

NEWS



KEIR STARMER. PHOTO: LAUREN HURLEY / NO 10 DOWNING STREET / CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

MAY LOCAL ELECTIONS

Labour faces a drubbing

JOHN WESTMORELAND

The chickens are coming home to roost for Starmer and the Blairite zombies running Labour.

He promised change from the Tories, but workers across Britain are still waiting to see a change that benefits them. The polls are telling us that Labour is going to take a beating in May and the beneficiaries look to be Reform and the Greens.

Reform is the frontrunner in the polls and they dominate the voting intentions of supervisory workers, skilled and unskilled workers. But the Greens have also benefited from Labour's right-wing government. After Zack Polanski spoke at the NEU conference, promising an end to the marketisation of education, the union leadership says that voting intentions among educators have moved away from Labour to the Green Party.

No doubt the trend among teachers towards the Greens is going to be replicated in other unions, but that's not the whole story. A TUC report in February warned that significant numbers of trade-union members intend to vote for Farage's outfit.

The TUC general secretary has pointed to where Labour is going wrong, saying that if Labour did more for workers' rights and standard of living, the polls would take care of themselves. The problem is that Labour has systematically set about breaking the organic link that used to exist between the working class and the party.

The British working class is feeling the effects of the crisis that capitalism is in. Reform and the Greens both talk in terms of heading off a national crisis that is hitting workers, and this gives their campaigning the energy and passion of which Labour is devoid.

Of course, we want to see the Greens suck up the anti-Labour feeling and cut into Reform at the same time, as was the

case in the Gorton and Denton by-election, but the Greens are not a party rooted in the trade unions and the working class. And this is important.

Zack Polanski is a brilliant speaker and handles the media well, but he is careful to never present his policies as an assault on the capitalist class. He talks about leaving Nato, sometime in the future, but wants to maintain arms spending. He talks about social justice, but doesn't back workers using their collective strength to increase their share of the wealth they create.

And, here is the problem for the Greens; they say they want radical change but are not connected to the only force that can bring that change: the working class.

The May elections will not offer the working class a socialist alternative to the main parties. Your Party is not standing candidates and instead will urge its members to support progressive independents. This abstention by YP will probably drive more of its members to the Greens or inactivity.

The political landscape is bleak for those wanting socialist change, but elections are not the same as real struggle between the forces of capital and labour. Electoral rhetoric echoes the struggle but voting will not resolve it.

On most of the issues dear to the left, the working class is on our side. Peace, workers' rights, defending health and education, taxing the rich and freezing rents

are revealed by the pollsters as being the most important demands for workers. Of course, there are some issues that favour the right strongly, such as immigration, but we can tackle that if we are fighting on the other class issues.

In the run-up to the elections, the left has plenty to do that will build up hope for the future. There is the NEU's Save Education campaign that connects to every issue facing the working class, and parents are urged to get on board with it.

There is also the importance of building for the Nakba demo on 16 May and showing that international solidarity with Palestine and opposition to racism are crucial working-class issues.

THE 1916 EASTER RISING AGAINST EMPIRE

PETE WEBSTER

110 years ago this month, in the midst of a world war, Irish freedom fighters launched an insurrection to throw off the yoke of British imperialism.

On 24 April 1916, Patrick Pearse, commander of the Irish Volunteers, stood on the steps of the General Post Office (GPO) in Dublin and read out a proclamation of Irish independence from British rule. Hours before, the building had been seized by a combined action of the Irish Republican Brotherhood's Volunteers and the Irish Citizens Army founded by the revolutionary socialist James Connolly.

The armed uprising did not materialise out of nowhere but stood at the head of centuries of struggle against British domination over the island.

It's worth remembering that this call for a war of liberation from Britain came at a time when the whole of Ireland was under the rule of British and wealthy

Irish landowners and industrialists, and was governed from Westminster. This was also in the middle of an imperialist world war that expected dominion countries, like Ireland, to provide the cannon fodder to defend the Empire.

The insurrection was to last just six days before Pearse and the remaining combatants were forced to agree an unconditional surrender. After the seizure of the GPO, the British brought in thousands of troops with machine guns, heavy artillery and even a gunboat on the Liffey. The GPO and surrounding streets were gradually reduced to rubble under the bombardment. Some 2,000 Volunteers, Citizens Army members and civilians lost their lives in the battle with many more injured.

Following the surrender, martial law was imposed and, in the reaction that followed, some 3,500 were detained with nearly 2,000 receiving custodial sentences and sent to prisons in Britain. The leaders captured at the GPO were tried

by court martial with 16 receiving the death penalty, including Connolly. He had been injured in the fighting and was unable to walk due to his wounds turning gangrenous. One of the last to be executed, he was taken on a stretcher to the prison courtyard, tied to a chair and shot to death by a British firing squad.

Despite the repression, the British failed to break the resistance of the Irish. In the 1918 election, Sinn Fein went to the polls with the slogan 'Vote Sinn Fein and show the world Ireland is not a part of England'; they swept the board.

In 1919, the War of Independence broke out that saw the island partitioned two years later as a compromise settlement with the nine traditional counties of Ulster being reduced to six under British rule to ensure a Protestant and loyalist enclave.

So long as partition remains, there will always be a struggle for a united Ireland by those who see that Britain is part of the problem, not the solution.

EDITORIAL



TOMMY ROBINSON'S DEMONSTRATION, SEPTEMBER 2025. PHOTO: STEVE EASON / CC BY-NC 2.0

WE CAN STOP THEM

COUNTERFIRE

Saturday 16 May will be the next big test for the movements in solidarity with Palestine and against fascism.

Outrageously, the Metropolitan Police have given Tommy Robinson the heart of central London – the Strand, Trafalgar Square, Whitehall and Parliament Square – for his ‘Unite the Kingdom, Unite the West’ march.

This is despite the Palestine coalition applying for a route in central London for the annual demonstration commemorating the Nakba back in December. A demonstration with added significance in 2026 given the continuing genocide in Gaza, the pogroms against Palestinians in the West Bank, Israel’s new death penalty for Palestinian prisoners, and Israel’s occupation and ethnic cleansing of the south of Lebanon.

The Met’s decision exposes the real nature of two-tier policing . It shows a deliberate strategy by the state to use fascists to try break the Palestine movement.

It wouldn’t be the first time. In November 2023, then Home Secretary Suella Braverman directly mobilised fascists to confront the Palestine demonstration. There is a direct line to be drawn from that day as the first serious fascist mobilisation for some time through to the Southport riots, protests outside hotels housing asylum seekers and culminating in 200,000 at Tommy Robinson’s demonstration in September.

That demonstration featured calls for violence against Muslims, migrants and the left, a Palestine flag ripped up on the stage,

people sieg-heiling and both anti-racists and the police violently assaulted.

Fascist organising and the state’s demonisation of Muslims and refugees has led to an exponential rise in Islamophobic hate crimes in the last year with at least 30 mosques attacked, two Sikh women raped in the West Midlands and a Muslim woman rammed with a car in south east London to name a few.

Where Palestine demonstrations face arbitrary restrictions from the route to length of the rally to whether megaphones, pots or pans can be used, the far right – with a proven track record of serious violence – are given free rein.

If allowed as planned, Tommy Robinson’s demonstration will be assembling in the same proximity to two mosques as synagogues are to Park Lane and the Israeli embassy which have been given as

reasons to stop Palestine marches assembling in those areas.

This is even though there isn’t a shred of evidence that any of our over 30 Palestine

National demonstrations have been a threat to Jewish people – thousands of whom have been a part of every demonstration.

Meanwhile, Danny Tommo, right-hand man of Tommy Robinson, posted a video saying ‘We are not coming to wave flags... We know what needs to be done... So make no mistake - on 16th of May, things change.’

When Stop the War’s John Rees described the Met’s decision as ‘the state and centre aid[ing] the fascists’, Tommy Robinson responded, ‘That’s correct , London is ours on may 16th [sic]’.

There can be no question that fascists will be further emboldened to terrorise Muslims if they have uncontested control of London streets on 16 May.

The state is playing a dangerous game



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INTERVIEW

'Europe is gearing up for war'



Michael Lavalette spoke with Felix Kreklow Rojas, a school student who is playing a key role in Germany's growing anti-conscription movement

Could you start by telling us a little about yourself and your political background?

My name is Felix Kreklow Rojas. I'm nineteen and I am deputy chairperson of the JSW in Aachen, in Western Germany near the border with Belgium.

The JSW is the youth wing of the BSW (the Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht - Vernunft und Gerechtigkeit, which translates as the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance - reason and justice). The BSW originated in a split from Die Linke in January 2024.

I became politicised around the age of fourteen when I joined the SPD (the German equivalent of the Labour Party).

There were key experiences in my life which drew me to politics. My mother is a single parent and we faced financial worries, issues around housing and around her working hours. My father, who is from Columbia, was homeless for a while and had to live on a camp site. The combination of these experiences made me very critical of German society and of capitalism.

But I quickly became disillusioned with the SPD, especially their support for the Ukrainian war and the consequences of that support on working-class people through increased costs and inflation.

When Sarah Wagenknecht left Die Linke, I decided to join the BSW and got involved in their youth wing. Recently I've been involved in the anti-conscription campaign and I have been involved in calling demonstrations against Trump's attacks on Venezuela and Cuba.

For me, the link between all these campaigns, and the key value that shapes my politics is 'social justice' and the fight against social inequality.



FELIX KREKLOW ROJAS SPEAKING AT AN ANTI-CONSCRIPTION PROTEST

How did the campaign against conscription start and what actions has it taken?

The campaign was launched by the youth organisation of the Communist Party, but it involves all parties of the left and young people who are not in parties. In June last year, a national planning meeting was called and, from there, the movement rolled out in quite a decentralised way. There isn't a central coordinating body, only national days of action are coordinated. But it's up to local groups what actions they take and how they organise.

Centrally important, however, have been school strikes against conscription. In the last round of strikes, around 55,000 students took part in the actions from right across Germany.

Again, these have been led by school students, not by outside bodies or organisations. The strikes have been different in different schools. Some places it's just a strike, or a demonstration or meeting at the school,

but in other places we have held marches and rallies.

One thing with the marches and demonstrations is that, in Germany, you have to be eighteen before you can officially organise a demonstration and you have to register it with the police. So older students, like me, have taken on that organising role and in Aachen we have had city-centre demonstrations.

Why do you think the state is pushing conscription?

In Germany, the state, politicians and media are all pushing a narrative that we need to arm and be prepared to confront Russia. Russia is constantly portrayed as a threat.

In contrast, Germany is portrayed as a bastion of freedom and democracy and rearmament is necessary, we are told, to protect ourselves and to be part of a 'strong, assertive Europe'.

But Germany isn't neutral with regard to Ukraine. Germany already sends vast amounts of

arms to Ukraine, and, in my opinion, there are some amongst our rulers who want to be able to send troops into Ukraine to confront Russia.

Even Green Party politicians are suggesting that we are already in 'a war against Russia', they support intervention into Ukraine like the other mainstream parties.

As Germany moves in this interventionist direction, conscription becomes a key part of the picture. It provides the troops, but it also sends a message that the increased militarisation of society is necessary.

In this way, rearmament, increased military spending and conscription are all being pushed as part of the European-wide arms race.

And you know, it's not just conscription, there are other aspects to this.

For example, if you sign up for four years (not just the one-year conscription), the army promises to pay for your driving lessons and driving licence. Now this might not be an incentive to

those from affluent backgrounds, but for those from poorer backgrounds, it is a 'carrot' that is being dangled in front of people. The average cost of driving lessons and the driving test is around 4,000 Euro, so for those from poorer backgrounds, it is an enticement to sign up for longer.

And now, from the start of April this year, any male citizen between the ages of seventeen and 45, who wants to travel abroad for more than three months, must get the permission of the German Armed Forces. This is an incredible attack on our civil liberties, our freedom of movement, but it stresses how much the German state is moving to a war footing.

What is driving the new militarism and what do you think we need to do across Europe?

The biggest drivers of the new militarism are the politicians, the media and the companies (the military-industrial complex) who benefit from the arms race.

This is happening across Europe and all the countries of Europe are increasing their military spending and gearing up for war. It's very, very dangerous.

That's why I think the International Anti-War conference on 20 June in London is so important. It will bring people together from across the continent and we can listen to each other, learn from each other and, I hope, start to coordinate actions and demonstrations across Europe against the new militarism.

It's a wonderful opportunity for us all.

I hope there will be lots of people from Britain, across Europe and beyond all there and all calling for peace, not war!

More details on the 20 June International Anti-War conference in London on page 4



SATELLITE IMAGE OF THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ

‘Shock and war’: the looming crash

DOMINIC ALEXANDER

It is anyone’s guess just how bad the economic fallout from the criminal war on Iran will be.

The wild, and sometimes suspicious, gyrations of the markets, and the price of oil and gas, with every new tweet from the lunatic-in-chief, does not help bring any clarity to the situation. What we do know is that inflation in the Euro area has already jumped 2.5% in March. In the UK, energy and other bills like council tax were already going to rise in April, and now food inflation alone is predicted to reach 9% at the least.

The measures the government is claiming will address the situation, such as the rise in the minimum wage and pensions, will be more than wiped out by those other rises. The cost-of-living crisis, which never went away, will be punishing working people still further.

The damage is already sufficient that recession is probably on its way. Of course, with every day the Strait of Hormuz remains blocked, the likely severity of this escalates. The knock-on effects are feeding through to decisions made about investment, most alarmingly by farmers, which means worldwide food prices will rise regardless of

how much longer supply, of fertiliser as well as oil, remains disrupted.

At best, we face a period of stagflation, but this could turn into a major downturn, accompanied by severe inflation, ‘slumpflation’. Oil-refining capacity in the Gulf may already have been damaged such that it could take years to return to full pre-war capacity. Given the parlous state of the world economy, with fears of an AI bubble bursting, or of a crash induced by problems in the private-credit markets, it is fair to say the outlook is deeply alarming.

In this situation, what we need is major government intervention to protect both people and production, and food supply in particular. What we’re getting are anaemic energy-price controls which won’t kick in until the autumn and repeated insistences from both Reeves and Starmer that the best way to bring down prices is to achieve de-escalation in the Gulf. Short of our government, along with the rest of Europe, adopting the Spanish response against this war, these statements are just deflections designed to absolve the government of blame.

The Tory response is to demand more drilling in the North Sea, despite the fact that since the oil and gas would be in private hands, and would therefore

be sold on the open market, this would do absolutely nothing to bring down prices for households. Either the Conservative leadership is monumentally stupid, or they assume we won’t notice the problem. All this dissimulation from the major parties is designed to occlude the real decision, which was made long ago, that governments should not interfere with profit-making, except to subsidise and protect it.

Our bills and transport are expensive because utilities, buses and trains have been privatised, and these services, where they are working at all, are failing due to the profits that have been squeezed out of them. They all need to be renationalised without delay, so that essential services are provided throughout the next crisis, which shall assuredly come, probably soon.

Our food costs are going to rise, because governments have made no serious interventions into protecting and planning food production, which is what urgently needs to happen now. The massive rise in military spending must be halted; the money is needed elsewhere. A Spanish-stye rent freeze would be useful too. The so-called ‘free market’ has comprehensively failed and we need an economy that is planned for the benefit of people rather than profit.



STOP BOMBING IRAN DEMONSTRATION, LONDON, 21 MARCH. PHOTO: STEVE EASON / CC BY-NC 2.0

THREE KINDS OF ANTI-IMPERIALISM

John Rees

Across a generation of warfare, from Afghanistan to Iran, there have been three basic positions repeatedly articulated on the left in regard to imperialism.

The first and most widespread view is that the actions of the imperialist powers can be justified by reference to the nature of the regimes under attack. In this framework, support should be given to wars against regimes, like those of the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein in Iraq, that are authoritarian, undemocratic, exploitative, and oppressive.

This view became widely argued because it was part of the establishment case for war in Afghanistan and Iraq in 2002-3, although the modern root of this so-called ‘humanitarian imperialism’ lay

in justifications for the 1999 NATO war in the Balkans, the first of the post-Cold-War Western interventions. It was especially deployed by Tony Blair’s Labour government, and he and his wife Cherie Blair, developed the ‘feminist imperialist’ argument that the war and occupation of Afghanistan was to ‘liberate Afghan women’.

Donald Trump’s more brutal ‘might is right’ iteration of imperial ideology has dispensed with such niceties. So, the ‘humanitarian’ argument now is confined to those corners of the left where it took root in the Blair era. The left variety of this argument is often couched as solidarity with workers or oppressed peoples within the countries targeted by the imperial powers.

The problem with this approach is not that it is mistaken about the undemocratic or authoritarian nature of regimes like those in Iraq, Libya, or Iran. The problem is with the idea that the Western states are in any way an appropriate agency to achieve liberation.

In fact, Western regimes have no interest in promoting democracy, and indeed have often been mainstays of support for the very same regimes, like Saddam’s Iraq or Gaddafi’s Libya, before they became perceived as an obstacle to Western interests. Moreover, the Western powers are very happy to give endless support to dictatorial but pro-Western states, like the Gulf autocratic kingdoms.

In short, left ‘humanitarian imperialism’

is essentially a colonial mindset that believes that ‘we’ (that is, the imperial states and their left cheerleaders) can liberate oppressed people, rather than liberation being fundamentally the result of the struggles of the oppressed themselves. And it confuses the solidarity that is due to such struggles with support for the imperial projects of the Western governments.

The second mistaken form of anti-imperialism commits an equal but opposite error. This approach excuses undemocratic and oppressive regimes because they are attacked by imperialism. It assumes that the internally repressive nature of a state should be ignored or justified simply as a result of being targeted by the imperial powers.

In doing so, it obliterates the class struggle and other democratic and liberatory struggles within the states targeted by the West. It assumes that the interests of the state and the ruling class in those nations targeted by imperialism are identical. So, for example, because China is the subject of Western hostility, its internally repressive nature is excused and, for instance, its repression of Uyghur Muslims is minimised or brushed aside.

This approach denies the class character of those states and gives their nationalist ruling classes a ‘communist colouration’ in exactly the way Lenin warned revolutionaries not to do. It refuses to recognise either the exploitation and oppression of the working class in those nations or the compromises their ruling classes always make with imperialism.

There is a third alternative, a principled anti-imperialist approach which is far more effective than either of these flawed perspectives.

While not ignoring the importance of resistance in those countries faced with imperialist aggression, this third approach neither denies or minimises the undemocratic or repressive nature of states where this is an obvious fact of life, as it is in Iran. Opposition to the wars and occupations launched by the imperial powers does not require an uncritical attitude to the regimes under attack.

What is required is the view that only the working class and the people of the country have the right to change their society and that this project can only be damaged by the wars launched by the Western powers. Moreover, suggesting that the Western governments can assist this process as, for instance, Iranian monarchists are currently doing, can only help burnish the reputation of the imperial governments and so weaken the ability of trade unions and social movements in the imperial centres to challenge their ruling classes.

So this third view is that, in imperialist countries, the main enemy is at home and the main task is to oppose our own ruling class. But this does not mean pretending that in the states that are subject to imperialist attack, there is no class struggle between the exploited and the exploiters (including the exploiters’ state machine). The rulers in these countries are not the friends of the workers, even if they are the enemies of the imperialists, with whom they often compromise and whom they fight ineffectively precisely because they need to continue to fight their own population.

We can both make our priority the attack on our own imperialists without forgetting that the class struggle exists in those countries that are attacked by imperialism. In that struggle, we are with the exploited against their state machine while we give no ground to our imperialists who seek hypocritically to justify their actions by reference to the plight of the oppressed elsewhere. We fully recognise that every imperialist is in favour of liberation in their enemies’ backyard, but never in their own house.

THE CONDITION OF THE WORKING CLASS



by **Terina Hine**

In a grotesque repeat of its history, the German car manufacturer Volkswagen is reported to be returning to its dark roots, once again moving from civilian car production to military manufacturing. This time around, rather than producing hardware for the Nazis, it's planning to get into bed with another state committing a genocide, with plans to go into business with the Israeli state-owned weapons manufacturer,

Rafael Advanced Defence Systems.

The famous German car company was established in 1937 to produce the 'people's car', but shortly after, with the outbreak of World War II, production moved from civilian vehicles to arms for Hitler's war effort. In the process, the company used more than 15,000 slave labourers, housing four concentration camps and eight forced-labour camps. In 1944, one of its engineers travelled to Auschwitz to select Jewish metal workers personally.

After the war, VW was saved from being dismantled and was run by the British occupying force, producing cars for allied personnel. In 1949, the company was returned to German ownership. It became famous for its Beetle car and the VW Camper Van. By 2024, it was ranked the world's second-largest car maker by sales. Last year, it was the largest car manufacturer in Europe, with the best-selling electric-car brand and almost a third of the European market share.

Yet thanks to Trump's tariffs and competition from China, VW share prices have fallen dramatically, and though it still made a net profit of €7 billion last year, neither this nor its lead position among European car makers prevented the plant at Osnabrück being threatened with closure.

So VW is attempting to transition its Osnabrück site to military production and embrace Germany's growing defence industry, with the full support of the German government. This move is the second attempt at diversifying to military production in just a few months. In 2025, VW tried to sell Osnabrück to the German defence company Rheinmetall, but the deal fell through. Now they have made moves, which if successful, will see the plant produce Iron Dome parts, missile launchers, heavy-duty trucks to transport missiles, and electricity generators.

German military manufacturing is booming, the country plans to spend more than €500 billion on defence by the end of the decade and more and more companies

are expected to pivot towards the defence sector. The country already hosts one Raphael plant, and VW is already involved in producing military trucks alongside its subsidiary MAN and Rheinmetall. But this deal would be a significant shift change.

The deal between VW and Raphael reflects a changing economic model being pursued across Europe. The mass militarisation of the continent will accelerate the move from cars to weapons. In January, French car manufacturer Renault announced it would be producing drones for Ukraine and France. But, as evidenced by the Alternative Defence Review, such military investment will do little to help floundering European economies. Military spending has one of the lowest 'employment multipliers' of all economic activity, while profits from arms manufacturing almost entirely remain with the arms manufacturer.

The militarisation of European economies should concern us all. It creates a permanent pressure for war, creating an ever more dangerous world. Germany, along with other European countries, is investing heavily in the arms industry while simultaneously cutting social and welfare programmes.

Over the Easter weekend, peace activists organised protests against the militarisation of the Osnabrück plant. Stephan Krull, a former employee commented that with its Nazi past, VW has a historical responsibility to not produce arms, while other locals say the move to military production would be a betrayal of the town's heritage as a city of peace.

It took VW a generation to recover its brand image following World War II. Today, few who fall in love with the Beetle or explore the open road in an iconic VW Camper remember the company's dark Nazi past. To make a deal with the Israeli state military would be the second time in its history VW was servicing a genocidal state.

Dark days indeed.

ISRAEL'S 'GAZA PLAYBOOK' IN LEBANON

ZAHID RAHMAN

Following the start of the US-Israeli war on Iran, hostilities between Hezbollah in Lebanon and Israel have resumed. Israel has launched a ground assault into southern Lebanon, claiming to be creating a buffer zone.

Meanwhile, Israeli ministers are openly saying they are annexing Lebanese territory. Bridges across the Litani river have been struck by the IDF, UNFIL peacekeepers have been killed, and over a million Lebanese (over a fifth of the country's population) have been displaced.

Annexationist ambition in southern Lebanon isn't a phenomenon that is new to Zionism, in fact it's older than the state of Israel itself. Zionist lobbying groups pushed to extend Palestine's territory up to the Litani river during the British mandate. In 1956 as Britain, France and Israel planned a joint war on Egypt, Israel's prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, lobbied to annex southern Lebanon once more.

In 1978, amid the Lebanese Civil War, Israel invaded southern Lebanon and four years later extended its invasion as far north as Beirut, besieging the Arab capital for two months. Thousands of civilians died during the siege due to indiscriminate Israeli air strikes, shelling and car bombs. Three thousand Palestinian refugees in Sabra and Shatila were massacred by Israeli-allied Phalange militias.

The years of occupation led to the creation of Hezbollah, launched to drive the Israelis out, which they eventually did in 2000. When Israel invaded again in 2006, they were successfully repelled by Hezbollah which drove up its support in the country and region.

Israel's year-long war against Lebanon in 2024, its war-crime pager attacks and assassination of Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah, deteriorated the group, but the present conflict has shown that it is far from eradicated.

Israel has tried to ignite a new civil war in Lebanon by pressuring the Lebanese government to militarily confront Hezbollah. In its current campaign, Israeli forces are ethnically cleansing the country's Shia population. Shia villages have been razed to the ground, Christian villages and hotels that provide shelter to Shia refugees have been bombed. Israel is reportedly in talks with Ahmed al-Sharaa about Syria invading Lebanon in collaboration with Israel.

Israel has said in clear terms that it is using the 'Gaza playbook' in Lebanon. A declaration of genocidal intent, and plans for permanent occupation.

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

MORGAN DANIELS

1649

1st: A small group of 'Diggers' led by Gerrard Winstanley occupies St. George's Hill, Watton, Surrey

1870

22nd: Vladimir Lenin born in Simbirsk, Russian Empire

1958

4th: The first major Aldermaston march sets off from Trafalgar Square, arriving four days later at the Atomic Weapons Establishment

1963

30th: A boycott begins of buses run by the Bristol Omnibus Company in protest at the operator's refusal to employ black people

1977

23rd: The Battle of Wood Green: three thousand anti-fascists confront and partly drive away a National Front march outside Turnpike Lane Station

MARXISM 101



FASCISM: WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO STOP IT



by **Alex Snowden**

In defining fascism, it is important to identify what fascism is – but also what it isn't. Fascism is, after all, one of the most over-used words in the political lexicon.

Fascism is a particular type of political order in capitalist society. It is a form of capitalist class rule that dispenses with formal democracy in favour of extreme authoritarianism. This includes things like banning trade unions, removing parliamentary democracy and severely curtailing freedoms.

This does not, however, mean that all authoritarian regimes or dictatorships have been fascist. A fascist political order represents a successful counter-revolution against the working class. It is a response to mass working class struggle and inevitably entails violence against workers and their organisations.

It also necessarily involves a break from liberal, democratic forms of capitalist rule by at least sections of the capitalist state and the ruling class.

Fascism is likely to become a serious threat in conditions of acute capitalist crisis as the old, stable forms of rule are under pressure. Some capitalists turn to fascism, out of desperation, as a means of restoring

stable capitalist rule and smashing working class resistance.

Fascism is therefore a product of acute class struggle and reflects defeat for the working class. But it does not primarily have its base in the capitalist ruling class itself. Its main social base is in the middle class, caught between the two great antagonistic classes (ruling class vs working class).

The middle class provides the party activists and the street fighters for a fascist movement. In an economic crisis, much of the middle class feels insecure and squeezed. Yet it cannot look to collective action by workers – and workers' organisations like trade unions – to provide a counterweight. Nor does it see any salvation in conventional ruling class politics.

Such a movement will involve mobilising beyond electoral politics, seeking to intimidate socialists, trade unionists and racial minorities on the streets. However, this movement – to attain high office – also requires the collusion of parts of the ruling class when it can no longer confidently govern in the old ways.

Ideologically, fascist parties and movements aspire to make such a political order a reality. Fascist ideology includes elements of opposition to democracy and freedom, but these are unlikely to be popular in isolation. Fascist ideology leans heavily on racism and nationalism.

This was evident in the most important fascist movement in history: Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party, which combined antisemitism and nostalgic German nationalism with the economic grievances of middle class Germans in particular. The Holocaust was

the ultimate expression of antisemitism fused with Nazi Germany's imperialist expansion across Europe.

The Nazis' antisemitism had a powerful appeal for middle class Germans in an era of economic Depression. Hitler blamed Jewish bankers and Jewish Bolsheviks alike for social problems and falling living standards, channelling resentments towards both the rich and the working class. This was, though, in the service of a political project that attacked Jews and workers while protecting German capitalism.

Leon Trotsky, writing in the early 1930s, viewed the Nazis as an expression of 'counter revolutionary despair' by the middle class. This echoed the rise of Benito Mussolini's fascists in Italy in the early 1920s. Mussolini's movement had been fuelled by hatred of the workers' revolts of the 'biennio rosso' – the two red years, 1919 and 1920 – and was emboldened by the defeat of that upsurge.

Trotsky's analysis was very astute. Equally importantly, he outlined a strategy for stopping fascism. In the early 1930s he repeatedly warned of the Nazi threat in

Germany and called for a united front of workers' organisations to block it.

This would mean cooperation between the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party – both genuine mass working class parties – and also the trade unions. It was not primarily an electoral pact, but the basis for united mobilisations on the streets, in workplaces and in communities.

Such a strategy went directly against the Stalinist orthodoxy emanating from Moscow and was therefore not taken up by Germany's Communists. Trotsky did not have the political forces to turn this united front concept into a living reality.

The result of these monumental mistakes by Germany's workers' movement was the most catastrophic defeat for the working class in history. If 1917 was history's peak for the working class, 1933 was its nadir.

When assessing fascism and its potential today, the analysis pioneered by Trotsky provides an invaluable starting point. His grasp of the strategic necessity of the united front also retains its relevance.

The new journal revitalising the revolutionary tradition



We face a fast-unfolding series of interlocking crises that pose both a great challenge and a significant opportunity for the Left.

The Marxist Review is Counterfire's attempt to respond to the big questions posed by contemporary capitalism and will seek to develop a strand of Marxist thought that remains rooted in working-class struggle.



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WHAT WE STAND FOR

Counterfire is a revolutionary socialist organisation that has been central to the Palestine, anti-war and anti-austerity movements over the last two decades. We are committed to transforming our society from one based on the profit motive to one built on the needs of working people.

Real change can only be achieved by working-class people organising themselves to challenge their bosses and the government that stands behind the bosses. It depends on mass movements, popular protests, and on workers taking action. We believe that this kind of popular opposition requires a dynamic extra-parliamentary left, rooted in workplaces, communities, and colleges.

We also believe that all the struggles against oppression are connected. Racism, sexism, and every other form of oppression and discrimination are a product of a society based on the exploitation of working people by a tiny minority of capitalists. War, climate change, and inequality are all symptoms of a chaotic system based on market competition.

In the process of helping to build every kind of resistance to capitalism, we bring to bear the lessons of the past and a Marxist analysis of the present. Counterfire puts the case for a revolutionary socialism that ultimately seeks popular control of society and genuine liberation for all.

Our members are actively involved in the protest movements and workers' struggles around the country, organising and supporting protests and picket lines. We have Counterfire branches across the country helping to build solidarity with struggles locally and nationally, and popularise socialist ideas and analysis.

As well as putting on a wide range of debates, public meetings and other events around the country, we run one of the best-read websites on the left which has scores of contributors and tens of thousands of readers every month and we distribute thousands of copies of the left's first free paper – which has now expanded to 12 pages.

Join us and get involved today.

COUNTERFIRE & MOVEMENT EVENTS

Counterfire organises regular national and local public meetings discussing key topics of the moment. Our events are open to all, and listed below along with key movement dates for your diary. See counterfire.org/events for updates.

LAKENHEATH

[Lakenheath Alliance for Peace] **International Peace Camp**

1 - 6 April
RAF Lakenheath, see lakenheathallianceforpeace.org.uk for updates

BIRMINGHAM (ONLINE)

[Stop the War] **Stop the War on Iran, Defend the Right to Protest**

Tuesday 7 April, 7pm
Register on Zoom:
bit.ly/4bPC2CV

BATH

[Counterfire] **War on Iran: why has the west set fire to the Middle East?**

Thursday 9 April
The Grapes Pub, 14 Westgate Street, BA1 1EQ

GLASGOW

[Stop the War] **Break with Trump Scotland national demo**

Saturday 11 April, 11am
McLennan Arch, Glasgow

LONDON

[Counterfire] **Revolution! weekender: Resisting Trump's new world disorder**
Saturday 11 - Sunday 12 April
SOAS University, Thornhaugh Street, WC1H 0XG

NATIONAL (ONLINE)

[Counterfire Students] **Sudan: the ongoing crisis**
Wednesday 15 April, 7pm
Register on Zoom:
counterfire.org/events

BRIGHTON AND HOVE

[Stop the War] **Stop Starmer's militarism, Stop Trump's wars**

Thursday 16 April, 7pm
Brighelm Centre, North Road, Brighton, BN1 1YD

MERSEYSIDE (ONLINE)

[Merseyside trade unions] **Stop the War meeting**

Thursday 16 April, 6:30pm
Register on Zoom:
bit.ly/41O6nMa

CANTERBURY

[Stop the War] **Hands off Iran, Cuba, Venezuela, Palestine, Lebanon**

Thursday 16 April, 7pm
Friends Meeting House,
6 The Friars, CT1 2AS

LONDON

[Housing campaigns] **National Housing Demo**
Saturday 18 April, 1pm
Central London, see housingdemo.org for updates

MANCHESTER

[Counterfire] **Counterfilms: I'm Not Your Negro film screening**

Sunday 19 April, 7pm
The Peer Hat, 14-16 Faraday Street, M1 1BE

NEWCASTLE

[Counterfire] **War on Iran: why has the west set fire to the Middle East?**

Tuesday 21 April, 7pm
Tyneside Irish Centre,
43 Gallowgate Street,
Newcastle upon Tyne,
NE1 4SG

DEVON & CORNWALL (ONLINE)

[Counterfire] **War on Iran: why has the west set fire to the Middle East?**

Tuesday 21 April, 7pm
Register on Zoom:
bit.ly/4e7XhRM

IPSWICH

[Together Alliance] **Launch meeting**

Wednesday 22 April, 6:30pm
Friends Meeting House, 39
Fonnereau Rd, IP1 3JH

HARINGEY

[Counterfire] **Confronting conspiracy theories**

Tuesday 28 April, 6:30pm
All Good Bookshop,
35 Turnpike Lane, London,
N8 0EP

EAST LONDON

[Counterfire] **War, fascism, economic crisis: Why you should be a socialist**

Tuesday 28 April, 7pm
The People's Letters,
395 Cambridge Heath Road,
London, E2 9RA

GREENWICH & WOOLWICH

[Counterfire] **Zionism and imperialism: Why the British state backs genocide**

Tuesday 28 April, 7pm
Stage 19 Property (opposite
Lidl), Macbean Street,
London, SE18 6LW

NATIONAL

[Palestine coalition] **Workplace Day of Action for Palestine**

Thursday 14 May
Workplaces nationally

LONDON

[Palestine coalition] **Nakba Day national demonstration**
Saturday 16 May, 12pm
Central London, follow
[@stwuk](https://twitter.com/stwuk) for updates

DUNFERMLINE

[Counterfire] **War on Iran: why has the west set fire to the Middle East?**

Tuesday 26 May, 7pm
Del Farquharson Centre,
Nethertown Broad Street,
KY12 7DS

LONDON

[Stop the War] **International conference against war**

Saturday 20 June
Central Hall Westminster,
Storey's Gate, SW1H 9NH

LOCAL GROUPS

Counterfire has local branches across the country building the movements of resistance and popularising socialist ideas by organising public meetings, local activity and distributing our free newspaper.

To find out more about a branch near you or to help set one up where you are, please contact the national office.

NATIONAL OFFICE

info@counterfire.org
07807 123472

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ART & CULTURE



PRINCESSES SOPHIA, BAMBA AND CATHERINE, BUCKINGHAM PALACE, 1895. PHOTO: HENRY VAN DER WEYDE / PUBLIC DOMAIN



SOPHIA DULEEP SINGH SELLING THE SUFFRAGETTE OUTSIDE HAMPTON COURT PALACE. PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN

THE LAST PRINCESSES OF PUNJAB EXHIBITION

Aristocratic rebels and the workings of empire

KATHERINE CONNELLY

Most readers of this newspaper are probably not frequent attenders of Britain's palaces and their exhibitions celebrating the extreme wealth and privilege of the royal family, with whom we are unfortunately still lumbered. This exhibition at Kensington Palace, however, attempts something different, revealing through personal stories how sex, class and resistance were shaped by Britain's plunder of India: the 'jewel' in its imperial crown.

'The Last Princesses of Punjab' tells the story of Britain's imperial relationship with India through the fraught interconnections between six regal women. First, we encounter the Maharani Jind Kaur, who fought the efforts of Britain's East India Company to seize the Sikh Empire's territory in Punjab after the death of her husband, Ranjit Singh.

Punjab was seized by Queen Victoria, later to proclaim herself 'Empress of India', along with the Koh-i-Noor diamond which, appallingly, remains in the British monarchy's possession. Along with Kaur's jewellery, some of which is displayed in the exhibit, the British also took her son, the Maharaja Duleep Singh, who was patronised as a sort of exotic court

pet by Queen Victoria. The scars from this strange predicament later revealed themselves as he spiralled into self-destruction and attempted to regain his kingdom. His unhappy marriage to Bamba Müller, the daughter of a German father and Ethiopian mother brought up in Cairo, and the third woman in this story, resulted in six children. Their three daughters, Bamba, Catherine and Sophia – the last princesses of Punjab – were all aristocrats and rebels.

Bamba and Catherine pursued higher education, at a time when this was extremely unusual for women. Catherine further defied political and social expectations by joining the suffragists and living with her female partner Lina Schäfer. Resident in Germany until Schäfer's death,

Catherine helped Jews to flee the Nazis, and there is moving testimony from their descendants in the exhibit.

Meanwhile, Sophia, goddaughter of Queen Victoria, joined the militant suffragettes and though she was never imprisoned, almost certainly because of her social status, the exhibit contains an array of artefacts from her part in the struggle, including the protest she wrote on her Census form and the photograph of her selling the Suffragette newspaper with the headline 'Revolution' outside her home in Hampton Court Palace!

The exhibition states that the Singh sisters were not anti-imperialists and during World War One, in which over a million Indians fought, Sophia worked as a nurse

for Indian troops. Yet, when the sisters visited India in 1903, they were appalled by the poverty they witnessed under colonial rule, and they mixed with nationalist figureheads. Certainly Bamba's claim to be the 'Queen of Punjab' sat uneasily with Britain's claim upon the territory.

The exhibition addresses some of these contradictions, noting that the sisters were dispossessed by the same empire that sustained their aristocratic lifestyles. We are therefore able to glimpse the high-level, yet intimate, workings of empire: its use of violence, theft and bribery, and ultimately its inability to ever completely suppress resistance.

The exhibition is on at Kensington Palace until 8 November 2026

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MORE WAR, ESCALATING AUTHORITARIANISM, A DEEPENING COST OF LIVING CRISIS - THE LEFT FACES BIG CHALLENGES. BUT RESISTANCE IS ALSO GROWING.

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PHOTO: STEVE EASON / CC BY-NC 2.0

DES FREEDMAN

The right to protest is under attack.

This was dramatically illustrated when two leading organisers of the pro-Palestine movement were found guilty of breaching police restrictions during a mass protest in London on 18 January 2025.

Chris Nineham, vice-chair of Stop the War, and Ben Jamal, director of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, were convicted under the Public Order Act for their roles in a peaceful protest in which a small delegation attempted to lay flowers at the feet of police at the top of Whitehall.

This was a highly political prosecution and an equally political judgement that ran, unusually for a case heard in a magistrate's court, to more than fifty pages.

The Palestine Coalition had originally been given permission to assemble outside the BBC in order to protest against the Corporation's biased reporting on Israel's genocide in Gaza. However, following a campaign coordinated by the Jewish

Leadership Council (JLC), the Metropolitan Police commander Adam Slonecki changed his mind and gave permission only for a static protest on Whitehall.

The JLC repeatedly lobbied Slonecki and argued that the 'cumulative impact' of the pro-Palestine marches was disrupting the right of people to attend a local synagogue. Yet scant evidence was produced that Jewish worshippers were either threatened or prevented from exercising that right.

The judge, who had previously dismissed a case against Tommy Robinson, ignored the defendants' case that the police conditions were illegitimate and unnecessary. Similarly, he rode roughshod over video evidence showing police officers waving through the flower-carrying delegation.

The Met immediately crowed about the verdict, warning future protest organisers 'to understand the importance of cooperating with officers.' Meanwhile, pro-Israel organisations like the Community Security Trust used the verdict as an opportunity to once again repeat the lie that pro-Palestine marches – regularly featuring a large Jewish

bloc – pose a threat to Jewish people.

Outside the Court, Ben Jamal accused the judge of presiding over an obviously unfair trial in which four of its six days were allocated specifically to making the prosecution's case. The verdict was immediately condemned by a range of MPs, trade unionists and civil-society groups with Human Rights Watch describing it as 'a travesty of justice and a huge blow to the right to protest.'

Chris Nineham called the verdict 'grotesque' and argued that it was an obvious attempt to scare people away from protests. His conclusion: 'It is an attempt that will not stop us.'

The stakes could hardly be higher. The police have so far refused the Palestine movement's preferred route for the Nakba demonstration on 16 May, and allowed Tommy Robinson to take over the political centre of London on that day.

The Palestine movement is calling for the biggest possible mobilisation on that day to ensure that the far right cannot stop our movement.

16 May: Nakba Day national demonstration
Central London | Follow @stwuK for updates