

Labour Affairs

Incorporating the Labour and Trade Union Review

No. 370 - July - August 2026

Price £2.00 (€ 3.00)

Burnham's Story Should Have Been Inequality, not Devolution

If Andy Burnham is to have any hope of reversing the decline of the Labour Party he needs to have a fairly simple but compelling story. One good story would be inequality. He could say that he is going to reverse the inequality that has developed in the UK in the 47 years since Thatcher first came to power and set about destroying the post WWII political consensus of full employment and good public services.

Such a story would have an immediate appeal to those sections of the working class who are drifting in desperation but somewhat reluctantly towards Reform. It's also a story in which there is a lot of interest at the moment. Readers will likely be aware of the numerous podcasts by-ex-City trader Gary Stevenson on the matter.

Stevenson's message is that all the assets of society (houses, water, energy, transport etc.) are being bought by the super-rich who then give working people access to these resources at the maximum rent they can extract from them. The super-rich have wealth far in excess of what they can spend in consumption. They use their excess wealth to buy anything that's for sale. If you sell your house, a super-rich person will always be able to outbid anyone else who's interested in buying it and then let you live there at an exorbitant rent. Stevenson argues for a wealth tax as a first step towards reducing the inequality that he believes is destroying British society.

Stevenson's message has been taken up by Zack Polanski, leader of the Green Party which seems to favour a wealth tax. Stevenson and Polanski both promote the works of the French economists Gabriel Zucman and Thomas Piketty in this area. Indeed Zucman has just produced a book with the name 'We need to tax billionaires' in which he proposes an annual wealth tax of 2% on wealth above £100 million.

A tax on the super-rich would certainly be seen as fair. But it would not reverse Labour's decline unless working people saw a real improvement in their standard of living. There is no obvious reason why a wealth tax would improve their standard of living.

Continued On Page 2

The Limits of Devolution

In his speech in Manchester on 29th June, Andy Burnham made some interesting proposals.

He wants all parts of the UK to be able to take greater public control of essential services like water, housing, energy and transport. He also pledges 10-year plans to bring down the cost of these essentials to individuals, families and businesses.

He proposed that regions would be supported to set clear and credible industrial ambitions, with support to achieve them, encouraging more cross-UK partnership between places with complementary industrial clusters. He also wants to shift public procurement so British-based companies are in a better position to win contracts and to protect sovereign manufacturing and production capability across the country in critical sectors like steel, defence, energy, food and farming.

He plans the biggest council house building programme since the post-war period, using vacant public land to reduce costs. This is framed around adopting a national Housing First philosophy pioneered in Finland, plus higher density residential development in towns and business rates reform to support community-building pubs and high street businesses. He linked this to childhood memories of a "secure" council home as a foundation of working-class aspiration that has since been lost.

On education, he calls for ending a school system configured almost entirely around the university route, building instead genuine parity between academic and technical education. He also wants more 45-day work placements and apprenticeships for young people.

Would the outgoing Starmer/Reeves administration have had much disagreement with proposals like this? Probably not with the objectives themselves, but it would have had grave concerns about the methods used to deliver them. According to Burnham, the overarching mechanism is a new "No. 10 North" operation based in Manchester, intended to redistribute power from Whitehall to the regions and nations of the UK.

It is certainly true that progress in improving living standards outside London has been dismal. Burnham associates this failure with the concentration of power in a remote and poorly informed Westminster and Whitehall. Yet this mistakes the symptoms for the underlying cause.

The central problem is not that too much power resides in Westminster. It is that Westminster has voluntarily made its

Continued On Page 3

Continued From Page 1

How will a wealth tax allow people to own where they live or to rent good accommodation at a fair price? How will a wealth tax give people secure well paid employment? How will a wealth tax provide the infrastructure that communities need – affordable energy, good transport links, good education and health services?

It won't. It may reduce the consumption and asset buying powers of the rich a bit, and that is to be warmly welcomed, but it won't build houses, it won't make energy cheaper, it won't refurbish schools and reduce NHS waiting lists. These are problems that can only be addressed by reclaiming the state as a central organizing force in society. Thatcher handed the organization of the essentials of society over to the private sector. The private sector failed to deliver in many areas. Working people have wonderful communication devices but nowhere to live. Burnham must reclaim the role of the state if he is to seriously reverse Labour's decline. A wealth tax would be a small part of any solution.

In fairness to Burnham, reclaiming the role of the state does seem to have been an important part of the way he went about solving problems in Manchester. His powers to do that would have been limited in Manchester where he would have been financially constrained. In other words, resources may have been unemployed but he would not have had the money to acquire them. But now as the prime minister of a currency creating state he is not financially constrained.

His problem is not where does the money come from. Any expenditure approved by Parliament will be made by the Bank of England. In Manchester, Burnham could see unemployed resources that he did not have the money to employ. Now his problem is where are the resources to do all the things that need to be done to reduce inequality and improve the lives of working people. Where are the builders,

plumbers, electricians, roofers to build new homes? Where are the doctors and nurses to improve NHS care?

Rachel Reeves' great failure was that she saw little role for the state in solving these problems. She relied almost completely on the private sector. She justified the inability of the state to do anything by saying she had no money. Working people saw little improvement in their prospects and in the prospects of their children under Reeves' tutelage. They registered that fact in the May local elections and within a matter of months Starmer and Reeves will have gone from high office.

Consider the matter of making energy affordable. It should first be noted that energy prices have increased because of the war in Ukraine. That war is a result of the eastward expansion of NATO. The cost of energy has been further exacerbated by the US and Israeli attack on Iran. It would make sense for the UK to try to wrap up the Ukraine war. It is unlikely that Burnham will have the ability or inclination to counter the Russophobia that grips the political elite. Burnham probably supports the eastward expansion of NATO and agrees that Britain needs to rearm against a revanchist Russia. A first real test for Burnham will be the "Moscow test" - whether he goes further into turning the economy into a war-time one or commits to focussing on social spending. Burnham's social agenda will be seriously damaged if he does not address the total costs of the UK's participation, active and passive, in imperial wars.

Consider the matter of making home ownership and renting affordable. A huge home building program would be required. Who would organize it? If Burnham relies on the private sector then homes for the super-rich will be built. Does Burnham have the ability and inclination to reclaim the role of the state in ensuring that there are sufficient good quality affordable homes available? Here we think he may well have the

Labour Affairs**No. 370, July / August 2026**

ISSN 2050-6031, ISSN 0953-3494

Published by the Ernest Bevin Society
Editorial Board: Christopher Winch, Jack Lane
and Gwydion Williams

LabourAffairs@virginmedia.com

Websites:

<https://labouraffairs.com/> and<http://labouraffairsmagazine.com/>

Subscription: £20 for one year (10 issues)

Distribution: Dave Fennell

Editorial Addresses:

No. 2 Newington Green Mansions,

Green Lanes, London N16 9BT

33 Athol St., Belfast, BT12 4G

Contents

Inequality Not Devolution	1
The Limits of Devolution	3
Growth Through Defence	
Spending	4
Working Class Struggle	6
Palestine Links	7
National Security Bill	7
The Origins of Rock	9
Racist Incidents	11
Zucman—Tax the Billionaires	12
Sahra Wagenknecht Newsletter	14
Stevenson—Tax the Super-Rich	17
Notes On the News	18
Trump and the JCPoA	22
Fortress Football	24

inclination to do something useful. But only if he recognizes that the problem is resources, not money.

Burnham should insist that every secretary of state should have Keynes' famous dictum hanging on their office walls: "Anything we can actually do we can afford." meaning that if the resources required to do something exist and are unemployed then the state can always afford to buy them and put them to good use.

If the resources exist but are being used by the private sector what should the state do? For instance if the state needs builders to build social homes but they are all being used by the private sector to build luxury homes for the rich, the state could simply outbid the private sector for these workers. But that would have inflationary consequences which are

best avoided. The correct thing is to use regulation or taxation to reduce the demand for these builders by the private sector. It's often not a simple matter to free up the resources that the state needs to implement what it sees as desirable policies. But the first step is to recognize that it's a resource problem and not a financial problem.

A lot of what is needed takes time e.g. training construction workers, regulating private house building etc. This is not to say they should not be done but the working class will expect to see some positive results coming through quickly. Among these could be an emergency work programme for unemployed young people and a rapid improvement in bus services. People will notice this and it will make a difference to their lives. Restoring the education maintenance allowance for 16+ youngsters might be a winner along with a campaign to get more SMEs to offer apprenticeships (60% of the workforce, 37% of apprenticeship places).

Burnham should make ending inequality his main public agenda. But he must understand that reclaiming a primary role for the state is his main tool for realizing that agenda. If Burnham makes the same mistake as Reeves, if he refuses to reclaim a much bigger role for the state in organizing the resources of society then the decline of the Labour party under Burnham will continue.

Continued From Page 1

own power dysfunctional by adopting a set of fiscal rules that prevent it from using the capacities that come with issuing the nation's currency. These rules are a political choice rather than an economic necessity. They treat the British government as though it were financially constrained in the same way as a household, a business or a local authority. It is not.

We saw this clearly with Reeves' first Budget, where it was argued that winter fuel payments for most pensioners had to be abolished because otherwise the fiscal rules would be breached and confidence in the economy undermined.

Reeves' entire argument has been that she would like to do many worthwhile things but unfortunately "there is no money." This ignores the constitutional reality that the United Kingdom is a currency-issuing state. The British government can never run out of the currency that only it can issue. It can always meet liabilities denominated in sterling. It is therefore not financially constrained in the way households, firms or councils are.

This does not mean there are no limits to public spending. There certainly are. But the relevant question is not "Where is the money?" It is "Where are the workers, the skills, the materials and the productive capacity?" The real constraint on a currency-issuing government is the availability of real resources and, ultimately, the risk of inflation if public spending outpaces the economy's ability to produce goods and services.

Once this distinction is understood,

the limitations of Burnham's proposals become much clearer.

Indeed, an argument could be made that there has already been too much devolution in Britain. Under Margaret Thatcher, and successive Conservative and Labour administrations, much of the state's capacity to shape economic development has effectively been devolved to private markets, often with disappointing results. The consequences are visible in stagnant regions, deteriorating public services and the growing electoral appeal of parties such as Reform and Restore.

The Bank of England is legally required to ensure that payments authorised by Parliament are settled. Parliament is the legislature of a currency-issuing state. It never has to ask whether sterling is available before authorising expenditure.

Devolved institutions occupy an entirely different position. Councils, combined authorities and any new regional institutions are currency users. Before they can spend, they must first obtain sterling from taxation, borrowing or transfers from central government. Unlike Parliament, they cannot create the currency they spend.

This distinction is fundamental. Devolution may redistribute administrative authority, but it does not redistribute monetary sovereignty. Unless Westminster provides the necessary financial resources, devolved institutions remain constrained by budgets over which they ultimately have little control.

Burnham largely glosses over this distinction. He speaks approvingly of "sound public finances" and of operating within "our current fiscal rules." Yet these concepts are appropriate for currency users, not for the issuer of the currency itself. For the British state, the relevant question is not solvency but inflation and the effective mobilisation of real resources.

One has the impression that Burnham recognises there is some tension here but has yet to resolve it. By accepting the existing fiscal rules as fixed constraints, he inadvertently accepts the very doctrine that has starved the regions of investment over the past fifteen years.

When implementing the New Deal during the Great Depression, President Roosevelt faced a related administrative question. Large sums were allocated

Editorials and articles at our website, by subject, at

<http://labouraffairsmagazine.com/>

Also <https://labouraffairs.com/>

Check what we were saying in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which still reads well. Web pages and PDFs at

<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/>

Or by subject at <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/m-articles-by-topic/>

by the federal government to states and counties, but local institutions frequently administered the programmes themselves. Administrative decentralisation proved entirely compatible with monetary centralisation because the financing always came from the federal government, the issuer of the dollar.

One suspects that Burnham has something similar in mind. If so, he must remain absolutely clear about where the money comes from. It comes from the central government, and only the central government, as the issuer of sterling, can focus primarily on mobilising the nation's real resources rather than worrying about finding the money in advance.

There are at most three years until the next general election. Creating the network of devolved institutions Burnham envisages is far from a trivial undertaking. One suspects that a groan may have gone through the hearts of working people in the impoverished regions when they learned that they would have another layer of bureaucracy to deal with. Many people living in Britain's struggling regions may reasonably wonder whether another layer of bureaucracy is what they most urgently need. They want secure employment, affordable homes, reliable public services and opportunities for their children.

Devolution may improve democratic accountability and enable policies to be adapted to local circumstances. But it cannot by itself overcome Britain's economic malaise if the institutions receiving these new powers remain financially dependent upon a central government that continues to behave as though it were financially constrained.

The decisive question is therefore not where administrative authority is exercised but where monetary sovereignty resides. Unless Westminster abandons fiscal rules that treat the issuer of sterling as though it were merely another currency user, no amount of constitutional redesign will produce the transformation that Burnham seeks. The deeper risk is that, by accepting those rules as immutable facts of economic life rather than political choices, Burnham ends up legitimising the very doctrine that has prevented Britain's regions from flourishing.

Burnham and growth through increased defence spending

By Eamon Dyas

On Sunday 28 June the former Chief of the Defence Staff, Sir Tony Radakin, said in an interview with Laura Kuenssberg on BBC that whoever follows Keir Starmer as Prime Minister would have to operate "almost like a wartime Prime Minister" in the light of global threats. These comments were no doubt directed at Andy Burnham and were the latest in a series of "defence experts" voices wheeled out by the BBC to offer their advice in the light of his election at Makerfield.

Then on the day after, on 29 June, following a meeting with Keir Starmer at Downing Street the Secretary General of NATO Mark Rutte said that he did not expect the UK to meet an alliance target to spend 3.5% of GDP on defence by 2035 "in one step" - a target expected to be included in the publication of the defence investment plan published on Tuesday. Rutte went on to say that he was confident that Burnham would view the boosting of UK defence spending by nearly £30 billion a year as a means of delivering economic growth and increasing employment. He went on to repeat the message that has been doing the rounds since he was made head of NATO in 2024 and which has been pressed on every EU country since then. That

"Defence spending does two things at the same time. One, your first priority as a government, keep the country safe, obviously number one., But also second [is the] impact of your defence investments. Next to keeping the country safe and strong, is [the fact] it will create jobs." (*The Guardian*, 29 June 2026)

This has been one of the "go to" excuses used by the leaders of most EU countries, particularly, Frederick Merz of Germany and Emmanuel Macron of France as well as Keir Starmer of the UK in justifying increased defence spending. These three, alongside Ursula von der Leyen of the EU, have constituted "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" as they attempt to generate a stronger anti-Russian military backbone for

NATO. Their efforts have been based on the promise that the increase in military spending in Europe will provide compensation for the loss of industrial competitiveness that has resulted from the previous implementation of the insane policy of rejecting cheap Russian energy on which European prosperity had previously relied.

Rutte's comments followed a speech by Andy Burnham earlier the same day in which he was supposed to outline his plans for Britain should he become Prime Minister. In that carefully crafted speech Burnham does not mention defence spending and no doubt it was timed to avoid any questions that might have arisen from that omission should the speech have been made after the publication of the Defence Spending Review scheduled for the Tuesday.

The term "Defence Investment Plan" (DIP) was first coined as part of the Strategic Defence Review last year. In formulating that phrase the officials at the Ministry of Defence no doubt did so knowing that the money they were demanding could only be garnered by cuts elsewhere in the government's budget. Convincing the electorate to view that spending and the required cuts that were part of it as something that was an investment in the future was part of a clever marketing strategy meant to overcome the significant cynicism of the claim that the country was in imminent threat from Russia. Unlike the unreal impact on people's daily existence from the so-called threat from Russia the cuts demanded by the Ministry of Defence would have a very real impact on people's daily existence and so it had to be packaged as an "investment" - a sacrifice that would bring tangible benefits in the long run.

This is Luke Pollard, the Minister of Defence at the time, on 8 September last explaining to Parliament how this was to happen:

"There are huge opportunities across the nation in defence industries, but we need the workforce

of the future to deliver them. That is why, in the defence industrial strategy being announced this afternoon, he [another MP he was replying to] will see more investment in skills, not just in defence technical colleges of excellence but in schools and university clusters, to maximise the opportunity to enhance our skills offer and make defence an engine for growth everywhere in the country." (Hansard, 8 September 2025).

The economic justification for increasing spending on defence that it helps growth is something that Burnham is likely to use in order to commit to it. That growth, it will be argued, will be spread more widely beyond London and the South-East and will benefit the north through the resulting wider re-industrialisation of the economy.

However, no matter what such spending might promise on paper the reality is that the re-industrialisation of the north won't happen on the basis of increased military spending alone. This is because the country no longer possesses the wider manufacturing capacity or workforce skills for the economy to be revived on the basis of the market - that heartbeat has long ago stopped. Unless the state acts not only as an economic defibrillator but as a long-term life support provider parts of the economy may splutter back in to life on the basis of what is proposed in the Defence Investment Plan but it will not provide the means for any wider long-term recovery.

The only way for Burnham to realise any dream he might have to re-industrialise the North would be through significant state investment in fostering manufacturing and developing the skill-set of the workforce over a long period of time. But time is what the war-hawks keep telling him the country doesn't have. So, no matter how much government investment might be thrown at military spending the country's economy is currently in no state to make use of it as a stimulant for a wider re-industrialisation and much of that investment will instead go towards sustaining the manufacturing industry of other economies.

The paradox facing Burnham - providing he's serious about his dream of re-industrialising the North - is that the current war-hysteria is creating the decision-making environment where breaking the fiscal rules constraints can be justified. However, that same war-hysteria itself places a time restraint on

how any investment outside the fiscal rules can be spent. As a consequence, instead of it being part of a wider long-term policy for re-industrialising the economy that investment will inevitably be wasted on meeting defence targets that are being scheduled to a timetable that sees Russia as "a real and present danger". This means that anything that emerges by way of justification for additional government spending will prove to be too limited and result in the same outcome of the old policies of short-term, narrowly conceived investment planning that has plagued the country since the seventies.

There is also the spectre of the new relationship with the EU that Starmer has been cultivating since he came to office and which there is every indication that Burnham will continue. That potential new relationship cannot be seen outside the threat of a re-imposition of constraints on the practice of state assistance to industry. The opportunities provided by Brexit were squandered by every government which oversaw the economy since the referendum. However, that squandering was self-imposed by ideologues pursuing their free-market approach. Starmer's Labour government was the first Labour government given the mandate to oversee the economy under Brexit and instead of using the freedoms Brexit offered it chose to fit into the free-market blueprint.

The inevitable failure of a Brexit Britain tied to free market policies is now being used to justify the claim that Brexit was a failure and there are strong winds pushing the country once more in the direction of the EU. This represents a potential threat to any future Labour Prime Minister seeking to utilise the opportunities offered by Brexit to use the state in the process of reinvigorating the economy. Should Starmer's EU ambitions succeed it will tie any future British government to policies which exclude any meaningful involvement of the state in the running of the economy that is considered a constraint on the free market. While that isn't something which the free market advocates in Britain would view as a problem it would be a problem for anyone seeking to grow the involvement of the state in the economy.

At present the EU has released national governments from that requirement in the realms of arms production and many countries have taken advantage of this to pump money into their arms manufacturing sectors.

Because of this any government spending that is planned under Britain's Defence Investment Plan would enjoy the same freedom even under EU rules. However, should Burnham continue the free-market approach he inherits from Starmer and continue to pursue Starmer's ambition for a reset of Britain's relationship with the EU he will end up being tied to a narrow range of options on how the state can be utilised in pursuance of his ambition to re-vitalise the economy.

There are certainly opportunities offered by the Defence Investment Plan for Burnham but those opportunities will only be realised if the spending inherent in that plan is seen as part of a wider role for the state in how the British economy can be revitalised. That will involve a break from the free-market ideology which has been the main reason for the condition in which the country's economy now finds itself. Should Burnham attempt to revitalise the economy by relying solely on the freedom that the Defence Investment Plan provides but continue to commit to the free market and Rachel Reeves' fiscal rules when it comes to the wider economy not only will he inevitably fail but he will have wasted an opportunity to restore the economy and Labour's reputation as a meaningful representative party of the people.

Note:

As an example of how a good proportion of the funds allocated under the Defence Investment Plan will be spent the UK Defence Journal reported on 30 June that the Royal Navy is to spend £90 million to acquire new mine-hunting motherships from Norway.

"The Royal Navy is to acquire new offshore support vessels alongside Norway to serve as motherships for its growing fleet of autonomous minehunters, as part of a wider investment in mine warfare, the Defence Investment Plan said."

It also states that under the plan the Royal Navy will spend around £1.3 billion over the next four years in conjunction with France as part of the same project.

'From Norway', 'alongside Norway', 'in conjunction with France' - are we to understand that these minesweepers won't be built in England?

What does that mean for the redevelopment of British industry? it seems to be in doubt.

An Unknown Victory of Working-class struggle

By John Clayden

My father Harry Clayden was born in 1905 his mother my grandmother was born in the poor house where her mother, who was a servant girl, was incarcerated. My grandmother later married dad's father who was a carter who died in a flu epidemic just before the first world war. At thirteen my father had to leave school to work in a grocers shop to support his widowed mother.

He told me that at the end of the war the first political activity that he got involved in was a local campaign by returning demobbed soldiers. Their objective was to close down the local poor house in Leytonstone in the East End where he lived. The campaign was directed by a returning army major. The strategy was to surround the poor house with enough well organised people to stop it functioning and to block the board of governors from attending their meetings in the building. He told me the whole thing employed military tactics to outwit the police organised by the Major. It was a successful campaign and the poor house was shut down.

Regrettably I never got to know my grandmother as she along with my aunt and uncle and two siblings were all killed by a bomb in the second world war not that long after I was born in 1939.

They were staying with us awaiting evacuation. The bomb hit the Anderson air raid shelter where they

were sheltering, where we were living in Odessa Road Wandsworth. My mother and I were visiting my other granny in East Ham and fortunately for us missed it. My cousin who was in the house survived and she came to live with us.

My father who was a lifelong member of the Communist Party, worked as a grocery worker and was active in the shop workers union NUDAW which later became USDAW. He became attracted to the communists after hearing them speaking at their pitch at a sort of speakers' corner in Leytonstone. Before the war such areas of oration were not uncommon in different parts of the country. My dad said the communists encouraged young people to get up on a soapbox and have a go at public speaking. He was a founding member of the Young Communist League.

The Leytonstone Trades Council premises in common with many at the time was not only a place where trade union branches met and leftwing meetings took place; there were also education classes by The Central Labour College and a Woman's Guild choir and a children's brass band organised by the local cobbler who my father worked for before he left school.

As a member of workers delegations, he visited: the Soviet Union, Spain during the civil war where he met members of the Durruti Column and China. He told me one of the cockney

delegates while in China asked the Chinese Maoists "What do you do with those Capitalist Roaders? Do you cut their ruddy heads off? " The Chinese diplomatically smiled.

One of his best friends Tom Vetterlein who was Area Organiser for the ETU in East London informed King Street aka the HQ of the party, that the union leadership election was being fiddled - only to be nastily smeared because the leadership were in some way complicit. Needless to say, my dad never forgave them.

Most of his life he worked for what became the London Co-operative Society and was elected onto its management committee from 1937 to 1964 he always topped the poll because of the support of his fellow workers. At first there were three communists Sybil White and Eleanor the wife of leading communist intellectual Emil Burns.

They later formed the 1960 committee, an alliance with broad left co-operators, including Stan Newens (later MP for Harlow), and they together won control of the management committee. Harry went to Sweden and encouraged the co-op to introduce supermarkets with checkouts that he had seen there. He was elected president from 1964 till 1971 after defeating the notorious John Stonehouse.

PALESTINE LINKS

[Israeli officials discuss renewed push to expel Palestinians from Gaza \(Nadav Rapaport, Middle East Eye, 24 June 2026\)](#)

[Former Israeli prime minister Naftali Bennett says he smuggled Starlink receptors into Iran \(Middle East Eye, 24 June 2026\)](#)

[The Haredi draft revolt threatening to bring Israel to a standstill \(Eli Bitan, +972, 23 June 2026\)](#)

[I am a doctor in the occupied West Bank. Our hospitals are dying \(Hazim Faisal Abusondos, Middle East Eye, 21 June 2026\)](#)

[Ninety-two percent of Israelis think Iran has won war, new poll finds \(Middle East Eye, 21 June 2026\)](#)

[Students' lives on hold in Gaza \(Sara Awad, Electronic Intifada, 22 June 2026\)](#)

[Israel kidnaps toddler, returns him dead \(Nora Barrows-Friedman, Electronic Intifada, 19 June 2026\)](#)

[Why I'm returning to Switzerland after my unlawful detention \(Ali Abunimah, Electronic Intifada, 19 June 2026\)](#)

[US-Iran deal leaves Israel isolated and Netanyahu exposed \(Meron Rapoport, Middle East Eye, 18 June 2026\)](#)

[After a year of displacement, Tulkarm's Palestinians allowed home for two hours \(Mojahid Nawahda & Teebah Assi, Middle East Eye, 18 June 2026\)](#)

[What would happen if US actually cut off military aid to Israel? \(Connor Echols, 17 June 2026\)](#)

[His only crime is that he is a Palestinian doctor \(Shatha Yaish, +972, 17 June 2026\)](#)

[In Gaza, 'slaughter continues unabated' while the world turns away \(Ahmed Dremly & Ibtisam Mahdi, +972, 16 June 2026\)](#)

[The Palestinians dying for work \(Charlotte Ritz-Jack, +972, 12 June 2026\)](#)

['Where are the mediators?': Gazans decry ongoing displacement despite ceasefire \(Ruwaida Amer, +972, 9 June 2026\)](#)

[Another Hajj passes Gaza by \(Khaled Al-Qershali, Electronic Intifada, 9 June 2026\)](#)

[Israel kills family sleeping in their apartment in Gaza City \(Nora Barrows-Friedman, Electronic Intifada, 5 June 2026\)](#)

[Most people across 36 countries have negative views of Israel and little confidence in Netanyahu \(Laura Silver & Laura Clancy, Pew Research Center, 4 June 2026\)](#)

[UN verifies rapes of Palestinians, but still cites no Israeli victims \(Ali Abunimah, Electronic Intifada, 3 June 2026\)](#)

[Trump's Board of Peace is fueling genocide in Gaza \(Maureen Clare Murphy, Electronic Intifada, 1 June 2026\)](#)

New National Security (State Threats) Bill

OUR PARTY parliamentary leader Jeremy Corbyn pledged to oppose the government's National Security (State Threats) Bill yesterday as ministers started to rush the measure through Parliament.

He warned that the Bill "is an alarming expansion of state power, and an escalation of the government's chilling assault on the right to protest.

"This week more than 100 people were arrested for holding placards in support of a group that has taken direct action against British complicity in genocide. Meanwhile, Britain continues to sell arms to a state whose leader is wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

"This Bill represents a further, grave risk to our civil liberties. Under the new legislation, people can be criminalised for 'expressing an opinion or belief that is supportive of' bodies that the Home Secretary deems prejudicial to 'the safety or interests' of the UK."

Mr Corbyn added: "Deliberately vague and open-ended, this legislation gives the Home Secretary sweeping powers to criminalise political campaigns of their choosing.

"We are going down a very dangerous path, and the fact that this legislation is being rushed through Parliament in one day should alarm us all.

"Civil liberties are easy to lose, but hard to win back. For that reason, I will be voting against this Bill."

Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood told MPs that the Bill is needed to protect against groups the government regards as aligned with Russia, Iran and China in particular.

It will allow her to designate them as a threat with minimal oversight, leaving individuals involved with them liable to a prison sentence of up to 14 years upon conviction.

by Andrew Murray, Political reporter

Morning Star 18 June 2026

The origins of Rock

By John Clayden

The Skinheads one of the early youth cults in Britain still have memorial gatherings in Yarmouth on the east coast where they retain their affection for Ska music which is of Jamaican origin.

The adoption of black music by working-class kids after the war is interesting. It seemed to be a country-wide phenomenon. Why did it happen and what were the subsequent influences on British culture? I have puzzled over this with friends who also lived through it.

What follows is my account of my experience of what took place in the fifties, sixties and beyond.

Towards the end of the war our family moved into an impressive house in the Yiewsley High Street we rented from my father's employer the London Co-operative Society. It was in a state of decay the other half next door was uninhabitable but it meant we had two big gardens to play in and because my mum was hospitable, my friends were always round. I remember my cousin June and Arthur Wood were always Cowboys and Ted his brother and I were always Indians. After I passed the Eleven Plus and they didn't I lost touch. Me and Ted had just missed conscription but Arthur was called up but by that time it was winding down.

In a couple of years because of our love of music, we resumed contact and I often went round to their house in Whitethorn Avenue on the oldest prewar Council Estate. Arthur bought jazz records and we listened to Jelly Roll Morton and his Red Hot Peppers, Louis Armstrong's Hot Five, Sidney Bechet and

his New Orleans Feet Warmers, Bix Biederbecke and Muggsy Spanier and Tommy Ladnier.

The Wood brothers and another school friend Lawrence Sheaff had got into Ealing Technical College to do Commercial Art.

As well as the music we would amuse ourselves drawing cartoons usually of a surreal nature and inspired by Edward Lear's drawings. We each had a pile of paper and would pass one round and have a laugh and do another.

From a young age I had been listening to my Uncle Maurice's collection of jazz records he had left round at my Granny's when he went to fight in France and where we had been living near Slough. (While there I witnessed a Doodle Bug fly over). I had assimilated the genre.

By this time just after the war there were lots of local jazz clubs either for New Orleans Trad Jazz bands or others that were devoted to Modern Jazz and never the twain shall meet. The Traddies called the modern jazz fans Dirty Boppers and the others called the Traddies Mouldy Figs. The modern jazz fans wore suits with drain pipe trousers and winkle picker shoes known as the Yiddisher Britisher look because of their origin from Tailors in the Edgware Road. They were the proto mods and the Trad fans wore jumpers casual clothing a forerunner of what the press later called Hippies. They incidentally never called themselves Hippies but Heads. They grew out of Bohes (bohemians) and Beatniks. They were the first to wear their hair long. I remember one of the pioneers of long hair I knew who was on a Mayday March when a

policeman asked him sneeringly "Who do you think you are, Jesus Christ?" "He replied "No just a lesser prophet".

In addition to jazz in Whitethorn Avenue, we listened to Big Bill Broonsy and Leadbelly and other blues musicians Howling Wolf and Muddy Waters. And then when Lonnie Donegan the banjo player with the Chris Barber band formed a skiffle group to play in the interval and then released a record, we got ourselves some beat up guitars a tea chest to make a bass and zinc washboard and for a time I borrowed a Tuba from school. At first, we did not know how to tune the guitars but through Lawrence who came from a musical family - his father played in the Big Ben Banjo Band, we found out how to tune up and learned what was known as the three chord trick, three easy to play chords which could cover the tunes we played. I have still got the card - Ted Woods Original London Skiffle Group formed 1954.

Arthur performed and sang with his Art Woods Combo later the Art Woods inspired by Howling Wolf.

Our skiffle group got a regular gig playing the interval at the Viaduct Inn in Hanwell where Colin Kingswell's Jazz Bandits was the resident band. We would have been about 15. One of our number had seen the soldier playing a trumpet mouthpiece on its own, in the film "From Here to Eternity" and mastered the technique later going on to be a professional trumpet player.

On the same council estate there was also another band Cliff Bennett and the Rebel Rousers and at first, they had to go round to Lawrence to get him to tune

their guitars for them. Lawrence learned to play the solo "Guitar Shuffle", from listening to the recording by Big Bill Broonsie no mean feat as it entailed playing two parts at the same time.

The youngest brother of Ted and Arthur, Ronnie used to hang around all ears learning as we rehearsed and they bought him an electric guitar and he went on to play with the Small Faces and still till now he is a Rolling Stone. Recently on Desert Island Discs he praised Lawrence's playing and influence. He said Lawrence is now a Professor (of Transcendental Meditation) somewhere in America having abandoned music for the Maharishi but he always remained a mentor and support for Ron.

Our skiffle group morphed into a blues band with Lawrence on electric bass and Dicky Bachelor known as Dicky Dee on drums

I knew Dicky from the YCL when we were younger. We had acquired electric guitars a small 50 watt amp we were inspired by Chicago blues bands such as the great Jimmy Reid and numbers like Big Boss Man. Little could we have guessed that within a few years we would be seeing him in the flesh. I got a secondhand alto sax from a junk shop and we played in Cafe Cantata a coffeehouse on Eton High Street next door to the Police Station. We were known as the Nagga Yog band. Then Lawrence left to go back to Ealing to study fine art and we ended up playing with Hog Snort Rupert alias Bob Macgrath.

By this time the Ricky Tick Club was established in a pub opposite Windsor Castle the Star and Garter and was later to move just across the River

Thames by the playing fields of Eton in a decaying mansion named Clewer Mead. Both clubs were the inspiration of John Mansfield in partnership with Philip Hayward.

I would strongly recommend getting hold of John's book "As You Were" which gives a very good account of this era and I have found very useful to prompt my memory.

I should say that most of these blues fans were what became Mods.

John Mansfield was not interested in the money although he was a very good organiser promoter and he managed our band he just loved the music and brought over many black musicians from America who were our idols. In their turn they were amazed at the reception they got from white kids in England; unlike back home where black and white audiences and performers were totally separate.

John encouraged and helped the development of British bands on the Rhythm and Blues scene.

So we became the backing band of Hog Snort Rupert. We had a sax section and sometimes a three girl backing singers called the So Fines. We were called Hog Snort Rupert and the Good Good Band. Dicky Dee is credited by John Mansfield with introducing him to important venues and musicians.

Rupert acquired records from US army shops (known as the PX) on the nearest US Army Air force bases so we were inspired by bands and singers who were largely unknown here, one in particular was Bobby Blue Bland he was an early forerunner of soul music.

We were resident in the Ricky Tick on quieter nights along with

Julie Driscoll and Brian Auger.

In addition, Rupert also designed the posters and silk printed them in a basement of the Star and Garter and later when the club moved to Clewer Mead across the river. He also painted the interior of the new club in the same style as the posters. The fly posting of Rupert's very distinctive posters were a crucial factor in publicising the club circuit John and Philip had built up they silk screened them on the premises often at short notice.

The beginning of the sixties saw a rapid development of what was to become Rock music and the many black musicians who John and Philip and a few others brought over played a crucial role. They also gave a lot of help and encouragement, to the emerging bands who were inspired by these black musicians. John gave a lot of them the first opportunity to play in front of an audience.

After about four years as the thing became a craze among teenagers, the sharks grasping the opportunity to make big bucks took over and shaped its development. The music became a commercial commodity. Typically, in the case of the Stones. This is all well documented in John's book. The veracity of John's account some of my surviving friends and I can vouch for as we lived through it.

Those of us in Rupert's band were fortunate to do a tour backing two of the greats of black music, Larry Williams and Johnnie Guitar Watson (Jimmy Hendricks mentor) and we got to know each other. We gave them lifts when their transport never materialised and they were surprised how we knew their music and its idiom which we

had been familiar with since we were kids. Prez our tenor player was black born in London from an acting family and we greatly respected his talents but it never occurred to us to think of him as black. They must have been taking notes. Larry told John they were so good they named them twice.

When asked by a Manchester local reporter what he thought of the band Larry Williams said “Oh man they’re Baaaaad” which of course meant the opposite. The headline that appeared however said LARRY NOT TOO HAPPY WITH HIS UK BAND

He also told us at a rehearsal when we asked if we were doing things ok, “Man you’re Out of Sight” an expression we had never before encountered. They wore long white leather coats which sartorially put us to shame.

I think it was B B King who seeing a large crowd awaiting his plane landing at Heathrow, wondered who the celebrity was on board until he realised it was him.

But why did the youth in Britain take to black American music in the way they did and what if any were the consequences - good or bad?

Of course I don’t know the answer but the raw emotional sincerity of the blues had something to do with it. Perhaps it was a way of escaping the damping down of feelings which was the only way it was possible to survive the horrors of the war. Something I had experienced when young, as I was born in 1939 although I was only aware of it in retrospect.

On the other hand, the nature of relationships between young people was changed during the

war due to the fact that the one you loved might be killed any time and never be seen again. This led to a directness and an appreciation of the moment. Something the black slaves also developed to shake off their condition. These war time relationships were memorably depicted in a television series in my youth called The Chamomile Lawn.

The availability of small record labels like Topic and little portable radios had something to do with it and the popularity of folk music and black singers like Josh White and Paul Robeson and Leadbelly. The influences were often projected by people associated with the communist party or the labour left like Humphrey Lyttleton, Bruce Tuner and Ken Colyer. We despised commercialism and emphasized emotional sincerity. Musicians were often self-taught, playing from the heart and soul. That’s what Soul meant. Soul and Gospel music was an important inspiration.

Among workers there was a spirit of confidence engendered by the gains in living conditions and education and free health care and Trade Union strength. Bevin during the war had brought in the closed shop ie TU membership was mandatory.

This strengthened the working class in the immediate post war period. The working class had prestige the audiences at the Cantata and the Ricky Tick reflected this. From a class perspective the audiences were very mixed. There were kids from the council estates rubbing shoulders with rich kids from Stoke Poges and Langley but there was no snobbery. If anything, the working-class kids set the fashions and were looked up to. I remember Verity Emmett

who went out with Dicky who had been a child actress in Belles Of Saint Trinian’s and whose family were British colonialists who had gone native. They put on parties. Sometimes we went to parties in very big posh houses. The best dancer with the most prestige was Terry Keogh who was from the local council estate.

The spirit of the Aldermaston marches and the civil disobedience of the Committee of 100 and the American draft dodgers who ended up in London also had something to do with it.

In a pub crowded to overflowing at Falcon Field where the Aldermaston march was assembling, marchers packed out the only pub. The only way you were getting a drink was by fellow protesters passing money from hand to hand over to the bar and passing the drinks back over people’s heads. Over in the corner I heard a piano sounding like Ray Charles. I made my way through the crush and it was being played by a very young Stevie Windwood.

John and Philip who had done their national service in a military band were irrepressible rebels. (As was more recently the ex IDF bandsman saxophonist Gilad Atzmon)

Without exception the snobs from Eton with their top hats were despised except a few who merged with us. We looked down on Mick Jagger.

The early Stones were helped a lot by John even housing and feeding them but Jagger switched management to a fellow rich creep called Andrew Loog Oldham who marketed them as a sex commodity.

The music was our music - it belonged to our young generation who loved it and loved life.

The attraction for young people in the 50s onwards was not because of the blues singer's image, if they were black or white, it was primarily because of the emotional authenticity and dance enticing rhythm of their music.

To quote from John's book -

"The reception these visiting blues artists got in the clubs at this time was fantastic. The audience really loved them and they were treated to two hour sets. Between numbers some of these blues legends would tell them how much they appreciated how different things were here because back in the USA 'black' music was ignored and segregated and only poor re-worked versions were ever played on 'white' radio stations....rubbing shoulders with the bands was all just taken for granted. The whole scene was new to everyone.

Suzanne Ellis recalled 'We had such a good time at the Ricky

-Tick - it was almost like a family. There was no pretence, it just seemed normal. We were all young, and they were like friends.'

But these new promoters put the emphasis on the performers, the music was secondary. The image was primary. Andrew Loog Oldham ruthlessly got rid of those members of the Stones who did not fit the image, as John describes in his book. They were sold as a boy band, as sex idols. The Who as rebels smashing things up. The speakers and amps became so big and loud that the audience was dominated and made passive. The craze became so big a lot of money was made and money became the measure of value.

Racist Incidents, Southampton and Belfast

By Eamon Dyas

As far as I see it the issue here isn't about how racism or anti-racism explains these incidents. The issue is how European capitalism has come to rely on immigration both to feed its labour as well as its population needs in a situation where a sense of nationality continues to be the most cohesive element around which society organises itself.

It's that same sense of nationality that is now being appealed to in order to save us from the Russians and the Chinese.

European states, whether inside or outside the EU are now having to confront the outcome of their attempts to encourage immigration as a component of their free-market concept of capitalism. That encouragement of immigration initially served those European states where capitalism had been long established and it did so through the free movement of labour from the cheap and well-trained labour reserves of the post-Soviet bloc countries to those older European states.

But it was only a matter of time before those labour-supplying states developed economically to where they were no longer providing such cheap labour but were in fact attracting their previous emigrants back home (I personally know a Polish family that moved back to Poland last year after living in the UK for decades).

At that point we saw an acceleration in immigration from further afield and that immigration, encouraged by the destabilisation of societies through western military aggression (Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Libya and others), introduced a new and more alien non-European element into the hearts of European states. It's that alien element coming in such numbers that has tipped the balance between what European capitalism needs in terms of cheap and reproductive labour and what it requires by way of stable societies that it is now finding difficult to sustain.

This is because a sense of nationality remains the only means by which a society can still display any level of

stable coherence in its widest form.

We are now witnessing the failure of a political policy for a capitalism that is based on continuing access to cheap labour to sustain it. Because that policy is compelled to operate inside societies that of necessity require stability and because that stability requires it possessing a sense of "them and us" the strains are beginning to threaten the existing EU model for capitalism.

That policy has also been the means by which ever higher dividends could be paid to investors. This has lent itself to a situation where instead of increasing investment in equipment as a means of maintaining competitiveness European businesses have tended to be cosseted by those cheap labour policies. And they now complain about the low productivity of European labour! While that may not have had such a negative impact on the service and hospitality sectors it is proving disastrous for the manufacturing sector - a sector already hard hit by the insane policies of European politicians towards Russia.

It's difficult to see how this descent into chaos can be easily mitigated as there is no evidence that the political leaders of the EU have learned anything - we already see growing calls from European leaders to make it easier for more new members to be accommodated - more cheap labour.

In the meantime, it makes no sense for the Left to continue to frame the incidents like the Nowak one or the Belfast one in terms of the racism/anti-racism framework as it reduces politics to a far too simplistic moral argument in which working class communities always end up being depicted as the "deplorables".

Note by Bill McClinton

There has been a growing frustration at the lower end of the class divide for years, it has no political representation to speak of and no ideology as such, but has a feeling their problems don't matter and they are now competing with migrants.

Gabriel Zucman: We need to tax the billionaires 2025

Translated into English 2026

A summary by Catherine Dunlop

At 65 pages, this international bestseller is a long article or short manifesto.

The general idea is that taxing billionaires is no more revolutionary than establishing income tax; income tax is accepted now as a matter of fact, even if at the time it was created (end of 19th and beginning of 20th century) ferocious arguments were made against it, similar to the ones made today against a wealth tax, such as it will halt growth or kill innovation (none of which happened, quite the contrary).

Zucman proposes a tax of 2% on wealth over 100 million. This wouldn't affect the 10% richest, only the 1%.

Zucman starts his manifesto by describing how little tax the ultra-rich pay compared to the rest of the population, including the richest 10%, basing his results on the work of many previous and current researchers. He gives the example of France, which he says is typical of rich developed countries. The middle classes pay an average of 51% of their income in taxes, the working class around 45% 'V.AT, other indirect taxes such as fuel duties, payroll taxes (national insurance) and France's flat income tax of about 10% on nearly all incomes are responsible for

this substantial tax burden'.

What about the argument that the working class receives a lot back in the shape of benefits? Zucman calculates that if you deduct those, the tax burden on the working class falls to about 30%, still a substantial amount.

In the US people including the well off pay less tax than in Europe, around 30% of their income, but this is because they pay for health and education separately and privately.

Billionaires tend to hide what they pay in tax but research has been done and the results say that billionaires pay half as much tax as the average French person.

Billionaires pay just 2% income tax. Is this compensated by corporation tax? No, that only 'eats up 23%' of their income.

And these are 2016 figures. Since then, the French corporate tax rate has been cut from 33% to 25% and 'the effective tax rate paid by large companies has fallen from 19% to 14%'.

So why do billionaires pay so little income tax? It is because they are able to 'structure their wealth so that it does not generate individual income tax.' For example by paying themselves very small incomes or else by setting

up holding companies into which an income is paid; the company is not an individual and so not liable to tax, and these types of company are also not liable to corporate tax. Bezos, the Amazon billionaire, received benefit for his children because his declared income was so low. 'Billionaires have still not opted into the system [of income tax].'

Why does this matter? It is 'a fundamental violation of the principle that all citizens are equal before the law.'

The rise of inequality is striking: the wealth of the ultra-rich in France grew by an average of 10% a year from 1996 to 2024 compared to 4.5% for the average person.

'This spiral risks causing irreparable damage to our democratic ideals.' When does democracy become oligarchy? asks Zucman. 'Is it when the wealth of the ultra-rich exceeds 50% of GDP? One hundred per cent? Two hundred per cent? When they own not 80% of privately held media but 100%? Or perhaps when they finally get their hands on our public media? Or when they own not only entire Paris streets, but entire neighbourhoods?'

A quick look at the arguments against taxing the super-rich.

The richest 10% pay $\frac{3}{4}$ of income tax in France; yes, but this is based on 4 million households, not the around 100 billionaires who operate outside the tax system we are concerned about here.

If billionaires have no income, why should they pay income tax? Billionaires can use money in their holding companies to buy property and assets, buy up competitors etc, all untaxed. A 3 billion net worth generates say a 1% income, that is, 30 million a year, which is quite hard to spend. If they are taxed on that income, it means they are taxed on 1% of their wealth.

Billionaires will pay tax later. That is not the case.

Billionaires do not receive or want the fruit of government tax expenditure (health, education etc). But the 10% of the next richest also may not need these goods, but they still pay 51% of their income in tax. Billionaires are still part of society and should contribute to its welfare and cohesion.

World response to this situation.

'The G20, under the presidency of Brazil, put it on the agenda of its 2024 summit' and commissioned a report by Zucman himself. In this report, he 'recommended a minimum annual tax of 2% of wealth for ultra-high net worth individuals: those worth \$100 million or more.'

'This proposal was adopted by the French National Assembly in February 2025, only to be blocked by the Senate a few months later.'

Note that this applies only if such individuals do not already

pay 2% of their wealth in tax; if they already pay say 1%, they only have to pay another 1%.

Since on average those individuals earn a 6% return on their wealth each year; a tax of 2% on that return would amount to a 33% rate of tax.

But will a billionaire tax work?

It will work if it is applied not to income, which can be made to disappear, but to wealth 'which is much harder to manipulate'. It will not be a repeat of the wealth taxes that have existed in Europe in the 20th century. These were failures because

1/ they effectively exempted the wealthiest.

For example, the 1981 wealth tax introduced by the Mitterrand government exempted the super-rich. When it was abolished in 2016, it taxed billionaires at the rate of 0.005%. 'Any stake of more than 25% in a company, whether listed or not, was considered a 'professional asset' and exempted from tax'.

2/ the super wealthy move to tax heavens. This can be countered by following the American example. US citizens are liable to US tax wherever they live in the world, for life. Zucman suggests being less strict than the US and make taxpayers who move abroad only liable for tax for 5 or 10 years, or on a decreasing rate over time.

3/ tax fraud; since 2018, the automatic exchange of banking information has been in place world-wide; this should limit the hiding of assets.

Zucman ends with some more arguments that can be put up against his tax: what about companies that don't make a profit yet? They can sell a few shares; what about the ultra-rich with no liquidity? They have

made themselves illiquid on purpose, and can also sell shares to pay.

Zucman reminds his readers that great wealth wields great power, see Elon Musk given a place in Trump's cabinet and while in post eliminating parts of government spending not to his liking. This is something we as a society, cannot afford to ignore, says Zucman. He concludes:

'My proposed minimum tax on ultra-high net worth individuals finishes the job income tax started. Like income tax, it, too, will eventually gain broad acceptance as the logical and necessary measure it is.'

Comment

Presenting his idea as just 'logical and necessary' and not a bigger deal than income tax is probably a good way of achieving his aim. Being matter of fact will help to create a consensus.

In fact what Zucman proposes would not change the status quo much, it won't reduce ultra wealth, only stop it from getting even more gigantic quite as fast. Supposing the wealth of the ultra-rich earns them 6% in interest a year, a 2% tax would just reduce the rate at which they get richer. It would slow down the snowballing effect. Nevertheless, the case needs to be made forcefully as Zucman does here, as we are quite a long way from having any political force, in the UK at any rate, that considers a tax on billionaires 'logical and necessary'. That little book with a red cover should be widely distributed; and as a comment on the cover says 'Read it, share it and let's get on with it'.

Sahra Wagenknecht Newsletter

4 June 2026

This is Sahra Wagenknecht's newsletter. In it, I provide regular updates on my activities and current political issues.

Germany is in danger of being relegated. This is mainly down to an incompetent head coach who loves the sponsors more than his own supporters and is unable to motivate his divided team to score goals. If we want to compete at the very top of the world stage in future, we must do so without this Chancellor. He pursues policies that serve BlackRock and the upper classes and has no respect for ordinary citizens. He is running Germany into the ground with his military build-up and is sitting on Donald Trump's lap whilst our industry goes to the dogs. Instead of a better future for our children, we have conscription and schools in a state of disrepair. Over 80 per cent of Germans have had enough of Merz and consider him incompetent. For the BSW, one thing is certain: Red card for Merz! This Chancellor must be sent off! That's why we're taking to the streets: on 13 June in Magdeburg at 4 pm on Willy-Brandt-Platz. Come along, everyone – together we demand: Merz must go!

Vote Merz out

Soaring prices, a shrinking industrial sector, a growing threat of war: Merz is driving our country into decline. We must stop this government before it's too late! Voting the CDU Minister-President out of office in the state election in Saxony-Anhalt this September could bring Merz down. That is why it is all the more important for the BSW to win seats in the state parliament. For this is the only way to ensure that the established parties lose their majority. In my interview with Apollo News, I explain why

the BSW will definitely not be voting for the CDU candidate Sven Schulze and why we are calling for an independent Minister-President who will form a cabinet of experts and govern with majority coalitions.

[Apollo News is an online news outlet]

Undemocratic firewall

[The 'firewall' as explained before is the imperative to ostracise the AfD].

AfD: "A slap in the face to voters!" – Wagenknecht tears into the "firewall" on WELT!

It is completely undemocratic to permanently exclude a party that is voted for by around 40 per cent of the electorate. Regardless of one's views on that party's positions. The 'firewall' has failed. The fact that we in Thuringia ourselves took part in a 'firewall' coalition [i.e. a coalition that excluded the AfD] with very little political common ground has seriously damaged the BSW's credibility and only served to strengthen the AfD. We will not repeat this mistake. In my interview with WELT TV, I discuss why a new approach is urgently needed to overcome polarisation in Germany.

[WELT TV is a mainstream news channel; Axel Springer owns both the TV channel and the newspaper DIE WELT, the newspaper of record in Germany.] The interview is dubbed in English and can be seen on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kl-c1N9IpNg>

Fear of a snap election

Friedrich Merz is afraid of a snap election. No wonder: Merz is the most unpopular Chancellor of all time. The approval ratings for the CDU/CSU and the SPD are in free fall. Yet instead of changing their disastrous policies and

finally representing the interests of the public, the divided coalition partners are continuing to run our country into the ground. We want to drive another nail into the Merz government's coffin and ensure that the CDU Minister-President of Saxony-Anhalt loses his post!

[this is a brief item also dubbed in English on the BSW YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/OXsFBUtvTgo>]

Stupid double standards

When the US breaches international law, Merz couldn't care less. When Russia breaches international law, the German government drives our economy into ruin with sanctions. Enough of this ridiculous double standard! Why Germany's industrial decline will be unstoppable without affordable Russian oil and gas, and why there is an urgent need for talks on a diplomatic solution in Ukraine – I discussed these and other issues with Claudia Wittig, the BSW's lead candidate in Saxony-Anhalt, and political scientist Johannes Varwick.

Wagenknecht, Wittig, and Varwick debated these questions in the packed Volkspark in Halle.

[This is the dubbed content of a large public meeting in Halle.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJ6-clCxsRc>

Out-of-touch politics

BlackRock chancellor and multimillionaire Merz wants Germans to work longer and gamble away their retirement savings on the stock markets. You can't get any more out of touch than that! Does Merz even have any idea what it's like to get up every morning just to scrape by and provide for your family? Or what it means to work for decades and pay contributions, only to find in the end that you

can barely make ends meet on a meagre pension? At the BSW rally in Berlin, I spoke about why we urgently need a return to policies that improve people's lives, rather than burdening them with ever more cuts. You can watch the video of my full speech and the contributions from all the other speakers [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbDrBIS7Kfc). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbDrBIS7Kfc>

Expensive gifts to Ukraine

The war in Ukraine has already cost German taxpayers over 100 billion euros. This year alone, a further eleven billion is being sent to Kyiv in military aid. On top of that comes the EU's 90-billion gift, which is largely financed by German taxpayers. As if that weren't enough, CDU politician Norbert Röttgen is calling for even more money for Ukraine. How mad can you get? No, we don't need any more billions in German taxpayers' money for the corrupt Zelenskyy government in Kyiv! What is needed, at long last, is a diplomatic initiative from the federal government to end this senseless war. Merz and the CDU are pursuing policies that work against their own people and must be voted out of office as a matter of urgency!

No money for Nazi admirers!

Whilst German government politicians want to hand over further billions in taxpayers' money to Kyiv, the Zelenskyy government is paying homage, with great fanfare, to the Ukrainian Nazi collaborator Andriy Melnyk. The far-right machinations and the open cult of Nazism within the Ukrainian government seem to be of little interest to the otherwise so active 'fighters against the far right'. After all, this does not sit well with the narrative they have

been trying to sell us for years – that Ukraine is also defending 'our values'. Enough of this double standard! Not a single cent more for Ukraine!

Is Merz driving us into war?

This Saturday, we're launching a campaign against the Merz government with a rally in Magdeburg. We're taking to the streets to protest against rearmament, the threat of war, cuts to social services and the energy crisis! The kick-off for 'Our 2026 World Cup: Out with Merz!' is at 4 pm on Willy-Brandt-Platz. I'll be speaking there and would love to see as many of you as possible. With this Chancellor, Germany is in danger of being relegated. Merz needs to be sent off. Let's show him the red card together!

The threat of war is growing

By handing out billions in aid to the corrupt Zelenskyy government, Merz has turned Germany into the main financier of the war in Ukraine. This is not only a staggering misappropriation of taxpayers' money, but also extremely dangerous! After all, Ukraine is currently stepping up attacks on targets deep within Russian territory – something that would not be possible without financial and technological support from Germany. Why this increases the risk of a retaliatory strike by the nuclear power Russia against Germany, and why we must take to the streets to protest against the Merz government before it is too late – I discuss these and other questions in a new podcast with Salim Samatou. [A stand-up comic].

A wonderful freedom of expression?

When he was leader of the

Union parliamentary group, Friedrich Merz commissioned a company to comb through the internet and bring legal proceedings against hundreds of citizens for alleged insults. And it is precisely this same Merz who is now stepping forward to extol the state of freedom of expression in Germany. Is this not the height of hypocrisy? Has the Chancellor ever wondered whether the fact that citizens are being fined for sometimes trivial criticisms of politicians, or that the police suddenly turn up at their door to carry out a search, might have an intimidating effect? This must stop! This government should be consigned to the dustbin of history as soon as possible.

18 June

The launch of our campaign against the Merz government was a resounding success! Despite some rain at times, over 1,000 people turned out for our rally in Magdeburg. This shows that Germany is in World Cup spirit – and in 'Get rid of Merz' spirit! The event, including all the speeches, can be viewed [here](#)

Get rid of Merz!

The Merz government is driving Germany into decline. More and more industrial companies are relocating or going bust, and hundreds of thousands of well-paid jobs are being destroyed. Whilst there are shortages everywhere and people's lives are constantly getting worse, the federal government is, in all seriousness, discussing where else it can make cuts. Yet there is an unlimited supply of money available – solely to prolong the senseless war in Ukraine and to finance the corrupt Zelenskyy government. Enough is enough! East Germans can stop Merz and his disastrous policies in

September. Anyone who votes for the BSW to oust the CDU and SPD minister-presidents in the east and pave the way for a cross-party minister-president will also send Merz into retirement! My speech at our 'Get rid of Merz' rally.

Chancellor of Insolvencies

The vulture of bankruptcy is circling over the German economy and more and more workers are losing their jobs. Last year alone, 120,000 industrial workers fell victim to company bankruptcies. In the first few months of this year, an average of around 70 companies a day filed for insolvency. With its toxic mix of policies – comprising overpriced energy, excessive regulation and billions in debt for rearmament and Zelenskyy – the Merz government is destroying prosperity on a massive scale. We must stop this Chancellor before our country suffers irreparable damage! My interview with Tichys Einblick.

"Today's public service broadcasting is a disaster"

Claudia Wittig was no longer willing to stand by and watch as Germany continues its downward spiral. She is standing as the BSW's lead candidate in the state election in Saxony-Anhalt. Where does the frustration – particularly amongst East Germans – with the established parties and media stem from? Can public service broadcasting still be reformed? And what coalitions are on the cards for the BSW? I discussed these issues with Claudia in an episode of "Sahra meets".

Excuses from ARD and ZDF

The BSW is the only party to be almost completely excluded from public service broadcasting. This is undemocratic and a slap in the face for our voters. Ahead of the eastern state elections, the media firewall against the BSW is being raised

even higher.

The ARD's response to our [complaint](#) is a bad joke. To pass off the blatant bias of state broadcasting and the invitation of the same old war propagandists as editorial freedom is truly brazen. Public service broadcasting has long since failed to fulfil its remit. The BSW boycott is just the tip of the iceberg.

It is no coincidence that the "Tagesschau" increasingly reminds East Germans of "Aktuelle Kamera" [GDR state TV as was]. Public service broadcasting no longer has anything to do with balanced reporting and diversity of opinion. The [WELT](#) (paywall) reports on this unfortunate incident.

25 June

Never again war!

This week, on 22 June, marked the 85th anniversary of Hitler's Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union. Twenty-seven million people fell victim to the Nazis' campaign of extermination on the territory of the former Soviet Union, the majority of them Russians. It is a scandal that this day is increasingly being erased from public remembrance in Germany. This disgraceful approach to remembrance is, unfortunately, in keeping with the new German zeitgeist, which seeks to mentally prepare us for the next war with Russia. It is a complete disregard for history and extremely dangerous that, once again today, targets deep within Russia are being attacked and Russian civilians killed using German weapons, German technology and German money. 22 June should serve as a reminder that such a thing must never be repeated. But whoever brings war to Russia with German weapons will, at some point, bring war to Germany too. The German government must urgently prioritise diplomacy over escalation and do everything in its power to prevent another catastrophe that, in the nuclear age, could wipe out the whole of Germany. Never again war!

The 'Atlantic Bridge' Chancellor

How embarrassing! No matter how often Trump insults, threatens or slaps punitive tariffs on Merz and the Europeans, our 'Atlantic Bridge' Chancellor stands ready to curry favour with 'Daddy' Trump. Enough is enough! Germany finally needs a chancellor again who represents our interests, rather than kowtowing to the US.

"Merz doesn't need to teach East Germans about democracy!"

Thomas Schulze knows a thing or two about life. The 62-year-old initially worked as a chef and restaurant manager in the GDR. After reunification, he moved into the prison service. Since 2024, he has been working at the Stendal refugee accommodation centre and, alongside this, he was also a member of the German Football Association's Youth Advisory Board. He will be standing as the BSW's lead candidate in the state election in Saxony-Anhalt. Why did he join the BSW? How does he intend, with our party, to finally put the interests of the people back at the centre of attention after decades of disastrous policies? And what does he make of the 'firewall' against the AfD? I spoke to Thomas about this in an episode of 'Sahra meets'.

Alexander King gives the Berlin government a dressing-down

The Berlin Senate is failing to take any action to protect the economy and citizens from exorbitant energy prices and to improve the lives of workers. Instead, Berlin too is setting its course for a war footing. In three recent speeches on the phasing out of the [fuel rebate](#), wage dumping in the [healthcare sector](#) and [Bundeswehr recruitment](#) in schools, our Berlin BSW MP and lead candidate for the House of Representatives election, Alexander King, gives the Berlin state government a piece of his mind.

Gary Stevenson—Tax the super-rich

By Catherine Dunlop

Gabriel Zucman is not as urgent, in his little book *'We need to tax the Billionaires'* at least, as Gary Stevenson on his Channel 'Gary's Economics'. They agree on their one main point, and Stevenson has done an interview with Zucman recently on his channel.

Gary Stevenson makes one point only on his channel, which is 'Tax wealth not work' because the untaxed super-wealthy are on the way to owning most of the world's assets and consequently making everyone else poor.

Years ago, he used to give the example of Rishi Sunak with a wealth of £700 million making so many thousands a week just through interest. Recently he gave the example of the world's first trillionaire. His wealth automatically makes him \$137 million a day. \$137 MILLION A DAY. That money does not lie in a pile somewhere, it is used to buy assets and make more money. It is clear that the super-rich will outbid everyone for the assets that exist. Stevenson compares

them to a black hole that sucks everything into themselves. They will end up buying everything and everyone will be poor.

I understand this process when I think of the effect the 'normal' rich (people who have an income that might allow them to buy and sustain the upkeep of a second home) have on for example the population of picturesque coastal towns. They buy property there, drive the price up and prevent the locals from getting a look in.

That effect is multiplied unimaginably once wealth reaches the billionaire mark.

Stevenson says if you think this does not concern you, you are like China and India in the 18th century looking at distant Europe developing industrially and financially and thinking it did not concern them. They were soon involved when they found that Europe forced them to trade on unequal terms and ruined them, initiating a century of humiliation for China and famines in India when fields used to grow food for locals were turned to tea and cotton

cultivation for export.

In Europe and the USA today, the billionaires want to use water for their data centres (used to spy on you and take your jobs). This will deprive you and your kids of water or, to put it another way, access to water will go to the richest and consequently most powerful.

Stevenson fears that the strategy of the super-wealthy when deprivation starts to bite will be to set the poor against each other along race lines, a path Elon Musk has started encouraging people to take.

We can see the difference in the politics of France and Britain, when the French House of Commons (Chambre des Députés) has already voted Zucman's wealth tax into law, whereas an equally qualified and brilliant economist, Gary Stevenson, is reduced to making desperate appeals on a YouTube channel. So far he only has the ear of the leader of a small disorganised party, the Greens.

Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

Morally bankrupt, but the wages are great!

Tories as Latter-Day Anti-Fascists

‘Money Makers’ are Chieftains and Money Takers

Snippets

Iran: Willingness to Suffer

Poland and West Ukraine: Normal Hatreds Resumed

Trump and Musk’s Anti-State Folly

Losing the Moon? Or Losing Life on Mars?

Children of Sixteen?

Lowering the Cost of Motherhood

Green and Compromising

**Morally bankrupt,
but the wages are great!**

I’m certain that Keir Starmer did not tell Labour members that the party was morally bankrupt when he needed their votes to become leader. And that’s a moral issue, far more important than the fact that several recent Prime Ministers were not party leaders when their party last faced the electorate.

The wider problem is what many Labour MPs have become, especially after parts of the Labour left favoured graduates who sounded left-wing. Preferred them to the rooted trade unionists who had once been more commonly selected.

Corbyn in 2017 got the biggest-ever Labour vote since Tony Blair’s first victory. One has to wonder, is victory for Labour their first priority?

It is reasonable to ask whether someone with a basic annual salary above £90,000 can meaningfully represent the interests of people on ordinary incomes.

The median annual salary for full-time workers is below £38,000. MPs also receive expenses in addition to their salaries. As a result, they sit within a comparatively privileged group, with access to networks and opportunities that may lead to far greater wealth.

Don’t call it a betrayal of fine old democratic traditions. Britain’s Parliament was not originally designed as a democratic institution.

England has had parliamentary institutions since the medieval period, drawing on systems already present in Continental Europe. Looking back to the Roman Republic. Yet Rome gave most voting power to its richest citizens (<https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Rome-s-Undemocratic-Republic>).

It was designed to create fellow-feeling among a diversity of people with regional power. Not to give ordinary people what they wanted, when this did not suit ‘Upper London’.

‘Upper London’ is my way of emphasising that power rests with an elite centred on London, though often with homes elsewhere. It is much more accurate than saying ‘Britain’ wanted things. Just now, Britain wants a wealth tax, and Britain wants limits placed on what Israel does in Gaza. But ‘Upper London’ has so far got its way on both issues.

England divided power between a few hundred titled aristocrats and a ‘House of Commons’. But that chamber was not common in the modern sense: even before Rotten Boroughs spread, only about one-seventh of adult men had the vote. Only in the 1880s did a majority of men living in the core of the wider British Empire get a useful vote (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/40-britain/665-2/>).

MPs were unpaid until 1911. They were ‘Gentlemen of Independent Means’: men who lived from ordinary people’s labour as property owners or shareholders, without any obligation to do anything to help the people they lived off.

When MPs finally received salaries, £400 a year placed them firmly among the privileged. Britain was then poorer, and this was before historic inflation; average annual earnings were £70.

Their concern for ordinary people could resemble the concern many people show for pets or favoured wild animals. Suffering should be avoided, but their needs are still balanced against those of ‘people like us’.

For most MPs, ‘people like us’ means the privileged 5%, along with deep admiration for multi-millionaires and billionaires. Real power lies less with the few thousand billionaires, who together hold only about a fifth of private wealth, than with this wider privileged class. Legal but dishonest subsidies and hostile media controlled by multi-millionaires matter, but shared economic interest matters more.

Many of our ‘democratically elected’ MPs feel more affinity with billionaires than with the 90% or 95% whose interests differ sharply from their own.

Those majorities increasingly support wealth taxes, yet elected centre-left representatives abandoned that idea during the era of Tony Blair and Bill Clinton.

Obama did much to reduce existing racial inequalities, but during the 2008 economic crisis he firmly defended the interests of the 5%. Gordon Brown acted similarly during his brief period as Labour Prime Minister.

Those richer than the 90% but poorer than the 5% merely broke even, as they have since Reagan and Thatcher. That is why I have spoken of the 'Next Nine' and rejected the possibility of uniting the 99% against a handful of billionaires. This is a class issue, not a struggle between 'The People' and sinister rich figures lurking in the shadows. And people within the richest 10% may still want economic fairness.

Tories as Latter-Day Anti-Fascists

The problem is that we elect the wrong people as national representatives, after which their incomes place them within the 5%. It also gives them the prospect of far greater rewards if they reliably defend the rich.

The rise of socialism and communism frightened the 5%. Many supported fascism in the 1920s and 1930s (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/44-fascism-and-world-war-2/how-the-tory-party-aided-hitlers-rise/>). They became Latter-Day Anti-Fascists when Nazi Germany attacked the non-fascist West, and the Soviet Union became necessary to help save them. Our elites try to rewrite this history, but the Nazis kept two-thirds of their army on the Eastern Front until the very end (<https://www.quora.com/q/mrgwydionmwilliams/Nazi-Germany-Was-Defeated-in-Russia>).

Churchill was a hero of the anti-Nazi war, but when fascism was confined to middling and pro-British Italy, he went beyond most Tories as an enthusiast for Mussolini (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/44-fascism-and-world-war-2/why-churchill-admired-mussolini/>).

While memories of fascism's rise and defeat remained strong, only a few eccentrics wanted a revival in another form. Many socialist ideas about state management and regulation were tolerated, even normalised. Most still exist, though treated as 'secret vices'.

Even many left-wingers had, and have, an irrational fear of 'corporatism'. Anti-state populism remains depressingly strong, even though no successful populist politics has worked without state power behind it. Growing acceptance

of gays and lesbians is the clearest example, but there are many others. Consider the restrictions on speeding and public tobacco-smoking, both denounced only a couple of decades ago as grave infringements of personal liberty.

Benjamin Franklin famously wrote in 1789:

"In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."

I am surprised that this is so often treated as wisdom. Every society beyond tribalism has taxes. Tribal societies impose social obligations that may feel even more burdensome to ordinary members bound by tribal norms. But taxes within civilisations can be very uneven. Some people, usually the privileged, may be exempt from taxes. That was a major grievance behind the French Revolution.

In studying the decline of empires around the world, I have noticed that tax avoidance by the rich is often a major factor. Someone should write a book about it; I already have more useful projects than I am likely to complete in my lifetime (<https://gwydionmadawc.com/ideas-you-might-borrow/2537-2/>).

State power cannot prevent death indefinitely, but it can do much to lengthen or shorten lives. The USA, with its dogmatic faith in people spending 'their own money' within a profit-driven economy, has lower life expectancy than Britain or any other Western country. And that despite spending more than twice as much per person on health care.

Why do MPs not address this? Because most are embedded within the 5%, and the present arrangement suits them.

If I could change the system, every MP would have to live on the average wage of an ordinary worker. They would receive a lifetime guarantee of at least that amount, but could not rise above it.

That would keep them tied to the interests of the 90%.

For now, Burnham has spoken of Britain being on the wrong track for the last 40 years. Does he accept that Thatcher messed up when she stopped being an authentic conservative and started undermining the society with

Radical Right foolishness?

I will wait and watch. See if he prefers to be another historic failure. My mind is open for now.

'Money Makers' are Chieftains and Money Takers

The 'reforms' of Reagan and Thatcher did not improve wealth creation in either the USA or Britain. In Western Europe and Japan, they helped reduce the exceptional growth that many of those countries had enjoyed in the 1950s and 1960s (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/the-mixed-economy-won-the-cold-war/>).

Thatcher persuaded people that the advances made in Continental Western Europe were dangerous and had to be addressed. Her answers were mistaken, and the elements of the New Right programme that those countries adopted damaged their earlier successes.

Many businesspeople now recognise that something has gone wrong:

"Three-quarters of UK millionaires would be happy to pay more tax, research finds

"Despite concerns super-rich are leaving due to tax burdens, 88% of those surveyed were proud to live in UK and would pay more to fund public services". (<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2026/may/13/three-quarters-uk-millionaires-willing-pay-more-tax-research-finds>).

Society is complex and depends on many activities that do not generate commercial profit. Some functions are performed worse when commercialised, with health care a notable example. When freed from regulation, businesspeople often take more for themselves, but this benefits them alone.

Here again, the conventional left-wing answer is inadequate. Tribes need chiefs in order to function, although chiefs require sensible regulation. There is also genuine skill involved in being an effective chief. But that does not make such people superior in other matters. Individual minds are often brilliant in some areas and weak in others. Chess offers a clear example: strong players can defeat dozens of ordinary

opponents, yet this does not mean they possess broader wisdom. Bobby Fischer was a tragic example of someone highly gifted in one field but baffled by ordinary life.

A common feature of chiefs is that they seek to expand their own power, regardless of whether this benefits those they are meant to serve.

At present, Western politicians are preoccupied with the supposed danger of being overtaken by the rest of the world, even though people in the West are generally better off than ever before.

It's not even that the West is in danger of losing its dominant position. It is true that the Soviet Union's decline and the Reagan-Thatcher shift led much of the world to turn away from Western values. But do we have the right to demand conformity from others when our own confidence in those values is weakening?

The numbers may appear alarming. Muslims make up about 24% of the world's population, although not all live in officially Islamic states. India and China, the world's two largest states, account for another 18% and 17%. A further 20% belongs to the diverse countries of a broadly-defined Global South. Yet most of these societies have less in common with each other than they do with the West. They usually communicate with one another in English, because few people in any bloc speak the native language of another. Only a minority of Muslims speak Arabic.

Mao declared that China should never seek hegemony, at a time when few in the West would have thought it likely. Xi sticks to this wisdom. Meantime Islamic countries have great trouble collaborating with each other, and India seeks only to secure Hindu values on its own territory. No 'clash of civilisations' except in the minds of people determined to impose their own imperfect values on everyone else.

Snippets

Iran: Willingness to Suffer

Sylvester Stallone did his best work with the 1976 film *Rocky*. It offered a romantically exaggerated version of the real fact that some boxers are

immensely difficult to knock out. A real referee would certainly stop the fight before the 'tough guy' suffered permanent brain damage, and the sequels were more realistic. But it plays to what most people want to believe.

And for much of the world, Iran holding out against the worst the USA can do is just as welcome. They suffered a lot more, but retained power.

Internal liberal opposition seems limited. People reluctant to suffer do not overthrow entrenched and self-confident autocratic regimes. The hard-liners have often won contested elections against more moderate candidates.

How did it happen? I think the US elite got so used to weak insincere US 'Fundamentalists' that they forgot what real religion could be like. Thought it would be fine to carry through radical economic reform and disturb traditional opinion while suppressing sincere secular left-wing radicals.

Iran as it now is may actually concede on enriched uranium. They no longer need nuclear weapons. And the USA had a point that some of Iran's stockpile had become dangerously close to being suitable for a basic atom bomb. But drones and missiles with conventional explosives and incendiaries turn out to be very effective. Much less likely to be disapproved of by the wider world.

*

Poland and West Ukraine: Normal Hatreds Resumed

"Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky has been stripped of Poland's highest state honour, the Order of the White Eagle, over Kyiv's decision to name a military unit after controversial World War Two fighters.

"Polish President Karol Nawrocki branded Ukraine's decision late last month to name the unit after the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) 'outrageous', 'incomprehensible' and 'deeply disappointing'...

"Ukraine's Foreign Minister ... denounced Warsaw's move, calling it a 'strategic mistake' and 'disrespectful'.

"Many in Ukraine regard the UPA, which existed in the 1940s and 1950s, as heroes who fought for Ukrainian independence against the Soviet Red Army as well as Nazi Germany and Polish authorities. So for Ukrainians the title 'Heroes of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army' is a major honour.

"Poland, however, accuses the UPA of carrying out a genocide of ethnic Poles in Volhynia (now Volyn in Ukraine) in 1943-45." (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cr7xzg3dmj8o>).

That's the BBC 'putting lipstick on the pig'. No Briton would speak of '*the controversial World War Two Waffen-SS*', but that branch of the SS did less massacres of Jews and Poles than the West Ukrainian nationalists were once well-known to have done.

Well-known until 2014, when British media suddenly showed how to be selectively forgetful (<https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Ukraine-Western-Media-in-2014-Reported-Nazi-Links>).

*

Trump and Musk's Anti-State Folly

"Why Ebola came back — and a warning for the next pandemic.

"The outbreak in the DR Congo is unlikely to spread worldwide. But it comes at a time of cuts to health budgets and exposes a worrying lack of preparedness for 'Disease X'...

"Ebola is unlikely to be the cause of the next pandemic. The virus acts with such frightening speed, causing fluid loss, bleeding and organ failure, that it kills in weeks, if not days. That is a dead-end strategy for a virus bent on global domination.

"But the Congolese outbreak is a dress rehearsal for what might come next in an era when international funding for global health is shrinking faster than you can say Elon Musk and public trust in science and multilateral solutions is wavering." (<https://www.ft.com/content/e6e31057-aded-4109-9f5e-6808c7737b0d> (pay site))

"How the screwworm broke through US defences and returned to Texas cattle...

"According to an analysis cited by Senate Democrats ... the USDA agency responsible for responding to animal disease threats such as

screwworm, has fallen by more than half during the Trump administration in Texas following staff departures and restructuring efforts.” (<https://www.ft.com/content/7857e93b-68a2-492b-802a-d128aceab01e> (pay site))

And he’s even made a mess of a pool attached to the White House, getting a friend to do an expensive fix. It is now full of algae (<https://www.nytimes.com/2026/06/15/climate/reflecting-pool-algae-green.html> (pay site)).

*

Losing the Moon? Or Losing Life on Mars?

Musk was brilliant in getting used rocket stages to descend and be caught for re-use. But he risks a massive loss of reputation if he does not deliver a moon landing vehicle that can work with the NASA-built Artemis rockets.

It should have been easy: the Apollo program managed it with a lander and an ascent vehicle sitting on top of the lander. But the intent was to have much better, and so far ‘better’ is not yet ‘working reliably’. Musk’s *Space X* has yet to manage it, and likewise Jeff Bezos’s *Blue Origin*.

Both are supposed to be tested in 2027 by the new *Artemis III*, which will check whether both could be used for the real moon landing. Humans on the moon are now *Artemis IV*, scheduled for 2028.

There are US worries that there will be delays, and China will get there first. China has spoken of landings in the 2030s. But though they have sent robotic probes as far as Mars, they have yet to send humans for even a passive loop round the moon. Both Apollo and Artemis did this, and I’d not expect the Chinese to risk their current zero-deaths record.

They may however be the first to return soil samples from Mars. Scheduled to begin in 2028 and return in 2031. An existing NASA / ESA program got cuts and delays: it is currently expected to return samples in 2035.

*

Children of Sixteen?

“Social media to be banned for under-16s in landmark government move to give kids their childhood back”. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/social-media-to-be-banned-for-under-16s-in-landmark-government-move-to-give-kids-their-childhood-back>)

[news/social-media-to-be-banned-for-under-16s-in-landmark-government-move-to-give-kids-their-childhood-back](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/social-media-to-be-banned-for-under-16s-in-landmark-government-move-to-give-kids-their-childhood-back)).

I don’t feel qualified to make rules for today’s teenagers, though my strong feeling is that protections regarding sex are correct and should maybe be strengthened. But I do note confusion in public thinking. Young people at sixteen are definitely not children. But they are also not adults.

For a science-fiction epic, I imagined a human settlement beyond our solar system that had rethought this. Its people abolished the idea of “teenagers”: at age 12, the young were no longer called children, but were officially classified as “Halflings”. All done with ceremonies and prizes, done separately from the religious coming-of-age ceremonies that the religious among them do separately. But the similar step up to be ‘MidRangers’ at 14. Then Thresholder at 16, Pre-Adult at 18, and Young Adult at 25. And since I based it loosely on what we have, I have them keep the current British age of consent at 16.

It may be a crazy idea, but try thinking about it.

*

Lowering the Cost of Motherhood

Almost every country has a bigger population than it had ever had. Ireland, blighted by the British Empire, is unusual in having fewer (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/past-issues/isolated-labour-affairs-pages-before-2015/needless-suffering-in-the-1840s-irish-potato-famine/>). But the same is found in parts of Wales and Scotland (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/past-issues/past-issues-before-2016/isolated-labour-affairs-pages-before-2015/how-the-british-empire-blighted-britain/>). Nice places to live, but the work was taken away by what I call Upper London. By a ruling class that looks after just the richest 5% or 10% and neglects the rest.

The same people get angry that fewer women have several children, or even one child. But it is part of a much longer trend. One which was largely ignored until a smooth decline caused the earlier panic over over-population to flip into a panic about the population dwindling and even vanishing.

‘Reforms’ that abolished neighbourly streets and crammed

them into tower blocks were a cause. But it is also women having a lot more possibilities in life.

To me, the answer is a major new branch of the Welfare State. A well-funded *Motherhood Support Agency*. I’d gladly pay tax for it, since life would be meaningless to me if there were no future generations.

The human tradition has never been to have one lone woman tied to several dependent children, with or without a man to help. It has always been about a group of women knowing and trusting each other. So, make it a paid service, and with basic state regulation of licenced agencies that provide several occasional helpers for every mother who does not specifically refuse it.

‘Too expensive’, say MPs who can easily hire what help they need for their own children. And have plenty to spend on wars that generally end in political failure.

*

Green and Compromising

“Greens discuss downgrading some policies to prepare for possible UK coalition...”

“The party would instead create a concise platform that would be non-negotiable in any talks to ally with another party, according to two people briefed on discussions.

“A wealth tax would be one of these non-negotiable policies, a senior party figure said.

“Among the policies that could be given less priority are pledges to outlaw private landlords, reduce the speed limit to 55mph and a migration policy whose ultimate goal is a ‘world without borders’.” (<https://www.ft.com/content/c2eb5a75-ebc0-4981-9452-2b5aceab4fea>).

Policies on transsexuals are not mentioned. They could sensibly say they’d demand a free vote. Something their MPs would be required to support, but allies need not.

*

I write regular blogs - <https://www.quora.com/q/mrgwydionmwilliams>. I also post a lot on X (Twitter): <https://x.com/GwydionMW>

Trump and the JCPoA

By David Morrison

On 14 July 2015, Iran signed a nuclear agreement with the US and five other states (China, France, Germany, Russia and the UK). The agreement, known as the JCPoA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), was endorsed unanimously by the UN Security Council in resolution [2231](#) on 20 July 2015 and thereby became an international agreement to which all UN member states had a duty to adhere.

The JCPoA placed severe restrictions on Iran's uranium enrichment capabilities and its stockpile of enriched uranium. For example, for the next 15 years, Iran's level of enrichment was capped at 3.67%, the level appropriate for power generation reactors – 90% enrichment is required for a nuclear weapon – and its stockpile of enriched uranium was limited to 300kgs.

Sir Simon Gass was the head of the UK team that took part in negotiating the agreement. In a letter to The Times on 16 June 2025, he wrote:

“... it is worth remembering that in 2015 a group of six countries, including the UK, negotiated with Iran the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA) — an agreement that, if it were in force today, would restrict Iran to a mere 300kg of uranium enriched to no more than 3.67 per cent, far from the quantity or purity needed for a nuclear weapon. The agreement included an inspection regime of unprecedented intrusiveness to ensure Iran was not cheating. In return, Iran was promised relief from international economic sanctions.”

Not in force today

The JCPoA is not in force today, thanks to President Trump, who on 8 May 2018 during his first

term unilaterally terminated US adherence to it and reapplied the crushing US economic sanctions on Iran that were lifted when it came into force in January 2016. This inevitably meant that Iran's adherence to the agreement was also at an end and Iran was no longer subject to the enrichment limitations imposed by it. Shortly afterwards, his Secretary of State Mike Pompeo [issued](#) an ultimatum to Iran making 12 demands that it must satisfy before sanctions are lifted, one of them being the cessation of uranium enrichment.

The President took this action despite the fact that Iran was in full compliance with the agreement and had been since it came into force in January 2016. From then on, the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Authority) issued quarterly reports on Iran's compliance. Its tenth such report on 9 May 2018, like all its predecessors, confirmed Iran's compliance, IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano [stating](#):

“Iran is subject to the world's most robust nuclear verification regime under the JCPoA As of today, the IAEA can confirm that the nuclear-related commitments are being implemented by Iran.”

Trump ends restrictions on Iranian enrichment

The President [portrayed](#) his decision to terminate the JCPoA as a measure to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. But that makes no sense, since eliminating the enrichment constraints of the JCPoA freed Iran to reach the 90% level of enrichment required for a nuclear weapon, if it had a mind to do so. Today, according to the IAEA, Iran has roughly 440 kg of uranium enriched up to 60%

purity. That was made possible by the President's termination of the JCPoA.

Today, the President regularly tells outrageous lies about the JCPoA. For instance, on 3 March 2026, he [said](#) it gave Iran “the right to have top-of-the-line nuclear weapons”. That is simply untrue. In reality, the JCPoA restricted Iran's level of enrichment to 3.67%, which is far from the level required for a nuclear weapon. The President removed that restriction when he terminated the JCPoA.

On 28 January 2020, speaking alongside Benjamin Netanyahu in the White House, President Trump [confessed](#):

“As everyone knows, I have done a lot for Israel: moving the United States Embassy to Jerusalem; recognizing — (applause) — recognizing the Golan Heights — (applause) — and, frankly, perhaps most importantly, getting out of the terrible Iran nuclear deal. (applause)”

Nuclear deal possible in May 2025

After he returned to office in January 2025, President Trump said on many occasions that he wanted a deal with Iran. Needless to say, he repeatedly emphasised that Iran mustn't develop nuclear weapons, but at the outset it wasn't clear if the US would agree to limited uranium enrichment.

In May 2025, when negotiations were ongoing with the US, Iran stated publicly that, in exchange for the lifting of US sanctions, it was prepared to agree to a deal in which the enrichment level was limited to 3.67%. This offer was made public in an [NBC News report](#) on 14 May 2025:

“Iran is ready to sign a nuclear

deal with certain conditions with President Donald Trump in exchange for lifting economic sanctions, a top adviser to Iran's supreme leader told NBC News on Wednesday.

"Ali Shamkhani, a top political, military and nuclear adviser to Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, is one of the most senior Iranian officials to speak publicly about the ongoing discussions.

"He said Iran would commit to never making nuclear weapons, getting rid of its stockpiles of highly enriched uranium which can be weaponized, agree to enrich uranium only to the lower levels needed for civilian use, and allow international inspectors to supervise the process, in exchange for the immediate lifting of all economic sanctions on Iran.

"Asked if Iran would agree to sign an agreement today if those conditions were met, Shamkhani said, Yes."

The US could have taken up that proposal and reinstated something like the JCPoA, but it didn't. Instead, it aborted its ongoing negotiations with Iran and joined Israel in aggression against Iran.

Memorandum of Understanding

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the US and Iran on 17 June 2026 states the following on the nuclear issue:

"The Islamic Republic of Iran reiterates that it will never produce nuclear weapons. The Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States have agreed that the fate of enriched material and the fate of all other mutually agreed nuclear-related issues, including Iran's nuclear needs, will be adequately addressed in a final agreement; the final agreement will confirm the provisions of this Article."

Iran's undertaking there that it will never produce nuclear weapons reaffirms a position it has maintained since it joined the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) in 1970 as a "non-nuclear-weapons" state. Under Article II of the NPT, "non-nuclear-weapons" state members are required to undertake "not to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices".

(By contrast, Israel opted out of the NPT so that it was free to acquire nuclear weapons and

other nuclear explosive devices - and it did so over 50 years ago in the late 1960s.)

In return for surrendering its right to develop nuclear weapons, the NPT grants "non-nuclear-weapon" states like Iran the right to develop a civil nuclear programme. Article IV(1) of the treaty makes this clear:

"Nothing in this Treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes."

So, on the face of things, the NPT gives all "non-nuclear-weapon" states what it calls an "inalienable right" to uranium enrichment on their own soil, so long as the enrichment is not for weapons manufacture. Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Japan and the Netherlands are all in the same position as Iran. They are all "non-nuclear-weapon" state parties to the NPT. All of them have uranium enrichment facilities.

For more than a decade from 2003 onwards Iran resisted fierce pressure from the US and its allies to cease enrichment. Its right to enrichment was conceded in the JCPoA. It can be taken for granted that in upcoming negotiations with the US Iran will resist any proposal that cancels that right. But it will probably be prepared to accept some restrictions on the enrichment level and to downblend the existing 60% enriched uranium under IAEA supervision. It's highly unlikely that the US will be prepared to go back to war to enforce a more restrictive regime.

Continued From Page 24

access; transport costs to MetLife Stadium reportedly running at around £110 for the return journey. Football crowds have always been loud, and at times profane, and physically present in a way that American corporate sport finds inconvenient.

The latest edition of this World Cup, which, in a matter of hours, will be declared officially open in Mexico City is exposing the contradictions on a grand scale. Football is not going to be saved from within FIFA. It is not going to be saved by "better corporate governance" or more enlightened tournament hosts. The game belongs to the people who play it in parks and streets, who travel across continents to watch it, who organised the first supporter groups and built the first independent clubs. The 2026 World Cup should be treated as a warning, and as a reminder that a genuine alternative is possible only when the game is wrested from the control of transnational capital, corrupt bureaucrats, and the imperial powers for which they serve as stewards. The ceremony is about to begin. Let us watch closely.

Fortress Football: The Debacle That Is the 2026 World Cup

By Alexandros Schulman

At the time of writing, it is just hours before the opening ceremony in Mexico City is due to commence. The flags are hung, the broadcast crews are in position, and we are about to go live. That moment should be one of celebration, but for any keen observer of the game, it arrives under a shadow. If FIFA persists on its current path, the “Beautiful Game” will remain beautiful only as spectacle, but spectacles require an audience.

In many ways, the World Cup has always been quite contradictory. Born with the same internationalist zeal and passion that animated the early labour movement and a recognition that the working classes share more across borders than they do with the ruling classes in their own countries, it was however captured almost from the start by commercial and state interests. In that aspect, what we are watching unfold is not a new betrayal, just as the Trump regime’s imperialism and right-wing zealotry is nothing new, but both are the same old thing. The same Empire and its institutions, just more nakedly visible, and they are happening right now, right as the Empire threatens Iran with more bombing and as the world turns its eyes to North America.

The scandals surrounding this World Cup are too numerous to testify to in this article, but let’s start with Omar Abdulkadir Artan. A Somali referee, with valid visa, full FIFA accreditation, a formal invitation to officiate at the tournament, and yet turned away at Miami airport. Infantino’s response deserves to be read carefully, because it tells you everything: immigration decisions, the organisation explained, belong to the United States government, and FIFA cannot interfere. Let that land for a moment.

An organisation that imposes financial fair play regulations on sovereign governments, that negotiates tax exemptions from host nations as a condition of staging matches, that dictates stadium specifications down to the

dimensions of hospitality suites and yet this organisation apparently has very little to say when a qualified African official is denied entry despite satisfying every formal requirement placed on him. The limits of FIFA’s authority are firmly exposed with remarkable precision, exactly where American state power begins. And it is happening hours before the opening whistle.

This is not incompetence. It is just the way things are, it is the same order we have already seen FIFA defend through its selective moral posturing and its willing enlistment in the machinery of American imperialism, whether it be banning Russia’s participation in sports due to its military campaigns or this latest immigration fiasco.

The immigration system of the United States is not broken. It is functioning as designed, commodifying human beings by their utility to capital and their threat to order. Artan’s exclusion is not an anomaly. Moroccan supporters are reporting mass visa refusals, up to 80%. Haitian fans are effectively barred from travelling. Iranian fans are barred from entering stadiums; indeed, the Iranian football team has been reportedly required to enter and leave within the same day. These are not administrative failures. This is the border regime and ICE doing its job, even as the opening ceremony’s final rehearsals are underway.

The comparison with Qatar is instructive, and it clearly makes liberal commentators deeply uncomfortable. The Western media’s four-year moral crusade against Qatar also served another function: it allowed institutions like FIFA, the Premier League, and their sponsors to pose as the conscience of the game while doing nothing structurally about anything. This is the same old time-honoured hypocrisy of moral posturing for those outside the imperial core and absolute impunity for those within it. And yet Qatar, for all its said faults, did not filter the world through a geopolitical lens before letting it attend a football

tournament. When the matches began, people came from Africa, from Asia, from Latin America, from the Middle East. Supporters walked between venues. They occupied public space. Infantino himself, in 2018, made the argument plainly: without the supporters of every participating nation, it cannot be called a World Cup.

The comparison with Russia 2018 is equally revealing. The Russian authorities, whatever their broader record, introduced the FAN ID system, a free, personalised spectator card that granted visa-free entry to all foreign fans from the 32 participating nations, alongside free inter-city train travel and free public transport on matchdays. It was an explicit commitment to making the tournament genuinely accessible. The contrast with the United States in 2026 could hardly be starker: where Russia opened its borders, the United States has weaponised them. Where Russia offered free transport to fans, the United States charges £110 for a return journey to MetLife Stadium. The FAN ID was a tool of inclusion; the FIFA PASS is little more than a priority scheduling system for a visa interview that still offers no guarantee of entry. The message is unmistakable: some hosts treat the World Cup as a celebration of global community; others treat it as a security operation with football as its entertainment wing.

Infantino notably has been backtracking from his earlier principles, which as it turns out, were always conditional. Just as FIFA’s “inclusivity” has always been bourgeois fiction, applied selectively to discipline adversaries only. And those conditions are being enforced as the final countdown to the opening ceremony ticks towards kick off.

Inside stadiums across the US, class politics are equally undisguised. Blanket prohibitions on swearing, restrictions on pedestrian

Continued On Page 23