics.

Party

A People's History of Portugal, linking historical developments to contemporary class struggle, illustrates how capitalism repeatedly creates the conditions that force the working class to revolt. While the Portuguese Revolution produced organs of workers' power, it also demonstrated that revolutionary leadership and a socialist programme were necessary for the working class to conquer power.

Varela condemns social democracy for 'collaborating and stabilizing forms of domination' and points to the 'deep crisis' of trade unionism today. Unfortunately, she neither draws conclusions nor puts forward a strategy—a way forward informed by her history—for the Portuguese working class. She sketches out, in academic language, a liberated order but only asks: 'how could such an order come to be? What kind of mediations are needed—here and now? Which unions, movements, parties? Like Marx and Engels, no cook recipes are prescribed for any future-to-come.'

The comparison is not quite correct. Although the founders of scientific socialism refused to be drawn on what a communist society would look like, they did, especially after the Paris Commune, map out a strategy to get there.

Nevertheless, this useful history should be read by those determined to learn its lessons, developing a revolutionary programme and party that can ensure Portuguese workers and youth write a new, final, liberating chapter in their history.

By Dara O'Cogaidhin

Sexism, misogyny and profit: Louis Theroux investigates the 'manosphere'

REVIEW



Louis Theroux's documentary on the 'manosphere' shines a light on a poisonous, right-wing misogynist ideology and the grifters who have built social media empires selling it to young men. But Theroux never really addresses what sits beneath it: a capitalist system that offers many young men insecurity, isolation and no serious future, while allowing con men to profit from their frustration.

The 'manosphere' is an umbrella term for male-focused, anti-feminist online communities. In Theroux's film it is represented mainly by influencers who package extreme views on women and society inside a slick self-help framework. They flaunt wealth and

promise viewers the same rewards, provided they work hard enough—and buy the right course. Their target is young, impressionable men, often already struggling, to whom they offer a story that blames women, feminism and minorities for their pain.

The ideology holding this together is the 'red pill'. The term is borrowed from *The Matrix*. To be 'red-pilled' is to claim awakening to a hidden truth: that society is not biased against women, but privileges women at men's expense. In its basic form, red pill ideology says feminism has gone too far, overturned the 'natural' order between the sexes, and made men society's real victims. It borrows the language of evolutionary psychology to argue that men and women are naturally and permanently

different.

Several ideas follow. The 'sexual marketplace' treats dating like an economy, where people are ranked by status and attractiveness, and relationships become transactions rather than human connections. Men are divided into 'alphas' who dominate and 'betas' who submit. 'Hypergamy'—the claim that women are hardwired to seek the highest-status mate available—is used to justify misogyny and relentless male status-seeking. The figures of the 'chad' and the 'incel' stand for the winners and losers of this imagined sexual economy.

Red pill thinking mimics the language of radical awakening: seeing through ideology, rejecting false consciousness, identifying hidden power

structures. But it arrives at reactionary conclusions. Instead of locating male alienation in capitalism and class society, it redirects anger sideways and downwards, towards women, LGBTQ+ people, and racial and religious minorities. The manosphere does not invent young men's frustration. It hijacks it.

What becomes clear watching these influencers is that they are both entrepreneurs and ideologues. The spread of their worldview is bound up with the financial exploitation of their followers. Controversy generates views; views generate followers; followers are monetised through courses, supplements, trading advice and sponsored content.

That does not mean they do not believe the bile they peddle. Many clearly do. But the manosphere is also a market. It sells 'self-improvement' to vulnerable young men while funneling their attention and money towards its leaders. Under capitalism, even identity and self-worth become marketable. The manosphere sells masculinity as a product: if you feel inadequate, it is because you have not yet bought the right course, supplement or mindset.

Two figures in the documentary illustrate this hypocrisy. One is Harrison Sullivan, known online as 'HS TikkyTokky'. He livestreams his life and antagonises members of the public while viewers suggest 'pranks' to inflict on strangers. The film shows the cruelty of this content model, where humiliation becomes spectacle and spectacle becomes income.

Sullivan runs an OnlyFans management company and promotes its content to his audience, while expressing contempt for the women who produce it. He calls it 'disgusting' and says: 'I'm not trying to be a misogynist, but I'd disown my daughter if she ever did OnlyFans.' He introduces Louis to his girlfriend as 'the dishwasher'. We later find out she is called Kacey and is herself an OnlyFans model.

Similarly, Myron Gaines, real name Amrou Fudl, hosts the Fresh and Fit podcast under the banner of 'male improvement'. He regularly invites OnlyFans models onto the show, supposedly to discuss dating, only to berate them for their profession and ridicule their intelligence. Segments are then clipped and circulated across social media, often with gambling brands attached. He profits from the women he publicly despises.

The contradiction is sharpest in the movement's embrace of so-called 'traditional values'. These men present themselves as champions of a return to natural order: women in the home, monogamy restored, feminism rolled back. But their tradition is conspicuously one-sided.

Justin Waller, another influencer Theroux meets, repeatedly talks about 'one-way monogamy': the idea that a man can have other sexual partners while his partner must remain faithful. Many of these figures maintain multiple partners, or consume and profit from the content of sex workers, while forbidding their wives and girlfriends from exercising the same freedom. 'Traditional values' here means maximum freedom for men and enforced restriction for women.

Another thread running through Theroux's interviewees is a deep conspiratorial mistrust of 'the establishment': governments, institutions and, most revealingly, Jews. Fudl's wider record includes repeated antisemitic statements and Nazi imagery. The documentary does not discuss this.

It would be easy to treat this antisemitism as a personal prejudice disconnected from the manosphere's sexism. But the two are ideologically linked. This kind of conspiracy thinking senses a hidden ruling power but cannot name it correctly. Sometimes it calls that power feminism. Sometimes it reaches for the old antisemitic fantasy of Jews controlling the world. In both cases, it diverts anger away from capital and towards scapegoats.

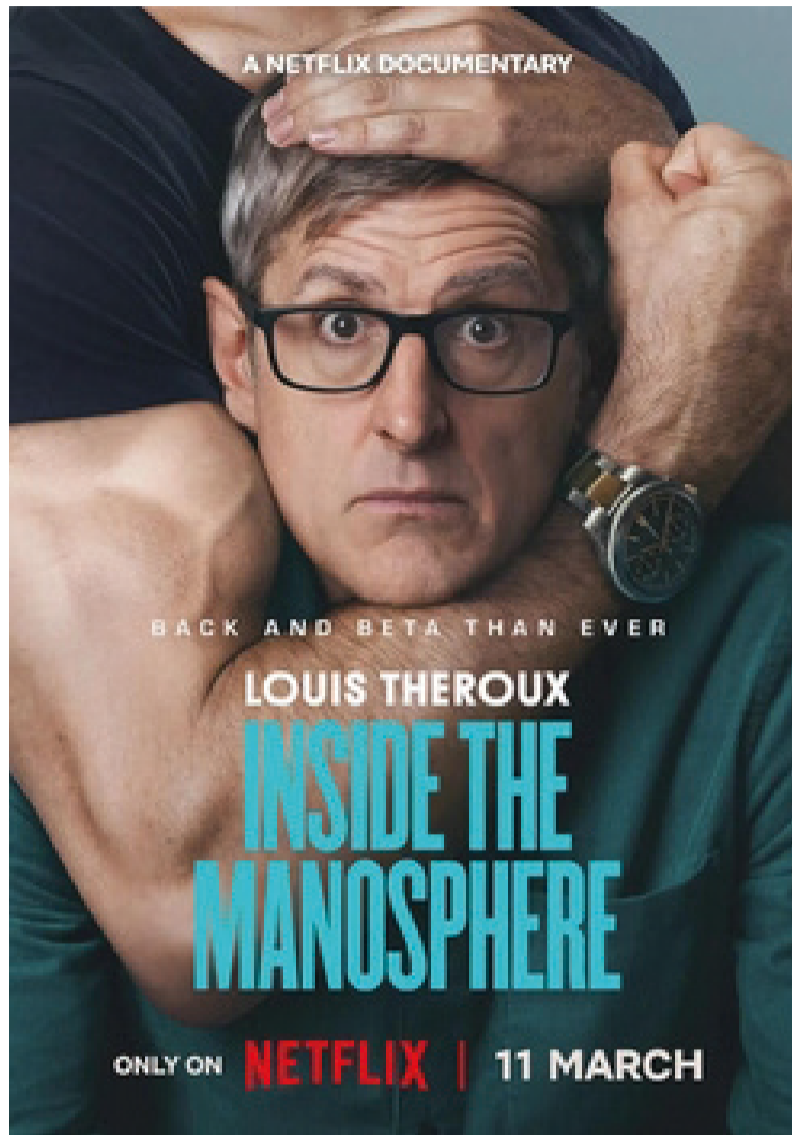
Liberal blind spot

In one revealing exchange, Sullivan turns the questioning on Theroux, challenging him to say whether Israel is committing genocide in Gaza. Theroux does not answer. For Sullivan, this proves Theroux is 'paid by the Jews'. In reality, despite his best attempts to hold up a mirror to society, Theroux remains within the limits of liberal media.

This is the documentary's central weakness. Theroux's trademark method—open-ended questions, gentle curiosity, letting subjects talk themselves into corners—does not serve this subject well. It has produced brilliant television when turned on figures whose worldviews are personal or eccentric. The manosphere is not eccentric. It is an organised, monetised and politically consequential movement with real effects on real people.

Theroux does push back on overt antisemitism. He also asks, rather tentatively, whether the wives and girlfriends of these men are happy. But he mostly allows the ideology to stand on its own terms. The cumulative effect is a degree of unearned platforming.

Most seriously, the film almost entirely ignores the women these men affect. Mothers, partners, teachers and colleagues of manosphere adherents are largely absent. We hear a great deal about how these ideas make men feel, but little about the concrete harm they do to women.



When Theroux does speak to women, the encounters are heavily controlled. Interviews with the partners of influencers take place with the men's permission and often in their presence. When the women become inconvenient, they are ushered away. In one especially uncomfortable scene, a female assistant of Fudl is texted and told to stop speaking to Theroux. She does so immediately, without explaining why.

Theroux rarely asks deeper structural questions because mainstream documentary-making usually stops at individual behaviour and psychology. It may criticise prejudice, cruelty and manipulation, but it rarely questions the society that produces them. The film never seriously asks what conditions make the manosphere possible.

Many young men drawn to the manosphere face real problems: insecure work, low pay, poor housing prospects and a sense that the future has been closed off. Capitalism produces suffering and alienation, making people increasingly isolated from one another. The manosphere provides a simple, emotionally satisfying answer: women and feminism are to blame.

Capitalism and patriarchy are not separate systems running in parallel. They are historically intertwined and mutually reinforcing. The manosphere's 'traditional values' agenda is presented as a revolt against modernity, a nostalgic return to a natural and ordered past. It is nothing of the sort. The 'traditional family' they fetishise is not natural. It is a historically specific arrangement that developed alongside capitalism and has served its needs ever since.

One of the greatest achievements of the 20th-century women's and workers' movements was the limited socialisation of domestic labour through childcare, maternity benefits, unemployment support and social care for elderly and disabled people. When these functions are pushed back into the nuclear family, they are performed for free, mainly by women, rather than paid for collectively through taxation. This comes on top of the cooking, cleaning, childcare and emotional maintenance that remain women's burden in most families. What the manosphere calls 'traditional values' is a domestic labour arrangement that serves capital.

This is why its obsession with controlling women's sexuality, labour and mobility is not simply bigotry, though it is certainly that. It is also a programme, whether or not its adherents recognise it, for reinforcing domestic servitude and shifting responsibility from the state back to the family.

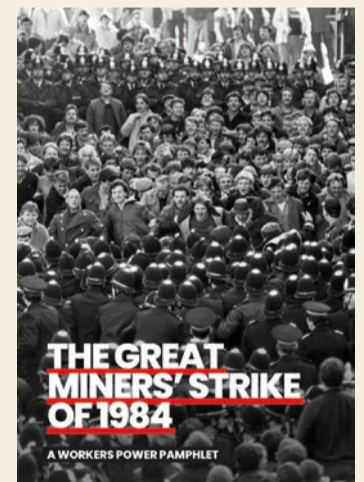
Inside the Manosphere is a worthwhile, if uncomfortable, watch. It gives a useful window into a movement shaping the minds of young men. Despite its limitations, seeing these figures up close—with their contradictions, cruelty and naked commercialism exposed—is valuable. But the film also shows the limit of liberal exposure. The manosphere does not only need to be observed. It needs to be opposed, politically and socially, by a movement that can answer alienation with solidarity, and misogyny with working-class struggle against the system that breeds it.

Mel Collins

PUBLICATIONS



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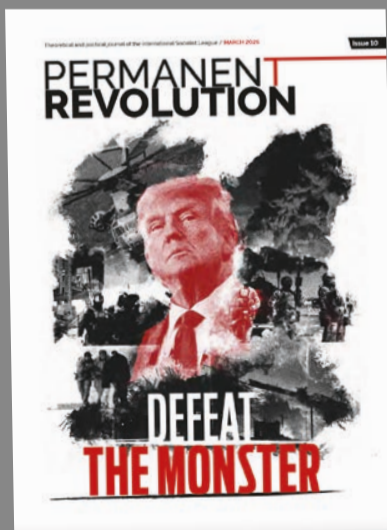
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