

COUNTERFIRE

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Across Europe...

WE SAY

WAGES

NOT

WEAPONS

Saturday 20 June
Central Hall Westminster
London, SW1H 9NH

10am: Pre-conference assembly
1pm: The new era of global war
3:15pm: The drive to war in Europe



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

AGAINST
WAR



NEWS



Henry Nowak: a tragedy exploited by the far right

ZAHID RAHMAN

Right-wing politicians and activists are in uproar over the murder of 18-year old Henry Nowak by Vikrum Digwa. Digwa stabbed Nowak after a dispute, only for the police to ignore Nowak begging for help. While handcuffed, Nowak repeatedly told officers “I can’t breathe” and “I’ve been stabbed” with one replying “Don’t think you have, mate.” Shortly afterwards the teenager died in police custody.

This case has become a political football for the far-right, despite pleas from the victim’s family not to politicise their grief. On Tuesday morning, Farage held an online “address to the nation” where he called for “pure, cold rage.” Suella Braverman weighed in with a tweet saying “White lives matter.” The right is claiming this as an example of ‘two-tier policing’ in which ethnic minorities are privileged.

Such discourse has seeped its way into reporting by the BBC and other mainstream media outlets, where blame for the Nowak case has been attributed to post-MacPherson Inquiry policing guidelines on racial minorities. The leader of the Conservative Party, Kemi Badenoch, claimed that police forces have given themselves to “overcorrection” after BLM-era reforms.

However, this is far from the truth. It is ethnic minorities that have found themselves victims of disproportionate policing. People of ethnic minority backgrounds are more far likely to be stop-and-searched and the Metropolitan police has repeatedly been found to be institutionally racist, misogynist and homophobic, including as recently as 2023. In that same year, senior figures in Police Scotland and the Avon and Somerset Constabulary even admitted their forces were institutionally racist.

Rather, the incident shows an extreme

lack of care and understanding towards the victim, and is symptomatic of the police’s disregard for the lives of working-class people – of whatever ethnicity.

This has not stopped politicians from trying to weaponise a tragedy, and in doing so, are directly mobilising the fascist right. On 2 June, up to 2,000 fascists gathered in front of the Southampton Central Police Station. The demonstrators rioted, with

some photographed giving Nazi salutes. Amongst their numbers included figures like Tommy Robinson, Lawrence Fox and Nick Tenconi (who leads UKIP).

This level of anger reflects a rising disillusionment with the British political establishment. The far-right is attempting to channel this against ethnic minorities, and have seized upon this latest issue to do so. The rise of racialised politics is a

challenge the left must confront, including by standing with the Sikh community, who already face calls to restrict their religious freedoms along with other racist attacks.

It is the role of the left to oppose police brutality and the political class’s racist rhetoric, as well as to organise and confront the fascist threat. The huge Together and Nakba Day demonstrations have shown this is possible.

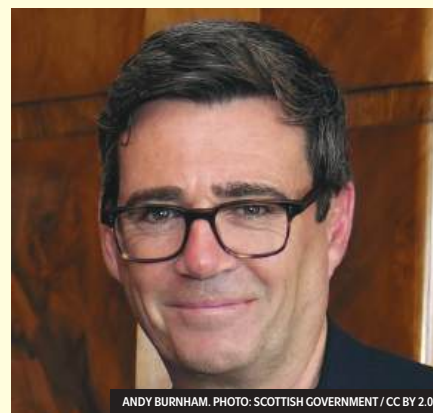
KING OF THE NORTH OR THE GREAT PRETENDER?

STEPH PIKE

Within a few months of the Gorton and Denton by-election, Greater Manchester is once again in the political spotlight with the Makerfield by-election, called to allow Andy Burnham to attempt to return to Westminster, and as he has indicated, to challenge Starmer’s leadership of both the Labour Party and the country.

Burnham is very popular in Greater Manchester and was last elected as Mayor with a huge majority, taking 63% of the vote. His popularity has come from his championing of the Hillsborough campaign, standing up to Boris Johnson and successfully demanding a better deal for Greater Manchester during Covid, his work on homelessness and his criticism of the government’s housing policies.

He also brought buses under public control, creating a unified Bee network across Greater Manchester and capping fares at £2.50. As well as these initiatives, he has created a persona for himself as a down-to-earth man of the people, advocating for the north against the Westminster-centric southern elite. As he has not been an MP for the last few



years, he is not tarnished by the disastrous decisions of Starmer’s government.

Despite this, Burnham’s victory is by no means guaranteed. Although he got 62% of the vote in Makerfield in the 2024 mayoral election, it is far from a safe seat with a majority of just over 5,000. Add to that the fact that in the recent local elections, Reform won all the Makerfield seats up for election with 50.4% of the vote to Labour’s 22.7%. Opinion polls at the moment put Burnham with a narrow 3% lead over Reform.

If Reform win, Burnham is a huge scalp and it will give Farage and his followers a massive surge of confidence.

But can we hope for more from a Burnham government than just defeating Reform (important as that is)? Will Burnham bring radical change that improves the lives of working-class people? The signs aren’t good.

Although there has been some positive impact in his tenure as Mayor, there is much for which he can be criticised; he failed to support the striking transport workers and his ‘Manchesterism’ economics has put lots of money into the pockets of big business. His recent endorsement of Shabana Mahmood’s draconian immigration policies does not bode well.

Even if Burnham had the will to bring in a left-wing agenda, which is highly doubtful, it is likely that the ruling class would move heaven and hell to stop him as they did when they destroyed the Corbyn project.

In recent years, it has been the mass movements on the streets that have pushed back both Tory and Labour austerity, warmongering, scapegoating of migrants and fuelling of the far right. More than pinning hopes on Burnham, it’s these movements that we must build.

EDITORIAL



LEFT TO RIGHT: URSULA VON DER LEYEN, KEIR STARMER, ALEXANDER STUBB, VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYI, DONALD TRUMP, EMMANUEL MACRON, GIORGIA MELONI, FRIEDRICH MERZ, MARK RÜTTE. PHOTO: SIMON DAWSON / NO 10 DOWNING STREET / CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

THE EUROPEAN WAR DRIVE AND HOW TO STOP IT

COUNTERFIRE

European rulers are not trying to hide it: they are openly campaigning for rearmament and war.

Ursula von der Leyen of the European Commission, announcing the ReArm Europe plan last year, said that Europe is ready to ‘massively boost its defence spending’ because ‘Europe must urgently rearm’.

French President Emmanuel Macron has openly advocated a ‘war economy’ and argued that defence production should be expanded on a long-term basis. Poland’s Donald Tusk has supported some of the highest defence spending levels in Nato relative to GDP and has advocated expanded European military capabilities.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz has been one of the strongest advocates of German and European rearmament. In his first major Bundestag speech as chancellor in May 2025, Merz said Germany would build ‘the strongest conventional army in Europe’ and that Germany must do ‘whatever it takes’ on defence. This was widely described as Germany’s largest rearmament

programme since World War II. And Merz insisted Germany must be ‘war-ready’.

Not to be left out, Keir Starmer has repeatedly backed calls from the military for a huge rearmament programme in the UK.

All this marks a decisive shift in great power politics.

The continued decline of the US, now past its zenith as the world’s only superpower, has forced upon it a reordering of imperial priorities. The US will not cease trying to control the globe, but it is now forced to do so through increasingly self-financing proxies.

Israel and the Gulf dictatorships, in that order, are the chosen satraps in the Middle East, and the European states continue in that role in Eurasia.

Of course, Israel has long been a US proxy, and the European states have been bound to the US through Nato since the 1940s.

But now that deal is being unilaterally renegotiated by Donald Trump, brutally instrumentalising the relationships so that they cost the US as little as possible and give the US’s allies very little but a

diplomatic headache in return. For their part, the European powers are out to recreate imperial power independently of the US.

This means demonising the Putin regime, which is a state which lends itself to that propaganda all too obligingly. It means doubling down on Nato expansion, one of the main drivers of the Ukraine conflict in the first place.

And even while the Ukraine war grinds on, killing and maiming hundreds of thousands on both sides, the Nato powers are preparing to fight an even larger future conflict on European soil.

To defeat this war-drive and the austerity that comes with it, the entire left and the labour movement need to face this challenge head on.

The European ruling class is already spending billions on rearmament, and their propaganda machinery is running an extensive campaign to justify it. Politically, only the far right can benefit from this.

Anti-war activity is now a defining characteristic of democratic politics, let alone any kind of socialism. This is the task that confronts this generation.

Golsmiths ‘lock-out’: solidarity is crucial

FEYZI ISMAIL

Five years ago, Goldsmiths University’s management imposed a restructure that they promised would put the university back on a firm financial footing. Now on its third restructure, with £14m handed to consultants since 2019 and the decimation of whole departments and administrative support, management wants to make another £20m in staff cuts: up to a quarter of the workforce. Astonishingly, it claims that this restructure will be different.

With nothing left to cut and fearing the complete breakdown of the university, Goldsmiths UCU voted to undertake a marking and assessment boycott. Management outrageously responded with 100% pay deductions.

Goldsmiths UCU has now voted to go on indefinite strike from 8 June: a logical next step when management is not paying its staff and not offering any meaningful solutions to the dysfunction their mismanagement has generated.

Of course, universities are operating in a context where the government has forced them to rely on student fees for income, particularly international students, and then changed visa regulations, making it very difficult for those international students to study in the UK. The government has withdrawn millions in funding for arts and humanities subjects, and is happy to see these departments close.

This has been devastating for universities like Goldsmiths. But letting management off the hook would be misunderstanding the transformation of universities since at least 2010: the marketisation and managerialism that has led to disastrous decisions.

At Goldsmiths, management has taken out covenants with two different banks, bought expensive and inefficient software designed to replace crucial administrative staff and is paying more and more managers six-figure salaries for handing over work to consultants. It’s a dystopia in which hundreds of staff refuse to participate.

But the experience at Goldsmiths is now normalised across the sector, as dozens of universities face redundancies, cuts to pay and pensions, course closures and more. Our fight has to be part of a national response, where we put pressure on the national union to escalate, and put pressure on the government to intervene.

We have to set aside competition between universities, support each other in our strike actions and mobilise towards a broader dispute over government spending. The money is there, now we need to demand it.



WEEKLY BRIEFING

Cut through the media bias with Lindsey German’s analysis on the latest political developments straight in your inbox every Monday morning



TINYURL.COM/LINDSEYBRIEFING

RANK-AND-FILE ROUNDUP



SAVE OUR SCHOOLS

CAROLE VINCENT

‘We’re in the fight of our lives’ says Daniel Kebede, General Secretary of the biggest teacher’s union in Britain. He is, of course, referring to the privatisation of our schools and education.

Nationally, while workloads are growing along with class numbers for working-class pupils, in fee-paying schools, class numbers remain small and staffing

levels high. This is a two-tier education system where there is clear division between the haves and have nots!

In one north-east London Borough, Waltham Forest, NEU members have been fighting back both in primary and secondary schools, whether privatised academies or local-authority schools, because schools in nearby boroughs such as Newham, Tower Hamlets and Hackney get much greater funding from the government.

In fact, there is a shortfall of an eye-watering £5 billion in funding for Waltham Forest schools such as Connaught School For Girls, where NEU members have been leading a fightback for all schools, as it is threatened with restructuring and redundancies of essential teaching and support staff, and staff face victimisation.

These disparities in funding, replicated elsewhere in the country, lead to crisis in recruitment and retention of teachers who can get higher salaries just up the road, morale becomes low and, with increased workloads, the result is a national teacher shortage.

Waltham Forest NEU members have led industrial action in recent years but the ability of workers to fight back is being threatened.

Three NEU members at Connaught School, including the branch rep, are being made redundant. This is the lengths these private companies are prepared to go to in order to break the union and rid their schools of those workers prepared to take a stand.

And while teaching and support staff face job cuts, four Senior Leadership Team members at Connaught receive more than £400,000 in salaries, despite doing little teaching. The restructuring and planned redundancies will affect the pupils now and jeopardise the future of this and other schools, by an asset grab that is happening nationwide due to academisation.

However, better news comes from

Belmont Park special-needs school. NEU members took strike action there and have won. There will be no restructuring or redundancies.

At another primary school, South Grove, NEU members were on strike before half term, but are now in talks with the strike suspended. A secondary school, Leytonstone, whose NEU members have taken several rounds of strike action against increased workloads and mandatory contracts to provide out-of-school activities also had a victory and these activities will remain voluntary, which is how it has always been.

At all of these schools, the support from other union members, parents, pupils and the community on picket lines has been incredible. The latest strike to have massive support is at a local-authority primary school in Waltham Forest, Henry Maynard school.

This is a much-loved primary school where just before half term NEU members took strike action, for exactly the same reasons as in other schools; heavier workloads, restructuring and threatened redundancies. They were supported by 150 parents, pupils and community members carrying placards and messages they had made in support of their teachers’ actions, including ‘Save Henry Maynard’.

The strike continued on Monday, 1 June. Please support our school and NEU members fighting for fully funded education for us all.

PICKET LINES THIS MONTH

For latest updates see counterfire.org/events

SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY

Union: UCU
Dates: 1-5, 8-12, 15-19 June
Location: Sheffield, S11 1WB

LONDON UNDERGROUND

Union: RMT
Dates: 2, 4 June
Location: Depots across London

WOODFIELD SCHOOL

Union: NEU
Dates: 2, 4, 5, 8, 11, 12 June
Location: London, NW9 7LY

INSTITUTE OF CANCER RESEARCH

Union: Unite
Dates: 3, 4, 9-11, 15-18 June
Location: Chelsea, SW7 3RP; Sutton, SM2 5GP

AQA EXAM BOARD

Union: Unison
Dates: 5-8 June
Location: Manchester, M15 6EX; Guildford, GU2 7XJ; Milton Keynes, MK8 8DF

GOLDSMITHS UNIVERSITY

Union: UCU
Dates: Continuous from 8 June
Location: London, SE14 6NW

RESIDENT DOCTORS

Union: BMA
Dates: 15-19 June
Location: Various

BOW BUS DRIVERS

Union: Unite
Dates: 11-14 June
Location: London, E3 2QP

INTERVIEW

'The working-class movement has always been internationalist'



Can you start off by telling us a little about yourself, your organisation and the movements you are involved with?

I am a long-term activist in the Italian organisation 'Potere al Popolo'. We are involved in a range of social movements, (against war, against austerity, for Palestinian rights, for example) as well as within the trade-union movement, the student movement and in working-class communities, via our 'Casa del Popolo' - we have about forty 'people's houses' across Italy which are involved in various forms of community organising.

I'm also involved in working with networks overseas: amongst Italian migrants and their descendants and trying to build our relationships with like-minded organisations and movements across the globe.

We believe we need to be involved in social movements, student campaigns and trade unions developing and deepening our struggles, but we also believe we, as a left, need to come together to provide an electoral challenge to the mainstream parties as well.

We fight on all fronts!

Can you tell us a little about the anti-war and Palestine solidarity movements in Italy?

There is a long-term connection with the Palestinian liberation struggle in Italy. Because of our location on the Mediterranean, many Palestinian exiles and political activists used to travel and come to Italy in the 1960s and 1970s. As a result, the Palestine Liberation Movement was well-known and respected in political circles.

When I first came to political activity, Palestine was an issue that we on the left knew



In the run up to the International Anti-War Conference in London, Michael Lavalette spoke to Maurizio Coppola from the Italian organisation Potere al Popolo (Power to the People)

about and were drawn to. With the rise of the anti-globalisation movements of the twenty-first century, the question of Palestine was, perhaps, relegated slightly, but when the genocide started in 2023, the Palestine movement grew quickly.

There have been hundreds of demonstrations, students have occupied universities and there have been a number of strikes against sending arms shipments to Israel.

Italy is Israel's third-largest weapons supplier, but dockworkers have shown their willingness to strike against the shipping of military goods.

The first significant action took place in June 2025. French dockworkers at the port of Marseille-Fos refused to load the Israeli ship ZIM Contship Era. The ship was being loaded with fourteen tonnes of military components destined for the Israeli Occupation Forces.

The Genoa Port Workers Collective (CALP), then announced it would mobilise to block the ZIM Contship Era from docking in Genoa. This campaign grew into a mass strike on 20 June under the slogan Disarmiamoli ('Disarm them'). This was a strike against the broader militarisation of European ports and complicity in arms transfers.

As part of the strike, there were demonstrations against rising military spending and the social costs of rearmament.

In September, the Genoa port came out again. This time the issue was support for the Global Sumud Flotilla. The radical union CALP (Collettivo Autonomo Lavoratori Portuali) had helped the Global Sumud Flotilla with docking and logistics. They announced that if Israel attempted to obstruct the flotilla, Italian workers were prepared to escalate and block Israeli cargo at Italy's major ports.

When the Flotilla was attacked, the workers blocked the ports of Genoa and Livorno and unions staged a nationwide general strike, shutting down schools and transportation.

So the Palestine movement has been at a high level in Italy and has been led by the organised working-class movement.

Italy's far-right Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has unusually spoken out against Israel's atrocities, why is that?

All the main political parties are pro-Israel, and Meloni and the far right are no different. But, at various points, she has spoken out about Israeli atrocities. To explain this, we have to look at how deep

the Palestine solidarity movement is in Italy, the impact of the social movements and the union actions in support of Palestine liberation. In other words, the strength of our movement has shaped political consciousness in Italy in important ways and this has even forced Meloni to acknowledge the genocide and its consequences, though, in terms of concrete action, she has done nothing significant.

Why are we seeing a drive to war in Europe?

We see a world in crisis. Capitalism is facing intractable problems. In this context, capitalist firms and states try to protect their zones of influence. The drive towards war, the huge growth in war-related spending, is a result of inter-state competition and it makes our world very unsafe.

In Europe, there are two sides to this drive towards a war economy. On the one hand, there are those who are looking through the prism of nations and nationalism and are arguing for the rearmament of individual states. But, on the other, there are those, primarily from the 'extreme centre' who are arguing for European-wide rearmament and the integration of Europe's armies.

We need to oppose both. And we need to continue to oppose Nato. A common slogan for us is: Europe/Italy out of Nato, Nato out of Europe/Italy.

We need to also make it clear that spending on war means diverting resources from the social and welfare needs of working-class communities, so the slogan 'welfare not warfare' is central. We need to make clear, against those who talk of 'military Keynesianism', that spending on arms and munitions does not create lots of jobs, or improve living standards. In fact we know that the 'return' from munitions, arms and military spending, in terms of jobs and improved working conditions, is less than you would get from investments in non-military areas of the economy.

Finally, why do you think the anti-war conference in London is important?

We are working very hard to make the London conference a success, as we did the Paris conference last year. These conferences give us a chance to meet, to think and to plan actions across Europe. The working-class movement has always been internationalist movement and we need to do everything we can to re-establish the traditions of active, working-class internationalism.

But part of that internationalism is to build our own networks and organisations in each of our countries. To give an example, if our comrades in France are successful and we have a government led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, its success will depend on what it does in France, but also by how successful we are, in Italy, Britain, Germany and Spain, for example, in building a socialist, solidarity movement that challenges our own rulers and their relentless drive for profit at all cost!

The conference is part of the movement to re-establish internationalism and solidarity across our movements in Europe and beyond. It's very exciting!

A national assault on higher education

COUNTERFIRE UCU MEMBERS

UK universities are in crisis.

According to the Office for Students, the sector's regulator, 119 institutions (around 43% of the sector) are forecasting deficits for this academic year. The OfS predicts that this figure could rise to 163 providers (representing nearly 60% of the sector) within three years.

Some 24 institutions are now reckoned to be in danger of bankruptcy and what the regulator nauseatingly calls 'market exit' in the next twelve months.

This has led to a devastating programme of job cuts across Higher Education. The University and College Union lists approximately thirty universities currently facing redundancies across the UK, from Aberdeen to Ulster. This includes 2,700 staff put 'at risk' by Nottingham University, 1,000 at Sheffield and 600 at Sussex.

Bosses at Essex want to cut 400 jobs and close its campus in Southend while Goldsmiths wants to make

£20m of savings from job cuts despite already having generated £16m of savings in two previous rounds of redundancies. At Edinburgh, where 1,800 jobs are threatened, management has said that 'nothing is off the table'.

Even the head of the sector's umbrella organisation, Universities UK, has estimated that some 30,000 jobs have been slashed in the past three years. One recent poll of university bosses found that more than two thirds of institutions were prepared to issue further compulsory redundancies in the next few years while 90% were considering job freezes and voluntary-severance schemes.

There are a number of reasons for the crisis. Many universities have been hit hard by falling numbers of overseas students who have been discouraged or even prevented from coming to study in the UK because of successive governments' anti-immigration policies. Government has withdrawn public funding from whole swathes of subjects and told universities to depend instead on tuition fees, heading up towards £10,000 a year.

Meanwhile, universities have invested the billions of pounds of

student fees not into providing fair pay for staff and lower staff/student ratios but into inflated salaries for senior management and vanity projects of new overseas campuses and shiny buildings. These are often built in partnership with private developers, on the backs of huge loans or underwritten by bonds secured with the support of major banks. Universities have hitched themselves to the financial sector: servicing debt rather than their own students.

Graduates are now entering a job market that's also in crisis and are doing so with huge levels of personal debt. The government has now frozen the repayment threshold so that significant numbers of graduates are seeing pay deductions subject to interest of 3% over and above inflation.

The UK needs a publicly-funded university sector to deliver high-quality and accessible education. Instead, successive governments have delivered a failed market in which rival institutions compete with each other,

prioritising standardised curricula and popular courses and closing more specialist programmes that don't have the same commercial appeal or – to use the industry jargon – employability.

This is precisely what we've seen with the suspension of humanities courses at Hertfordshire

and the closure of black studies programmes at Birmingham City University.

There's impressive resistance to the job cuts and programme closures at universities with an increasing number of strike ballots and student occupations. Many of these actions are likely to have an impact on protecting at least some courses and jobs.

But in the face of a national assault both on jobs and a high-quality educational experience that is in reach of working-class applicants, individual fightbacks won't be enough. A social movement comprised of university staff, students, local communities (many of whom are dependent on jobs at their local campuses) and political organisations is desperately needed.

If there's money for war, there is certainly money for free education. That's the message that has to be taken to the gates of Downing Street.



GLASGOW CALEDONIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS SUPPORT UCU STRIKERS. PHOTO: @UCUSCOTLAND/X



ZOHRAN MAMDANI. PHOTO: BINGJIEFU HE / CC BY-SA 4.0

COST OF LIVING: A CRISIS OF INACTION

As the cost of living crisis deepens, Chris Bambery asks why Labour isn't doing anything to help working people bearing the brunt of it

It is not just Starmer who is failing but the Labour Party. It is failing by inaction. It lacks any sort of coherent policy to deal with the economic problems we face and is caught in a doom loop of policies of old.

This Labour government worships at the altar of the free market and claims it is powerless to do anything about the cost-of-living crisis, the appalling state of our infrastructure and a developing housing crisis.

Yet if you look around the world, we see local authorities taking action to benefit ordinary people. Here are some examples. These are not revolutionary acts but if implemented here they would benefit us all.

Work and education

One million 16-24 year olds are not in education or work and the number is growing. Opportunities are down, entry-level jobs are down, apprenticeships in the UK are down and the conclusion of the recent Milburn report into young people and work is that the bottom rungs of the work ladder are proving harder to climb than ever before.

In Holland, young people are offered an alternative to traditional education with vocational training and education. They can spend one day a week in education on top of three to four days working as an apprentice. In this way, young people in the 16-24 age bracket are kept in work and continue in education.

We desperately need midwives, skilled construction workers and many other skills. Why not train our young people through apprenticeships? If it works in Holland, why not here?

Another way to address this would be to restore the retirement age to 65, reducing the number of those who have to work past that age when they don't want to, freeing jobs for young people.

Housing

Residents of New York City face the simultaneous squeeze of a cost-of-living and a housing crisis. Sound familiar? Well the difference between here and the Big Apple is it has a mayor who is doing something about it.

New York's Mayor, Zohran Mamdani, has laid out a plan to fulfil his campaign

promise to build 200,000 affordable homes over the next decade in New York City. His overall housing policy involves building new homes, tenant protections and overhauling the city's Housing Authority.

'We can keep people in their homes, and we can build the homes that they need to live, we have spoken about this crisis long enough, it is now time to do something about it,' Mamdani has said.

Under stage one, the city will build 200,000 new, affordable and rent-stabilised homes and preserve and stabilise another 200,000 homes. This will involve a \$22 billion investment throughout the next five years.

New York's councillors have passed a tax on non-primary residences in New York City in order to help close the city's budget gap. It's expected to raise \$500 million in revenue. The so-called pied-à-terre tax will be imposed on second homes valued at \$1 million or more and will take effect in two different phases.

Billionaire and Citadel CEO Ken Griffin became the face of the tax after New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani posted a video in front of Griffin's penthouse

apartment announcing the tax. Mamdani has also put bad landlords on notice, pledging to help 'transfer ownership' of chronically neglected buildings to tenants as part of his sprawling, new housing plan.

Apartment rentals in Manhattan topped \$5,000 (\$7,000) a month for the first time in April as vacancy rates tumbled to six-year lows.

Mamdani has warned that: 'When necessary we will take aggressive legal action to remove negligent owners and property managers. And for buildings that have suffered chronic neglect, we will work to transfer ownership to responsible stewards – stewards that include community land trusts, non-profits or even the tenants themselves.'

The plan would also ensure the poorest New Yorkers pay no more than 25% of their monthly income for rent: down from 30%.

Evictions

In Paris, under the trêve hivernale (winter truce), landlords are legally prohibited from executing residential evictions between 1 November and 31 March, regardless of

the reason for eviction. During this five-month period, utility companies are also banned from cutting off electricity or gas for non-payment. This protection covers almost all residential tenants.

In Barcelona, evictions for economically vulnerable tenants (such as single parents with multiple children, or households earning below specific thresholds) can be long delayed, and local social services must be provided with a window to offer alternative social housing before an eviction can proceed.

In Hungary, there is a nationwide winter moratorium on evictions from 1 December to 1 March. The city government of Budapest frequently requests that local districts institute an extended, voluntary eviction ban spanning from November through April.

Transport

In Luxembourg, the entire country offers completely free buses, trains, and trams for everyone: residents and tourists alike.

In Montpellier, France, residents have free bus and tram networks.

Tallinn, in Estonia, pioneered free

public transit in 2013. All registered residents ride buses, trams, and trolleys for free. Why not here?

Free school meals

In Wales and London, all state-funded primary schools offer universal free meals. In Scotland, all primary 1 to primary 5 pupils receive free lunches, with certain areas expanding this further.

Energy prices

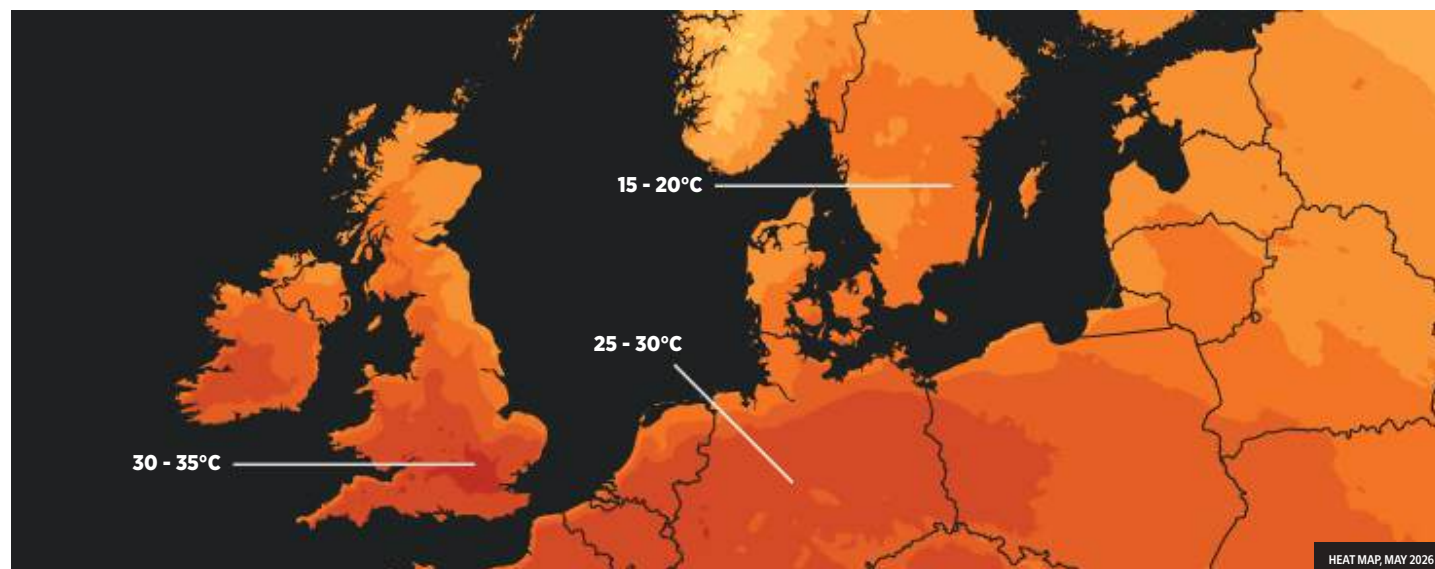
We all face 15% increases in energy prices. France has implemented a broad 'tariff shield' (bouclier tarifaire) limiting domestic gas and electricity-price increases. The state heavily subsidised the country's main utility provider, EDF, to prevent massive price spikes for households.

Malaysia maintains a fixed, subsidised pump price for petrol by adjusting the treasury's spending on subsidies.

With the exception of Zohran Mamdani, none of these examples have been enacted by self-declared socialists. In many cases far from it.

Britain is one of the richest countries in the world. Why not follow their lead?

THE CONDITION OF THE WORKING CLASS



It will only get hotter



by **Terina Hine**

Sizzling in spring, scorching in summer and flooding in fall. This is the future for the UK and it's deadly. By 2050, it's predicted there could be over 10,000 heat-related deaths per year.

The heatwave of 2022, when temperatures soared to over 40°C, saw over 3,000 excess deaths in England and Wales; 2025 was the hottest year on record; 2026 may prove even hotter. Destructive wildfires burned and people sweltered.

In May, we felt the temperature rise suddenly with the hottest May day on record. Temperatures in London reached 35°C (the average May temperature is 14° to 20°C).

These periods of hot weather are set to last longer and be more frequent. Heatwaves lasting longer than a week with temperatures rising as high as 45°C are possible.

The winter of 2023-4 was the wettest on record. Thousands were displaced by flash floods and the wet weather ruined crops; 2023-4 had the second-lowest harvest on record.

By 2050, according to the UK Climate Change Committee (CCC) report published in May, 92% of existing British homes will overheat and millions more homes will be at risk of flooding. High levels of rainfall in autumn and winter will lead to peak river flows increasing by up to 45% and lasting longer.

At least 60% of all UK food is grown here. Drought and flood will devastate production. High-quality farmland is predicted to drop from about 40% of land in England

and Wales to just over 10%. At the same time, global supply chains will be affected by climate shocks. As countries around the world hold on to what they have for local consumption, or sell to the highest bidder, climate-related food shortages will become a global pattern.

Water is of grave concern. Kent residents saw how lack of investment and maintenance results in nothing coming out of taps during the recent spate of hot weather. Without action, this could become the new normal across the country, for weeks and not days. The CCC report forecast a daily shortfall of water supply of 5bn litres by the mid-century.

What is to be done?

The world is not on track to keep global warming below 2°C. Warming of up to 4°C by 2100 cannot be ruled out. The Institute for Government has endorsed the CCC report predictions, calling them 'reasonable' rather than 'worst-case scenarios'.

Despite years of warnings, the UK is poorly prepared and our government continues to fail to take the climate threat as a serious security issue. It refuses to invest or take mitigating actions, let alone introduce legislation. The result of inaction will be deadly for the poorest and most vulnerable.

The CCC report proposes better cooling, increased flood protection and secure water supplies, suggesting these should be the highest priorities for government.

The report recommends that air conditioning be installed in all care homes and hospitals within the decade and all schools within 25 years. It says cooling for low-income households, which are at most risk of overheating, must also be addressed as a matter of urgency. But air conditioning is energy-intensive, and accounts for about 4% of global greenhouse-gas emissions, so is not the solution for millions of homes. Instead, the government must ensure subsidies cover heat pumps that are capable of cooling as well as heating, and should

legislate on building homes fit for the climate of the future, not the present or the past.

It must also legislate on maximum working temperatures and for working outdoors where working hours need to be limited to the cooler parts of the day.

The CCC estimates we should be currently investing around £11bn per year in climate mitigations. This investment would generate tens of billions in returns. Unlike the 'investment' of billions in weapons and war. Doing nothing is expensive, and the cost of inaction is rising, to an estimated £260bn a year in twenty-years' time.

The UK needs to prepare for 2°C of global warming, and do so now. As the report concludes, 'the UK was built for a climate that no longer exists.' The cost of inaction is too great to ignore. Surely even our government realises that.

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

MORGAN DANIELS

1868

5th: James Connolly born in Edinburgh

1905

27th: Founding conference of the Industrial Workers of the World begins at Brand Hall's, Chicago

1964

28th: Patrons of the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York's Greenwich Village, fight back against a police raid on the premises

1977

22nd: Mass picket held outside the Grunwick film processing plant in Willesden, north-west London, in support of striking workers

2020

7th: Black Lives Matter protesters in Bristol topple a statue of the slaver Edward Colston

US TIGHTENS CHOKEHOLD OF CUBA

JONATHAN MAUNDERS

Washington's campaign against Cuba is ramping up fast. The blockade that has strangled the island for more than six decades is quickly becoming something closer to a siege.

On 20 May, the US Justice Department unsealed an indictment against former Cuban president Raúl Castro, now 94, and five others over the downing of an aircraft of Brother to the Rescue, an exile group, in 1996.

On the same day as the indictment, the USS Nimitz carrier strike group entered the Caribbean. US officials may present these as separate events: one legal, one military. Nobody should be fooled. This is political theatre, armed with aircraft carriers.

Since January, and the US attack on Venezuela, Washington has blocked Venezuelan fuel supplies – one of Cuba's key sources – entering the island.

The result has been devastating: blackouts, transport paralysis, food insecurity and water shortages. Cuba says nearly three-million people now face daily water shortages, with the water system operating on just 37% of the fuel it needs.

This is not an unfortunate side effect of US policy. It is the point. The blockade is designed to make everyday life unbearable, then blame the Cuban government for the suffering imperialism has manufactured.

The fate of Venezuela is a recent memory. It has raised the fear that Cuba may be next in line for the same pattern: sanctions, isolation, legal escalation, military threats and the pretence that regime change is a humanitarian concern.

Recent aid ships underline the reality. In March, the Nuestra América convoy brought food, medicine, solar panels, bicycles and other supplies to Havana. It was a gesture of solidarity, but the fact it was necessary is an indictment of US imperialism.

Cuba's internal problems are real, but the decisive fact that the most powerful state on earth is trying to break a small island for refusing to submit to its domination.

Successive British governments have voted against the US embargo at the United Nations, but that is not enough. The British left should demand an immediate end to the blockade, oppose all US military threats, and insist that Cuba's future belongs to the Cuban people, not to Washington or the Pentagon.

End the blockade, withdraw the warships, hands off Cuba.

MARXISM 101



THEIR DEMOCRACY AND OURS



by **Alex Snowden**

Modern democracy emerged in Europe in the nineteenth century, though it wasn't until the twentieth century that most European countries attained universal suffrage. The vote is at the core of the capitalist democratic order. The achievement of voting rights by workers and women had to be fought for. It undoubtedly constituted a significant breakthrough.

Yet the history of parliamentary democracy has been one of frustration for working-class people seeking social change. Marx and Engels, based in Britain from 1849 until their deaths in the 1880s and 1890s, wanted to see the emergence of an independent working-class political party in this country. They also regarded the expansion of suffrage during their era as a step forward for the working class.

However, Marx and Engels never accepted that society could be transformed via the ballot box. The formal democracy of parliamentary elections left the economic power of the capitalists untouched. Nobody gets a vote on whether to close a factory or slash workers' pay.

Their strategic conclusion was that, while standing in elections and having a place in parliament could be part of a wider

political strategy, it could never be a substitute for working-class self-activity through strikes and demonstrations. When workers' struggles reach a very high level, they can even generate alternative forms of popular democracy.

These forms can potentially challenge the power of the capitalist class and the state. This was evident in the Paris Commune of 1871, influencing Marx's assessment of the capitalist state and the capacity of working-class people to overthrow it, creating their own popular democracy and in turn a new workers' state.

The Paris Commune was forged in conditions of wartime siege. On 1 September 1870, France surrendered to Prussia (the dominant kingdom in what was on the verge of becoming a unified Germany). Paris was surrounded by German troops, with large parts of France under military occupation.

Demonstrations in Paris influenced the formation of a French government of national defence. The logical course to repel the Prussian aggression was to arm and organise the workers of Paris. But this terrified the French ruling class. Marx wrote:

'Paris armed was the revolution armed. A victory of Paris over the Prussian aggressor would have been a victory of the French workman over the French capitalist and his state parasites.'

A gulf opened up between the vacillating elite, frightened of workers' revolt from below, and the workers themselves. The Prussian siege of Paris tightened. Together

with the French authorities' failure to provide adequate relief, this fuelled anger and determination among the city's working class.

The Paris Commune began on 18 March 1871, emerging out of protests and mutinies. It was the first time in history that a revolutionary government of the working class took control of a city, however temporarily (the Commune was violently crushed on 28 May 1871). Beset by problems, short-lived and relatively small-scale, it nevertheless gave a glimpse of how society might be organised differently.

The events of 1871 showed Marx that workers could act collectively, in a revolutionary manner, to assert their own independent class interests, overthrowing the established political order and operating in profoundly democratic ways.

Marx generalised from the experience. He insisted that in any such working-class revolt, the workers must abolish the existing state machinery: police, army, judiciary and so on.

Marx summarised the Commune as 'the political form at last discovered under

which to work out the economic emancipation of labour.'

In his *The Civil War in France*, published just days after the brutal suppression of the Paris Commune, Marx outlined a number of key elements of this political form. A commune or workers' state would be a democratic working body. The standing army and the police, as separate bodies from the people, were to be abolished. Magistrates or judges would be elected and recallable.

Political functions must be vested in recallable delegates, not representatives elected once every few years. Material privileges would be removed from these delegates, who would earn a worker's wage.

Revolutionary events in Russia, first in 1905 and again in 1917, threw up something similar to the Paris Commune: soviets, or workers' councils. These radically democratic forms of worker self-organisation linked political power with economic power. They challenged the capitalists directly in the factories as well as posing an alternative political order.

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.

TOWER HAMLETS

[NEU / Together on Cable St] **Remembering Blair Peach**
Tuesday 2 June, 5:30pm
Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, E2 6HG

LONDON

[Stop the War] **Pre-conference activist meeting**
Wednesday 3 June, 6:30pm
Corams Fields, 93 Guildford Street, WC1N 1DN

TOWER HAMLETS

[Stop the War] **Palestine, militarism and the drive to war**
Thursday 4 June, 6:30pm
Mulberry Hall, St Margaret's House, 21 Old Ford Road, London, E2 9PL

BRISTOL

[Stop the War] **Why we need an international anti-war movement**
Thursday 4 June, 6:45pm
Hamilton House, 80 Stokes Croft, St Paul's, BS1 3QY

BIRMINGHAM

[Stop the War] **Why we need an international anti-war movement**
Saturday 6 June, 2pm
BRIG Cafe, The Warehouse, 54-57 Allison Street, B5 5TH

LONDON

[Together on Cable St] **Book launch: A People's History of London**
Tuesday 9 June, 7pm
The People's Letters Bookshop
395 Cambridge Heath Road, E2 9RA

NEWCASTLE

[Stop the War] **Palestine, militarism and the right to protest**
Thursday 11 June, 6:30pm
Tyneside Irish Centre,
45 Gallowgate, NE1 4SG

BATH

[Counterfire] **Why is the Palestine movement under attack?**
Thursday 11 June, 7pm
The Grapes Pub, 14 Westgate Street, Bath, BA1 1BQ

MANCHESTER

[Counterfire] **Makerfield by-election: Burnham v Reform**
Thursday 11 June, 7pm
The Grapes Pub, 14 Westgate Street, Bath, BA1 1BQ

WEST LONDON

[Stop the War] **Stop Trump's wars**
Thursday 11 June, 7:30pm
St Mary's Church Hall, Ealing, W5 5RH

BRISTOL

[Counterfire] **Feminism and the European witch-hunts**
Wednesday 17 June, 6:30pm
Kit Form, 37 Jamaica Street, BS2 8JP

PRESTON

[IBAR] **Call Mr. Robeson - A life, with songs, performed by Tayo Aluko**
Friday 19 June, 6pm
Media Factory, Kirkham Street, PR1 1JN
Tickets: bit.ly/4vompsO

LONDON

[Stop the War] **International conference against war**
Saturday 20 June
Central Hall Westminster, Storey's Gate, SW1H 9NH
Tickets: bit.ly/againstar2026

LONDON

[Book launch] **Capitalism and the media**
Monday 22 June, 7:30pm
Golden Lane Estate
Community Centre, off Fann Street, EC1Y 0SA

LONDON

[Together on Cable St] **Cable Street and the Bryant and May Matchwomen**
Tuesday 23 June, 7:30pm
St Paul Old Ford,
84 St Stephen's Road, E3 5JL

CREWE

[Counterfire] **War, fascism, economic crisis: Why you should be a Marxist**
Thursday 25 June, 7pm
Hopes and Dreams, Broad Street, CW1 3UD

HARINGEY

[Counterfire] **Book launch: The Making of the Great Revolutions**
Friday 26 June, 7pm
All Good Bookshop,
35 Turnpike Lane, N8 0EP

LONDON

[Media Reform Coalition] **Media Democracy Festival**
Saturday 27 June, 9am - 6pm
University of Westminster, 35 Marylebone Road, NW1 5LS

SOUTH EAST LONDON

[Counterfire] **War, fascism, economic crisis: Why you should be a socialist**
Tuesday 30 June, 7pm
Stage 19 Property, Macbean Street, SE18 6LW

EAST LONDON

[Counterfire] **Police, protest and the attacks on the Palestine movement**
Tuesday 30 June, 6:30pm
The People's Letters Bookshop
395 Cambridge Heath Road, E2 9RA

TOWER HAMLETS

[Stop the War] **The international movement / Tower Hamlets AGM**
Thursday 2 July, 6:30pm
Mulberry Hall, St Margaret's House, 21 Old Ford Road, London, E2 9PL

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

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07807 123472

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ART & CULTURE

Marilyn Monroe

A working-class heroine



MARILYN MONROE IN RIVER OF NO RETURN, 1954

LUCY NICHOLS

Born 100 years ago this month, Marilyn Monroe is the most famous face that Hollywood has ever produced. Monroe was arguably Hollywood's first modern 'sex symbol', but represents much more than just the sexualised feminine object she is most often remembered as.

Monroe was born during the Great Depression and grew up in various foster homes and orphanages in multicultural, working-class parts of California. It was later, during the Second World War, that Monroe was 'discovered' while working in a factory. From here, she began modelling and her career took off: she starred in films, adverts, magazines and more, her face instantly recognisable even decades after her death.

Less is known about Monroe as a politically active woman, one who pushed back against homophobia, anti-Communism and racism, who advocated for free love, herself rumoured to have had many affairs, most famously with the Kennedy brothers but also with a number of women.

It is well known that Monroe married left-wing playwright Arthur Miller, perhaps less well known that she founded the Hollywood branch of the 'Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy' and was even elected as an alternate delegate to the California state Democratic caucus. The FBI opened an investigation into Monroe in 1955 after she applied for a visa to visit the USSR, as well as due to her support for her then-husband.

Monroe maintained a friendship with *New York Times* editor Lester Markel, the pair writing back and forth about US and international politics: 'I was brought up to believe in democracy, and when the Cubans finally threw out Battista [sic] with so much bloodshed, the United States doesn't stand

behind them and give them help or support even to develop democracy.'

She is, according to her FBI file, also believed to have visited radical left-wing American Frederick Vanderbilt Field in Mexico. Field wrote in his memoir that Monroe spoke of 'her strong feelings for civil rights, for black equality, as well as her admiration for what was being done in China, her anger at red-baiting and McCarthyism and her hatred of [FBI director] J. Edgar Hoover.'

Despite her fame, Monroe avoided the

consumerism of Hollywood and remained reasonably humble when it came to her home and clothing. Gloria Steinem wrote that Monroe 'didn't want to become one of the rich' and was disgusted by those flaunting their wealth, quoting Marilyn's own writing:

'I remembered all the sounds and smells of poverty, the fright in people's eyes when they lost jobs.'

With all of this in mind, it is difficult to imagine Marilyn Monroe as anything other than a tragic figure, especially considering

her premature death, in murky circumstances, at the age of just 36.

For Hollywood, then and now, Monroe was a 'dumb blonde' or a 'bimbo', playing the object to be laughed at, the prize to be won by male characters, or the uncultured, working-class caricature.

One might think that by 2026, the actor's legacy would have progressed slightly beyond this, but sex still sells, and a sex object is far more attractive to Hollywood than a politically conscious working-class heroine.

HOW THE STATE FUELS THE FAR RIGHT

CHRIS NINEHAM

Anyone who wants to understand the rise of the far right in the UK would do well to start here. Amongst other things, Trilling's short book is a warning against British exceptionalism: 'Like the proverbial frog that sits in the water as it slowly heats up, rather than jump to safety, we have allowed something incredibly dangerous to creep up on us'.

At the same time, this not a doom script. In the process of explaining the far right's relative success so far, Trilling is always on the lookout for weaknesses and contradictions on their side.

Trilling's explanation has three main themes. The first revolves around social and economic factors. Capitalism's neoliberal incarnation, especially since the 2008 bank crash, has generated massive disparities in wealth and an openly pro-business politics that has been devastating for working people.

The second theme is the weaponisation of immigration. To deflect anger at austerity, the Tories quickly set about targeting

migrants. The third is the appeal of the far right itself.

Trilling rightly takes a long view. Thatcherism's dog-eat-dog ethos and the attacks on welfare recipients and immigrants created a paranoid society breeding resentment and distrust. The right has built on this and fed off mainstream anti-foreigner poison. As a result, they have been able to respond to the sense of alienation

and atomisation created by slash-and-burn economics to forge an exclusionary nationalism promising community when communities have broken down.

The account is compelling. I would raise two further issues for discussion. First there is little mention of foreign policy here. British involvement in foreign wars has played a big role in the crisis of governance that Trilling describes and is central to the rise of Islamophobia.

My other observation is that the impact of left and the movements are a little downplayed in this account.

In the final chapter, Trilling argues that there is nothing inevitable about the success of the far right. Their world view is deeply contradictory. Reform is promising the world for working people but is at the same time more reliant on super-rich donors than any party in British history. It tells big business it is in favour of deregulation and tax cuts while promising economic intervention to its base. This is one of the reasons why they can be headed off.

Read the full review on counterfire.org

If We Tolerate This

How The British Establishment Made The Far Right Respectable



DANIEL TRILLING

CONVICTION FIRE

PHOTO: STEVE EASON / CC BY-NC 2.0



RESIST THE ATTACKS ON THE PALESTINE MOVEMENT

LOUIS BAILEY

The state attack on the right to protest is escalating. The police have been given ever more extensive powers, frequently misused, while judges are using remand as punishment for those awaiting trial. It is a grim picture and the number of untried political prisoners is rising dramatically.

A recent report by Queen Mary University and Defend Our Juries describes a systematic shift in the government's strategy to attack and intimidate peaceful climate and Palestine protesters. The numbers are stark. The report exposes 286 cases in which climate and Palestine protesters were imprisoned since 2019. In 256 cases, where sentencing and remand data could be verified, the total jail time imposed amounted to 136 years.

The researchers found that remand was used as the 'first line of attack', finding that 60% of cases had final verdicts that were less than the time the accused had spent in custody awaiting trial. For the Filton24, the accused

spent eighteen months in jail whereas the standard pre-trial limit is six months. After the eighteen months, all but one was bailed.

The government has clearly got the Palestine movement in its crosshairs. They arrest us for holding placards, call us anti-semites and try to strip away our right to demonstrate.

Disgracefully, Chris Nineham, vice-chair of Stop the War and Ben Jamal, former director of PSC have been convicted for their part in organising a peaceful protest on 18 January 2025. They are appealing.

This come alongside the proscription of Palestine Action. Accused of being a terrorist organisation even though the group only ever targeted military infrastructure – a legitimate act under international law. But as Israel has shown, international law is not an obstacle if it's in the interest of US imperialism.

The proscription of Palestine Action was found to be unlawful in the High Court, yet the proscription remains until the outcome of the government's appeal is announced and the

Met Police are still arresting those who hold banners declaring support for the group.

In the Filton24 case, following being acquitted on a first trial, defendants were re-tried on lesser charges. Those who were found guilty, although not on charges of terrorism, are being sentenced under the Terrorism Act – information that was withheld from the juries that delivered the verdicts. This is a clear violation of the right to a fair jury trial.

This is part of a wider onslaught which includes the Met Police openly lying about the Palestine movement to claim it is anti-semitic, the decision to allow fascists to march through London on the day of the Nakba demonstration, the arrests of people who have used the phrase 'Globalise the intifada', the refusal of entry for Hasan Piker and Cenk Uygur, and the list goes on.

To resist, we must strengthen the movement for Palestine. Not just to show solidarity with Palestinians but also to protect our democratic and hard-won protest rights.