

Labour Affairs

Incorporating the Labour and Trade Union Review

No. 371 - September 2026

Price £2.00 (€ 3.00)

Burnham's Administration is on the Road to Failure

Burnham is leading an administration that seems to have learned nothing from the administrations that governed the UK since the global financial crisis (GFC) in 2008. All these administrations failed. Keir Starmer failed, Rishi Sunak failed, Liz Truss failed, Boris Johnson failed, Theresa May failed, David Cameron failed, Gordon Brown failed. By failed we mean the Prime Minister resigned or was forced to resign or lost a general election.

A case could be made that this is not true of David Cameron who won the 2015 general election with a small overall majority. But this was almost an accidental victory caused by the collapse of the Liberal Democrat vote and Cameron's commitment to hold the Brexit referendum. He resigned a year later in 2016 after the loss of that referendum.

The primary reason that all these administrations failed is because they were committed to following a set of ridiculous fiscal rules around government spending, taxation and borrowing, that limited the ability of the state to act in the way that the society needed it to act.

Fiscal rules are a somewhat new invention for which the Labour Party chancellor, Gordon Brown, must take much responsibility. Administrations cannot avoid having views on spending and taxation. Previous governments (including under Nigel Lawson and Ken Clarke) had fiscal objectives and targets too, but Gordon Brown introduced the first genuinely codified, rules-based framework, with a specific numerical target and an explicit accountability mechanism, rather than a looser set of policy commitments. Brown also made the Bank of England (BoE) independent in the sense that the BoE could set interest rates without consulting with the chancellor. Before Brown, the chancellor's permission was required before interest rates could be changed by the BoE.

Brown felt that with his explicit fiscal rules he was introducing an era of fiscal responsibility. In fact Brown introduced an era of great fiscal irresponsibility. Successive administrations focused on following fiscal rules rather than doing what the country needed.

The genuine irrelevance of the fiscal rules is illustrated by the fact that in moments of crisis the fiscal rules are quickly ditched. Thus in 2008 the government created a huge amount of money to stop the global financial crisis becoming a UK depression. Similarly, in the Covid crisis of 2020, a huge amount of money was created to stop a depression emerging. However, once the crisis has passed, the clamour to follow the fiscal rules starts again.

Starmer was a dour uninteresting man who seemed to have little feel for the people over which he was prime minister. But it was not his personality that destroyed his administration. It was the religious fervour with which his Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, proclaimed her adherence to fiscal rules.

It should have been crystal clear to Burnham that Reeves' preoccupation with fiscal rules destroyed the Starmer administration. But, instead of downplaying their importance, almost the first thing that Burnham announced was that he would be a close follower of Reeves' disastrous fiscal rules.

By that single act Burnham has put his administration on the road to guaranteed failure.

The next general election is less than 3 years away. If Burnham does not convince the electorate that he is making changes that will dramatically affect their standard of living, the Reform party may well form the next administration.

Does Burnham have the intent and ability to make the required dramatic changes? The evidence so far is not reassuring. On the most important issues he has chosen broadly to follow the policies of Starmer's

administration: he has declared his complete commitment to Rachel Reeves' fiscal rules, he has declared full support for the NATO proxy-war against Russia, he has refused to describe Israel's actions in Gaza as genocide, he continues to allow the US to use UK airfields to launch bombing raids on Iran.

On all the major issues, fiscal rules, Ukraine, Gaza, Iran, tax increases, Burnham's administration is indistinguishable from the Starmer administration. Cutting VAT on electricity and limiting bus fare to £2 pounds are welcomed by the electorate but there is a tsunami of increases in the cost of living approaching, if the war in Iran and the proxy-war against Russia continue. It is unclear that Burnham has any idea how to deal with that other than by introducing a thinly disguised austerity package.

Any Labour administration that attaches importance to fiscal rules is an administration destined for failure. The Tories understand this. It is no accident that forcing Labour to accept fiscal rules has been the Tories most important political objective. Indeed the Tories have used the fiscal rules to pursue their own political objectives.

When the Tories formed the coalition government after the 2010 general election, George Osborne and David Cameron were delighted to be able to use fiscal rules to further cut services and reduce the size of the state. The preoccupation with the size of the national debt has relentlessly destroyed one administration after another. It created the dissatisfaction that led to Brexit. It destroyed Theresa May's overall majority when the electorate were given the choice of Jeremy Corbyn as a prime minister who had no time for fiscal rules. It destroyed Boris Johnson's levelling up agenda. It destroyed Liz Truss and then Rishi Sunak. It has destroyed Starmer's Labour administration in 2 years, despite it having a huge overall majority.

But Burnham and the Labour

party continue to lock themselves into this guarantee of failure. There is no doubt it would be difficult to challenge the belief in fiscal rules which has achieved almost religious status. Yet fiscal rules were not a focus of UK administrations until the almost philosophical desire to reduce the size of the state took hold under Thatcher and subsequent Tory prime ministers and was embraced further by Tony Blair.

If Burnham is to win the next general election he must move Labour's preoccupation with fiscal rules to a preoccupation with resources. For instance, if Labour is to build more social housing, Burnham's question should not be where does he find the money. It should be where does he find the skilled workers and raw materials and land to build this social housing. He must shout from the rooftops Keynes' famous statement: If we can do it we can afford it. That should be the motto of his administration and its focus should be on finding the required resources.

We are not suggesting this task will be easy. Galileo found it was relatively easy to show that the earth went round the Sun. But he found the political task of having the physics accepted was much more difficult. Burnham has a similar problem. The economic case for abandoning the fiscal rules is relatively easy. But the political task of winning the argument to abandon a set of rules that have achieved almost religious status over the last 30 years will prove very difficult.

There is little evidence that Burnham has either the intent or ability to make this required political case. If he does not, his administration will fail as have all those other administrations that allowed fiscal rules to limit the role of the state.

But perhaps blundering into a war with Russia may save him.

Labour Affairs

No. 371, September 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

Editorial: Burnham's Administration is on the Road to Failure	1
The Soviet Union as a Failed World State	3
Nonsense about Government Bonds	7
Newsletter from Germany (Left Alternative)	8
Building and Apprenticeships Views from the Front Line.	10
Palestine Links	12
The Pursuit of European Unity Through War	13
Letter to the Editor about Dianne Abbott and the NATO Russia War	14
Notes on the News: Real Civilisations Don't Clash; China's 'Reformist' Leader	15
Democracy et cetera - What Fascism Was and Was Not	19
"The Architect or the Bee?" Problems of Economic Planning	24
Human Connections and Individualism	28

The Soviet Union as a Failed World State

By Gwydion M. Williams

From Soviet Globalism to Russian Imperialism Lost Globalisation Soviet Elites Reverting to a Ruling Class Talking Turkey

Was the Soviet collapse a failure of socialism? Or a failure from the 1960s of the strongest single socialist state? A failure caused by rival nationalisms, and a reluctance to move on from 1930s visions?

At a time when many Westerners cooed over Francis Fukuyama's promise that the Soviet collapse meant that everyone would now accept Western liberal capitalism, I thought otherwise:

"The Post-1956 Failure of Pro-Moscow Communism...

"Back in the days before Khrushchev the CP were the local representative of the crude, repressive but often highly effective World State that Stalin & Co. were trying to build. There was a real popular link between this growing World State and large numbers of working people, as well as any number of disaffected intellectuals. It was a democracy of sorts, and one that looked set to remake the world along the lines originally envisaged by Lenin.

"Khrushchev destroyed this democracy in 1956. He created as much confusion among Communists as the Pope would create among

Catholics if he were to say that Jesus was not after all the Son of God. In no sense did Khrushchev encourage the rank and file of World Communism to start thinking seriously about their own past. Some people mistakenly saw him as meaning this – the Hungarians, for instance, whom he crushed with tanks later on in 1956. The reality was that Khrushchev threw the movement into chaos by arbitrarily changing the beliefs that millions of ordinary people had built their lives around." (<https://wordpress.com/stats/post/5910/gwydionwilliams.com> 1991).

I had nothing major to correct or add in 2006, when I wrote *History: the end of Fukuyama* (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/past-issues/before-2018/isolated-labour-affairs-pages-before-2015/fukuyama-on-history-after-the-gulf-war/>).

The West in the 1980s had stabilised after the protests of the 1970s, but mostly because of confusion and a loss of hope. No one actually said '*the people united can still be pig-ignorant and self-harming*', but many former radicals felt it in 1972, when Nixon was re-elected in the largest landslide election victories in American history. Yet the 'conservative' position was no more attractive, with Nixon discredited in 1976. It began what continues to be an era of confusion. Most Anglos remained convinced of the transcendental merits of parliaments but not parliamentarians. Law but not lawyers. Free-market business principles, but not the honesty or good intent of most of the people actually running businesses.

In 1991, the disintegrating Soviet Union was to copy this same folly,

letting the neo-liberals go much further than had been allowed in the West. They took up Adam Smith's claim that an 'invisible hand' would somehow stop anything too bad from happening. But in the real world, the 'invisible hand' remained broadly invisible.

Anti-socialist notions were badly mistaken, and caused post-Soviet Russia to waste its potential and get overrun with crime and fraud. And between 1976 and 1991, the People's Republic of China was able to move on from 1930s values without ever surrendering to the unhealthy mix the West was offering.

But saying this leaves open the question of what it was that went wrong in the Soviet Union.

From Soviet Globalism to Russian Imperialism

Was the Soviet Union imperialist?

My answer is '**only from 1956 to 1989**'. Before that, it was an authoritarian version of World Socialism. One that was working honestly and successfully for ideals shared with a much wider global community. The only realistic builder of the World State that many socialists and other radicals saw as necessary for world peace.

The Soviet invasion and overthrow in 1956 of a left-wing and popular government in Hungary was a Russian-dominated version of Leninism using crude military force to crush the will of a sovereign state. They then repeated the process in Czechoslovakia in 1968. That can be seen with hindsight as the beginning of the end for the Soviet experiment (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/magazine-001-to-010/magazine-007-july-1988-2/the-1968-invasion-of-czechoslovakia-doomed-the-soviet-union/>).

Hungary had been the most willing of the Middle-European allies of Nazi Germany in the invasion of the Soviet Union. Pre-war Czechoslovakia had been a victim, and its socialist government had been promised Soviet support if France would defend them against Hitler. Home-grown Leninism had always been strong there, and still was in 1968. Communists got 31% in the free elections in 1946, and despite years of Russian oppression it still got 13.6% in 1990.

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/>

Stalin, who'd always understood the power of nationalism, had accepted the defection of Yugoslavia in the 1940s, when he had other options. In 1944, he'd rejected the option of conquering Finland when the Nazi retreat left it vulnerable. They had not joined the wider war, and the small community of Finnish Jews had been safe. But those Jews also had to do regular military service when this was objectively pro-Hitler. And Finns helped starve Leningrad by being part of the blockade. But allowed to choose its own future, Finland opted for a great many Moderate Socialist measures.

Interestingly, Stalin did also try to ramp down the Cold War. In 1950, he suggested a unified and neutral Germany (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stalin_Note). He might earlier have hoped to win over Germany as a whole. The Communist Party of Germany had got nearly 17% in the last vote before Hitler came to power. And neutrality was later the solution for Austria. Along with Yugoslavia, this would have made a permanent neutral zone between East and West. But the West rejected it, perhaps seeing that West Germany could be a vast asset in a future European Union. 70% of the land area after eastern annexations to Poland, and 80% of the population. And it seems that the supposed danger of Russian tanks rolling westwards was not a real worry for the top decision-makers when there was a chance to end it.

This event remains almost unknown, and gets left out of every survey of the period that I've seen. The idea of Stalin as a blunderer who just happened to smash Nazi Germany was so entrenched that no Western writer wanted to know. And most of those who still defend him remain stuck in the politics of the 1930s.

Khrushchev could have revived the idea of a neutral Germany when he supposedly tried for peace with the West. But was he ever sincere? Actions speak louder than words. Everything he and Brezhnev did suggests that conquest was still the real aim. And invading Afghanistan 1979 confirmed this to many. There were even people who saw it at the

time as another step to an 'inevitable' Soviet conquest of a feeble West. That's one of many awkward truths that most commentators who lived through that era see fit to withhold from more recent generations.

Lost Globalisation

Many things perished in the 1960s and 1970s, that might have happened with a different post-Stalin leadership. Whether people would have seen a World State as a dream or nightmare has become irrelevant: it is now very unlikely to happen within the lifetime of anyone currently alive. It does no good to speak of a world without borders when the bulk of the population say no.

Recently I saw a Quora question asking why we even needed separate countries. I pointed out they said it in English, which is the official language or an official language for only one-fifth of the world's population. Also spoken fluently by at most one-fifth of the world's population, and often not the same people.

Around 10% of Indians are fluent in English, and its status was given at the insistence of the 43% of Indian citizens who are not fluent in Hindi.

More than 80% of Scandinavians are fluent in English, but probably would not use it for things they rate as important and where their own language would be understood. They can speak English but do not *feel* in English. And the same is probably true for most populations where two or more languages are widely understood. The five sovereign Scandinavian states do important business in their five different languages, four of which would have been a single language in mediaeval times. Norway peacefully seceded from Sweden in the early 20th century, as did Iceland from Denmark in 1944. Neither are members of the European Union, and both Sweden and Finland were not in NATO before the recent artificial panic over Russia's rescue of Russian-speakers in Ukraine (<https://gwydionmadawc.com/my-blogs/ukraine-the-current-conflict/>). And in that, incidentally, the undoubted guilt of the Russian-dominated Soviet Union before 1989 has helped give believability to the false story about general Russian expansionism.

The closest we ever got to a single world authority was in the early 20th century, as European empires were increasingly able to suppress functional but unrecognised small states in territory other Europeans had given them the rights to (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/46-globalisation/what-was-the-minimum-for-sovereign-states/>). And many believed that eventually one Empire would absorb the rest. Such thinking helped make the elite of the British Empire keen to destroy an increasingly powerful Germany (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/problems-magazine-older-issues/how-the-british-establishment-planned-world-war-one/>).

How close did we come? I made a rough estimate of 54 in 1916 – world wars do not stop imperial expansions. But the victors did their best to break up the defeated European empires, when some sort of multi-national federation might have done better. And did in fact do better in Yugoslavia, until the West decided it ought to be destroyed.

Currently there are 193 UN members, while Switzerland, the Vatican and Palestine have observer status. Several more regions have limited recognition but are functionally independent –ex-Soviet Georgia has a stand-off with the previous Soviet autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. DeepSeek said 5 to 9 globally, depending on the criteria used.

The best we can hope for is a future in which all sovereign states have their borders frozen, unless the existing state chooses to let them go. Not always just, but we live in a world of spreading nuclear weapons and versatile drones that could carry nerve gas. So far there are only disputed claims of occasional Russian use, and maybe just tear gas. But at the time of writing, Iran remains able to hit both Israel and the USA's Arab allies. And there are all sorts of other conflicts, either active or likely to flare up again later.

In an imperfect world, I prefer peace to justice.

Soviet Elites Reverting to a Ruling Class

The word 'revolution' gets misused to apply to radical changes within

the existing system. And sometimes also for a region fighting a successful war of independence: notably in the USA. These normally leave most of the existing rich and powerful in a secure position. Changes within the USA between the 1780s and 1830s were maybe less radical than what happened back in the United Kingdom.

A real revolution is where most of the existing rich and powerful get swept away. This happened by stages in the French Revolution – the initial compromise with a constitutional monarch might have worked. And failed to happen in China in either 1911-12 or 1927.

If you think that a society can sweep away the existing rich and powerful without getting nasty and authoritarian, you are not dealing with reality. Europe's Colour Revolutions were shifts within elites that had moved on from an imposed Soviet system. The Arab Spring movements either failed or led to a chaos no one had wanted. It came closest to working in Tunisia, but the new system disappointed. There was popular support for the elected President becoming a new authoritarian boss. Few Tunisians believed in the transcendental merits of parliament but not parliamentarians: they just noticed that the messes had not been fixed.

Regarding revolutions, it is entirely normal for early leaders to get swept aside. Mostly because differences in belief that were acceptable among a united opposition become key matters when the opposition becomes the government. And where people excellent at making speeches denouncing those in power often proved inept when trying to achieve something if actually given power. That was Kerensky's fate – he had no better idea than to continue the war and do no better than the Tsar had managed. Had he made a firm commitment to land reform and allowed Ukraine to separate under German hegemony for the sake of peace, things might have been very different.

As everyone knows, replacement of leaders happened to an astonishing extent in France. It did not help that the early leaders were lawyers

who failed to handle actual popular politics. And Lenin threw out almost all of his important socialist rivals, with Trotsky mockingly suggest they lie quietly in the dustbin of history. Not anticipating that he would soon be joining them there, of course. In France, Napoleon stabilised a system that had been badly governed by several versions of a parliamentary system. He gave the French what most of them wanted, and it was not Napoleon who began the military aggression beyond ethnic French territories. But he missed several chances to stabilise the regime. If he'd stopped or had died after 1807 and the defeat of the Fourth Coalition, Europe might have had something like late 19th century values much sooner and much less painfully.

In the new Soviet Union, Lenin authorised a Mixed Economy, but unfortunately the system failed to work well. Stalin produced a viable alternative, and all along was aware that some sort of major invasion of the Soviet Union was coming. But sadly, the post-Stalin leadership was a mix of unrealistic hopes and failure. The immense burden of matching the USA in the Cold War stunted their economy – but events since 1991 show that the USA did indeed need to be limited. The error was not to encourage US moves to moderation, which happened to a small extent under Jimmy Carter and was then reversed by Reagan.

In China, Mao had hoped for a moderate New Democracy, but had little choice but to be radical when the USA kept up a 20-year fight to restore the ineffective Kuomintang. People say that only Nixon could have gone to China, which is true, but probably only Mao could have received him. Only he could have allowed an initial opening-up. Things went further under Deng, but Deng sensibly kept criticism of Mao within sensible bounds.

In the crisis of 1989, the leaders were vastly stronger because they had never denied the continuity with Mao (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/42-china/42-1-chinese-politics/communist-chinas-1989-fight-for-survival/>, <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/42-china/communist-chinas-survival-after-the-tiananmen-crackdown/>).

The mix that existed was in many ways what Mao's initial idea of New Democracy would have been if the USA had not been implacably hostile. A real threat of a US invasion existed till Nixon made peace in the early 1970s, and finally dropped the claim that the Taiwan regime was the legitimate government of all China.

In the Soviet Union, Khrushchev's main error was to think he could talk of compromise with the West, but crush any attempt by pro-Soviet regimes in Middle Europe to act on the logic of this.

There was also a sad failure on the matter of women's rights. Nothing new happened under Brezhnev's rule, when the West was copying and then overtaking the best of what Communism had done. One particular instance – Valentina Tereshkova in 1963 was the first woman in space, with the USA having refused to allow female astronauts. But the Soviet leaders somehow decided she'd been very nearly a failure. She was strained after having been the only woman to have ever made a solo space venture, but they failed to send any more women on any sort of mission until 1982. And that was only when the USA had decided to include at least one woman among the seven on the early Space Shuttle missions.

It turned out that the women could do everything the men could. Had that been the Soviet pattern between 1964 and 1981, the loss of vital support from radical women might have been less drastic.

None of this was *because* of socialism. It was a series of avoidable errors, many of them resulting from a failure to honestly apply what had long been accepted as socialist principles.

Talking Turkey

With World Government dead, what were the chances for a world of free and equal sovereign nations? The Soviet Union had a mixed record – dominating their neighbours, but also helping anti-colonial movements.

But when the Soviet hegemony collapsed, the elite of the West started

behaving in a much more bullying and domineering manner. Not just with wars, but also cultural attitudes.

Born 1950, I learned to say Sri Lanka and Myanmar and Malawi and Zambia and Zimbabwe, rather than the older Ceylon, Burma, Nyasaland and the two Rhodesias. Beijing, Mumbai and Kolkata rather than Peking, Bombay and Calcutta. Most serious news agencies did the same. That's why I was astonished when Western pundits and media flatly refused to accept it when the Turkish Republic officially defined their name for English-speakers as *Türkiye* rather than Turkey.

There were several good reasons for the Turks to want it. The new spelling and pronunciation were closer to what the Turks themselves say. What many European nations already have in their own language: French has '*la Turquie*'. Turks had a right to be offended by the English mispronunciation of their national name, and to sharing it with a food-bird that's an outsized and rather absurd relative of the grouse.

'Turkey' in English usage also has a wider and insulting meaning. And '*it's a turkey*' mean flop, failure, or something absurd. A sovereign nation whose name was mispronounced as Grouse would also be likely to want to change it.

Even if the Turkish Republic had gone mad and decided that they wished to be known in English as Boaty McTurkface, that would have been their right. An aspect of sovereignty.

The issue was Western elites showing a *lack of respect*. The elite and their obedient media people decided that the Soviet Fall meant that they could roll back everything they'd conceded since the 1930s.

For the elite – what I call Upper London – anti-Fascism was never a real belief (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/d-nazism-and-the-guilt-of-upper-london/>). It was fascist Italy that decided to make a war between imperial powers into an anti-fascist war by attacking France when it was visibly failing. But Churchill then decided to gamble the future of the British Empire on repeating the crushing of Germany that he'd helped see through in the

previous World War. And Hitler foolishly helped him by not letting it be known how moderate a peace he was privately willing to settle for (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/44-fascism-and-world-war-2/how-hitler-might-have-had-a-victorious-peace/>).

Britain and the USA found that only treating the Soviet Union as a partner gave them a chance of victory. Most of the formidable German army died or was captured there (<https://www.quora.com/q/mrgwydionmwilliams/Nazi-Germany-Was-Defeated-in-Russia>).

If the Soviet Union was increasingly an aberration in the 1960s, it was also the champion of many modern values before the 1950s. They became obstructive, only after Soviet power got human equality and anti-racism accepted by the liberal West.

Liberal hero John Stewart Mill was very happy to work in the London offices of the East India Company, as his father had. He was quite definite that the Muslims and Hindus of the Indian subcontinent were in no way fit to rule themselves (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/998-from-labour-affairs/the-french-revolution-and-its-unstable-politics/040-politics/how-john-stewart-mill-twisted-the-idea-of-liberty/>).

Mill made a half-accurate forecast about China: "*if they are ever to be further improved it must be by foreigners.*" But advice from foreigners similar to Mill led to failure and warlordism: the centuries of tradition that make the West's imperfect parliamentary system viable were shallow even in superficially-Westernised Shanghai and Tianjin. And in Hong Kong, no one thought of giving mere Chinese any significant authority until nearly the end – and even then Thatcher missed the chance to give the final Governorship to an ethnic Chinese (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/46-globalisation/46-1-more-on-globalisation/opium-city-the-story-of-hong-kong/>).

China was saved by Global Leninism: a more realistic vision of Western values brought first by Europeans and Euro-Americans, and then adapted by Mao to be much more effective in Chinese conditions.

In the 1940s, imperialism was never explicitly condemned by

the new United Nations. It was openly practiced by at least four of the founders: the United Kingdom, France, The Netherlands, and Belgium. The United States was less bad: racist at home, but they freed The Philippines in 1946, while Puerto Rico has a majority preferring complete merger to separation from the USA (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2017_Puerto_Rican_status_referendum). And American Samoa has freely chosen to settle for self-rule and no automatic US citizenship.

The Union of South Africa was a founder member, despite denying votes to its non-white majority. And maintained a mandate over South-West Africa that was declared illegal in 1971, but only ended with the independence of Namibia in 1990.

The United Nations was a very imperfect alternative to a World State before the 1960s. It remains imperfect, but for at least the next few decades it is the best we can hope for.

Lenin created the Soviet Union as the liberated portion of planned World State. Had anti-Bolshevik Poles lost a brief war that developed from Pilsudski's Poland invading Ukraine, it could easily have been a much bigger Soviet Union with enthusiastic German participation. Poles might have been won over: there were always a minority of Leninists among them.

It would have been a different world, in my view a much better world. But it was not the world that actually developed. And unlike the Trotskyists and unlike Europe's remaining Soviet-style Communists, I see it as something that's very unlikely to be created for the foreseeable future.

Western nations defined the world as a collection of sovereign states. We'd be much better off if we insisted that our elites start actually obeying the rules they themselves wrote.

It helps that the US attempt at hegemony has basically failed. Back in 2019, I spoke of how the West '*Fails in Five Civilisations*' (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/the-west-fails-in-five-civilisations/the-west-fails-in-five-civilisations-2/0>). The trend has only got stronger since then.

Nonsense about government bonds

By Martin Seale

The mainstream media is full of stories about bonds. The fear being spread is that the Labour government will be unable to sell UK government bonds to a private sector that is apparently worried about whether the UK government might go bust.

The UK mainstream media is unimpressive at the best of times. But when they talk about UK government bonds, gilts, they display startling levels of ignorance. Let's try and explain it to them

What Is a Bond?

A bond is simply a piece of paper (these days, usually just an electronic record) that promises to make a set of payments in the future.

Every bond has three main features:

Face value — say, £100. This is the amount you'll be paid back at the end.

Interest rate — say, 5% per year. This is called the "coupon."

Maturity date — say, 5 years from now. This is when you get your £100 back.

So if you bought this bond, you'd receive £5 a year for 5 years, and then a final payment of £100 when it matures.

UK government bonds have a special name: **gilts**.

Where Do Bonds Come From?

When the government spends more money than it collects in taxes, an office inside the Treasury called the **Debt Management Office (DMO)** sells, or "auctions," bonds to match that gap.

Here's the important part: selling bonds is a choice, not a necessity. By the time the bonds are auctioned, the government spending has already happened. Selling bonds isn't what allows the government to spend more than it raises in tax.

So How Does the Government Actually Pay for Things?

To understand that, you need to know how government spending is financed in the UK.

When Parliament approves a piece of spending, the **Bank of England (BoE)** creates new money and puts it

into the government's account. This is how *all* UK government spending is paid for — the Bank simply creates the money needed, without first checking whether the government's account already holds enough.

What Happens to That Money Next?

Once the government spends that new money — buying goods and services from private companies — the private sector ends up with more wealth than before. This is a direct link: an increase in government debt is matched, pound for pound, by an increase in private sector wealth. The only way to reduce government debt is to reduce private sector wealth by the same amount.

The private sector then has to decide what to do with this new money. Some gets spent, some gets paid in tax, some gets invested, and some gets saved.

Why Do People Want to Buy Bonds?

When people save money, they usually want to earn interest on it — and this is where government bonds come in. They let people put their savings into a financial asset that pays interest and carries essentially no risk.

Savers could instead put their money into the stock market or into bonds issued by companies, but those are riskier than government bonds. The markets know that the UK government will never fail to pay back its bonds.

So when the government auctions bonds, it isn't scrambling to find money to spend — that money was already created by the Bank of England. What it's really doing is offering a safe, interest-paying home for the savings of people and institutions that already have more money than they need.

When People Don't Want to Buy Bonds

Sometimes the private sector doesn't want to buy government bonds. This usually happens for one of two reasons:

They think there's somewhere else safe to put their money that will earn

a *better* return.

They expect that, in the near future, new bonds will be issued paying a *higher* rate of interest.

That second point depends heavily on what interest rate people expect the Bank of England to set in future — which, in turn, depends on what they expect inflation to do.

A Quick Example: Prices and Yields

Imagine investors believe interest rates are about to rise — say, from 2.5% to 2.75%. It wouldn't make sense for them to pay the full £100 face value for a 5-year bond that only pays 2.5% a year, when a better rate might be available in a month.

So instead, they might offer less than face value — say, £98. They'd still receive £2.50 a year in interest, but on an outlay of only £98. Their effective interest rate — called the **yield** — works out at $2.5 \div 98$, or roughly 2.55%.

What's Actually Happening Right Now

This is exactly the situation we're seeing today. Markets expect inflation to rise, partly because of the war in Iran. Higher inflation, they believe, will push the Bank of England to raise the interest rate it pays to commercial banks on the money those banks hold with it (held in what are called, for historical reasons, "reserve accounts").

The media gets excited when bond prices fall, presenting it as proof that markets doubt the government will repay its debts. But that's not what's really going on. Markets have simply worked out that, given their expectations for inflation and interest rates, then the value of the bond will fall once the BoE increases interest rates. It also means that the value of all other bonds will fall. So there is a rush to sell bonds with the intention of buying back into the market once the intentions of the BoE become clear. There is no fear in the markets that the UK government will default on its debt. They are just engaged in maximizing their return. As you would expect.

Labour Affairs says: The BSW is coming back.

New polling suggests that the BSW is in a position to gain seats in the Sachsen – Anhalt (Lower Saxony) regional elections. Despite all the campaigning against them and the promotion of the fake left ‘Die Linke’ party as a diversion, the BSW, the representative of peace, freedom and the working class interest, is still in the fight.



Despite all the campaigns against us: The BSW is coming! The majority of citizens in Saxony-Anhalt want change. The numbers also show that only with the BSW in the state parliament will there be a majority to unseat the incumbent CDU candidate. The AfD alone could achieve this, at most, only by allying with parts of the CDU—in which case there would indeed be a different head of government, but certainly no fresh start. Only with the BSW can there be majorities in the state parliament for a different kind of politics. If we enter the state parliament, the “firewall” will be a thing of the past!

Our election goal is to unseat the incumbent CDU minister-president and replace him with a nonpartisan minister-president who will end the “firewall” absurdity and govern with shifting majorities. We want to tackle the most pressing problems together with everyone who is willing to cooperate in a substantive way to tangibly improve people’s lives. CDU candidate Sven Schulze will definitely not get a single vote from us. His defeat would be the next well-deserved blow to

Friedrich Merz and likely the end of his disastrous chancellorship. Anyone who votes for the BSW can bring down Merz!

SPD Finance Minister Lars Klingbeil’s push to ban the AfD is harmful! Instead of talking about banning a political rival, Klingbeil and his colleagues should finally put an end to the bad policies that are making many people angry and have driven many voters to the AfD!

If the thresholds for banning political parties are lowered to the point where a party like the AfD can be banned, then Germany is on the path to dictatorship. As the BSW, we say: Put an end to toxic cancel culture and the new authoritarianism that, out of an inability to engage in objective debate, is calling for bans with ever-greater abandon!

That’s another reason why we’re inviting you to the “Festival of Free Speech” in Magdeburg on August 30. Together with fascinating guests, we’ll discuss the current challenges facing democracy and free speech—from censorship and political persecution to cancel culture in public broadcasting, all the way to state-directed propaganda through NGOs and reporting hotlines.

Come join us and let’s take a stand against this authoritarian trend!

The office of Thuringian Minister-President is not a traveling trophy that Mr. Höcke (a prominent AfD politician) can award at will. It is true that Mario Voigt, as Minister-President, has lost the confidence of the party, and the BSW Thuringia must withdraw its support from him. But Höcke’s offer is neither honest nor serious. It is dishonest because he knows that the majority of those sitting in the Thuringian state parliament on the BSW ticket are in opposition to the federal executive committee and would not vote for me. It is frivolous because a genuine solution for Thuringia can only be a nonpartisan Minister-President who lives in and is rooted in the state—not someone like me who merely spent his childhood there. Höcke plays politics like the established parties: partisan maneuvering and grandstanding take precedence over solving problems.

Our country—and Thuringia as well—need something different: serious politics that put an end to the “firewall” madness, take election results seriously, and finally try once again to make a difference in the interests of the citizens. When, for example, Höcke’s colleague Siegmund in Saxony-

Anhalt declares that, without an absolute AfD majority, he would rather hand over the office of Minister-President to the CDU right away, this appears to contrast with Höcke's offer but actually follows the same logic: the party comes first, then the state.

The BSW wants to overcome this dishonest way of doing politics that has been prevalent in Germany for years. As we have already stated on several occasions, we are prepared to hold talks with the AfD and all other parties regarding a nonpartisan Minister-President and key policy priorities. Not least to discuss the differences and common ground between the BSW and the AfD, the BSW leadership offered Ms. Weidel a public debate with me, which she regrettably declined.

I call on Mr. Höcke to engage in this debate with me instead of Alice Weidel—on neutral ground and with an impartial moderator. There, we should also discuss the BSW's proposal for a non-partisan Minister-President, ways out of the current economic crisis and the state of German education, or why Mr. Höcke supported the transatlantic wing of the AfD at the party's last convention.

Thuringia needs a credible, nonpartisan head of government who will put an end to the "firewall" and govern with shifting majorities. Large segments of the Thuringian BSW share this view. That is why several district chapters are now calling for a special party convention. It is unfortunate that the Thuringian parliamentary caucus is not yet as far along as the grassroots, and this harms the BSW. However, this does not change the fact that we, as a party as a whole, have learned

from this mistake. The BSW will definitely no longer participate in a "firewall" coalition. When the BSW nominated its candidates for the Thuringian state parliament, the party was only a few weeks old. In my interview with WELT TV, I discuss why we are now in a completely different situation and why I am confident that the problem in Thuringia will also be resolved.

Labour Affairs comment. Originally the BSW in Thuringia refused to enter government with the AfD as part of the firewall against the 'far right'. This has been recognised as a mistake by the central leadership, but not by all BSW members in Thuringia.

More on the Lower Saxony election campaign.

The federal government is ruining our economy, embarrassing Germany on the world stage, and pushing us to the brink of a major war. An overwhelming majority of people are fed up with these disastrous policies! Anyone who wants to see Friedrich Merz ousted must vote for the BSW in Saxony-Anhalt on September 6. Because if we win seats in the Magdeburg state parliament, CDU Minister President Schulze will be gone—and very likely Chancellor Merz as well. We are campaigning for a nonpartisan Minister President who will put an end to the "firewall" nonsense and govern with shifting majorities. It is high time for policies that move our country forward again and improve people's lives, instead of ignoring their concerns! My speech at the kick-off of the BSW election campaign tour in Dessau.

Campaign journalism at its finest: Ever since the BSW made it clear that the incumbent CDU

candidate—who is expected to lose the election in Saxony-Anhalt—will not receive our vote, a massive campaign has been underway against us. The accusation: that we are "currying favor" with the AfD and "helping them come to power." That's exactly what the established parties and the mainstream media—circling within their own bubble—are saying, even though they are largely responsible for the fact that more and more people are turning to the AfD out of anger and disappointment! Sure, we're familiar with that logic: "Stop the thief—he's got my knife in his stomach!" Yes, we want to break out of this "firewall" dead end. But what we want above all is a fresh political start: for peace and diplomacy, for better education, for freedom of speech, and for a different energy policy. We have a good proposal for this: a nonpartisan minister-president who embodies this new beginning, governs with shifting majorities, and finally gets back to substantive politics.

BSW against warmongering and for peace and good relations with the Russian Federation.

Defense is a thing of the past! Today, war-mongering fanatics like the "military expert" Carlo Masala are already spinning tales about how to conquer territory in the "war of the future." Let's put an end to this madness! Instead of squandering hundreds of billions to prepare for a war against nuclear-armed Russia—a war we wouldn't survive—we should do everything we can to resolve conflicts through diplomatic means.

Building and Apprenticeships—Views from the front line.

By Eamon Dyas

I came upon this as a post from someone called Robert Stewart on Facebook. His profile says that he “is a property entrepreneur, former RAF fighter pilot and housing commentator specialising in unlocking housing supply through commercial conversion, brownfield development and planning reform”. Apparently he also ran a scaffolding company.

Although he’s not exactly my kind of person because of what he does he provides an intelligent insight into the issues that confront not only his business but businesses generally when it comes to skills shortages. Here’s what he says about housing:

"Empty buildings we won't convert.

A generation we won't train.

A housing list we can't clear.

Three problems. And each one is the answer to the other two.

We treat empty buildings, planning, housing and skills as four separate debates. They're not. They're one loop, spinning the wrong way.

Britain is covered in empty space. Dead retail, redundant offices, the floors above every high street shop. Already built. Already owned. To turn it into homes you go through a planning system designed to stop bad things, not to help good conversions happen fast. So the building rots on a technicality while the waiting list grows outside its front door.

And converting is skilled work. Trades, not mega projects. Exactly the work you could train a young person on,

in their own town, on a real site. But we've hollowed out the pipeline, so even where the work exists, the hands don't.

Then there's cost, the part nobody wants to hear.

Everyone loves a greedy developer. But walk into an empty building in half the towns in this country and the problem isn't greed. It's arithmetic. Labour's scarce, materials cost more, and the finished flat sells for a fraction of the same flat in Chester or York. Same building, same work, same housing need. The number just doesn't add up.

That's where most people give up. If the maths doesn't work, it doesn't work.

Except we're already spending the money. We're just spending it at the wrong end.

Councils in England spent £2.8 billion on temporary accommodation last year. A third of that on emergency B&Bs and hostels, families sharing a kitchen with strangers. And here's the number that should end the argument. Since 2009, spending is up 176 percent while the number of families housed is up only 129 percent. We're paying more and more to house fewer people worse.

That's not a country that can't afford to fix this. It's a country pouring a fortune into not fixing it.

So stop spending it downstream on the hotel room. Spend it upstream on the building.

A grant to close the viability gap. A guaranteed lease to remove the risk once it's done. The state provides the certainty only the state can.

Private capital and local trades do the building. I know it works because I've done it. A derelict working men's club in Chester, converted to thirteen flats, leased to the council on a guaranteed rent.

Marginal on paper. Made bankable by one thing, a public lease that told the bank the income was real.

That's not a subsidy. It's the same money the state already spends on a hotel room, spent once to build a home instead of monthly to rent a problem.

But it has to be national. The support that exists today is a mess, a different pot in every region, a different rule in every council. You can't build a business on a lottery. One framework. The same grant, the same lease, the same rules, in every town from Cornwall to the North East. Not fifty schemes that expire before you've drawn the plans. Not devolved so your town's chances depend on which mayor shouts loudest.

That's when the loop spins the right way. Buildings get converted because the maths works. The maths works because the state buys the outcome it's already overpaying for. The conversions train a generation. And that workforce brings the cost down on the next one.

Four problems. One framework. Each piece finally in reach of the one next to it.

That's not a slogan. It's a design choice. And right now we're choosing the £2.8 billion hotel bill instead.

So here's the question. If you were writing that one national framework, what's the first rule

you'd put in it?

This is something I read on Facebook and one that is confirmed by a conversation I had with a local plumber who repaired a leak for me.

"I used to own a scaffolding business. We took on apprentices. And I watched the majority of them walk out before they were anywhere near qualified.

Not because they were lazy. Not because they didn't want to work. Because the model was broken in a way that nobody running it from Whitehall ever had to feel.

Here's how it actually works at the small business level.

You take on an apprentice. They're on a lower wage, fine, that's the deal.

The government covers some of the training costs, fine.

But what nobody covers is the invisible cost. The one that actually kills it.

Your best operator is now running at half speed. Because the apprentice can't work unsupervised.

Every task takes longer. Every job runs over. The client gets frustrated. The margin disappears.

And you're left with a choice between hitting your deadline and developing your apprentice, and the deadline always wins.

So the apprentice gets less supervision than they need. The training suffers.

They feel unsupported. And eventually they leave.

Nearly half of all construction apprentices drop out before completing their training.

Nearly half. In a sector that is desperate, on its knees, for qualified people.

And we're haemorrhaging almost one in two before they get there.

This isn't an attitude problem. It's a design problem.

Germany has a dropout rate of 25%. Ireland, 20% for craft apprenticeships.

The difference isn't that German or Irish young people are more committed. The difference is that those countries have national supervisory frameworks.

Structured support that sits alongside the employer. Coaches who work across multiple apprentices, multiple firms, catching the ones who are struggling before they walk.

We have nothing equivalent. We dumped the entire supervisory burden onto the small firms least equipped to carry it, wondered why uptake was low and dropout was high, and then called it a skills crisis.

It's not a skills crisis. It's a system failure.

Here's what I'd replace it with.

A National Apprenticeship Employer.

Government becomes the employer of record. It carries the wage, the admin, the liability. It provides a roving supervisory structure, senior tradespeople covering multiple apprentices across multiple small firms simultaneously.

The small business gets skilled hands arriving on site, structured, supported, and supervised by someone else. They contribute to the training without bearing the full cost of it.

The apprentice gets proper development instead of being left to sink or swim on a busy site.

The government is already spending money on a system that loses nearly half its apprentices before they qualify. Redesign it. Put the supervisory infrastructure where it should have been all along, at the national level, not dumped on a firm of five scaffolders just trying to get the job done.

We have a million young people doing nothing. We have an industry that can't find workers. We have a housing target that is fiction without those workers.

The connection is there. The system just isn't designed to make it.

That's Point 8 of the Build Don't Blame manifesto. Not a spending commitment.

A redesign.

#propertyinvestment
#UKProperty #propertyinsights
#propertyeducation
#buildingcommunities
#builders #landlord

Pete Whitelegg adds:

Isn't a significant component part of the problem here is who is doing the heavy lifting. Small to medium sized business appear to be struggling with apprenticeships. When I did my apprenticeship local authorities took on loads of apprentices. They all had direct labour forces. We also had large scale industry that required skilled labour and therefore had apprentices.

These days much of the economy works on a sub-contracting or agency basis. No wonder the system fails.

PALESTINE LINKS

[ICC's Japanese president says she 'won't give up' despite US sanctions \(Middle East Eye, 27 August 2026\)](#)

[Armed Israeli settler 'hikes' aren't new – but they're becoming deadly \(Aharon Porath & Roei Kleitman, +972, 26 August 2026\)](#)

[US designates Palestine Action activist group 'Specially Designated Global Terrorist' \(Middle East Eye, 26 August 2026\)](#)

[Hundreds of academics and lawyers urge Burnham to lift Palestine Action ban \(Imran Mulla, Middle East Eye, 26 August 2026\)](#)

[What's behind Israel's growing assault on West Bank healthcare \(Ghada Majadli, +972, 24 August 2026\)](#)

[Why Israel's latest illegal settlement move has triggered global alarm \(Shehab Khan, Zeteo, 22 August 2026\)](#)

[Israel murders children, police in Gaza \(Nora Barrows-Friedman, Electronic Intifada, 21 August 2026\)](#)

[Irish government under fire over Palestinian student visa rejections \(Abubaker Abed, Electronic Intifada, 20 August 2026\)](#)

[Qusra is where Israel's lies about settler violence hit a wall \(Oren Ziv, +972, 18 August 2026\)](#)

[Former Israeli soldier held captive in Gaza asks Ben Gvir to let him execute Palestinian prisoners \(Nadav Rapaport, Middle East Eye, 18 August 2026\)](#)

[Israeli soldiers number Palestinian detainees on their foreheads \(Fayha Shalash, Middle East Eye, 18 August 2026\)](#)

[Israel allows Jewish ritual at Al-Aqsa Mosque in unprecedented violation of status quo \(Lubna Masarwa, Middle East Eye, 17 August 2026\)](#)

[Gaza's sick wait for treatment that may never come \(Ahmed Dremly, +972, 14 August 2026\)](#)

[Why this pro-Israel New York Times columnist is WRONG about Gaza \(Mehdi Hasan, Zeteo, 6 August 2026\)](#)

[Israel expands extermination zone in Gaza \(Nora Barrows-Friedman, Electronic Intifada, 31 July 2026\)](#)

[Buried in the new defence budget, a plan to merge the US and Israeli militaries \(Middle East Eye, 24 July 2026\)](#)

[Nearly half of Israel's government joins march vowing Gaza settlements \(Oren Ziv, +972, 20 July 2026\)](#)

[Hear the speech Swiss authorities tried to prevent me giving \(Ali Abunimah, Electronic Intifada, 19 July 2026\)](#)

[In the West Bank, Religious Zionists are realizing long-held vision \(Jared Hillel, Electronic Intifada, 17 July 2026\)](#)

[Gaza's 1000-Day Siege: A Catastrophic Humanitarian Collapse \(Scheerpost, 7 July 2026\)](#)

[Israel kills young mother and her infant daughter in Gaza tent \(Nora Barrows-Friedman, Electronic Intifada, 3 July 2026\)](#)

[Palestine Action ban births new direct action groups \(Asa Winstanley, Electronic Intifada, 26 June 2026\)](#)

[Two CT scanners for one million people in northern Gaza \(Farah Samer Zaina, Electronic Intifada, 25 June 2026\)](#)

[Swiss criminal probe to target official behind Ali Abunimah expulsion \(Asa Winstanley, Electronic Intifada, 24 June 2026\)](#)

The pursuit of European unity through war

By Eamon Dyas

I think John Mearsheimer's question as to why the politicians of European countries appear to have lost the ability to think strategically and logically when it comes to Russia has to be seen in the context of the EU. With the systematic attempt to erode the idea of separate national interests and subsume them under an abstract idea of Europe it has left successive generations of those pursuing an ambition in politics incapable of viewing the idea of national interests as a paramount concern. It's all about Europe. But there is no such thing as a Europe that is anchored to a geographical entity that can assess the geopolitical arena from a perspective that is capable of balancing risk versus gain in strategic terms as was the case when it came to nation states. All that these politicians can now do is to perceive the world from the aspect of an ideal that has not yet reached the political maturity that comes with nation states and it is that ideal that now determines what passes for strategic and rational thinking. Those "European" politicians with the intelligence to see the limitations of their situation are either too ambitious to see that the emperor has no clothes or believe that the current war in Ukraine provides the opportunity to make the EU idea a reality by steeling it through the fire of a war. This is a real danger because the way that the weapons of war have evolved means that it is now possible to fight a war without the need for the involvement of the whole population and although the EU idea is incapable of generating the necessary commitment from the majority of its populace that no longer acts as a hindrance, or at least is not seen as a hindrance, by those pursuing that line of progress that sees conflict as the route towards what they believe will turn out to be a more solidified

Europe.

We have spoken before about the unification of Europe by way of unification of energy supply and pricing, and the rejection of Russian gas.

EU policy to detach EU energy from Russian energy—summary

Regarding the European Commission and Ukraine. As was explained previously, from early on the European Commission had been pursuing a policy of "soft" coercion when it came to separating European states from Russian energy. In its practical application this involved a two stage process. The first stage was to ensure that energy production and distribution utilities were privatised within the constituent states of the EU. The second stage was to manipulate the recently privatised energy companies into a re-arrangement of their activities in ways that involved the separation of the production and distribution activities of energy utility companies in order to encourage a cross-country "European" perspective which "freed" them from energy policies formulated by their respective governments - policies that were at the time tied to the use of Russian energy. In pursuit of this objective the Commission was not beyond using its anti-trust and monopoly powers to "encourage" utility

European unification through Energy policy. Extracts from previous Labour Affairs articles on this topic:

<https://labouraffairs.com/2025/02/01/ukraine-and-the-supply-of-russian-gas-to-europe/> Feb 25

"Brussels would also take over energy negotiations with third parties such as Russia, Europe's main energy supplier, arguing that EU members will get a better deal

if they combine forces rather than negotiate on their own." ("Fearful EU aims to take energy policy from governments", *The Times*, 9 March 2006.)

This was correctly interpreted by *The Times* newspaper as an attempt by the European Commission to "seize control of energy policy from national governments" following the "decision by Britain to yield control over energy policy to Brussels" (ibid.).

European Commission's tactics for taking control of national energy sectors

The significance of the events in 2007 and the Lisbon Treaty was that, thanks to the likes of Poland and the Baltic countries, the member states of the EU were now encouraged to view the energy issue in the wider context of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). This represented a victory for that element inside the EU bureaucracy and within European politics that was determined to weaken the prerogatives of national states over their energy policies - something they viewed as a hindrance to the pursuit of their federal ideal.

It should be noted at this point that the original point of weakness for national energy sovereignty was laid down much earlier with the obligation placed on nation states to privatise their previously state-owned energy companies - something that was a precursor to the directive of the European Union's First Electricity Directive, issued on 19 February 1996 which sought to establish a new regulatory framework.

The special case of Germany

However, the Commission never fully got its way with Germany whose economic success had come to rely to a large extent on access

to cheap energy from Russia. When it came to energy policy Germany continued to plough its own furrow. In this regard it has to be said that other countries, and even the European Commission grudgingly acknowledged that the German economy, if it was to continue to act as the engine-room for Europe's economic success, would require such access. Nonetheless, as later events would show, while it may have stood back at this point in time, the European Commission never really abandoned its efforts to prise Germany away from Russian energy.

Policy against Russian gas Ukraine and Russian energy

The logical objective that followed from the European Commission defining Russian oil and gas as a threat to European energy security was the emergence

of a policy which sought to reduce the European Union's reliance on Russian energy. Alongside, the use of coercive administrative measures to inhibit such reliance the Commission also used the inducement of possible access to alternative suppliers of oil and gas - all of which sat alongside the environmentalist objective of reducing the overall use of carbon-based energy sources.

In practical terms, the effort to find alternative sources of energy involved the European Commission providing political and financial support for projects that involved the construction of new pipelines to convey oil and gas from non-Russian sources to the European market even if this made no economic sense.

Although the European Commission's objective in terms of its attitude towards Russian energy was given impetus in the

aftermath of the EU's eastern expansion in 2004 it had followed a policy of encouraging the use of alternatives to Russian energy before that - in fact it went out of its way to encourage the de-coupling of former Soviet countries from Russian energy even prior to them joining the EU in spite of the fact that it made no economic sense for those countries to do so.

Efforts by EU to bring Ukraine in as a member

As early as 1993 a Ukrainian government had announced that joining the EU was its main foreign policy objective and in the following year the country signed a "Partnership and Cooperation Agreement" with the EU which was scheduled to come into force in 1998.

Letter to the Editor about Diane Abbott speech to the Peace Conference

I attended the London Peace conference on 20th June and in some respects it was quite impressive. Central Hall Westminster was full to the brim, both in the main hall and the smaller hall. Standing room only. Large delegations from both France and Spain with smaller delegations from most European countries.

Conference speakers came from a wider geographical spread. Two or 3 speakers from the US, several from the middle east and a couple from South America.

The conference was called in response to the massive shift in spending right across the west into the military/defence and the ongoing slaughter in Gaza.

There were some good speeches, particularly from those rallying the faithful to the cause of the Palestinians. And a couple of Americans reminding us that there is more to US politics that

Trump.

But where the whole thing fell flat, at least for me, were the speeches concerning the increased military spending in Europe, this brings me to Diane Abbott.

There were five MP's making headline speeches at the conference, Richard Burgon, John Trickett, Diane Abbott, Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana.

All except one railed against military expenditure and how appalled they were that this would inevitably lead to a massive reduction on welfare spending. All highlighting how these policies being enacted across Europe would increase and entrench ever greater levels of social and economic inequality.

But these speeches also either directly or indirectly highlighted the central fault line within the left, our freedoms. Time and again along side the condemnation of

increased defence spending was the refrain that our freedoms must be defended, Europe is under attack, we can't just sit back and see our freedoms trashed.

Only one of the MP's placed all this in its right context, Diane Abbott. She made it as plain as can be that all of this is a result of the eastward expansion of NATO. She made it very clear that that was the primary cause of the conflict and the reaction of the Russians to the provocation. And I have to say she got a good reception at the end of her speech. Whether that was because she is Diane Abbott or the content of her speech I don't know.

But it seemed to me that this is the central contradiction, or at least a significant one, that undermines much of the left.

Pete Whitelegg

Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

Real Civilisations Don't Clash

Western Freedom: I Did It My Way, You'll Do it My Way

It's My Disaster, I'll Replay If I Want To China Keeps the Market Beasts Under Control

The Bad News Drones

You'll Do It My Way (Again)

The Faulty Founding Fathers of the USA

Snippets

Inequality from the 1970s? Nixon's the One!

The Bad Ship 'Abraham Lincoln'

Real Civilisations Don't Clash

The new Mecca Defence Pact is bad news for Israel, but *not* for Western civilisation.

It could end with Israel being forced out of the West Bank and Gaza by a combined force of Turkish and Pakistani troops, probably based in Syria. Safe from Israel's undeclared atomic weapons, because Pakistan is an openly nuclear state.

I'd warned of something like this might happen as long ago as October 2018 (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/newsnotes-historic/2018-newsnotes/news-blog-october-2018/>). And I was told that a common front would be hard, which is true. But hard things do happen. A pro-Turkish and strongly Islamic government in Syria helps. As does Trump's probable wish to dismantle US global hegemony and allow home-grown bigotry to re-surface.

In 2020, I warned that the ingenious campaign to undermine Corbyn was going to damage Zionism in the long run (<https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Suicidal-Zionism>).

In the 1990s, Yasser Arafat and the bulk of the Palestinian movement agreed to what they should have settled for much earlier – a Palestinian state with self-rule for most of the West Bank and Gaza. But the wording of the Oslo Agreement was ambiguous. Israel found ways to undermine the new Palestinian state, including encouraging the hard-line Islamists that it cannot now cope with.

With luck, it might end with a reduced Israel that would also be safe, and a humiliation for Zionism's global fan-club. But not the end of the Jewish state: the UN did originally authorise it, and the UN is the

only functional international law we have.

Don't forget that while settlers from Europe and the USA dominate Israeli politics, more than half the population are Jews who were minorities within Islamic countries. As they still are in Iran, but that's an exception. Most of them would have no place else to go.

We'll have a One State Solution when we get the land overshadowed by flocks of flying pigs. It's that silly.

Western Freedom:

I Did It My Way, You'll Do it My Way

Wars happen when independent political units bump into each other, and don't find ways to stop small disputes getting large. Mostly they are members of the same civilisations. And many states and empires can contain several different versions of civilisation, so long as it is understood by all which of them is in charge.

'Being in charge' is generally the issue. It's not true that it's just caused by capitalism, or just by religion. These may throw up issues, but often it's something else. Part of our biology

Chimps, along with the enigmatic bonobos, are our closest relatives. And we are *their* closest relatives, with gorillas more distant. They are too dangerous to keep in the way most dogs are kept within a human family (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/20-science/chimps-are-never-tame/>). And left to themselves, they are violent. Not just in zoos: in the wild they have their own little wars. A recently reported case had 24 killings, including 17 infants. Two factions of what had been a single community (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cr71lkzv49po>), and there was a similar case reported back in 1976 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gombe_Chimpanzee_War).

For humans, small mostly out-of-sight violence tends to be worse among tribalists than among civilised states. If their battles seem very mild, it's only because it takes training and harsh discipline to persuade individuals in a crowd of relative strangers to charge head-on at another large crowd that is likely to defend itself fiercely (<https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Wars-Started-Long-Before-Civilisation>).

That's why I said *Real Civilisations Don't Clash*. Humans clash, either as individuals or in combines of various sorts that do some sort of mutual defence. Who may even be proud of saying *My Country Right or Wrong*, and then cannot figure out why we keep on having wars.

I recently read that famous book, *The Clash of Civilisations*. Like most of the supposed theoretical work of the New Right, there is virtually nothing in it. What it did was serve as a cover for the West getting aggressive with other civilisations when the Soviet Union stopped being there to keep them modest.

They say 'world policeman'. Nonsense. Police are there as agents of a civil power that decides what they prevent, what they tolerate and what they are required to defend. Trump is showing that the US military machine can be used without clear controls by whoever gets to be elected by the USA's outdated and messy political system. If they'd had Presidential elections with two rounds or a single transferrable vote, they'd have elected Bernie Sanders in 2016. The world would be a very different place.

The US attitude – just as strong with Obama and the Clintons as with the two Bushes – was that freedom is best defended by the USA taking it away from anyone who gets out of line. The attitude is, *'if you were truly free, you'd be doing everything within the range of human behaviours that we find acceptable'*. Paying no attention to how this range has expanded within living memory, and much bigger shifts are easily found in history. And never mentioning that the Soviet Union was the first government and state that was an active promoter of many of those values: racial and sexual equality and a reduction of the importance of what you were born into.

The biggest military machine on the planet started running wild when there was no longer a powerful Soviet Union to balance it.

Now we have China providing the balance. That ancient free-market magazine *The Economist* is appalled by them, and that's almost always good news.

It's My Disaster, I'll Repley If I Want To

The USA are wholly guilty of causing the existing mess in Afghanistan. A home-grown radical movement was serious about giving equality to women, and the USA went to enormous lengths to strengthen a reactionary opposition. Saved it from defeat several times, though the Soviet Union helped by repeating the errors of 1956 and 1968 and thinking that things would be much better if they overrode the sovereignty of a nation that at the time had broadly similar aims.

The Soviet Union is gone: it is US folly that matters. Remember that the did something similar in Iran in the 1950s. Defeated a moderate nationalist government, and advised the Shah not to worry about Islamic Fundamentalists'

Unlike the US 'fundamentalists', those people were and are entirely confident in their religion. The US sentiment that Bob Dylan mocked, *'for you don't count the cost when you've God on your side'*, is a genuine belief among them. It's only US citizens who are increasingly getting Post-Traumatic Stress when they try applying the idea in the real world.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, the USA insisted on a parliamentary façade, when an autocrat who got things done would have been very acceptable to those who mostly wanted the same things done. They assume that everyone shares the West European feeling that government is not respectable without a parliament, though originally it need not be democratic and almost always excluded women. A feeling shared by the USA and other places outside Europe grabbed by people of mostly West European origin. But parliaments where rival parties obstruct each other are not necessarily wanted elsewhere.

Most of the world knows that Afghanistan is best accepted as a neighbour that might moderate if not threatened by outsiders:

"India, Qatar, China, Iran and several central Asian states all recently welcomed Taliban officials or opened new channels of communication. Russia, which recognised the Taliban government in Kabul just over a year ago, signed a military cooperation agreement last month. In June, the European Union held talks with Taliban officials in Brussels about returning failed asylum-seekers to Afghanistan. Individual European countries have also deepened their own contacts with Kabul." (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/aug/15/concern-grow-global-ties-taliban-afghanistan-human-rights>).

China Keeps the Market Beasts Under Control

"The death of Zhu and Jiang, two prominent leaders from the same era, has prompted a wave of nostalgia among many Chinese people for a time when the country looked as if it was going in a different direction - when it appeared that it may open to the world and allow more freedom for its people." (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c8dn3rqlyrgo>).

That's the BBC's spin on the death of Zhu Rongji, the second most powerful leader when Jiang Zemin was in charge. And for Jiang, at least, it's historic nonsense.

After crushing the Tiananmen protests, Deng Xiaoping and his fellow Party Elders handed the succession to Jiang Zemin. Promoting a man who had peacefully resolved similar small protests as Party Boss of Shanghai.

A man who had also done a much more important task that most

people overlook: he talked round a man called Wan Li, holder of the normally-minor post of *Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress*. A man who theoretically had the right to topple the existing system within its own written laws. Doing what happened soon afterwards in the Middle-European countries that Moscow had been dominating since the Red Army took them from Nazi Germany.

I'd assume that Jiang died back in 2022 with great contentment about what he'd done. Middle-European countries got back the right to control their own future, which China already had. Which they always favoured for sovereign states. Back in 1968, Mao thoroughly disapproved of the direction that Czechoslovakia's Communist leaders were taking the country, but also disapproved of invading them. And Jiang in his own time saw how Russia and Ukraine suffered parasitic corruption and a shrinking economy. That Middle-Europe east of Ukraine and Belarus had to be taken into the European Union to keep them prosperous.

Beijing does not talk freely about power-political issues, but did sum up the economic changes after Mao, and the mistakes made elsewhere:

"Jiang Zemin's Legacy: What It Means for China

"Previously, under socialism, many people were skeptical of markets, often dismissing them as inherently 'capitalist.' But in 1992, that changed, Deng Xiaoping made it clear that the market is a neutral tool. Socialism can harness it, and so can capitalism. Then in 1992, China formally adopted the socialist market economy as its economic system...

"After the Soviet Union fell apart, Russia was influenced by the West and identified with Western ideology. We believe Russia made a mistake then, but at that time Russia genuinely hoped to become a member of the West.

"During Jiang Zemin's period, the approach was very clear: regardless of what ideology Russia had, we would develop normal friendly and neighborly relations." (<https://thechinaacademy.org/jiang-zemins-legacy-what-it-means-for-china/>).

The policies of Deng and then Jiang and Zhu included a tolerance of massive inequality, but it did go along with genuine trickle-down. They copied the example of Singapore, and of Japan before the USA forced it to damage its fast economic growth. Let capitalists try out new things, but hold them responsible. And make sure that everyone is looked after.

It is also true that those countries have done less to give women access to the top jobs, in the way the West has. But the West has also seen most of the 'Blair Babes' let the interests of most women be neglected, for as long as there are sufficient female snouts in the trough (<https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Let-Down-by-the-Parliamentary-Labour-Party>).

And business people who play financial games pay for it, such as the founder of collapsed Chinese property giant Evergrande. Sentenced to life in prison (<https://share.google/e8ZTyLr7S8rSwFubo>).

(An expanded version of this study is available at <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Zhu-Rongji-a-Communist-Who-Kept-Capitalists-Under-Control>).

The Bad News Drones

Trump says harsh things, but seems to have grasped that the USA got a mauling when it attacked Iran. It surprised most people, myself included. I'd expected no more than successful endurance, based on what I said earlier: *'for you don't count the cost when you've God on your side'*. The Revolutionary Guard think just that, and I'd suppose that most ordinary Iranians are not sure they are wrong. But I'd expected a long endurance, such as North Vietnam managed. Not successful retaliation against US interests.

The Vietnamese Communists avoided aggressive acts outside of Indochina. Correct for the world at the time, whereas Palestinians did their own cause immense harm by flashy and superficially clever deeds like airline hijacking. By their mass killings at the Munich Olympic Games. But the generation that fought Vietnam's American War passed on mostly cynicism and disappointment.

The present generation are much more traumatised by what are mostly much easier wars.

As I said earlier, trying to seek out and destroy an enemy who can hit back on fairly even terms does not come naturally to most humans. Its existence was the oddity, but the USA has not yet adjusted to new reality.

Which also included cheap missiles and drones. Devices that might carry nerve gas. Carry anthrax or other biological weapons. Might hit Israel with them, whereas Saddam Hussein never dared go beyond regular explosives if it were people more highly valued by the West than Kurds or Iranian are. He was a Westernised Arab who hoped to survive as a successful inflictor of a nationalist version of Western values on the complex ethnic mix of Iraq.

I've no idea if Iranian religious beliefs would permit real 'weapons of mass destruction'. And I suppose no one else knows either.

You'll Do It My Way (Again)

My laptop computer smugly told me off for using the wrong finger for secure access, after it failed to recognise the correct finger. Only behaved when I forced it to reboot, and did not mention the possibility of the system letting me down.

All of the people writing stuff for automata to feed to us are certain of their own immense superiority. My Sky box cannot be bothered to check that the internet link is actually fine after a blip and that and they can fix it. To get the system back, I have to act as if I am at fault.

I've seen many complaints about how software products for ordinary customers have changed. Once you bought a product and you then owned it, at least for personal use. Now you lease it, and have no choice about getting whatever updates they may think good for you. Recently my version of Photoshop chose to impose a fancier system that no longer allows the quick and convenient photo editing I had got used to.

Both the current version of *Microsoft Outlook* and the global question-and-answer forum *Quora* mark my UK English spelling as

wrong, when it differs from US forms. No room for organise or other forms that the USA discarded in an irritatingly small spelling reform. Had we been given phonetic spelling based on a New York accent, it would have been a coherent system that one could abide by. But most of the absurdities were left intact. You still have rough dough-faced ploughmen wandering through Slough.

After I tried unsubscribing from LinkedIn, I found the number of unwanted e-mails increased. Maybe my action had alerted them that I was at least real and reading them.

The Lords of Software, working in an industry where even footsoldiers may end up with millions, have attitudes that I'd see as ensuring they will not be the people ruling the future. But they seem certain to do more permanent damage before they get what they deserve.

Those people have a self-confidence that vastly exceed their impressive genuine talents. Just as their cash rewards do: the prospect of a few tens of millions would have been enough to incentivise the most successful of them to do their useful work for the wider society. But the top earners think they deserve many billions, and are oppressed if more billions do not follow.

Realms of wealth that go far beyond any possible personal spending. But it translates into power, and they think themselves much the most fit to have it.

The Faulty Founding Fathers of the USA

In a recent dispute on Quora, I noted that the USA's Founding Fathers believed many things that 90% of today's US citizens have rejected.

Specifically:

1. None of them believed that women should have the vote, or have authority at any level in the new government. The common view was that for any woman to have authority over any man was wrong, regardless. Even with children and servants it would be delegated authority from some superior male.

2. The White Race was

superior, and was entitled to replace the Native Americans. A few of them might be tolerated on the margins of society, and some Native American ancestry was OK.

3. Slavery for Black Africans was acceptable, though best ended in the long run in order to make a pure white society. The former slaves might be sent somewhere else, which Lincoln was seeking to do in his last days.

4. There was no necessity for all white males to have the vote. Property qualifications were fine.

5. Privilege based on inherited wealth was fine, though not aristocratic wealth based on long aristocratic descent.

6. The death penalty was fine, and included theft as well as murder.

7. Rich men could claim huge tracts of land that they could then sell to people who actually wanted to farm those lands. George Washington did a lot of that, but so did many others.

8. The new USA should not be defined as a Christian country. No religion was to be imposed, and there would be no legal penalties for skepticism or outright atheism. This was well ahead of British laws and of most of the rest of Christian Europe, whereas the Ottoman Empire and most other Muslim states were tolerant of anyone who behaved and paid taxes.

9. Politics and the government should be entirely in English, with no provision for speakers of French or Spanish or Dutch.

This shifted in the 19th and 20th centuries, with pressure from radicals, and later from socialists and communists. I've done a blog on how the left redefined 'The Normal' <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/998-from-labour-affairs/the-french-revolution-and-its-unstable-politics/against-globalisation/the-left-redefined-the-normal/>.

Snippets

Inequality from the 1970s? Nixon's the One!

Richard Nixon got the US working class voting for him without looking

after their economic interests. Started the 'Feed the Rich' policies that Ronald Reagan carried through, after a rather empty interlude by the well-meaning Jimmy Carter (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/the-mixed-economy-won-the-cold-war/>).

But Nixon and Reagan were helped when left-wing radicals treated the New Deal compromise as rubbish. When they forgot to mention its merits when demanding radical social change.

Only in the last decade has the left remembered it was an issue. And mostly they do it still without mentioning what the New Deal got right.

It would be worth them saying that on economics, the left are the functional conservatives and traditionalists. Calling for a rolling-back of the failed radical-right policies of the Neo-liberals.

*

The Bad Ship 'Abraham Lincoln'

"The aircraft carrier U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln's supply problems began soon after the first day of the war, as Iranian missiles and attack drones fell on a Navy base in Bahrain.

"The Iranian attack, retaliation for the U.S.-Israeli assault on Tehran, destroyed much of the base. And as it went up in smoke, so did a major logistics hub that the Navy has relied on for decades." <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/08/14/us/politics/uss-abraham-lincoln-trump-supplies-diego-garcia.html> (pay site)

Nixon and Reagan would have displayed concern, and probably sincerely felt it as well. Trump has said they ought to tough it out: this from a man who avoided service in Vietnam with a claimed medical condition.

*

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

Democracy et cetera

By Brendan Clifford

It has been demonstrated in recent years that the United States is not only the leader of world democracy, but is the foundation on which it exists, and without which it is unlikely that it would exist.

Leaving aside the United States, the democratic world is Europe.

Europe was laid out as a democratic patchwork by Britain and France, at the Versailles Conference of 1919—which was controlled by Britain and France, with Britain in the ascendant over France.

During the next twenty years Europe, with few exceptions, discarded the democratic system—the system of representative government conducted through the conflict of political parties elected on the basis of a general adult franchise.

The conflict of parties in recently-established nation states was found to be incompatible with the maintenance of State authority. The system of party conflict was essentially divisive. It operated by seeking out points of difference, exaggerating them, and depicting the other party as being wilfully destructive. Where the parties were aligned with antagonistic class interests, they acted to intensify them.

The framework of that system was the League of Nations. In principle the League ordered the world into a series of nation-states which governed themselves democratically. The democracy increasingly took the form of a party political antagonism of classes. But a nation is a consensual combination of classes. In order to establish the authority of the national state, the various countries therefore set aside the political system of class antagonism by means of establishing the dominance of national socialist, or fascist, parties—whose purpose was to restore the authority of the State by restoring the consensus of the nation by mediating the class antagonism.

This change was brought about by

different ways in different places. In ideological form it began in Italy where Mussolini, a revolutionary socialist before the first World War, brought Italy into the War as a British ally—against the opposition of both the Socialist Party and the Catholic Church—in exchange for a British promise that Italy might take large tracts of bordering Austrian territory if Austria was defeated.

After the War he generalised what he had done as Fascism, which roughly meant a bundle of things—including both nationalism (for which read Capitalism) and Socialism.

In Germany the change was brought about electorally and legally—two things which in the democratic era one might have thought were close to being the same thing, but which in their usage just now are tending to become opposites.

Those currently in authority in the EU—the usurping Commission—seem to have read up on the supposed origin of Democracy in ancient Athens and come to the conclusion that democracy is an anarchic phase of transition between aristocracy and monarchy—meaning that Ms Von Der Leyen is the autocratic Queen!

In Finland the change was enacted by a civil war, which many agree was the closest thing there has ever been to a literal war between classes, in 1917. The capitalist class won, and apparently saw advantage in allying itself with the National Socialist form when it came along.

In Spain the development happened in the course of a military coup d'état against a Republic which was unable to restrain its widespread Anarchist support from engaging in Voltaire's injunction to "wipe out the infamous thing", the Roman Church. The military coup systematically gathered social support to bring about the establishment of a political order which included the Church, along with a Syndicalist force called the

Falange.

The Spanish development was different because of the length of time the military coup took to consolidate itself, and the way it constructed a social regime in the course of securing itself—which it did not have clearly in mind at the start—and the intervention of other European forces, both democratic and Fascist, in the course of the War.

Franco was something different from Mannerheim in Finland, Mussolini in Italy, or Hitler in Germany. Only Horthy in Hungary is in some degree comparable to him. He constructed a viable State in the course of a Civil War, gave it a Fascist structure because that was what was appropriate in the circumstances, and he kept it out of the Fascist War on Russia.

And the presence of Spain (and Portugal) as Fascist states in post-1945 Europe gave the lie to the propaganda description of the War which Britain started as the Anti-Fascist War.

Franco did not give way to any "pro-democracy activism", but he treated his system as an emergency operation in the national interest, and made provision for it to end in a transition to Constitutional Monarchy. And the national state he had constructed was stable enough to ward off an attempt to treat the Civil War as a feud and to treat the regime as a murder gang that must be punished by law.

Europe—newly democratised—was confronted with Fascist Spain in 1945: and let it be. Where did it get the sense to let it be—contrary to the sharp new ideology of the Anti-Fascist moment?

Political experience is accumulated by States and their main components in the course of time. The States of mainland Europe (excluding the Iberian Peninsula) had, since 1919, been a series of fundamentally different things. In 1945 they were the debris of the Fascist war on Communism—which they had failed so spectacularly to win. Spain,

though only six years old, was the oldest State—the oldest regime in continuous existence.

The others were post-Fascist States. They had suddenly ceased to be Fascist States by being conquered by Russia, and they had been taken in hand by their military conquerors—Russia and the United States. And, seeing no future for their recent past, they became Pro-Democracy activists. But they were again being set up as States by others—as in 1919.

The Anti-Fascist War—insofar as it deserves the name—began when six countries of Fascist Europe invaded Communist Russia in June 1941. Britain had invented Total War in 1914, but the Fascist War on Russia was the most total war ever fought.

That War was a test of durability. It proved to be catastrophic for the Fascists. But Europe remained loyal to the Fascist cause to the bitter end. There were no democratic revolts in favour of the enemy!

(The apparent exception, the Warsaw Uprising, was actually a Polish attempt to gain control of the city, before the imminent arrival of the Red Army to liberate it: and to keep it out!)

The Anti-Fascist War was a war for Democracy and Freedom. That was generally agreed from 1941 to 1945. The main force of Democracy and Freedom was Communist Russia. That was generally agreed. The Communist system of Democracy took a different form from the Capitalist.

Communism and Capitalism were united in defence of Civilisation! Fascism was a force of Evil that had somehow arisen beyond the parameters of Civilisation—represented by Communism and Capitalism—and was now endangering the whole of civilisation.

Communist Democracy stopped the European Fascist advance at the gates of Moscow at Christmas 1941, broke the Panzers at the battle of Kursk in 1942, organised itself on a very wide Front and fought its way relentlessly to Berlin. Europe was conquered into freedom! Fascism was broken by conquest. Europe must learn to live without it!

But how could States which had been so purposefully fascist, and which had ceased to be fascist only because they had been conquered by Communism, account for things in such a way that they could remake themselves in the instant into functional members of the opposite of the system they had made for themselves?

The trickery of Democracy—and the European Commission is now close to describing it as trickery—was beyond them in the past. That was why they had become Fascists. How could they now remake themselves backwards into that tricky system, in a condition of subjugation caused by catastrophic defeat by conquest, and account to themselves for how they had brought all this about?

Fascism was an emergency measure for dealing with the fragility in the ultra-democracy of the artificially-constructed ‘nation-states’ (many of which were not actual nations!) formed by the conquerors in 1919.

It was not ended by internal development. It was broken by conquest and subjugation. It had not run its course as an emergency measure. It was destroyed in mid-course by the Communist/Capitalist alliance formed against Nazi Germany.

In Spain Fascism ran its course as an emergency measure. It continued in Spain for a generation after 1945, and then phased itself into a viable system of party-political democracy.

East of the Pyrenees what happened in 1945 was in many ways a repeat of what had happened in 1919. In 1919 the existing system of Europe was made war upon by the two great Western Empires—the British and the French. When they declared war on it, they declared that it was Evil. And when they won the War, they destroyed its structures—and they scotched the sources of tradition with it—knowing very well that tradition is closely bound up with State authority.

(A difference emerged between France and Britain in 1920, which led to another War twenty years later! The French, who had borne the main cost of the 1914 War in human and physical terms, plundered and

annexed and humiliated defeated Germany with gay abandon, along with the British, in 1919. But, when the French tried to enact measures that would prevent Germany from reviving and taking revenge for the humiliations inflicted upon it, Britain objected that that would not be ‘fair’! It insisted that France could not have a Rhine frontier—which would have given it a defensible border—and that the German territorial state should continue—except for Alsace/Lorraine going to France and other bits going to Belgium and Poland.

Britain, in its very effective War propaganda (much admired by Hitler) declared that Prussia (its close ally for many centuries!) was established on an evil system, and that in the process of national unification the ‘good’ German had been infected by the evil of Prussianism.

Whether this was true or false is beside the point. It was the case made by the British propaganda that deluged the world for about six years. Irish Home Rule demagogues—Tom Kettle and Robert Lynd—were to the fore in propagating it. Few voices of dissent were heard. Amongst those few were Roger Casement, who was familiar with the workings of the British State from the inside, in its upper regions, and James Connolly, who was an acute observer of it from the lower regions on the outside.

Both said outright that Britain was making war on a commercial rival and was doing it in a way that would destroy European culture. Both were disposed of in 1916: and so their case was lost by default!

The British case was the ‘pragmatic truth’ of 1919. But, when the French wanted to put it into action—by reducing the size of the German state and separating the ‘good Germans’ from the Prussians—Britain wouldn’t have it!

In the German demoralisation of 1919 there was support for partition into Rhineland Bavaria and North German States. But this proposal seemed to set off the British ‘balance-of power’ instinct—praised by Churchill as an “unconscious” drive.

The British Establishment suddenly saw that the disintegration of the German territorial state would

restore the dominant position of France in Europe—and make it the main enemy again. So it vetoed the Rhine Border and the Rhineland state: and Hitler's first notable action was his stand against Bavarian secession.

Major Street, the very intelligent Information Officer of Dublin Castle, after writing his books on *The Administration Of Ireland* in 1920 and 1921, was transferred to the European scene to counter French efforts to take Germany in hand. This was Weimar Germany which, to conciliate Allied propaganda, had obediently made its futile revolution against Kaiserism (a stabilising force in Germany), only to be trampled on still further in the Versailles Peace 'Negotiations'—which took the form of a series of Diktats enforced by a Starvation Blockade!

Britain conspired prudently with 'Weimar' Germany against the restrictions of the Versailles Agreement which it had imposed in 1919. It then acted openly with Hitler in breaking its provisions—beginning with the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1934 and culminating in the Munich Agreement of 1938.

British support for Fascism/National Socialism was not problematical for the Empire: it made sense in terms of Power Politics. A resurgent Germany was a check on France and a counter to Soviet power.

The Versailles system established in 1919 was weak and brittle. German democracy lacked any foundation in traditional State authority. It encouraged free expression of actual social antagonism. It provided fertile ground for growth of the international socialism of Russian Revolution—which conceived of the working class as an international class which was destined to become the generalised ruling class of Europe.

The growth of Communist Parties everywhere was strong enough to suggest that that was a realisable prospect. The counter to it was not literal class war, such as apparently happened in Finland right at the start. It was national-socialism, the purpose of which was to restore the combination of classes in the power

structure by means of elements drawn from both sides, and thus establish effective authority in the nation-state.

Churchill—the future hero of the Anti-Fascist War—was, in the 1920s, lavish in his praise of Italian leader Mussolini for finding the anti-dote to International Socialism in National Socialism. And in the early thirties he hoped that, if Britain was ever put in the position in which Germany was put in 1919, it would find a Hitler to save it!

The problem is not why Britain actively supported the Nazi regime in breaking free of the Versailles strait-jacket, and restoring itself as a regional Power facing eastward—as it did by means of the Munich Agreement in 1938. The problem is why, a few months later, it suddenly decided to make war on Germany over the trivial issue of the city of Danzig.

Churchill had nothing to do with this. He was a Great Man, in Platonic form, waiting for his moment—and he could not be choosy when the moment presented itself. He became a Great Man of the Anti-Fascist War, joining Stalin in saving Europe from the force that had saved Europe from Stalin!

But, when he came to write the history of that War, he at least had the grace to sub-title it as *An Unnecessary War!*

Capitalism and International Socialism joined forces to save Democratic Civilisation from National Socialism. It was an absurdity!

In the final months of the 1939-45 War, as International Socialism was saving Central Europe from National Socialism by conquering it in a war of self-defence, Churchill cast around for ways of making war on his great (un)Democratic ally in the East—which was doing what it failed to do in 1920: spreading the revolution!

The time had come to get to grips with the real enemy—now that the intermediary fascist conflict had been got out of the way. He said frankly that he had always considered Communism to be the real enemy—even when he was obliged to lavish praise on it in public—because,

without it, his war of pin-pricks against Hitler Germany would have fallen flat.

Democracy in 1945 existed in two mutually-contradictory forms. The effective form—that broke the power of National Socialism—was the Communist form.

It was democratic in that it enlisted the mass of the people in the construction of an industrial economy, a State, and an Army under the direction of an extensive Party organisation drawn from the populace.

The other form was the Liberal Democratic. It was organised as a system of conflict between a number of ideologically antagonistic parties from which the populace as an electorate chose one of them by vote every few years to form a Government. Between elections the mass of electors went about their private concerns.

The system of liberal democracy in Europe, when restored superficially by the Western Occupying Powers, could not at the outset brand the Russian system as an even greater system of despotic tyranny than the Fascist system had been! If that was the case, what had the War been about?

It took some years of time and forgetfulness to pass, and for a new order of feeling to be generated—appropriate to the paradoxical nature of the outcome of the War, before Western Europe could settle down as a toy-town democracy under the wing of the United States.

(And, at the same time, conditions of life for the working class of Europe were much improved, as compared to the pre-War situation. This had to be done to counter the attractions of the Russian system of production, with its empowerment of the workers.)

The United States was kind to Europe. It shielded it from existential agonising over its recent past—which it had experienced as good, but must now experience retrospectively as evil—and about how quickly and smoothly the social substance of the evil past had become the beneficent present.

And it set Europe up in business again, conferring on it effective

demand for the output of the greatly increased industrial capacity developed in America during the War.

*

It is said that Hitler expected the Third Reich to last a thousand years. In June 1940 Churchill spoke of the British Empire lasting a thousand years. In Churchill's hands the Empire lasted about three years after that speech!

Britain's 1939 War on Germany had at least an undertone of anti-Fascist purpose. It ended in defeat in June 1940—and therefore led to an increase in the Fascist presence in Europe.

Britain had depended on France to bear the main cost of the War again, as it had in 1914-18. France remembered how Britain had prevented it from making a secure settlement against Germany in 1919-20 and was cautious in its commitment to battle.

Britain did nothing much for ten months after declaring War in 1939. Its small Expeditionary Force idled at the Front during the Autumn, Winter and Spring of 1939/40, as did the very much larger French Army. Germany responded to the Anglo-French declaration of war on it in May 1940. As the weaker force, without command of the resources of half the world at the disposal of the French and British Empires, it had to act energetically, if it was to survive.

It had been given a 'practice war' in September 1939, when Britain and France had drawn Poland into a Tri-partite military encirclement of Germany in order to induce the Poles to refuse to negotiate with Germany over the unsustainable position of Danzig. Germany responded to the military encirclement by striking at Poland, in the expectation that Britain (and France), instead of delivering on the military guarantee to Poland, would stand idly by—which is what happened.

Britain provoked the German/Polish War, and made it the occasion for declaring war on Germany. Germany responded to that declaration of war some ten months later and, with the expertise gained in its Polish War, broke the order of

the Anglo/French deployment with a feat of Arms.

The British Army rushed into Belgium and then rushed out again, and went home, when it found itself in danger of being cut off from its way home.

The French Army then faced a debacle, after a German breakthrough from the Ardennes Front. France found itself occupied by the State it had declared War upon, and abandoned by the Ally who had led it by the nose into causing that War. Its democratically elected Government decided to negotiate terms of settlement with the State on which it had made war and lost.

Britain declared that the terms of the Anglo-French alliance prohibited France negotiating with the enemy without British approval—even though it had lost the War and Britain had left the battlefield!

The British propaganda denied that the battle had been won by a remarkable German feat of arms, and asserted that the French Establishment was riddled with Fascist Fifth Columnists who had opened the Front to Germany. It broke off diplomatic relations with France, treated it as an enemy, and made War on it—by destroying its Fleet in the first instance, and then by fostering terrorist activity within France under the name of Ungentlemanly Warfare.

Ungentlemanly Warfare was not going to win the War. It had a different purpose: to maximise the German intrusion into French affairs: to make things as difficult as possible for the French to make a viable settlement with the State on which it had declared War, and lost: to degrade the French Government—the Popular Front—into something that could be represented as having opened the Front to the Germans in May 1940.

Fascist Italy was neutral in the War declared by Britain until Britain left the battlefield. There was no necessary unity among fascist states. Fascism was national socialism—the counter to international socialism. Mussolini was a revolutionary socialist who took his movement into the First World War on nationalist grounds, under British urging,

and who formulated the merger of Nationalist and Socialist Revolution as Fascism after the First World War—and was highly praised for it by Churchill.

Mussolini remained British in international orientation, even after Britain reneged in 1919 on the promises it had made in 1914 to get Italy into the War. And he was a backer of Austrian Fascism against Germany.

Austrian Fascism was patriotic against Nazism. It was the kind of thing that is represented in *The Sound Of Music*—but with the fascist character of the hero obscured.

The showdown between the Austrian and German Governments was not between liberal democracy and Fascism. And Mussolini was a backer of Austrian independence—until he began to realise that Britain was subverting the Versailles system by building up Germany against France.

Then, when Britain subverted the Czechoslovak State which it had created in 1919, and allowed it to be dismantled by Germany—and by Hungary and Poland under German authority—and followed this a few months later by bringing about a war on Germany with the intention that France would fight it: and lost that War in May/June 1940, it was not unreasonable for Italy to conclude that Britain was no longer capable of exercising the guiding role in world affairs which it had asserted in its wars against Napoleon, and to assert a position for itself in the post-British order of things.

Britain was no longer capable, after June 1940, of fighting the War which it had declared but, because it was not in danger of occupation, and its Navy was still the most powerful in the world, it did not need to end the War it had declared by making a settlement.

It kept Europe unsettled by means of pin-pricks. One of these pin-pricks was its intervention in the Italian/Greek War. The Italian and Greek states were both Fascist. Britain offered military assistance to the Greeks because Italy had joined forces with Germany in the other War as the Anglo-French front was

collapsing.

The Fascist Greek dictator, General Metaxas, refused the offer of British military assistance because he did not need it, and because acceptance would automatically bring Germany into his War on the Italian side—which was, of course, the British purpose. But Metaxas died. The offer of British assistance was pressed on his successor, who was not worldly-wise. The offer was accepted. Greece became a Front in the British War on Germany.

The German route to Greece was through Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia split apart at a touch. The various peoples in it had been thrown together by Britain in 1919 with scant regard for national cohesion. Lloyd George's maxim was:

"The whole state of society is more or less molten and you can stamp upon that molten mass almost anything as long as you do it with firmness and determination".

But this kind of thing is easier said than done. Yugoslavia dismantled itself easily into its component parts and they aligned themselves militarily against one another within the framework of the general War that Britain was intent on bringing about by drawing others into it.

British success in spreading its War to the Balkans in April 1941 probably had the very far-reaching effect on the post-War Settlement of Europe by delaying the European assault on Russia for a month. If the assault had been launched a month earlier, and had reached Moscow before Winter set in, and the Soviet State had retreated beyond the Urals, the subsequent course of events would have been different.

A factor in the German decision to make War on Russia was that a victory in Russia would bring about a settlement with Britain, and end the uncertainty that hung over Europe.

There were only two forces in the world capable of doing battle with Germany as it had become in June 1940: America and Russia.

American democracy was determined not to be lured into another European War, and Russia was not going to risk itself in an offensive War. So Britain's only

hope lay in Russia being attacked. That happened in August 1941 by Germany invading and its East European allies joining in. The exceptional barbarity of the following years—the extermination of Poles and Jews—was concentrated in the hinterland of the European advance.

If Europe had won, and Russia was put out of the game, Britain would have made a settlement with Germany—it is not suicidal, though it likes to pretend that it would rather be wiped out than violate a principle! And if Europe failed to win in Russia, then the outcome was inevitably an expansion of Communist power across Europe.

With Russia giving a good military account of itself, the only way of preventing that outcome was to find a way of drawing in the only uncommitted Power, the USA. And that is, presumably, why Churchill seconded a US ultimatum to Japan in 1941—and lost the Empire that was intended to last for a thousand years!

For a few hundred years Japan had been living peacefully within its own borders—'navel gazing', as we now put it—when American warships visited it in 1850 and told it it must enter the world market, or else . . .!

Britain had done the same thing with China—but by means of actual war—ten years earlier. [The story of how Britain got China hooked on opium, disabling the country and garnering huge super-profits is beside the point here! It was the Chinese Communist Party which expelled the Imperialists and put the country on a sound footing! Ed.]

The Japanese authorities saw that peaceful self-sufficiency was no longer allowable, so it geared itself up for Imperialist Capitalism: and proved to be good at it. It formed a mutually-beneficial alliance with Britain, and helped to secure the British Empire in the Far East.

The United States, by systematically extending westward expansion, had come to regard the Pacific area as its sphere of influence. It was irked by the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1902 and, after Britain became its debtor in the First World War, demanded that Britain should end its alliance with Japan—or else face a direct

challenge to its naval power.

Britain did not renew its Japanese Treaty, and the Japanese were denied racial equality in the Versailles system—though it was one of the victors of the Great War. Then, in 1941, the British Empire seconded an American demand that Japan must desist from certain of its Imperialist activities.

Japan, forced into the imperialist system by American warships, decided to fight for its life against the American/British ultimatum, and it pulled the plug on the British Empire in the Far East!

And, perhaps with a sense of poetic justice, we can note that Britain's botched Great Power manipulations in World War 2, which forced it to look to the USA to pull its chestnuts out of the fire, had the unintended consequence that the USA gradually forced Britain to disengage from its Empire, and to defer to the new world role adopted by its erstwhile colony!

Further Reading

Major C.J.C. Street: *The Administration Of Ireland, 1920;* with a substantial extract from his *Ireland In 1921* and a review of his other writings on Britain's world role, and inter-war Europe. Introduction by Dr. Pat Walsh. Intelligence Officer Street produced this exceptionally informative justification of the Black and Tan War in Ireland, using the secret archives of Dublin Castle (with many captured IRA documents and official statistics of incidents.) 192pp (9.5" x 6"). Index, Bibliog. ISBN 0 85034 089 6. AB, 2001. €18, £15

The Starvation Blockade On Germany In The Great War. A Summary by Angela Clifford of *Two Definitive Works* by Eamon Dyas: *Blockading The Germans and Starving The Germans.* Belfast Historical & Educational Society. March 2022. Belfast Historical & Educational Society. 2020. ISBN: 978-1-87207837-3. €9, £10

“The Architect or the Bee?”

By Michael Murray

“A bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of its cells.

“But what distinguishes the worst of architects from the best of bees is namely this: the architect will construct in his imagination that which he will ultimately erect in reality. At the end of every labour process we get that which existed in the consciousness of the labourer at its commencement.”

Karl Marx: Das Kapital

Introduction

The 4th September marks the anniversary of the death, in 2020, at the age of 86, of Mike Cooley, author of the seminal book, first published in 1980 by Spokesman Books: *“The Architect or the Bee? The Human Price of Technology*

The 2016 edition has a must read 7 page Foreword by Frances O’Grady, former TUC General Secretary, and no stranger to Labour Affairs, or its predecessor, Labour and Trade Union Review.

This year also marks the anniversary of the publication of what is generally referred to as the *Lucas Plan*, otherwise *“The Corporate Plan for Lucas Aerospace,”*

What prompts this article, apart from marking the anniversaries, is to draw attention to the relevance of *“The Architect or Bee?”* and *“The Corporate Plan for Lucas Aerospace* to some of the burning issues of our time, beginning with the external pressures on Britain to increase its Defence spending at the expense of all other civil and social expenditure: *“Warfare spending instead of Welfare spending”* as the catalyst

and main driver of economic growth.

Defence Spending

A propos defence spending: yesterday, a leaflet addressed to Labour members came into my virtual letterbox. It read: *“Assumptions are often made about what Labour Party members think on key issues but our polling work this summer surprised many. We found that Labour members support reducing welfare spending more than the general public, and also supported higher defence spending.”*

The giveaway: In tiny print at the bottom of the leaflet: ***Copyright Labour Together!***

Labour Together with a ThinkLabour rebrand. It is pretending to be reporting news when they are in fact making it - as with their ‘focus groups,’ which became a substitute for democratic decision-making at Annual Conference.

And true to the tried and tested Labour Together playbook, Burnham’s first serious political statement endorsed the *“Warfare not Welfare”* government trajectory and moreover, has promised to fulfil all

the exorbitant financial commitments made to Ukraine by Starmer. Of course, this can only be paid for by cutting back on State spending, including Welfare, since he’s also committed himself to keeping within Labour’s self-imposed fiscal rules. Though don’t ask him where the countless billions promised to Ukraine *“for as long as it takes.”* are going to come from. (his words: faithfully repeating Starmer’s).

Of course, any hardship involved is in the *“National Interest.”*

The prestigious journal *“Open Democracy”* begs to differ. In an in-depth series of investigative articles on the US Military Industrial Complex it reports:

“The rapid expansion of Anduril’s UK footprint reveals how a clutch of US defence-tech firms backed by Trump’s family and close supporters are looking to profit from the US president’s insistent pressure on the UK government to increase its defence spending. As Trump’s erratic foreign policy has raised military tensions across the world, these firms — which include

controversial spy-tech firm Palantir — are poised to benefit.” *Ethan Shone Open Democracy*, 24 August, 2026.

Bear in mind, also, Andrew Feinstein’s “*The Shadow World: Inside the Global Arms Trade*,” 2011, which exposed systemic corruption, close ties between governments and defence contractors. He found that the arms trade represents 40% of international trade corruption, despite constituting only 1% of international trade. In this book he also connects the legal, government-backed arms trade to the illicit black and grey markets, showing how bribery and political collusion fuel both. And he cites the invidious “revolving door” between political, military and defence companies. And the ubiquitous “donations” (not confined to the Defence sector, admittedly).

Hardly had the ink dried on Andy Burnham’s signature in the House of Commons’ “Test Roll” when it was reported in “Open Democracy” that, in June, one of his Ministers accepted a £20,000 donation from Signum Global Advisors, a “war profiteering firm” *Open Democracy*, 21 August, 2026. When challenged to rebut the accusation, she declined. Another feature of the Defence Industry identified by Feinstein: the impunity it enjoys because of its political connections. A reciprocal culture of impunity in fact. And this corruption is not victimless, which makes it reprehensible.

Is Defence spending a driver

of growth?

There is, today, a consensus in macroeconomic research and multilateral organisations from the World Bank to the UK’s own Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) that spending on Health, Welfare, Housing and Education yield substantially higher multipliers and long-term productivity gains, reduces long-term state costs, and narrows social inequality.

A healthier, highly educated workforce is inherently more innovative, efficient, and adaptable to technological change.

A significant portion of defence spending is allocated to heavy machinery and specialised equipment that does not directly improve the everyday productivity of the wider civilian work force.

Bottom line: Defence spending is not the growth engine it’s made out to be by those across the political parties calling for it.

So why are they calling for it?

The Party political consensus is that the UK is in a “pre-war” situation caused by a Russian threat to UK Nato allies and the UK itself - while, conversely claiming that Russia is too weak to beat the Ukraine. Apart from a bi-partisan consensus regarding this threat, the new Labour PM has also bought into it personally, a matter of weeks after declaiming 40 years of neoliberalism and austerity.

Then there’s Lord Robertson, a prominent advocate of more Defence spending

with cross party support, the epitome of the symbiotic relationship between the military, the political elite and the Defence industry. He’s a former Secretary General of NATO, former Labour Defence Minister under Blair and Senior Counsel for the US based Cohen consulting Group, amongst whose clients are companies in the Defense sector.

In 2025 he was given a year’s leave of absence by the Cohen Group to lead the UK’s Strategic Defence Review, to maintain the image of being an honest broker, representing the national interest, not his paymasters of 20 years duration.

The debate in Parliament has narrowed to finding existing pots of money to cut, putting the UK’s social security and welfare budgets in the crosshairs.

So the game is to create consent for the cuts - the same cuts that finally brought the last PM down - by replacing a Starmer by a Charmer.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence, to most ears, sounds very modern, but was in fact coined as far back as 1955 in the course of a research funding submission written by a John McCarthy and others. They explained the proposal “(would) proceed on the basis of the conjecture that every aspect of learning or any other feature of intelligence can in principle be so precisely described that a machine can be made to simulate it.” (My

emphasis MM)

The proposal outlined goals “for machines to handle language, form concepts, solve human-level problems, **and improve their own performance.**” (My emphasis MM)

AI not being an issue, directly, in the Lucas Aerospace struggle, Mike Cooley only became immersed in it in the years immediately following the Lucas experience and by 1987 he had become the founding Chairman of the international journal “*AI & Society*.”

The journal honed his critique of Artificial Intelligence and automated systems. It championed a vision of technology that saw it enhancing human skill and dignity. More broadly, it spearheaded a vital campaign to raise awareness of LLMs (Large Language Models) and other areas of digital transformation.

Decades before the mainstream world began worrying about ChatGPT or algorithmic bias, Cooley and his co-founders launched this journal specifically to question the social cost of automated systems. Today, the journal is more relevant than ever.

In Chapter 4 of the “*Architect or Bee?*” Mike takes us as far back as Socrates and Plato in an absolute tour de force potted history of the conceptual origins, and evolution over the centuries, of what we now know as “*Artificial Intelligence*.”

In a later chapter, appropriately titled “*Some Social and Technological Projections*,” quoting an un-named British AI expert, he left us with this sobering thought:

“If AI is not challenged and the human designed in, then” *humans will have found their natural place in evolutionary hierarchy. Namely, animals at the bottom, human beings in the middle and thinking machines at the top.*

“The alternatives are stark,” he cautions. “Either we will have a future in which human beings are reduced to a bee like behaviour, reacting to the systems and equipment specified for them, or we will have a future in which masses of people, conscious of their skills and abilities in both a political and technical sense, decide that they are going to be the architects of a new form of technological development which will enhance human creativity and mean more freedom of choice and expression rather than less.”

“The truth is, we shall have to make a profound political decision as to whether we intend to act as architects or behave like bees.”

THE LUCAS COMBINED SHOP STEWARDS COMMITTEE

A lifelong trade union activist, up to and including many times elected Delegate to the TUC and becoming President of the TASS section of the AEUW-TASS union before, via a number of later amalgamations, that union ended up in the union known as Unite, whose leadership, sadly, has taken a position on defence spending which would have been anathema to Mike - and to the TGWU General Secretary Jack Jones, Cooley’s greatest trade union supporter, who also believed in a ‘bottom up’ shop stewards movement.

“Structure is a function of Purpose,” a former TUC General Secretary, George Woodrow, had long ago concluded. Mike Cooley came to the same conclusion.

The multi-union TUC based on differentials, demarcation and institutional competition between (and sometimes within) individual unions was too cumbersome to deal with large corporates like GEC or Lucas and easy

for unscrupulous managements to divide and conquer. Cooley highlights this organisation challenge in the “*Architect or Bee?*” And, from the beginning took a different “bottom up” view of the structure needed for dealing with the complexity of thousands of workers, from a multitude of grades, trades and semi-skilled workers spread over dozens of sites, represented by twelve different unions.

He wrote: “(The Lucas Combine) is unique in the British trade union movement in that it links together the highest level technologists and the semi-skilled workers on the shop floor.

“There is therefore a creative cross-fertilisation between the analytical power of the scientist, and what is more important, the direct class sense and understanding of those on the shop floor.”

To understand Cooley’s thinking fully, it is important to know he wasn’t talking only about industrial relations. He saw this creative “cross-fertilisation” as key to developing and nurturing what Marx called the “*relations in production*” (ie division of labour) as distinct from the “*relations of production*.” (i.e. ownership and control) - a prerequisite of truly social production in place of the Taylorist division of labour that hitherto existed - which cautioned the production worker, on clocking in, to leave his head in the locker room with his coat.

Socially useful production in Cooley’s understanding was both *what* was produced (the **What:** product or service) and the **How:** the choice of technology, work organisation and consideration for the social and environmental impact of the product or service.

Crucially, socially useful production would not include destructive military contracts or

products leading to environmental degradation.

Production should instead fulfil unmet civil, environmental, and medical needs. The wastefulness of profits-driven built-in obsolescence was one of his greatest bugbears - and has become an infinitely bigger issue over the years.

Technology should *augment* human skill rather than replace it. Hand-and-mind craft should be prioritised, along with the practical know-how, and intuition of experienced workers over the detached, abstract formulas of technocratic experts.

Allied with that, he believed the manufacturing process must satisfy the psychological and creative needs of the worker, eliminating the rigid division between intellectual labour (*the architect*) and purely mechanical execution (*the bee*).

"The choices are essentially political and ideological rather than technological, he argues in "The Architect or Bee?" "As we design technological systems, we are in fact designing sets of social relationships.

"As we question those social relationships and attempt to design systems differently, we are then beginning to challenge, in a fundamental way, power structures in society."

The Lucas Plan

In its final form it comprised a 6 volume, 200 pages per volume of technical details, engineering drawings, costings and micro-economic calculations.

At its core was a list of socially useful products for which there was an identified need and for the production of which there was within the Lucas sites threatened with cuts, the identified requisite skills, tools and machinery to

produce them, as demonstrated in the Plan.

This mammoth task was carried out over two years in which 150 product ideas were identified by the workforce and organised in turn into six product ranges, as varied as medical equipment, transport vehicles and energy conservation equipment.

Inspired and led by Mike Cooley, this was the work force response to the threat of the Company's plan for large cutbacks and redundancies arising from the 1974 Labour government's reduction of Defence spending.

It was chosen as an alternative strategy to the more traditional route of strikes, sit-ins and negotiated redundancies which had been seen to have failed in GEC with the loss of 10s of thousands of jobs.

The Labour Government and Official trade union sellout

In the mid-1970s, management at Lucas Aerospace faced international competition and shifting state defence budgets. They announced restructuring plans to make up to 20% of the 18,000-strong **workforce redundant**, which amounted to roughly putting 3,600 jobs at risk.

By 1979, management formally moved forward with an updated target to cut 2,000 jobs. Despite the Lucas Plan demonstrating that the job cuts were unnecessary, official union executives and Labour government ministers negotiated separately with management. They agreed to a compromised figure of **1,500 redundancies**, funded by £8 million in taxpayer money paid to the company.

While the Combine successfully delayed and prevented *forced* mass redundancies during the peak height of their campaign, the rejection of the plan meant the job cuts were ultimately carried out via voluntary redundancy, site

closures, and restructuring.

Following the 1979 election of Margaret Thatcher, the remaining union resistance was fragmented, leading to further targeted sackings of the key activist shop stewards.

FINAL COMMENT

A final comment on the Lucas Plan. The management's reasons for non-acceptance of the Lucas Plan were: an assertion of "*management's right to manage*," linked to that, its fiduciary duty to the shareholders not to put their investment in jeopardy by attempting to switch from manufacturing armaments to the likes of health care products.

Looking at that side of the story, I would have thought it had a fiduciary duty to seriously examine a business plan so comprehensively prepared.

Instead they treated the Lucas Combine as an "unofficial" body, outside the agreed structures and procedural agreements.

They did not commission a Report on the Lucas Plan despite the thorough research that went into it and professional presentation.

Fiduciary duty?

The Lucas Plan has stood the test of time, its methodology studied and applied world-wide in the 50 years since in different situations.

In Part II "*Some seed fell on fertile ground*" "...The International take-up of Mike Cooley's core ideas - focused on the BRICS' member states, contrasted with the G7 countries (including the UK).

Human connections

By Eamon Dyas

Musk predicts that within 5 years, apps, email, etc. will all be gone, replaced by AI

Everything will be generated by AI on your device (formerly known as a “phone”), delivering everything it thinks and decides you want or need to your screen - Elon Musk

1.5-min clip from a Joe Rogan interview with Musk

Elon Musk: Apps Will Disappear in 5 Years #science #space #podcast ¹

Beyond the orbit of family and friends the way that most people relate to other people is through links established by the market with shopping being the most common one.

The possibilities opened by the internet has made even that link less prevalent. A person can now procure any manufactured item or service without leaving their home simply by pushing a few keys on their smartphone. And even the decisions involved in that effort have now been overtaken by the online service provided by the large supermarkets. These supermarkets, whose IT systems can now identify the patterns of your purchases if you use credit or debit cards (or even cash purchases if you use their loyalty card to take advantage of discounts) from week to week and they retain that data so that they can replicate those purchases for delivery to your door should you request it.

With systems like Siri also available in the home that can answer - via a speaker or on your phone - a whole range of questions that might previously have been part of a real life interaction with other human beings while also being capable of performing simple physical tasks like turning on the lights or central heating, the range of activities involving

contact with other humans is contracting all the time.

This is now being compounded by the development of humanoid robotic systems where even the visual appearance of humans is being imitated in ways that seek to supply the normal need for emotional comfort through the visual presence of other humans. There’s currently a comedy series on BBC iPlayer called *Ann Droid* which humorously explores this situation. The plot of the series revolves around the decision of the inept son of a widowed woman who does not wish to go into a home and cannot afford home care, to lease a re-conditioned robot from a company that specialises in supplying such a service. Looking at this programme in view of the progress made in this area it seems like a scenario that is now no longer far-fetched.

Technology that has developed so fast under the stimulus and direction of the market has remoulded our humanity along lines that reduce us into ever-decreasing individual pieces of existence whose only worth is as consumers. Without wishing to fall into an over-poetic mode it reminds me of those dying stars that contract into ever-smaller spaces and assume an ever-heavier density until they eventually explode; it seems to me that we are being made into Gods for a while but the price we really pay comes with the loneliness that inevitably comes with that role.

Frederick Engels noticed the early inklings of this on seeing London for the first time but what he witnessed then has grown into something that even he could never have imagined as no doubt he assumed that Socialism would have provided a more human alternative by now.

Here is a reminder of Engels’

impressions of London taken from his *Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*:

“After roaming the streets of the Capital a day or two, making headway with difficulty through the human turmoil and the endless lines of vehicles, after visiting the slums of the metropolis, one realises for the first time that these Londoners have been forced to sacrifice the best qualities of their human nature, to bring to pass all the marvels of civilisation which crowd their city ; that a hundred powers which slumbered within them have remained inactive, have been suppressed in order that a few might be developed more fully and multiply through union with those of others. The very turmoil of the streets has something repulsive, something against which human nature rebels. The hundreds of thousands of all classes and ranks crowding past each other, are they not all human beings with the same qualities and powers, and with the same interest in being happy? And have they not, in the end, to seek happiness in the same way by the same means? And still they crowd by one another as though they had nothing in common, nothing to do with one another, and their only agreement is the tacit one, that each keep to his own side of the pavement, so as not to delay the opposing streams of the crowd, while it occurs to no man to honour another with so much as a glance. The brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest becomes the more repellent and offensive, the more these individuals are crowded together within a limited space. And however much one may be aware that this isolation of the individual, this narrow self-seeking is the fundamental principle of our society everywhere, it is nowhere so shamelessly barefaced, so self-conscious as just here in the crowding of the great city. The dissolution of mankind into monads, of which each one has a separate principle, the world of atoms, is here carried out to its utmost extreme.” (pp.17-18).

¹ <https://youtube.com/shorts/yZs8V19PX74?is=eUG5sEPqvDiYsINP>