

Labour Affairs

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Can People Live on Hope Alone?

Andy Burnham's conference speech was a curious affair. He reiterated his view that the country took a wrong turn in the 1980s, when Margaret Thatcher set out to dismantle the post-WWII political settlement.

"In 1945, we had the vision to win the peace. We had the bravery to make change. We built good homes, secure jobs, health and education for everyone. We gave Britain hope again.

"We made working-class aspiration feel real for families like mine. We built the common good. Or at least we did until the 1980s. Suddenly, the common wealth we had created, this party, the wealth we had created for the many was seen as an opportunity for the few.

"Homes. Water. Energy. Transport. Care. Broken up and sold off.

"The British Right talk about 'taking back control'. Never let them forget, they are the ones that gave it away in the first place. Economic control diminished by selling off essentials. Political control corroded by the hollowing out of councils. Immigration control weakened by Brexit."

Burnham's political objective appears to be to use his administration to return to something closer to the post-WWII consensus.

It is an interesting framing, and most readers of this magazine would agree that a wrong turn was taken some 40 years ago. But it is a limited one, because it does not explain how someone like Thatcher could come to power and, within a decade, reverse a consensus that had held for over 30 years. Burnham says nothing about how this came to pass. If he does not understand how it happened, will he know how to reverse it?

The election of the Thatcher government in 1979 is usually described as a move to the right by British society, but this over-simplification obscures what Thatcher actually represented. It

also avoids the culpability of the labour movement in creating the conditions in which someone like her could thrive. A more accurate description is that she embodied the electorate's reaction to the future the labour movement had threatened to create through its myopic behaviour in the 1970s. The trade union movement had shown by its actions that it controlled most aspects of civil society, from the disposal of the dead to the public's access to energy and light. The dominant question was how that power would be used in future. Until then it had been wielded disruptively, in sectional interest. What remained to be seen was whether it could be turned to constructive, responsible use in the wider society.

In many ways the answer came with the rejection of the 1977 Bullock Report on industrial democracy. That rejection reflected the dominant influence of a narrow sectional mindset among most trade union leaders and an ideologically constrained political left. The electorate faced a Labour leadership unable to influence how the unions' enormous power was used, and so the party appeared to offer no alternative to continued industrial strife and anarchy. An incompetent trade union movement enabled Thatcher's arrival in British politics.

Of course, the trade union movement is much less powerful today than in the 1970s. But the problems Britain will face over the next year resemble those of that decade. The inflationary wage/price spiral of the 1970s was driven by huge increases in the price of imported Middle Eastern oil. Over the next six months Britain will face an avalanche of price rises, again driven by energy prices. How does Burnham propose to deal with that? Reducing VAT on electricity will have a negligible effect on the rising cost of

living.

In sum, this was a speech strong on intentions but poor on detail. Sometimes it sounded more like a manifesto for the next general election than a description of policies for this administration. Delegates were enthused by the statement of intent, but once that enthusiasm passes they will realise how little they have been told about implementation. There are intentions on council house building, electoral reform, reconsidering Brexit and reducing youth unemployment, but little on how any of it will actually happen.

Having raised enthusiasm, Burnham then felt the need to introduce a little realism. He announced that he would end the triple lock on pensions in 2030. It was a decidedly unwise move that he will likely regret and may well reverse or mitigate before the 2029 general election. One suspects he was forced into it by his Chancellor, John Healey, who appears to live in permanent fear of the bond markets.

More importantly, the decision raises doubts about whether Burnham understands the real problems he must deal with if he is to turn his intentions into reality. The UK is a currency-issuing state. Any expenditure approved by Parliament is financed by new money created by the Bank of England. The problem is never where to find the money but where to find the resources to do what he wants to do. Announcing the end of the triple lock suggests Burnham has not grasped that his problem is finding resources, not money. If so, his administration will be much weakened in its ability to realise its intentions.

We said at the outset that the speech was a curious affair. Beyond the lack of detail, there was a surprising but welcome absence of any reference to fiscal rules or national defence. One expects Kemi Badenoch at the

Conservative conference to call for welfare cuts to pay down the national debt and prepare for a fictitious Russian threat. Yet Burnham made only a single passing reference to NATO and Russia. It is distinctly odd that, in his first speech as Prime Minister to a Labour Party conference, he hardly mentions the proxy war being waged by NATO against Russia, a war that must bear primary responsibility for the cost of living increases to which working people have been subjected. It is doubly surprising given that, in his recent 20 minute address to the UN General Assembly, he spent almost a quarter of his time attacking Russia.

In his leadership election campaign Burnham put great emphasis on following Reeves' fiscal rules. In conference he merely said, "I have to be honest about what the country can afford. I will stick to our fiscal rules to get borrowing and debt down.

His near silence on fiscal rules must have come as a welcome relief to delegates, who had listened to Rachel Reeves talk of little else over the previous two conferences.

The ostensible purpose of the Labour party conference was to give British people hope again. Burnham's speech certainly succeeded in giving conference delegates hope again. Whether it has given the more general electorate hope again will be tested at the Holborn & St. Pancras by-election on 8th October. This has been a Labour seat since 1983. In theory it should be an easy hold. But the leader of the Green party is standing as a candidate so the outcome is in question. It will be a first test of Burnham's vision for the country. It will be interesting to see if the electorate need more than just hope to be convinced to vote Labour.

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Was The Soviet Union “A Failed World State”?

A Reply To Remarks In *Labour Affairs*, September '26 by **Brendan Clifford**

The Russian Revolution was envisaged in the first instance by its creator as a preliminary to an international Socialist Revolution against Capitalism. Socialist Revolution was seen by Lenin as having been made possible, even inevitable, in the immediate future, by developments within German capitalism during the War. These developments were brought about as a means of coping with the comprehensive Blockade of Germany by the British Navy—which cut it off from the medium of the world market in which it had been created.

The financial devices, in particular, by which it had kept itself going after Britain excluded it from the world market, and organised the world against it, were seen as an intensification of the social character of Capitalism, which would eventually lead to Socialism.

The future, in which Capitalism would undergo a transition into Socialism, had become the present under pressure of the exclusion of the freshest and most advanced form of Capitalism from the world market under pressure by the British Empire.

I don't recall that much was written about the State in that socialist revolution—except that

it would wither away very quickly. Capitalism would undergo a transition to Socialism, beginning in Germany, and the Socialism would be such that we could all, cooks and bottle-washers, take our turn at the running of the Government.

With Capitalism gone, what need would there be for a State? The function of the State was to protect the market from its victims. And with the market gone, gold will be used for making lavatory seats.

That is what I recall from *State and Revolution*, which I read a very long time ago, and do not have a copy to hand.

In his general view of the situation Lenin differed very little from Trotsky, or from Rosa Luxemburg. When the Tsarist State collapsed, and politics went into flux, Lenin and Trotsky set aside their theoretical differences of the past and were at ease with one another in what they were saying and doing in the present.

Rosa Luxemburg, however, retained a critical stance against Leninism because of certain features of it that became profoundly problematical a few years later.

Lenin/Trotsky made a revolution

on socialist principles in Russia in 1917 on the understanding that it only be a holding operation until the actual Socialist Revolution happened in Europe. They governed in Coalition with the Socialist Revolutionaries for a few months.

In the Spring of 1918 they were requested by Germany to either make a peace treaty with it, or make war on it. “Peace” had been one of the slogans of the Revolution, but the signing of a Treaty with a major Capitalist state—which would enable it to transfer a large number of troops to the Western Front, increasing the probability that it would win the War, was seen by many as counter-revolutionary.

The Marxist theorist of the Bolshevik Party, Bukharin, was against making a Treaty, and he gained a majority on the Central Committee. The policy of the Party was that Socialists everywhere should oppose their own Governments in the War and desire its defeat, and thereby set free the elements making for socialist revolution. How could the Socialists in power in Russia go against their colleagues in Germany by making a Treaty with the German Government?

The thing to do was resist German pressure for a Treaty by declaring a *revolutionary war* with the object of precipitating European revolution. After all, they had only set up a Socialist State in pre-Capitalist Russian society as a holding operation until the general revolution happened and Russia could find a place within the medium of European Socialism.

However, at that point Lenin gave absolute priority to securing the State which he was in process of constructing. He did not think it could hold out against a German

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assault. The State in Russia must be secured by a Treaty with Germany, even though that would increase the German chances of victory in the War. And he threatened that, if the Central Committee did not agree to signing the Treaty, he would resign his Office and appeal to the Party membership against the Committee.

Trotsky, who had been for revolutionary war, resolved the crisis in Lenin's favour by abstaining on the vote.

The Socialist Revolutionaries resigned from the Coalition and tried to assassinate Lenin for having betrayed the cause.

That was the beginning of *Socialism in a single country*. A Communist Party had taken power in a pre-capitalist society, and it committed itself to constructing a post-capitalist socialist economy by by-passing the capitalist phase of development. Lenin explained that it could do this by acquiring the culture that Capitalism had produced and applying it to bring about the results of capitalist development, as far as they were necessary to Socialism, without capitalists.

That is what Lenin set in motion. And what it required was not a World State but a very Russian State—a State that would not be functional in the advanced capitalist societies from which Socialism was to emerge.

I can see no grounds for the statement that: "*Lenin created the Soviet Union as the liberated portion of a planned World State*".

If he ever wrote about the possibility of a World State, then I missed it. And I don't know that anybody else, who was a competent politician, has advocated, or written about the possibility of, a World State.

Is it the case that "*Lenin authorised a Mixed Economy, but unfortunately the system failed*

to work well. Stalin produced a viable alternative"?

I assume the Mixed Economy was the freedom of the market, introduced when what was called *War Communism* failed to produce any economy at all.

The peasants, with ownership of the land established by the Revolution, were allowed to sell their produce on the market, so that they could buy industrial products produced by their demand, and an economy should be brought into existence.

The *New Economic Policy* worked very well by comparison with what preceded it, and it would possibly have blossomed into a vigorous capitalist economy if it had been let be. What it failed to do was produce Socialism.

Rosa Luxemburg had pointed out right at the start that the peasant proprietorship advocated by Lenin would become an obstacle to the Socialism he stood for. He knew that as well as she did. But he needed the support of the peasants in order to take power. And, when the future of War Communism led him to exhort the peasants to engage in market activity in order to create an economy, he described it as laying the seed-bed of Capitalism.

But a bit of actual Capitalism was needed so that there would be an actual economy to start with. The mere culture of Capitalism was not enough.

What Stalin did, when the *New Economic Policy* became a real obstacle to non-Capitalist industrial production organised by the State, was abolish the NEP—in conflict with a substantial part of the peasantry. That was in accordance with the future Lenin had envisaged for the NEP when introducing it.

"*Soviet Elites Reverting To A Ruling Class*" is another assertion in the same piece.

The Soviet system was certainly

governed by a political body that could be called an *elite*. If one chooses to describe it as *elitist*, then one must admit that elitism was inherent in Leninism from the start. It was the feature of Leninism that Rosa Luxemburg objected to strenuously.

She understood Socialism as an organic working-class development. Lenin saw Socialism as an alien intrusion into the working-class movement. Socialism would not be brought about by Trade Union action for pay and conditions. It would be brought about by a Party drawn from the organised working class to a considerable degree, but distanced from the spontaneity of the class by the principles of Scientific Socialism. It would to some extent be a manipulator of the 'spontaneous' development of the class, getting it to go beyond itself.

Soviet development in the 1930s was made possible by a stratum of managers trained and directed by the Party. A book has been published describing it as a *managerial class*. There was certainly managerial control—not workers' control. When the matter arose in Lenin's time, he insisted that Soviet managers must have dictatorial control. Amateur syndicalism would not do.

The *Labour Affairs* piece says:

"A real revolution is where the rich and powerful get swept away. This happened by stages in the French Revolution... 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"!

I had the notion that the rich in France were not very powerful. They had been disabled by the Crown by being required to play games at Court, and had become detached from society—unlike their British counterparts, who had acquired independent authority

for themselves and continued to manage their estates.

I also thought that the Revolution opened the way for the accumulation of riches, and for the power that goes with it.

I would have thought that only a propertied class could be a ruling class.

The managers of the Soviet system did not own the properties that they managed. And I don't know that there was ever a movement amongst them to become a ruling class by privatising the properties they managed.

When the intricate system of Soviet economy was demolished by the leaders of the State, it was not, as far as I could tell, done by them for their private advantage. It seemed to have become so intricate that they could not see how it could be made to keep pace with the free-enterprise Capitalism of America. [This was before the computer age, ed.]

When President Andropov announced that Scientific Socialism was to be supplemented by Sociology, I lost interest in the Soviet system, and waited for it to collapse.

When that happened, the floundering economy of privatisation showed how thoroughly Capitalism had been scotched in society.

Shares in an abandoned economy were distributed and were bought up by energetic individuals—largely members of the Party, who became “*Oligarchs*”. The name suggests that they became rulers. It was a misnomer.

I remember discussions of literature on BBC radio, probably in the late 1990s, in which a rebirth of literature was expected from the new dispensation. The oligarchs were seen as being of a kind with the English aristocrats of the 18th century who gave English society its cultural tone after the years of iconoclastic Puritanism.

But nothing came of it. They were not a ruling class.

They were the private owners of great wealth that had come to them

by an act of fortune and that was out of keeping with everything else in the society. They became owners of pieces of the productive forces of the socialist system of the state, which the leaders of the state could not see their way to maintaining as a functional socialist system and had made capitalist by breaking it up and giving shares of it to everyone.

But, giving a share in it to everyone did not establish a capitalist system, nor did the buying up of shares into large accumulations. The privatised segments of socialist economy did not have a capitalist system to function in: The Oligarch owners could only realise the value of their properties in the Capitalism that existed outside Russia.

The fall of Communism produced a Russian phenomenon in the West that was very similar to that which followed the fall of Tsarism—Oligarchs with immense wealth congregated in London and other centres of Capitalism and indulged in a kind of *ersatz* aristocratic living in imitation of the authentic aristocracy of the fallen Tsarist system which had done much the same thing.

The Oligarchs did not become a ruling class when the ruling Party structure failed. They were not even a class. That could be because the social system in which they were formed was not run by a ruling class.

They had no experience of class. There was only one class in Russia after the peasants were collectivised: the working class. And one class means no class. And that one class had not in any real sense seized power, established itself in dominance, and become the whole society.

The seizing of power, etc., was done by Lenin's party as a scientific project in which the working class, which was a minuscule part of society, was the effective instrument, but the purpose of action was decided by Scientific Socialism.

The ideas that are generated by working class life would of

themselves not have brought about the developments that happened in Russia. And, when the socialist system crumbled, the working class—in the form in which it had existed as part of the socialist system—did not become an active working class of the old-fashioned kind, any more than the managers of the socialist system became capitalist *entrepreneurs* when that system fell apart.

And, with regard to revolution, is it really the case that “*A real revolution is where most of the rich and powerful get swept away*”? Or is it where one political system replaces another?

The rich and powerful may, or may not, be swept away when one political system replaces another in dominance within a political system.

“*From Socialist Globalism to Russian Imperialism*”: Why did it become ‘Imperialist’ in 1956? The Soviet Union came into possession of the countries of eastern Europe after they attacked it in June 1941 with the objective of destroying it and, in order to defend itself from them, it had to defeat them—conquer them.

Having had to conquer them, it did not withdraw from them and leave them free to regroup for another assault. Until 1956 they maintained a semblance of democratic consent in the dominance they exerted. That form of control broke down in Hungary in 1956 when the nationalist protest movement called on the West—NATO—to come and join it.

None of the undisputed Empires in the rest of the world had been attacked by their subject peoples before subjecting to their control, and none of them was governed in the way that Russia governed the peoples that it conquered in the course of defending itself against them. Individual Communist movements with some domestic roots governed under Soviet oversight.

Letter To The Editor - Democracy et cetera

Dear Editor,

The article on "Democracy, et cetera" in the September 'Labour Affairs' helps to put Fascism in its historical context.

In political discourse today it is treated as a transcendental source of evil that can be related to any situation irrespective of time and place and therefore becomes a meaningless term and just a term of abuse.

In essence it was a means by which European states following the destructive effect that WWI had on these states to make themselves functional again. They sought to do this by mediating class conflict and other conflicts within them.

The crucial fact that is relevant from a Marxist perspective was the collapse of the 2nd International on the outbreak of the war. The assumption of the International was that the working class would revolt against their ruling classes in the event of such an inter-imperialist war and establish socialist states. That did not happen and the working classes supported their states in the war.

The Marxist perspective of the International proved not fit for purpose and thereby created a political vacuum in that there was not a unified Socialist response to the war.

Marxists such as Liebknecht treated the German state as causing the war and called in effect for its destruction and regarded those who supported it, such as Roger Casement, as traitors! This despite the fact that the state was the most socially progressive in the Europe of its time and was a victim rather the

cause the war.

War is about the destruction of states - period. But society cannot function without states and all classes need them to function. Otherwise we have a state of nature and that cannot, and will not, be tolerated. All classes have an interest in avoiding this and conflicts between them must be mediated to ensure survival of the state when that becomes an issue and it is THE issue for states and their peoples that are defeated in war.

The European Marxist perspective of the period did not appreciate this and promoted unmediated class struggle which was inevitably seen as endangering the state. (The most successful of the Communist Parties, the Italian, later concluded that a Historic Compromise was necessary for their success.)

The role of fascism in creating a functional state in the post war Europe period was recognised and fully supported as a means of doing this by, among others, Churchill. He fully supported a state's right to be fascist when necessary and therefore his advocating of war against Germany was not on the basis of fascism. It was the balance of power principle that mattered and was the justification for him and Britain for both World Wars. As he bluntly and brutally put it to the US Congress "The Hun is always either at your throat or at your feet" (19 May 1943)..

So WWII was not an anti-fascist war for him or indeed for Russia who fought it as the Great Patriotic War. The war was in reality a collection of wars each with its own dynamic and

retrospectively treated as one. It is misleading in the extreme to see it through the prism of fascism which is now the standard view. This leads to a totally squinted view of the history/politics of the period and the war.

It was the latest and the last act of Britain's balance of power strategy towards Europe whose result this time was to remove Europe from the centre of world politics, i.e., the destruction of Europe as a political entity.

The case of Connolly in Ireland is very instructive as an example of a true Marxist of the 2Nd International who was faced with the dilemma of the collapse of the International. He decided, no doubt after much soul searching, that the only alternative for him as a socialist was to ally with radical nationalists in the creation of a state that would acknowledge the role of the working class and have a socialist input as the basis of that state, hence his leading role in the 1916 Rising.

Despite its connotations he could therefore be accurately described as a national Socialist. Realities cannot be reduced to labels which can obscure as much as they can enlighten situations.

And the labelling of some political activities today in the terms of the inter war period is assuming that history is repeating itself and is predictable and at best this is intellectual laziness and bankruptcy and at worst can lead to delusional and dangerous conclusions.

Yours etc

Jack Lane, 4/9/2026

How Europe is descending into war

By Eamon Dyas

Small states of the European Union are in a peculiar position. The large more powerful states relate to the world differently and their interests manifest different priorities. That was not a problem for the EU when the more powerful states were tied to Russia through their manufacturing activities' reliance on cheap energy. However, that relationship was systematically unravelled by the way in which the EU Commission succeeded in abolishing the sovereignty which member states previously exercised over their energy supply and distribution networks. This was done under the screen of concocted security concerns and conservation considerations - both of which it was claimed required a centralised approach.

Once that was achieved it represented a victory for US interests - which had been particularly opposed to the relationship of German manufacturing with Russian energy. But by removing Europe's relationship with Russian energy the EU Commission also removed the most important component that guaranteed peace in Europe.

After the EU Commission had succeeded in disrupting Europe's natural economic progress by severing its economic relationship with Russia it left the road open for US geopolitical interests to take charge. While the EU Commission had proved to be very adept at expanding and using its regulatory powers in the commercial arena beyond the issue of climate change conservation arguments it lacked a wider foreign policy perspective that could have, to some extent, mitigated US dominance in this area. And as a body that had never been designed to play such a role, Europe ended up in a situation where what was left of its post-war capacity to formulate an independent foreign policy via its member states never had a chance. It never had a chance because such a policy required both Germany and France recognising where their interests lay in terms of Russian energy and an ability to assert it in the context of US opposition.

Whatever opportunity there may have been for this to emerge was thwarted by British influence over European developments at a critical juncture. With the main component states of the EU being overwhelmingly post-war constructions they ended up relying on what they believed to be the "wise old head" of Britain as their guide in the realm of foreign policy and as a result

were blinded to the political implications of Tony Blair's EU expansion eastwards in May 2004.

This represented the largest single enlargement wave of new EU members but because it included the Baltic countries and ex-Soviet bloc countries it was guaranteed to introduce a significant element of anti-Russian sentiment into the EU's political atmosphere - something that was also facilitated by the way that these states had joined NATO just over a month earlier. It's inconceivable that the likes of Germany and France were unaware of the threat to Europe's peace that such membership represented at the time. Those countries' membership of NATO represented a most flagrant breach of the promise that NATO would not move eastwards which Russia understood was part of it agreeing to German unification in 1990.

In agreeing to them joining the EU in May 2004 just over a month after they had become NATO members it may be that Germany and France had believed they had tied those countries to the peaceful evolution of Europe that was evolving on the basis of their economic relationship with Russia. If that was the case it was something that was blind to the way in which the US was advancing its policies in Europe.

Then, in 2008, with the US sponsoring the NATO membership of Georgia and Ukraine the EU countries could no longer ignore the way in which the US was interfering in Europe's peace. But their response proved just how inept they were at protecting the peace of Europe. Instead of vetoing such membership the only thing that Germany and France did was to impose conditions on such membership that merely delayed such membership and in the process left the issue as an open sore on their relationship with Russia that could continue to be exploited by the US.

With the removal of Europe's energy relationship with Russia the political ineptitude on the part of the EU in the face of US interference in Europe led eventually to it becoming an active partner in that interference to the point that Germany acquiesced firstly in the revelation in 2015 that the US National Security Agency had been tapping its Chancellor's phone conversations for decades (see: [https://www.reuters.com/article/world/us-spy-agency-tapped-](https://www.reuters.com/article/world/us-spy-agency-tapped-german-chancellery-for-decades-wikileaks-idUSKCN0PI2AD/)

[german-chancellery-for-decades-wikileaks-idUSKCN0PI2AD/](https://www.reuters.com/article/world/us-spy-agency-tapped-german-chancellery-for-decades-wikileaks-idUSKCN0PI2AD/)) and ended up turning a blind eye to US involvement in the blowing up of the Nord Stream pipeline in 2022. Once that became the accepted German response to US interference in Europe it was inevitable that instead of exposing and confronting that interference Germany's interests could only find expression in taking political control of Europe in ways that would coincide with - rather than confront - the US and in those circumstances the future of small states in Europe will be one where they will have an ever diminishing role.

It is in that context that the latest move by Germany has to be viewed:

"Germans pitch EU plan to circumvent national vetoes

"Countries should abstain rather than block initiatives they do not support

"With Viktor Orbán's veto now gone, a group of EU countries has proposed a plan to avoid a single country's veto from blocking the pipes in Brussels in future.

"Germany is leading a push for a greater use of abstentions and a more creative interpretation of the EU's treaties, according to a draft letter to Kaja Kallas, seen by Euractiv.

"Berlin has long advocated abolishing the principle by which all foreign policy decisions, such as sanctions on Russia, must be decided unanimously by all 27 countries. That irks smaller countries, who see unanimity as a potential lifeline.

"We must also ensure that this culture of consensus fosters common action rather than preventing it, otherwise we will have legitimacy but no strength," the German letter reads, also supported by the Netherlands, Luxembourg and France.

"The letter, due to be sent to Kallas ahead of a meeting of foreign minister in Wicklow on Wednesday, proposes greater use of constructive abstentions, existing qualified-majority procedures and tighter limits on governments invoking national-policy objections.

"Calls to only require a qualified majority to take foreign policy decisions have gained momentum as EU governments confront an increasingly unstable geopolitical environment, alongside a growing number of instances in which individual countries have leveraged their veto power to block or delay EU decisions.

"Last week Slovenia stopped the EU

from issuing a unified statement criticising the Israeli government's move to break the West Bank by building settlements in the E1 area, as defined by international law.

"Hungary, under Orbán, repeatedly using its leverage over EU decisions to extract concessions, including guarantees over the Druzhba oil pipeline. Under Péter Magyar, Budapest has also blocked Ukraine from making enlargement progress.

"Where QMV applies to a foreign policy decision, the countries acknowledge that governments can oppose it for "vital and stated reasons of national policy," but call for those objections to be clearly justified."

Countries should avoid linking together "substantially unrelated" issues, the letter states, and should raise concerns early enough to allow time for consultation and compromise.

<https://www.euractiv.com/news/germans-pitch-eu-plan-to-circumvent-national-vetoes/>

Editor's note:

The origin of the discussion was the People's Movement's comments on Iceland refusing to restart talks on joining the EU:

The incomprehension of Irish europhiles at Iceland's decisive rejection of European Union membership talks reveals a fundamental unwillingness to confront the historical record and undemocratic character of the European integration project.

When 52.8% of Icelandic voters rejected the government's proposal to reopen accession negotiations, the reaction from europhile quarters in Dublin—where the EU has been elevated to near-religious status—has been one of bewilderment. How could a prosperous, progressive Nordic nation choose to remain outside the club that Ireland embraced so enthusiastically?

The answer lies in a history that Irish europhiles have chosen to forget.

Icelanders probably observed what happened to Ireland—a small country that voted "No" to the Nice Treaty in 2001 and was made to vote again until it delivered the "correct" result. They witnessed Ireland's rejection of the Lisbon Treaty in 2008, only to be forced into a second referendum in 2009, when economic pressure and manipulation secured the required "Yes." What kind of "union" disregards the expressed will of its citizens and demands they vote until they comply?

Irish europhiles, in their incomprehension, fail to acknowledge

the institutional realities that Icelanders understood all too well.

The European Commission—the body with exclusive right to propose legislation—is composed of unelected officials who swear allegiance not to their countries but to the EU. Charles de Gaulle described it as "a conclave of technocrats without a country, responsible to nobody."

The Council of Ministers makes laws in secret, with approximately 85% of EU directives agreed privately in committees of civil servants. It is responsible collectively to nobody—the classical definition of an oligarchy.

The European Parliament, for all its democratic pretensions, cannot initiate any EU law. It can only amend draft laws that come from the Commission and Council. This is not a parliament in any meaningful sense.

And the Court of Justice has become a constitution-maker, interpreting treaties in ways that extend EU powers beyond what was agreed, ruling that EU law has primacy over national constitutions.

Icelanders weighed these realities against the modest benefits of EU membership. They recognised that the fisheries sector—a pillar of their economy and national identity—would be placed at risk. Ninety percent of companies in the industry opposed joining the bloc.

The EU's conciliatory approach on fisheries in the lead-up to the vote was treated with appropriate scepticism. Icelanders had seen how "solemn declarations" and "creative solutions" in Brussels often prove worthless once the treaty is signed. They understood what the Irish have learned through bitter experience: that the EU's promises are written in disappearing ink. Icelanders recognised this pattern. And they refused to become its next victim. They see the "Solemn Declaration" that was supposed to guarantee Irish military neutrality—the Triple Lock—subsequently written out of history by Ireland's political establishment.

The Icelandic vote is not exceptional—it is part of a consistent, continent-wide pattern. Every time the European project has been submitted to democratic judgment, it has been rejected:

Switzerland, 1992 — rejected EEA membership

Norway, 1994 — rejected EU membership

Denmark, 2000 — rejected the euro

Sweden, 2003 — rejected the euro

France and Netherlands, 2005 — rejected the EU Constitution

Greece, 2015 — rejected EU austerity (only to be forced to accept it anyway)

United Kingdom, 2016 — rejected EU membership

This is not a series of unfortunate accidents. This is a consistent pattern: when the decision is left to citizens, the European Union is rejected. That is why in Brussels they prefer to make decisions away from the democratic process.

Ireland's experience with the EU should have served as a warning to smaller nations. The Lisbon Treaty gave the EU full legal personality for the first time, primacy over national law, and population-based voting that reduced small countries like Ireland to under 1% of voting weight each.

The six largest EU states now have over 70% of the voting weight in the Council, while the 22 smallest have less than 30%. Small countries have not "pooled" sovereignty to gain influence—they have surrendered sovereignty to become provinces of a German-dominated empire.

The Icelandic vote represents a clear-eyed assessment of what EU membership truly entails. It is not about "opening out to the world" it is about an accelerating surrender of democratic self-government to unelected technocrats.

Irish europhiles who cannot comprehend Iceland's choice are those who have willingly blinded themselves to history. They refuse to acknowledge that the EU's problems are not caused by a lack of integration—they are caused by supranational integration itself.

The history of European integration is not a story of progress toward peace and prosperity. It is a story of democratic subversion, of elites who learned to despise the people they claimed to serve, of the systematic erosion of the most fundamental right of any democracy: the right of a people to govern themselves.

Icelanders understood this. Their "No" vote was not a rejection of Europe—it was a defence of democracy.

The incomprehension of Irish europhiles is evidence of how deeply the EU's anti-democratic culture has corrupted political discourse in its member states, creating a class of elites who have abandoned the very principles they claim to want to defend.

UK Sanctions on West Bank Settlements

By Eamon Dyas

Yesterday 9 September 2026 the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Edward Miliband, announced that the Labour government was going to impose sanctions that “will target illegal settlements and settlement expansion” in the west Bank which he described as “ethnic cleansing” and which the Israeli government had done little to prevent.

He said that this announcement represented “a new approach” to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, by the British government which “not only calls out injustice and suffering but acts”.

The announcement was made in a great cloud of moral satisfaction echoed and inflated by the media. At last the behaviour of Israel that for so long had exposed the hypocrisy and shallowness of Western values and been a cause of embarrassment for our Western leaders was being called out and responded to.

This feeling was further enhanced by the announcement that Canada and France would be emulating Britain’s actions and then we heard that Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden would also be taking action. The western world, it seemed, had begun to change its stance on the issue of Israeli expansion.

But after the initial cloud of moral satisfaction began to evaporate the landscape it revealed didn’t seem to have change all that much. In fact, a closer look at the announcement by the British Foreign Minister reveals that the programme of “a new comprehensive sanctions regime” will only begin to be introduced “over the next six to nine months”.

To any reasonable mind the question arises as to how is it that sanctions can be imposed on Russia at the stroke of a pen but require “six to nine months” when Israel is concerned. If what is happening in the West Bank is ethnic cleansing then surely the sooner these sanctions are imposed the sooner they would act as an inhibitor against its continuation. Providing a long timetable for their introduction is only inviting those perpetrating the ethnic cleansing to speed up their activities.

This lethargic approach contrasted

with the immediacy of the action taken by the Israeli government in response to the announcement by the Western governments. Within hours of that announcement Israel had closed the British consulate in occupied East Jerusalem accredited to the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank.

The Israelis also announced that Britain would no longer be able to participate in the US-led coordination mission for Gaza, that British training of Palestinian Authority forces in the West Bank would be terminated, and that some elected UK officials and other nationals would be banned from entering Israel.

The speed of this Israeli reaction alongside the speed exhibited by the West when it came to sanctions on Russia raises the very intriguing question as to why it’s going to take between six to nine months for the West to turn what up to that point remains merely a threat of sanctions into actual sanctions?

Could it be that there is no intention to actually impose sanctions but merely to give the impression to a growing frustrated electorate that their governments are actually doing something?

This explanation gathers weight when it is realised that elections are due to take place in Israel next month in which there is a very real chance of the current Israeli government being replaced. Should that be the case then the prospect of different personnel in government will be used by the West as the excuse for suspending the threat even though, given the nature of Israeli politics there is little prospect of any Israeli government reversing the actions of the current one,

Statement by Jewish Voice for Liberation

JVL Statement: On the UK’s Sanctions on Settlement Goods and more

JVL welcomes the sanctions on Israeli settlement goods announced by Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband in response to Israel’s multiple crimes against the Palestinian people. The moves, while late and insufficient, represent an advance on the inaction of previous governments, including that

of Keir Starmer. We welcome the ban on provision of services supporting the construction of illegal settlements and the outlawing of events, like the recent one in Edgware, promoting the sale of settlement properties.

This is not a case of unilateral UK action. It aligns Britain with a dozen other countries making similar moves, including France, Canada and Ireland. Spain has gone further and implemented a full arms embargo, which we urge Britain to emulate. After years of ineffectual words and occasional action against a few individuals, at last we can see a potentially significant shift towards holding the state of Israel to account.

Much more needs to be done and we welcome the Foreign Secretary’s acknowledgement that campaigning by people of all backgrounds, nationally and internationally, and young people in particular, has a positive role to play. Demonstrations against what the government has clearly identified as ethnic cleansing are not “hate marches”.

We condemn accusations of antisemitism (or to quote Mike Huckabee, “Jew Hate”) levelled against Ed Miliband, who is Jewish, for the steps he has outlined today. We join with the Foreign Secretary in rejecting all attempts to associate British Jews collectively with the actions of a rogue state, evoking a classic antisemitic trope. All too often it is Israel’s supporters rather than its critics who conflate British Jews with Israel, attempting to suppress criticism of Israel’s actions with allegations of antisemitism. Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, who claimed that sanctions will have a “negative impact” on British Jews, has shown no compassion for the Palestinian people and explicitly referred to Israel’s army in Gaza as “our heroic soldiers”.

Responses from other Israel apologists are also predictable and pathetic. For example, MP Peter Prinsley, former vice-chair of Labour Friends of Israel, claimed the time is not right for sanctions. But for all who take his view, there will never be a right time to hold Israel to account.

We hope that the limited UK action announced today, along with other nations, will at least slow down the

pace of Israel's heinous and ongoing assaults on the Palestinians. But we are not optimistic. Israel has already retaliated by closing the British consulate in Jerusalem and banning a number of pro-Palestinian MPs from entering the country, and there have been threats of counter-measures from US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee. We urge the Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister to recognise the Israeli state's determination to pursue its expansionist goals and urgently start preparing plans for more forceful action against it.

We echo UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese's opinion that a settlement trade ban has to be part of "a true paradigm shift to Israel-Palestine that ultimately seeks to implement the international court of justice advisory opinion in 2024". This stated that Israel's presence in the occupied territories was 'unlawful in its entirety'. The opinion rules, she says, that, "all states carry an obligation...not to recognise the situation as legal, and not render aid and assistance in maintaining it".

Statement is online at <https://jewishvoiceforliberation.org.uk/statement/on-the-uks-sanctions-on-settlement-goods-and-more/>

NAZA: Exposing Israel's killing machine in Gaza

By David Morrison

NAZA is an 80-minute documentary film which examines the systems behind Israel's mass killing of Palestinian civilians in Gaza. Its title is derived from *Nezek Agavi*, the Hebrew military acronym for collateral damage. It was directed by Israeli film-makers Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor and co-produced by the Guardian newspaper.

It premiered in the main competition at the Venice Film Festival on 10 September 2026, where it received a record-breaking 25-minute standing ovation and won the Special Jury Prize. It will be available for free on the Guardian website in November after its global theatrical run.

(Abraham and Szor won an Oscar in 2024 for their film *No Other Land*, which shows the destruction of Masafer Yatta, a Palestinian community in the occupied West Bank. It is available on Amazon Prime.)

(*)

In an article on 17 September 2026, entitled "[I saw NAZA - in a healthy Israel, it would be shown on the evening news](#)", Haaretz journalist, Etan Nechin, wrote:

"In NAZA, 24 anonymized Israeli military and intelligence personnel detail the internal machinery and protocols of the targeting systems.

"Based on Abraham's 2024 exposé (in the +972 magazine), the documentary contains interviews with 24 intelligence officers from the elite Unit 8200 about an AI system called Lavender, used to generate tens of thousands of targets during

the Gaza war.

"The interviews were filmed at night on a Tel Aviv rooftop, with the officers' voices distorted and their faces digitally altered to conceal their identities. As they explain how they helped build Lavender, automating the identification of targets and calculation of expected casualties, the darkness makes it easier to imagine the conditions in which they worked: huddled in dim offices before flickering computer models.

"Using a notepad, the interviewees sketch out how they had detailed information about virtually any building in Gaza. As part of the targeting process, officers could use the system to track residents' cellphones. One of the officers even describes hacking into the phone of a 12-year-old girl using an automated tracking system called "Where's Daddy?" allowing them to determine when her father would be home. The building was later bombed while the man and his family were asleep inside.

"Officers were told that Lavender could identify Hamas operatives with 85 percent accuracy, and did so at scale. According to one officer, Lavender "enabled" the killing of tens of thousands of non-combatants and the demolition of whole neighborhoods, all presented as legitimate attacks on military targets."

Interviewees in the film explained that the AI software assigns an expected civilian fatality value to potential targets. Strikes with a value under 20 (20 NAZA) did not need higher-level special clearance. Approvals were granted for strike

values reaching as high as 500 civilian casualties (500 NAZA).

(*)

Needless to say, the directors of NAZA have been subject to fierce criticism from Israeli politicians, most of whom hadn't seen the film. Prime Minister Netanyahu said: "It's shocking. We are fighting global anti-Semitic incitement and when it comes from within us it is intolerable" and lamented that "two Israeli directors portraying the [Israeli military] as war criminals receive applause at the Venice festival". He promised to introduce two bills into the Knesset, one to allow the revocation of citizenship from people who "defame Israeli soldiers" abroad, and another to increase the sum they can be sued for in defamation cases.

Opposition leaders vied with him in their condemnation. Gadi Eisenkot, a former head of the Israeli military, is the most likely successor to Netanyahu if he can't form a government after the coming election. He denounced the film as demonstrating "moral blindness, a detachment from reality, and harm to the State of Israel in a difficult hour". Former prime minister Naftali Bennett called it a "horrific blood libel against our sons and daughters", and former defence minister Avigdor Lieberman described the directors as "haters of Israel".

At the time of writing, only a handful of Israeli journalists have been able to watch the film in Israel. Israeli cinemas have so far declined to screen it, even for free.

Palestine Links

[Labour minister: British Muslims haven't always been heard but Burnham will change that \(Imran Mulla, Middle East Eye, 30 September 2026\)](#)

[Miliband speaks of a Middle East policy shift - so it's time to pick a side \(Tom Blackburn, Middle East Eye, 29 September 2026\)](#)

[The 'gray arm' of Israeli annexation: a settler-led wing of the army is driving Palestinian displacement on the state's behalf \(Amos Brison, +972, 25 September 2026\)](#)

[Israel's delayed massacres: Bomb-damaged buildings collapse in Gaza \(Nora Barrows-Friedman, Electronic Intifada, 18 September 2026\)](#)

[+972 condemns escalating threats against 'NAZA' directors \(+972 Magazine, 18 September 2026\)](#)

[Israel's latest attack on Gaza's children bans kites \(Ahmad Sbaih, Electronic Intifada, 16 September 2026\)](#)

['Everything necessary for human life was erased' \(Basel Adra, +972, 16 September 2026\)](#)

[Why Latin America is key to Israel's diplomatic impunity \(Xavier Abu Eid, +972, 15 September 2026\)](#)

[UK settlement sanctions are an opening gambit. Here's what should follow \(Hugh Lovatt, +972, 14 September 2026\)](#)

[Secret systems used by Israel in mass killings of Gaza civilians revealed in new film \(Emma Graham-Harrison & Xan Brooks, Guardian, 10 September 2026\)](#)

[NAZA review – Israeli intelligence officers cast chilling light on civilian deaths \(Peter Bradshaw, Guardian, 10 September 2026\)](#)

[NAZA: Exposing Israel's killing machine in Gaza \(Yuval Abraham & Rachel Szor, +972, 10 September 2026\)](#)

[Israel's new West Bank separation wall closes in on Palestinian communities \(Oren Ziv, +972, 9 September 2026\)](#)

[Statement of the Foreign Ministers of Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK on the Two-State Solution \(9 September 2026\)](#)

[Three-quarters of US college students say Israel is committing genocide \(Ali Abunimah, Electronic Intifada, 3 September 2026\)](#)

[Ben Gvir unveils 'voluntary emigration' plan to remove most Palestinians from Gaza \(Times of Israel, 3 Sept 2026\)](#)

[Defense Minister Katz: Israel will facilitate emigration from Gaza 'by any means' as soon as Trump allows \(Times of Israel, 2 Sept 2026\)](#)

[Netanyahu's 'total victory' vow kept him in power. Now it may be his undoing \(Meron Rapoport, +972, 27 August 2026\)](#)

[Tony Greenfield's speech from the dock \(Medium, 21 August 2026\)](#)

Presidential Pardons in Israel

By David Morrison

On 19 September 2026, the President of Israel, former Labour politician Isaac Hertzog, pardoned Elor Azaria, an Israeli soldier who executed a Palestinian at an army checkpoint in Hebron in March 2016. The existence of video of the incident shot by a volunteer from the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem made it impossible for the Israeli authorities to deny that an execution had taken place.

What happened was that two Palestinians, including 21-year old Abdel Fattah al-Sharif, had stabbed an IDF soldier. Other soldiers quickly opened fire, killing one attacker and seriously wounding al-Sharif. The video of the incident showed him lying incapacitated on the ground for 11 minutes, with soldiers milling around and largely ignoring his motionless body until one of the soldiers, later identified as Elor Azaria, walked over calmly and

shot al-Sharif in the head.

There could hardly have been a clearer case of cold-blooded murder – and there was video evidence to prove it.

Nevertheless, Azaria wasn't convicted of murder. In January 2017, he was convicted of manslaughter by an Israeli military court and sentenced to 18 months in prison. This was reduced to 14 months by Gadi Eisenkot, then head of the Israeli military (and maybe Israel's next prime minister). He was eventually released after just 9 months in prison.

On the day Azaria was convicted, Prime Minister Netanyahu announced his support for a pardon. An opinion poll, published on the same day, found that 67% of Israelis supported a pardon.

Azaria never expressed any regret for his action. According to Haaretz (19 September 2026), as

recently as July this year, the Israeli military opposed a request to pardon him on the grounds that he hadn't taken responsibility for his action or expressed regret. Nevertheless, Hertzog pardoned him.

In pardoning individuals who had shot Palestinians in cold blood, he was following the footsteps of his father, Chaim Herzog, who was Israel's sixth president. In 1986 he approved unusual pre-emptive pardons for Shin Bet agents who not only killed Palestinian bus hijackers after they were captured and bound, but also participated in a cover-up in which they framed Israeli military forces. Nevertheless, Hertzog senior gave them pre-emptive pardons, which meant that they didn't even have to stand trial. This unusual procedure was backed by the Israeli Supreme Court.

Canvassing for George in Kentish Town

Today 24th September I spent two hours canvassing for George Galloway who is contesting the bye election on the 8th of October in Holborn and St Pancras constituency

It was in a very pleasant wide road near Kentish Town West, with well-kept small terraced houses obviously owner-occupied. The people I spoke to were young and appeared to have good jobs.

I was surprised by the friendly response when I said who I was canvassing for and most took a leaflet. Except one who said she was off to canvass for the Labour party.

I must add that nobody said they would be voting for George but I had some very interesting conversations especially when I pointed out that he was standing because he is the only candidate

who opposes the current anti-Russian war hysteria and the danger this is leading to.

One young woman, at least she looked young to me but I am in my late eighties, read the leaflet and then said she agreed with his position on the Ukraine war. She then went on to say she was Ukrainian herself and her uncle in the Ukraine who was fifty-five and had already served in the army had just been abducted by six men to fight and nobody knows what has happened to him.

Another woman who said she intended to vote Labour took a leaflet. She showed me she already had a green one and she said as we live in a democracy it was important to look at all sides. When the conversation turned to how George was standing because nobody else

was opposed to a war with Russia and the talk about reintroducing conscription and the problems facing young people today she agreed and said she was self-tutoring her teenage son who was sitting at a table behind her, and when I said any party coming into power would be up against the power of the billionaires and the City of London she said she had just been discussing this with him.

Another told me we were in a situation in the West where our morality is in crisis.

Overall I formed the opinion that people are beginning to wake up and think more deeply as they become more aware of what is going on in the world.

Guilt for 20th Century Mass Deaths

By Gwydion M. Williams

Lenin as Peacemaker
Marxist Guilt?
The Black Book as Unreliable Source
Junk Politics About China
The Meaning of Responsibility - A Wider Project?
Was World War Two Unavoidable?

Lenin as Peacemaker

World War One was the biggest mass killing in Europe since the Thirty Years War. Much bigger than the combined Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, the biggest European event between the two. But by no stretch of the imagination can that World War be blamed on socialists. All of the governments that joined the war were favourable to capitalism. All of them had parliaments that had the option to prevent the war in the long-running crisis over Serbian terrorists with probable Serbian-government sponsorship killing the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary. All except the Ottoman Empire, which was attacked after wishing strongly to avoid the war. Attacked because tsarist Russia wanted Constantinople, see Pat Walsh's *Ireland's Great War on Turkey* (https://www.atholbooks-sales.org/searches/author_search.php). And it fitted the wish of part of the British elite to break Imperial Germany (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/problems-magazine-older-issues/how-the-british-establishment-planned-world-war-one/>).

While some socialists were persuaded to support the war and even to join coalition governments, socialists were also the bulk of the people who openly protested against the war. And if you exclude pacifists, some of them also socialist, then an overwhelming majority of those serious about ending the war were socialists.

Russian revolutionary socialist

– not yet calling themselves Communists – called for peace in the months between the incoherent February Revolution and the relatively peaceful take-over in October. A parliament elected by a rich minority had insisted on continuing the war, but was losing as badly as the Tsarist government had repeatedly lost.

Lenin demanded a peace *without annexations and without indemnities*. The victors at Versailles were later to impose plenty of both. They denied the freedom promised to Arab subjects of the Ottoman Empire, and did not consistently apply self-determination even within Europe. Woodrow Wilson had used the idea as cover for an intervention that ensured that Britain and France would pay for the loans and supplies they had got from the USA. Even his famous *Fourteen Points* broke the principle twice (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/44-fascism-and-world-war-2/woodrow-wilsons-deceptive-14-points/>).

So how do anti-socialists blame socialism or communism? The usual dodge is to measure '*deaths by dictator*'. This feeds the liberal prejudice that *Bad Persons* must cause it all, even though both multi-party parliamentary regimes and ruling monarchs seem to me to have started just as many wars.

Franco kept Spain out of World War Two. The same was true for Salazar's Portugal and Atatürk's Turkish Republic. Likewise the ruling monarchy of Thailand. The self-appointed first Shah of Iran of the Pahlavi dynasty was overthrown by the British because he wanted to stay neutral. More recently, Gaddafi's militancy did not involve Libya fighting anyone: nor did it have internal wars until he was overthrown. The initial Leninist takeover in Afghanistan was peaceful, and the USA put enormous effort and spent gigantic funds on an opposition that could never keep internal peace. That first modern Afghan War generated people destined to become formidable foes of the peace the West had hoped to

impose.

Marxist Guilt?

In the 29 calendar years that Mao led China, the economy grew faster than in the Indian Republic. Faster than either the USA or Britain. And the always-high Chinese death rate fell much faster than for other poor countries.

If Mao was over-bold with the Great Leap Forward, would a less bold leader have achieved the same degree of success with no serious setbacks? Easy to imagine, hard to achieve. Mao had a record of being bold and being justified by events, which is why he gained so much authority. And why China still honours him.

For the Soviet Union, we're told by the European Parliament that Stalin caused World War Two. Now I'd freely agree that Stalin took steps to reshape the growing crisis to be the least bad alternative for Soviet survival. But some sort of Second World War was likely, regardless. Books as different as H G Wells's *The Shape of Things to Come*, Olaf Stapledon's *Last and First Men* and Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies* expect a new war within a few decades. And while Waugh is vague about the cause of the war, the other two mention Poland. DeepSeek found five more for me: it was a widespread expectation.

The Trotskyist movement has been amazingly successful as a cultural influence in the West. Entirely useless as a Leninist movement: in its century of independent existence it has only ever done damage to other leftists, and was never seen as a serious threat by any capitalist government (<https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Trotskyism-a-Century-of-Failures>). But so much has it dominated thinking about the Soviet Union that a popular right-wing graphic showing drops of blood for deaths caused by dictators has not one drop for either Lenin or Trotsky, though they were the first people to suggest that Marxists should overthrow the capitalist and parliamentary government that Russia's February

Revolution had created.

The graphic is anonymous, but shows Japanese leader Tojo as guilty of five million deaths. Most authorities would say that the invasion killed at least 14 million Chinese, and millions more elsewhere in Asia. He was also not a dictator, merely a leader given the top job after the war started.

What's worse is a mere 17 million for Hitler. Official estimates are 60 to 75 million for World War Two, including 6 million Jews and 5 million others intentionally exterminated under Hitler's authority. So to me it is obviously pro-Fascist as well as anti-Communist, though most people fail to notice that.

The Black Book as Unreliable Source

The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression is the translation of a French work edited by Stephane Courtois. Published by Harvard University Press 1999, and it is the nearest thing to a reputable standard source on alleged Communist guilt.

The *Wikipedia*, which is anti-Communist when it is not neutral, says

"The work was praised by a broad range of popular-press publications and historians, while academic press and specialist reviews were more critical or mixed for some historical inaccuracies." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Black_Book_of_Communist

Stephane Courtois was a Maoist in 1968, and has become an obsessive anti-Communist. Not the only young radical to turn to bitter hatred when their own vision of the Glorious Future fails to come off.

The work is trash. Every anti-Communist story becomes an undeniable truth. Some of its claims are demonstrably false. And it is soft on Nazism.

Taking the standard line that Stalin etc. were personally responsible for every death among those they ruled, it claims 85 to 100 million deaths caused by Communism. Yet by contrast:

"Nazism, which at an estimated 25 million turns out to be distinctly less murderous than Communism." (The Black Book, pages x-x1)

World War Two killed 70 to 85 million. Most Westerners would blame most or all on Hitler. Myself, I estimated that 25 to 35 million can be blamed on Imperial Japan ([https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-](https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/44-fascism-and-world-war-2/deaths-caused-by-hitler/)

[revolution-website/44-fascism-and-world-war-2/deaths-caused-by-hitler/](https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/44-fascism-and-world-war-2/deaths-caused-by-hitler/).) Also Croats, anti-Soviet Ukrainians and people in the Baltic Republics killed Jews without direct Nazi involvement, with Croats also killing Serbs and Ukrainians killing Polish Christians. Some war deaths might be assigned to other allies, including starvation in Leningrad that happened because Finns blocked access from the north. But a figure as low as 25 million for Hitler is simply ridiculous.

To make sense of the book's figures, they must be saying that Stalin was responsible for the estimated 26 million Soviet citizens killed in the war, but Hitler was not. And really, how was Stalin supposed to deal with Hitler? Give him a flower? (Someone might want to do a *YouTube* production making use of these ideas.)

Also someone in a position to embarrass him should ask Stephane Courtois if he accepts the standard figures of 6 million Jews and 5 million others intentionally killed by Hitler, often at the expense of the Nazi war effort.

Another weirdness is claiming that Lenin changed the Bolshevik name from Social Democrat to Communist from an admiration for Sir Thomas More and Tommaso Campanella. Both devout Catholics, and their anti-capitalist utopias had some gains for women but kept them definitely inferior and subordinate. Nor did they share the Bolshevik belief in Free Love, at least for heterosexuals. The Bolsheviks correctly placed among a mixed bag of people who had some of the same ideas before modern socialism emerged. Commonly called Utopian Socialists.

The simplest search would point to the *Communist Manifesto*. Marx and Engels created this for a small short-lived *Communist League*. Thought more of a broad front from 1864 with the *First International*. And by the 1870s, they were one of several influences within an electorally-successful German socialism. Then the government blundered when trying to suppress them:

"... the treason trial of the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Germany (SDAP) leaders. During the proceedings, prosecutors read the text of the *Manifesto* into the court record; this meant that the pamphlet could legally be published in Germany." (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Communist_Manifesto#Rise,_1872%E2%80%93931917).

But for many years, '*Communist*' was

just the name of a popular summary of Marxist ideas. The initial German publication was as part of a report of the Treason Trial, in which followers of Marx were jailed for two years after voting as elected representatives against the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. It boosted the movement, but at the time Socialist or Social-Democrat were the standard names.

In 1914, Lenin was among a minority who were appalled by the way that various socialist parties had supported their own national government in the drift towards World War One. Some of the objectors were pacifist. Lenin revived the name *Communist* to make it clear that revolution must be preferred to letting ordinary people wage a hideous war for rival versions of capitalist imperialism.

'*Don't Mention the War*' might be Courtois's catch-phrase. Only it is World War One, which was still killing citizens of the short-lived multi-national Russian Republic. Lenin overthrew a war-mongering government that still looked to the British and French promise that Russia would get Constantinople and the Dardanelles (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantinople_Agreement). An older loose promise had encouraged Russia to forbid Serbia's government to be close-questioned about the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne. But with the war going badly, it was secretly formalised in the same time-period as the disastrous British Empire attempt to make good on it with the Gallipoli Landings.

As it happens, I have a family connection on my mother's side. A great-uncle who had gone to Australia volunteered for World War One and died at Gallipoli. My sister Merryn, who is anti-war and an excellent poet, gave the man a fine memorial:

"Far from Devon, from Australia;
"why he went – a mystery –
"he took his skeleton, his rifle,
"leaving no posterity."

Britons suffered less than most, but we suffered. And benefited indirectly from the Soviet alternative being there, so the ruling class up until Thatcher were scared and moderate. Kept free Higher Education, low unemployment, and did not dare touch the National Health Service.

Another detail – Marx and Engels in a new preface for the 1882 Russian edition of the *Manifesto* wondered if Russia could directly become a communist society. Bolsheviks at the time of the non-socialist February 1917 revolution had decided that Tsarist Russia was

now committed to capitalism. That the next stage would be French-style politics that Marxists mostly call Bourgeois Democracy. Stalin as the senior Bolshevik present in Petrograd was running them on that basis. Then Lenin returned and demanded something much more radical. Stalin was one of many who came round to this view.

In a wider context: Trotsky had taken up the idea that Marxists should grab power for themselves. But he had been hostile to Lenin's party over several years, and had far too few organised followers to make it good on his own. The idea had anyway been invented first by Rosa Luxemburg and by a Russian of Jewish origins called Parvus.

Rosa Luxemburg was an idealist, murdered by right-wingers in 1919. Most of her followers and colleagues became Communists. Most notable was Felix Dzerzhinsky, founder of the Soviet security services.

Parvus later became an agent for Imperial Germany. I suppose that if he'd kept it secret and if Lenin or Stalin had then shot him as a traitor, he would have been elevated to the ranks of Innocent Martyrs. In fact everyone rejected him, with Switzerland weirdly deporting him as a Bolshevik agent. He died in 1924 of natural causes, or maybe of disappointment.

Ignored in the West apart from an out-of-print book called *The Merchant of Revolution*, Parvus would be fascinating for a film or documentary, or another book. Solzhenitsyn includes him in his accounts of Lenin in his *Red Wheel*, but his work is too twisted to be trusted. Solzhenitsyn opens with the nonsense claim that Lenin got his faction called 'Majority' when it was a minority. It is well documented in works by Lenin and others that he based this on being a majority of the *Iskra* faction of Social-Democracy within the Tsarist Empire. Other factions had less in common than Bolshevik, Menshevik and other factions who'd once been together on the newspaper *Iskra*. One of these was the Bundists, who wanted a Jewish state dominated by Jewish values within the territory of the Tsarist Empire. A Bundist autonomous state could have happened within what is now West Ukraine, where Jews were numerous. Tragically, most of that once-flourishing Jewish population either fled or were killed by the people the current Kiev regime treats as heroes.

Junk Politics About China

Another demonstrable absurdity from the *Black Book* is on page 280. It dates the Kuomintang-Communist alliance

to 1925-26, and has Chiang Kai-shek already leading it. It was only in 1927 that Chiang gained dominance over rivals, in part by dropping the more radical aspects of Kuomintang policies. Reforms that had been defined by Sun Yat-sen, undisputed leader until his unfortunate death in 1925.

Authors who lay down the law about Chinese history seem unaware of Sun's gigantic role in the matter. And probably don't know that Sun's loyal widow consistently supported the Communists. Her role in using Edgar Snow to publicise Mao in *Red Star Over China* was probably far bigger than standard histories recognise: my own research found unexpected clues (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/china-nurturing-red-stars/>).

The book also repeated Chiang's barefaced lie that the Communists wanted to take over. As orthodox Marxists, the Chinese Communists expected what Leninists call a Bourgeois Revolution, given that Chinese capitalism was far weaker than in Russia 1917. They expected to see much more capitalism, but including land reform that would remove a parasitic landlord class. And ending the effective ownership of chunks of many Chinese cities by foreign powers.

Chiang failed to do this, letting landlordism stay intact. Letting Shanghai remain dominated by a French Concession and an International Concession run by the British Empire and the USA. Allowed similar things in other Chinese cities. And all this stayed in place until the USA got it formally abolished during World War Two, when anyway the Japanese had taken over and interned all the US and British men.

The Kuomintang still allowed foreign warships to sail up the Yangtze. It was left to the Communists to establish the real sovereignty that had been lost in the Opium War, with stands like the famous *Amethyst Incident*.

On page 471, the book correctly identifies the importance of Peng Pai in making the Chinese peasantry a revolutionary force. Though it calls him P'eng P'ai, his name in the older Western system for Chinese names that China replaced formally in 1979, and which almost everyone now uses. But it then calls Mao "a previously marginal Communist cadre". Mao had been a major radical leader in Hunan in 1920-21, when others with Comintern advice were organising a Chinese Communist Party. The senior of two delegates from Hunan to the formal founding of the party, thought there is some confusion

about who and whether it was 12 or 13 or some other number. He remained very important in the alliance with the Kuomintang, and then in started again with a few followers after Chiang Kai-shek's betrayal of the abortive 1927 revolution.

Mao was one of two founding member who remained important after 1927. The other was Zhang Guotao, who like Parvus was one of the traitors who might have been another Innocent Martyr had their guilt not be so blatant. At one time a serious rival to Mao and with his own Red Army, he then defected to the Kuomintang and supported Chiang Kai-shek. But was unwanted and lived in Canada till 1979, converting to Christianity shortly before he died (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhang_Guotao).

Then there's Tibet. People all over the world will nag China over Tibet but say nothing at all about Kashmir: this includes Joanna Lumley who was born there as a child of the last days of British rule. The *Black Book* takes a sillier-than-usual line on this:

"The 4 million to 6 million Tibetan nationals had made it quite clear that they were not happy being part of the Chinese state." (Page 542.)

There were never as many as four million ethnic Tibetans until recent years, when they and other minorities like Uighurs have multiplied greatly within People's China. Nor did any except a few of the elite have even a limited understanding of modern politics.

What's now the Tibet Autonomous Region was called Outer Tibet under British Empire influence, just as Mongolia was for a time Outer Mongolia and Inner Mongolia, with the 'Outer' part becoming dominated by Leninists and achieving full recognition as sovereign by China and the wider world. The British Empire never did this for 'Outer Tibet', though the 13th Dalai Lama made a claim. But in 1940, Chiang Kai-shek's government with US support stepped in and got its preferred candidates recognised as Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama. They did not allow the Golden Urn test, which had lots for several candidates in the hope of a supernatural selection. They backed those Tibetans who said that their government-friendly candidate was obviously the same man who had tried to quit China in his previous incarnation.

The Wikipedia, mostly reliable on basic facts, chooses to ignore what happened in 1940 in its history of Tibet (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Tibet#De_facto_independence

(1912%E2%80%931951). Nor does it mention Lhasa's failed attempt to get newly-independent India to accept them as a sovereign state in 1947.

In 1951, when Beijing reasserted control, Outer Tibet had at most one million inhabitants. Another 2 to 3 million lived as minorities in various parts of Inner Tibet. All ruled by warlords before the Communist came: either Han or Chinese Muslims (Hui).

At least the book doesn't have Chinese People's Army generals flying into Lhasa before the place even had an airport, as happens in the film *Seven Years in Tibet*. The one starring Heinrich Harrer, Hollywood's favourite SS man (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/42-china/tibet/falsehoods-in-seven-years-in-tibet/>).

Harrer in his 1952 book had described people called Khampas as bandits who threatened and exploited honest Tibetans in the region loosely ruled by Lhasa. An issue evaded by those later hailing them as Freedom Fighters. It was Khampas who'd left provinces that Beijing was reforming that started the 1959 revolt and the Dalai Lama's exile. Before that, Mao had respected Lhasa's autonomy enough to leave it to the Dalai Lama to end Tibet's ancient serfdom and slavery, which this 'holy man' never did. The new government in Lhasa freed them, and Tibetan exiles seem to be entirely from the displaced ruling class.

Harrer also mentions with apparent disdain the tolerance for homosexuality among Buddhist monks. Buddhism is mostly tolerant of homosexuality, but monks and nuns are always required to be celibate. Also vegetarian, and the Dalai Lama confuses his admirers by being as much a meat-eater as most of his kind.

The Meaning of Responsibility - A Wider Project?

This work is the first stage of a wider project. I plan to say a lot more about the complex issues of guilt and responsibility. For instance the Tory government *could* have made peace after the Fall of France. Documents later made public suggest that Hitler would have demanded less than the most of the ministers were willing to give (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/44-fascism-and-world-war-2/how-hitler-might-have-had-a-victorious-peace/>). Churchill certainly did more than anyone else to prevent it - does that make Churchill guilty of subsequent deaths? It is definite that the mass deportation of German Jews only

began after the British Empire refused to concede defeat: it had been much smaller and less regular than that.

Professional historians should have sorted this out years ago, but far too many defend the myth of a virtuous British Empire and a noble USA. Most on the left are much keener on bad-mouthing Stalin than recording the much more damaging sins of the centre-right when fascism was advancing. I and others do what we can - see very notably the work of Brendan Clifford and especially his *Union Jackery* (<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/unionjackery.88pp.pdf>). I hoped and still hope that the Global South will eventually take this up to undermine the West's excessive claims.

I also had a wider idea - why not an entire encyclopedia? A *Global North-South Encyclopaedia*? I've blogged about why it is needed, given the bias and limits of the current very-useful Wikipedia (<https://mrwydionmwilliams.quora.com/A-Global-North-South-Encyclopaedia>).

Saying more will need at least one more article. I'm working on it.

Was World War Two Unavoidable?

Accepting that a Second World War was always possible, who was to blame for the actual war?

I'll start with the East Asian end. There were no possible excuses for the full-scale Imperial Japanese invasion of China that began in 1937. Nor for their failure to offer terms that Chiang Kai-shek might have accepted, rather than attacking the USA in 1941.

China had alarmed Japan by a wide coalition under Chiang's leadership that included the Communists and several warlord rivals. But it would have been unlikely to risk trying to recover what Japan had taken already: it was just resisting fresh demands. And that Chinese government did not actually declare a war until after Japan's attack on the USA. They had to keep US sympathy, with many in Congress favourable to Japan.

Roosevelt did intentionally put economic pressure on Japan. He could not declare war without Congress. Japan's hard-liners were fools who repeatedly murdered other much smarter servants of Japanese Imperialism.

The Soviet Union meantime kept peace with Japan until almost the end - till after the Hiroshima bomb, in fact, though it had been agreed months earlier.

It suited both sides. And Japan must have noted that the Soviet Union applied racial equality far more sincerely than other powers at the time. Nazi awarding them the status of 'the Aryans of the east' was even less rational than their other racism: it did not rule out a future racist conquest if Germany had won.

Note also that calling it the Second World War only became general after the USA joined and merged the East Asian and European wars. Early on it was sometimes called the *European War*, or just *The War*.

The European end began with the German attack on Poland, which obliged Britain and France to join in. But what gets overlooked is that they might have urged Poland to let Hitler have Danzig, which was strongly ethnic-German and nominally a Free City. The promise could have been that there'd be a war only if he demanded more.

If people say that Hitler would have had a world war regardless, I'd answer that it might well have happened, but compromise would have been worth trying. We did avoid the Cold War becoming World War Three, and I'm expecting the same for the Ukraine crisis.

Back then, I suppose that the views of the elite, the views of 'Upper London', shifted drastically in March 1939. Hitler ignored the Munich Agreement and took the Czech half of Czechoslovakia as the '*Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia*'. For 'Upper London' it was unacceptable as a matter of power politics. They also had the Spitfire aircraft and radar defences that had been only partly ready earlier.

I'd also say unconditionally that once the war began, Hitler repeatedly made choices that made the war much larger and more damaging. And nothing obliged him to deport unrepentant Jewish populations. Nor to start the mass pre-planned killing of Jews and others he saw as unfit to live.

Mass killing was only confirmed at the Wannsee Conference on January 20th 1942. It was always slowed by the Nazi wish to keep it secret. Even though the Polish underground took great risks to confirm the killings, the Western governments delayed publicising it. And many fighting against the Nazis also believed that the stories were as untrue as World War One stories of German atrocities in Belgium had been.

The military authorities in both Britain and the USA also rejected the idea of bombing the railways bringing Jews and others to the death camps. It would have saved lives, but done little to speed the defeat of Germany. Another matter of power politics deciding.

Tony Greenstein: The most important half-hour of my life

Below is the text of the closing speech Tony Greenstein prepared for the end of his trial at Kingston Crown Court.

After a four-day trial ending on Friday, August 21 2026, Tony was acquitted of one count of inviting support for a proscribed terrorist organisation [Hamas] under Section 12(1) of the Terrorism Act 2000.

You can read Tony's blogposts at azvsas.blogspot.com.

Note: This text has not been checked against delivery. For legal reasons, it was not published until after the jury delivered its verdict.

1. WHY I AM SPEAKING TO YOU MYSELF

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury.

First, a word about why I have chosen to address you in person rather than through my barrister, Lawrence McNulty. My decision implies no criticism of Lawrence. It is simply this: when my liberty is at stake, I wish to speak to you directly rather than through someone else. It is my words that are on that indictment. When someone is accused of meaning something he never meant, he should be the one to tell you what he meant.

I am not a barrister. I hope you will bear that in mind. However what I will do is speak from the heart. I am seventy-two years old. I have been arguing in public for more than fifty years, and this may be the most important half hour of argument in my life.

The prosecution say that I invited people to support an Islamic group called Hamas while accepting that I didn't support Hamas myself. Think about that for a moment. Why should I invite people to support a group that I don't support and never have supported? It is illogical.

According to the Prosecution's opening statement, although I did not mention Hamas by name in my X posts, my "reference to support for the 'Gaza ghetto uprising' — in that specific context, on that specific date — can only have meant support for Hamas".

In order to sustain their case the Prosecution fixated on one sentence in a blog of 10 pages, concerning the congratulation of

Hamas for a well-planned and audacious attack. In other words if you ever say anything about any group then you are a supporter if not a recruiting sergeant.

In fact my blog is cut off in the Bundle. At 1060 words. In fact it went on for some 1935 words, including a leading article from an Israeli paper, Ha'aretz and two contributions from American Jewish political scientist, Norman Finkelstein. That is in addition to 2000 words in the comments.

Even on the one piece they produced they had to ensure that you didn't see all of the evidence. Let alone produce uncut the 15 or so blogs that demonstrated that I didn't support Hamas and never had.

According to the Prosecution logic Kemi Badenoch supporting Starmer's decision not to make British bases available for the war against Iran means she supports the Labour Party.

It is like being told that the Pope has supported abortion by helping out women who have had abortion. The fact that you support one action of a group does not mean that you therefore support the group itself. That logic escapes the Prosecution, although it should be obvious that supporting one action of a group doesn't mean supporting the group itself.

2. WHO I AM

Before I make my case, you are entitled to know a little of my background. Firstly I am a parent, with 4 children, 3 sons and a daughter. Although I am separated from my wife, Fiona she was in the public gallery yesterday with

our 35 year old son, Daniel who is severely autistic. Fiona and myself are Daniel's carers.

I went to Brighton Polytechnic in 1974 where I obtained an honours degree in Applied Sciences. In 1996 I obtained an MA in Colonial History from Birkbeck, London University and between 2000/2 I obtained a law degree from Sussex University and the following year a Legal Practice Certificate from the College of Law in Guildford.

Apart from being a blogger I have written for, among other papers and web sites The Guardian, New Statesman, Tribune Magazine (Orwell), Al Jazeera, Middle East Eye, Middle East Monitor, Open Democracy and many others

I was born in 1953, in the shadow of the Holocaust. The Holocaust had ended only eight years before. My father's parents came to England from Poland and left the rest of the family behind. Nearly all of them died in the Holocaust in Treblinka extermination camp. My father mentioned it just once in his whole life. Just one sister, who jumped off a deportation train, is known to have survived. Over three million of Poland's 3.3 million Jews were murdered.

My father was Rabbi Solomon Greenstein. In 1936 he stood at Cable Street, where the working people of the East End — Jews and dockers together — stopped Oswald Mosley's blackshirts from marching through a Jewish neighbourhood. That is the house I was raised in. Not a house of quietism. A house where you stood in the road.

So I am extremely aware of the

trauma caused by the Holocaust. It is not history to me. It is the empty chairs at my family's table. But what I have always fought against was those who used the murder of 6 million Jews in order to justify the murder and genocide of others. That is why authored *Zionism During the Holocaust*.

I was brought up as a religious Zionist. In 1967, when Israel captured what is now known as Gaza and the West Bank, I shared in the joy of fellow Jews. None of us knew then what horrors would be visited on the indigenous Palestinians who lived there.

Then, at the King David School in Liverpool, I was asked to take part in a school debate on whether Zionism was Right or Wrong and because nobody else would take that side I agreed to play devil's advocate. In the course of researching the topic I suddenly realised that I had grown up with a series of fabrications and lies. The refugees of 1948 had not left voluntarily on the orders of the Arab regimes. They had been expelled at the point of a gun, and after a series of massacres. The documents that proved it were classified and are still classified.

This was the pivotal moment of my life. From then on I became a Jewish anti-Zionist. And I learnt something my school had never taught me: that anti-Zionism had been the majority trend amongst Jews until the second world war. It is a Jewish tradition, as old as Zionism, and I stand in that tradition. Today 44% of young British Jews describe themselves as non- or anti-Zionist. We are not a curiosity. We are a tradition, coming back.

And I have lived that tradition the way most of our Jewish ancestors did. For fifty years I have opposed fascist groups on the streets. Because racism and fascism led to the holocaust. I was also a founding member of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

I am a Jewish socialist. The Palestinian organisation whose politics I have supported for decades is the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine — secular, socialist, founded by a Christian Palestinian, George Habash.

Hamas is an Islamist movement. Its full name is the Islamic Resistance Movement. Ask yourselves — is a Jewish secular socialist who has spent twenty years criticising political Islam and Hamas a plausible recruiting sergeant for it?

And as you weigh that question, understand what it is to be me, standing in this dock. Someone who has spent fifty years fighting fascism on the streets of this country. I never imagined it could happen here in the mother country of democracy that I would be facing 14 years imprisonment for writing a blog and tweeting under the Terrorism Act 2000.

3. HOW THIS CASE CAME TO YOU

At half past six on 20th December a dozen counter-terror police raided my home, seized my electronic devices, and arrested me — on the basis of a single tweet posted a month previously. We live, ladies and gentlemen, in dystopian and Orwellian times.

When I applied for the return of my devices, the officer in charge explained in a witness statement why they were keeping them. They needed, he said, to fully understand my “mind set and ideology” from my internet search history, and from how, “and indeed if”, I talk about Hamas with others away from the public domain.

Is it really the job of the police to act as amateur psychologists, inquiring into people's minds?

There might be a justification for all this if they thought I was going to set off an explosive device. But that is obviously not the case. It

was the police themselves who gave me bail the same day, with three relatively trivial restrictions — which, on appeal, Westminster magistrates watered down further. Clearly, they did not think I was a terrorist.

But the Terrorism Act has been creating a whole new category of terrorist. On the Home Office's own figures, arrests under the Terrorism Acts have leapt in 2024 from around two hundred to more than three thousand in 2025 — a more than tenfold increase.

And the profile of the average terrorist has changed too. It used to be a 31 year-old man. It is now more likely to be a 59 year-old woman. You may ask yourselves whether the word “terrorist” has quietly been given a new meaning — and whether I am standing in front of you because of it.

And when they interviewed me, I did not hide behind “no comment.” as my solicitor advised me. I answered every question for over an hour, and came back three months later, voluntarily, and did it again. When they asked me directly whether I supported Hamas against the Israeli army, I gave them an answer I will repeat again, because it is my whole case:

“I would probably support the devil against the Israeli army. That doesn't mean I support the devil in itself.”

And if the devil exists it exists amongst those who prohibit anaesthetics entering Gaza so that children have to endure amputations without the benefit of pain relief. The devil exists amongst those who deliberately starve children to death because they rationalise that those children will only grow up to be terrorists. It exists among those who bomb tent encampments and literally burn children and their parents alive. It exists amongst those who call Palestinians “human animals” the same phrase used by Himmler,

the head of the SS about Jewish children in a speech on October 4, 1943 to senior SS Generals.

In a situation where there is a conflict, you support the oppressed rather than the oppressor. That is not support for an organisation. That is a moral position — one, I might add, with a rather long Jewish pedigree.

4. WHAT YOU ARE BEING ASKED TO DECIDE

Her Honour will direct you on the law, and what she tells you about the law you must take from her, not from me. But you know by now what the prosecution must make you sure of, and it is worth setting out plainly, because everything I say from here on hangs from it.

They must make you sure of three things. That Hamas was proscribed on 7 October 2023 — that is agreed, and always was. That my words in fact invited support for Hamas. And that I knew, at the time, that that is what I was doing.

Three things. All three. Sure of each.

Now notice what is not on that list.

It is not on that list whether you agree with my opinions about Israel and Palestine. It is not on that list whether you find those opinions congenial, or offensive — some of you may find that they are. And it is not on that list whether Hamas ought to be proscribed. That is the government's decision. It is not mine, and it is not yours.

The charge is not holding an opinion. The charge is inviting other people to support an organisation, Hamas. Those are two different things — and every single question in this trial lives in the distance between them.

Hold on to that distinction, because I am now going to show you what I actually wrote.

5. WHAT I ACTUALLY WROTE

This case hinges on three short posts and one article. That is the entire alleged crime. So let us read it — carefully, the way the prosecution hopes you won't.

First. Hamas is not mentioned. Not in the first tweet. Not in the second nor the third. Not once. The

prosecution invite you to supply the name yourselves — because I did not supply it.

What I wrote was “the Gaza Ghetto Uprising.” And I chose the word ghetto deliberately, but not for the reason the prosecution imply.

Let me explain, for those of you who do not know the history. In the second world war, the Nazis walled the Jews of Warsaw, half a million of them into a ghetto — a sealed district, starved and diseased, from which the trains left for the Treblinka death camp. And in 1943 the young Jews who remained did something nobody expected. With a handful of smuggled pistols, against tanks and the SS, they rose. They knew they could not win. They rose because it was better to die resisting than to be led away quietly. It is one of the proudest moments in Jewish history.

The last surviving commander of that uprising was a man named Marek Edelman. And in his old age, Edelman wrote to the Palestinian resistance and addressed them as fellow fighters — much to Israel's annoyance. When he died, Poland gave him a state funeral, a fifteen-gun salute, the President gave the oration. Israel did not send the lowliest clerk at the Israeli Embassy. Edelman wasn't a Zionist.

Edelman, who led the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising against the Nazis, described Gaza as a ghetto. I have used his comparison for years before October 2023. Two million people, most of them refugees or the children of refugees, sealed into a strip of land under blockade for 16 years, where the majority are children who have never once been allowed out. When I wrote “ghetto,” I meant a ghetto. My blog supported the Uprising just as I would have supported the slave uprisings of the 19th century. That is a political opinion. It was a political opinion on 7 October 2023, and it is a political opinion now.

And here is the crazy thing. Read section 1 of the Terrorism Act 2000 and ask what it would have made of the Warsaw Ghetto fighters. If this Act had existed in 1944, they could have been classified as terrorists. So could the French Resistance. That is how widely this law is drawn — and it is worth remembering when you

consider who it is now being pointed at. The definition of terrorism in the Terrorism Act 2000 is no definition at all. It has been widely criticised, both by the Supreme Court in *Gul* and also by the Independent Reviewer of terrorism David Anderson QC as he then was.

Second. “PLEASE SHARE.” The prosecution say those two words are the invitation. Members of the jury, I have written a blog for 18 years. “Please share” means: read my article, pass it on, argue with it. Asking people to read what you have written is not asking them to support an organisation. If it were, every writer in this country would be standing where I am standing. My purpose was not to invite support for anyone. If I had wanted people to support a particular group I would have said it. I often ask for support for things such as the Al Tafawk kindergarten in Jenin. Nothing in the wording suggests that. The posts were advertising my blog. That is what writers do.

And here is what that “recruitment campaign” achieved. 56 views. 73 views. 58 views. Four shares between them. The prosecution's case that this was an invitation to the public to support a proscribed organisation — is a fantasy that they have created out of nothing.

Third — the sentence the whole case rests on. “Whatever criticisms one can make of Hamas, we should congratulate them on this well planned and audacious attack.”

Note the words: “whatever criticisms.” Those are not the words of a recruiter. A recruiter does not open with the criticisms of the thing he is recruiting for. Those are the words of someone who has spent fifteen years making those criticisms in public — and I will show you the receipts in a moment.

And “well planned and audacious” — that is a description, not an endorsement. October 7 was well planned, and it was audacious. Israel had constructed a five billion dollar electronic fence, complete with drones, sensors and automatic machine guns, and it was breached in minutes. Retired generals said the same thing on television that week. Nobody raided their homes at dawn.

As for “ Hamas should be congratulated ” it is so obviously a figure of speech, not meant literally, that I am surprised that the prosecutor doesn’t blush every time she argues this.

And I will tell you what else I wrote that day, in the same article and its comments. I wrote that the retribution of Israel would be bloody and savage. I wrote to a commenter: “ Graham, believe you me, I am apprehensive of the days ahead and Israel’s potential for genocide. ” Apprehensive. Those are not the words of someone celebrating. They are the words of someone who feared exactly what was coming — and who, you may think, has been proved catastrophically right.

But you would not have read the latter comment because the version of the blog in your Bundle is only half the original (1060 words as opposed to 1935 words). The comments underneath were another 2,000 words and they too were not in your bundle. Why? Because it is clear that the conversation didn’t mention anyone joining Hamas. Anyone with eyes to see would understand that the blog was not an invitation to join Hamas.

It takes a certain malevolence to read that into the blog. And let it be clear that support for an action of a proscribed group is not the same as support for the group itself. expressing an opinion or belief that is shared by or coincides with the aims of a proscribed organization is not the same thing as expressing support for the organization itself That is or should be common senses. It is also good law as in the case ABJ decided recently in the Supreme Court.

So ask yourself the only question that matters. Where, in any of this, is the invitation? Did I ask anyone to join anything? Did I ask for money? Did I ask a single human being to take a single action — other than to read an article?

You may take those three posts and that article into your deliberation room and read them from beginning to end as many times as you like. You will not find it. It is not there. |

6. TWENTY YEARS OF MY OWN HEADLINES

The prosecution must also prove that I knew I was inviting support for Hamas. So let me show you what I have actually written about Hamas, over twenty years, under my own name. These are the titles of my articles:

We Support the Palestinian People of Gaza — not Hamas. March 2009.

Islamic Fascists Attack Children’s Summer Camp in Gaza. May 2010.

Hamas — Speaking with a Forked Tongue. December 2010.

The Lousy Hamas Government. February 2011.

Hamas Prevents Palestinian Students Studying Abroad. August 2011.

Hamas’s Attack on NGOs Resembles That of Israel. August 2011.

Hamas Pays the Price of Forced Islamicisation. April

2013.

How Israel Helped Create Hamas. July 2014.

Hamas Does Its Best to Make Palestinian Lives a Misery. February 2018.

Abbas and Hamas — Abuse and Torture of Palestinians. October 2018.

Ten years of headlines. I called them Islamic fascists. In print. In public. Under my own name. Do the titles of those blogs indicate support for Hamas?

And these are only some of them. You can be sure that if my writings helped the prosecution in any way, they would have given them to you to read rather than objecting to them.

I have spent my political life supporting the secular, socialist tradition of Palestine. So when the prosecution tell you that on the morning of 7 October 2023 I woke up and decided to become a recruiter for the Islamic Resistance Movement, you are entitled to ask: on what planet? |

7. WHY, THEN, AM I HERE? — ONE LAW FOR SOME

So if the words don’t say it, and the record contradicts it, you are entitled to ask the obvious question: why is this prosecution happening at all?

Let me answer it with a comparison, and you may draw your own conclusions.

Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham — Al Qaeda’s franchise in Syria — was a proscribed organisation in this country until October of last year. While it was still proscribed, and while its leader, who became Syria’s President, still had a ten million dollar bounty on his head, eminent British public figures — Alastair Campbell, Tony Blair’s former spin doctor, and Rory Stewart, a former Conservative MP — travelled to Damascus to conduct a friendly, filmed interview with him. This is a regime whose forces have killed thousands of Christians, Druze and Alawites because of their religion. They came home and were effusive in their opinions about him, to audiences of hundreds of thousands.

Nobody raided their homes at half past six in the morning. Nobody seized their devices to investigate their “mind set and ideology.” A decision was taken not to trouble them.

Now, when a law is implemented against certain people and not others, that goes against the first principle of the rule of law. Either laws are applicable to all, or to none. To apply them only to those whose opinions the government of the day disagrees with — that is the hallmark of a police state, not a democracy.

And you do not have to take the point from me on trust, because the same double standard is written on a larger canvas. Parliament made genocide and war crimes offences under the International Criminal Court Act 2001. Yet successive British governments have gone on supplying arms to what most of the world regard as a genocide in Gaza, and yet no minister has ever stood where I am standing.

This is not a new story. Nelson Mandela — whose statue

stands today in Parliament Square, facing the Houses of Parliament — was described by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan as a terrorist, and the movement he led as a terrorist movement. If this Act had been in force in those decades, that movement would have been proscribed — and anyone in Britain who wrote “we should congratulate them” would have been at risk of standing exactly where I am standing now. Mandela himself said:

“The West sees liberation movements as terrorist movements — and that is why I am accused of supporting terrorism.”

Now let me be precise about what I am saying, because it is not what the prosecution may pretend I am saying. I am not comparing any organisation to Nelson Mandela. The comparison is not between organisations at all. It is between governments — then and now — and how easily they attach the word terrorist to whoever opposes the policy of the day. Today, Mandela is widely admired. The label of terrorism should be applied to those who are terrorists not those who are not. I

8. THE STATE HAS ALWAYS PROSECUTED OPINIONS

Judges have always insisted that the trials before them are not political. They said it at the trial of Emmeline Pankhurst in 1912. Chief Prosecutor and Attorney General Sir Rufus Isaacs, emphasised that:

‘Suffrage is not the issue, it is the criminal behaviour of the suffragettes and their incitement to partake in militant activity at which 54 windows were broken.’

That was also the view of the Judge, Mr Justice Coleridge, who handed out a sentence of 9 months to be served in the second division of prison, despite the plea of the jury for clemency.

The Home Secretary immediately stepped in to have Pankhurst transferred to the First Division of prison — a division reserved for political prisoners. A century ago the state admitted what today it denies: that some prisoners were political.

And consider what this country has done, within my lifetime, with laws

that prosecuted people for what they were and what they said. The law of blasphemous libel — repealed. The law of gross indecency, which criminalised sexual conduct between men and destroyed Oscar Wilde and Alan Turing was also repealed, and more than repealed: under the Alan Turing Law of 2017, every conviction was wiped out, as if it had never existed. Parliament itself has accepted that there are times when it has made mistakes, and the law of the day was wrong.

The Editor of Gay News, Dennis Lemon, was the last person sentenced to 6 months imprisonment suspended in July 1977 for blasphemous libel for suggesting Jesus was gay. The Judge at his trial, Alan King Hamilton, stated that homosexuality was responsible for the downfall of the Roman Empire. The judge at Oscar Wilde’s trial bemoaned the fact that he could only sentence him to 2 years in prison.

Judges have nearly always been the fiercest opponents of free speech. The reason is simple. As the Law Society Gazette pointed out on 25 June 2019 ‘Senior judges “most socially exclusive” of all professionals, 75% are Oxbridge educated and 65% having gone to private school.

When the state prosecutes opinions, it always says it is prosecuting something else. And usually it eventually, apologises but usually too late.

Freedom of speech in this country was not granted to us from above, and it did not arrive with the European Convention. It was won through political struggle — at the Peterloo Massacre in 1819, where cavalry rode down women and children; by the Chartists at Newport who were brutally slaughtered for peacefully demanding democratic reforms in 1839. People died for the right I exercised on 7 October 2023: the right to publish an opinion the government doesn’t like.

Benjamin Franklin warned: “Whoever would overthrow the liberty of a nation must begin by subduing the freeness of speech.” George Orwell — a man who knew something about both socialism and dystopia — put it in one sentence:

“If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.”

And if you want the alternative philosophy — the philosophy of this prosecution — it was stated with admirable honesty by the Ugandan dictator Idi Amin:

“There is freedom of speech — but I cannot guarantee freedom after speech.”

Ladies and gentlemen, you may think that sentence sums up a dawn raid over a tweet rather well. I was arrested, not for anything I did, but for what I said. This case is not about terrorism. It is about freedom of speech.

This is why the government’s own Independent Reviewer of terrorism legislation, David Anderson KC, was critical of the new terrorism laws. I quote from his 2014 Report on Terrorism Legislation:

a) To afford over-broad discretions to Ministers, prosecutors and police is undesirable in itself. As the Supreme Court maintained in *R v Gul*, 91 it leaves citizens in the dark and risks undermining the rule of law.

b) To render people subject to the terrorism laws whom no sensible person would think of as terrorists risks destroying the trust upon which these special powers depend for their acceptance by the public.

I have committed no violence. I have threatened no one. I have incited nobody. Nobody in this courtroom suggests otherwise. I wrote an article.

And for that article, I face a maximum sentence of fourteen years in prison. Fourteen years. For three posts and a blog. Ask yourself what kind of country are we becoming to send a seventy-two-year-old Jewish grandfather — a carer — to prison for fourteen years over three tweets and a blog article? I

9. YOU — THE LAMP THAT SHOWS THAT FREEDOM LIVES

Which brings me, finally, to you, members of the Jury.

Let me be clear about what I am asking of you, and what I am not. I am not asking you to set aside the law. Her Honour will direct you on the law, and you should follow

her directions. I am not asking you to agree with my politics. You may think I am wrong about everything I believe, and it would change nothing about your task.

The role of the Judge is concerned with the law. The role of juries is to ensure justice is done. That is why successive governments have slowly whittled away at the right to trial by jury. The previous Justice Secretary David Lammy wanted to abolish them for half of those who are now entitled to a jury. I have no doubt that although Andy Burnham has stopped these proposals they will return.

Because here is what the law itself gives you. You are the sole judges of the facts, of the context, and of the meaning of words. Not the prosecution. Not the police analyst who selected the phrases. Twelve ordinary people, precisely because ordinary people know what words mean. The prosecution does not get to dictate that “please share my article” means “support Hamas.” That question belongs to you, and to nobody else in this building.

That is not an accident of our constitution. It is the whole point of it. Lord Patrick Devlin — one of the greatest judges this country produced — said:

“Trial by jury is more than an instrument of justice and more than one wheel of the constitution: it is the lamp that shows that freedom lives.”

The jury, he said, is “an insurance that the criminal law will conform to the ordinary man’s idea of what is fair and just.”

Dame Heather Hallett, who sat on the Court of Appeal for 14 years, 2005–17, gave the 2017 Blackstone Lecture on the role of the jury. She is Chair of the COVID Inquiry and previously of the inquiry into the terrorist atrocity on 7.7: She said:

A jury may refuse to convict in spite of the law and the evidence because it concludes that the law is an unjust law. The jury passes its verdict on the law. Secondly, it ensures that the prosecution and the judge are on trial.

There is a plaque inside the entrance to the Old Bailey. It commemorates the most famous legal case of all — Bushell’s. The jury in 1670, refused to convict two Quakers, William Penn

and William Mead, for the crime of unlawful preaching. For that refusal the jurors were locked up for two nights without food, water, fire — or a chamber pot. They did not budge. And out of their stubbornness, in Bushell’s case, came the right that you now hold: the right of a jury to deliver its verdict according to its conscience and its convictions, and to answer to no one for it.

I am asking you to do something far more modest than those twelve did. I am asking you to read three posts and an article, in their full context, with your own common sense — and to answer honestly the only two questions in this case. Were those words an invitation to support Hamas? And was I, a Jewish socialist with twenty years of published criticism of Hamas, knowingly recruiting for them?

And understand that your answer will not stay in this room. If these three posts are terrorism, then the word has a new meaning for everyone in this country. Every student who shares an article. Every pensioner who retweets the wrong opinion. Every writer, every blogger, every one of your neighbours with a social media account and a view about a war. Can it really be the law of England that any of them — that any of you — will be condemned to fourteen years of prison for a tweet? You have the power, today, to answer that question. Whatever you answer is, it will be remembered long after this trial is forgotten.

If you are left in doubt as to whether I was genuinely inviting people to support a proscribed organisation — you must acquit. That is not politics. That is the law. |

10. FINALLY

I told you at the beginning what it is to be me, standing in this dock. Let me end with why it should matter to you.

I was born eight years after the gates of the camps were opened. It was British soldiers who opened the gates at Belsen. Whatever quarrels I have had with British governments — and you have heard today that I have had many — I have never once doubted what that meant.

I do not say that to ask for your sympathy. I say it because my family’s history taught me one thing above all others. The moment that matters is never the loud one. It is the quiet

one — when ordinary, decent people are asked to go along with something that does not sit right with them, and they do, because it is easier, because the language is technical, because someone in authority has assured them that it is necessary. I ask you to ensure that no one else goes through what I have experienced.

Not merely a case like this hanging over my head for 3 years, but the harassment that I have experienced from the State. Five times in the past two years I have been debanked for what is called ‘regulatory reasons’. First was Nationwide Bank which I had been with for a quarter of a century, then HSBC which closed an account my wife and I opened for our son, Daniel’s disability benefits. Then First Direct which I had been with 33 years, just 3 fewer than the bank itself existed. Then this year Santander and Kent Reliance building society.

It is clear that some agency of the state — the NCA most likely — fed false and malicious information to the banks and under money laundering legislation they are not allowed to tell me.

Lord Lane, Lord Chief Justice of England from 1980 to 1992, put it best of all in a House of Lords debate on April 7 1989:

“Loss of freedom seldom happens overnight. Oppression doesn’t stand on the doorstep with toothbrush moustache and swastika armband — it creeps up insidiously... step by step, and all of a sudden the unfortunate citizen realises that it is gone.”

You are twelve ordinary people, and this is one of the quiet moments. You are not being asked to make a protest, or to change any law. You are being asked to look at three short messages and one article, and to answer, on your conscience: was that an invitation to support Hamas — and did I know that that was what I was doing?

Although I am on trial today, it is really freedom of speech in this country that is on trial. The pretext for this attack is terrorism. However that is all it is. A pretext. I will finish with a quote from one of America’s founding fathers, Benjamin Franklin, who said:

‘Those who trade liberty for security deserve neither’.

Thank you members of the jury.

Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

Hard Right Peacemongers in Germany
Appalling Danger of Donbass Majority Rule?
6% of Russians Can't Be Wrong?
Artificial Cleverness and Job Destruction
SpaceX Starship Still Unready
China Still Rising

Hard Right Peacemongers in Germany

From 2022 and the sabotage of a moderate peace that Zelensky almost accepted, the classic West German pattern of Christian Democrats / Social Democrats / Free Democrats went into swift decline.

Free Democrats had always been a significant partner in government or opposition: in 2025 they fell below 5% and are not in the Federal Parliament. Having once had seats in nine of Germany's sixteen regional parliaments in 2022, they now have only four. The most recent in 2023, and the possibility of them being wiped out as a party with elected representatives is very real. In Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the region that just made the Rightwing AfD the largest party, the Free Democrats got seats in 2006 and 2021, but otherwise not.

In former East Germany, the Christian Democrats might be going the same way. They too got no seats in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, where they had been significant in the past. They too get fewer seats nationally, though from a much larger starting point.

Why are these people being treated as failures? Alarming and mysterious, we are assured by 'free' Western media that just happen to be owned and run by right-wing super-rich. The people who benefit from mainstream politicians holding out against demands for a Wealth Tax etc.

The obvious answer is that they have failed the public, especially in former East Germany. Before Gorbachev decided to cut them loose and allow an uncontrolled collapse, they'd been rated as a rare success within the declining Soviet bloc. But when it became clear that the population was going to blindly trust West German benevolence, this abruptly changed. Suddenly everything East German was wicked and wasteful and must be swept away. And the happy population were assured that something much better would replace it.

Like most promises from the New Right, and from the Clinton-Blair camp of centre-leftists who swallowed the New Right's economic nonsense, it would have been very nice if it had been true. And

of course it was thoroughly untrue.

Had Reagan and Thatcher been functional conservatives rather than trusting New Right advice, they would have made the new Russia a reliable friend. Made a gigantic long-term gain for their values, in the same way that the former fascist or hard-right nations of Japan, Italy, Spain and Germany in its Western half were won over. Were vital to economic success and working-class contentment in the Cold War.

This massive blunder was not even callous or amoral self-interest for the West. It was based on a shoddy understanding of real material wealth. Wealth is supposed to be generated by a quest for profit, and this is assumed never to be far wrong. And anything state-funded or even non-profit is declared incapable of generating wealth or avoiding waste. That's why the greedy failures running Britain's privatised water industry are not replaced.

In the opportunity created by the Soviet collapse, Gorbachev and then Yeltsin thought that the West valued them. The West's leaders were fools not to go with the generally friendly attitude that Russians then had. But any competent political leader should be on guard against betrayal even by apparently friendly forces.

Gorbachev and Yeltsin were not competent in large-scale politics. Gorbachev understood only politics within the Party machine. He might have triumphed if he'd followed the advice of Deng Xiaoping and kept party authority solid while he transformed a society that was used to trusting the government, or at least obeying it. Which was also the reason Khrushchev failed: he generated mistrust among the conservative-minded without doing anything to satisfy the people with useful new ideas.

But the West's leaders, and in particular those dominating the European Union, cannot possibly admit that they messed up. Instead, it has to be Deep Evil emerging unexpectedly in Russia. And if Russians were slow to do things that could be called evil, they could fake incidents. And expend the once-hopeful mixed-identity nation of Ukraine by playing up the Nazi-tinged hatreds of West Ukraine. Provoke normal Russian nationalism and call it evil.

We keep getting reminded of the 2018 nerve gas attack on exiled dissident Sergei Skripal as evidence of Russian evil. To me, it was blatantly False Flag. Ordinary British hired killers can't be hard to find for a major government, so why do should Russians use a method that made them look guilty? And which also failed to kill the man they apparently wanted to kill

(<https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/past-issues/2018-labour-affairs/2018-04-magazine/2017-04-editorial-nerve-gas-attack/>).

Germany's Hard Right are foes of the European Union, and so have no reason to go along with the anti-Russian nonsense. On other matters, this variety of Hard Right are only hard on poor. Encouraging the home-grown working class and poor to blame immigrants rather than New Right nonsense economics. They may well decline after blundering and being ineffective when actually in power.

More hopeful is a potential coalition government in Berlin led by the Hard-Left 'Die Linke' [The Left], where hard Right gains were limited. Would they repeat the good work of Mamdani in New York? But sadly, a coalition of Social Democrats / Christian Democrats / Greens would also work. And 'die Linke' would need both Social Democrats and Greens to rule.

Appalling Danger of Donbass Majority Rule?

Anyone failing to hate everything Russian has no place in the New Ukraine. That at least is the view that President Zelensky came round to, after being elected on a promise of moderation.

Ukraine's government is agreed to be full of corruption. I'm reminded of Baldwin's memorable remark about '*hard-faced men who look as if they had done very well out of the war*'. That was World War One, and the British Empire did emerge victor, though weakened overall. You might forgive the hard-faced men for not realising this, though they were certainly callous and greedy. But the chances of Kiev reconquering the anti-Kiev territories of the Donbass and Crimea should have looked absurd to anyone involved since their failed big offensive in

2023.

With hindsight, it would have been smart to have realised in 1991 that the Soviet Ukraine authorised by Lenin was artificial. Just as the two halves of Czechoslovakia ended up deciding they'd be happier as centre-right Czechs and centre-left Slovaks, so a split based on the former Tsarist provinces of 'Little Russia' and 'New Russia / South Russia' would have been wise. As two sovereign states called West Ukraine and East Ukraine, both might have done very well.

West Ukrainians, who naturally rejected the name 'Little Russia', had been long-term victims of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. A state ruled by an outsized gentry class, which was relatively nice to Jews but oppressive to Orthodox Christians. Frequent Ukrainian rebellions were crushed, leaving a legacy of hatred that exploded after the Tsarist collapse, and then again during the Nazi invasion. Some West Ukrainians directly served the Nazis, and others fought as a Third Force for part of the war. And back in 2016, there was a vivid Polish film describing just how bad it had been (<https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/West-Ukraine-The-Bitter-Past>).

From 2022, Poland tried keeping quiet in the hope of seeing major damage to their old enemy Russia. This has been coming under strain, as the dominant West Ukrainian nationalists keep insisting on the heroism and virtue of mass killers of Poles in regions of mixed population.

West Ukrainians also made a decision while under Austro-Hungarian rule to see Russia as a foe and oppressor rather than a liberator. That was mostly not the feeling in the former Tsarist province that Lenin had bundled with the slice not taken by Poland.

There was anyway a mix of opinion in both halves, but East Ukraine had never been part of Kievan Rus. It had been settled by a mix of newcomers from both Ukraine and Russia, after Moscow ended its depopulation by Tartar slave raiders (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crimean%E2%80%93Nogai_slave_raids_in_Eastern_Europe).

The Russian language and culture were dominant. Leonid Brezhnev was just the most notable of many who were born in Lenin's definition of Ukraine, but who were happy with a Soviet Union ruled from Moscow.

The two Orange Revolutions were part of a ding-dong battle between the West-minded and East-minded. East-mindedness won the 2010 Presidential election, which is why in 2014 the President was driven out in fear of lynching rather than having his offer of a new election accepted.

Crimea and the Donbass had a minority of Orange-Revolution supporters. People who'd probably kill or drive out their pro-Russian neighbours if they got control.

It is for this that West Europeans are being asked to suffer.

6% of Russians Can't Be Wrong?

Having given vast publicity to the anti-War Yabloko party not qualifying for national registration in the recent round of elections in Russia, Western media have gone silent. They are not reporting the weak results for individual Yabloko candidates who stood in one of the regional elections that were held at the same time.

"Yabloko did enter the regional parliament in western Russia's Novgorod region. It said on social media that it received about 12,000 votes – just over six percent of votes and enough to enter the regional legislature."

(<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/9/21/pro-putin-party-wins-supermajority-amid-ramped-up-ukrainian-attacks>)

DeepSeek pointed me to a similar report from India, <https://en.vijesti.me/world-a/evropa/827748/United-Russia-wins-record-number-of-Duma-seats%3B-anti-war-party-gains-small-regional-support>

I had to dig and to use the Chinese service *DeepSeek* to get those basic facts. Our ‘free’ Western media thinks it best that the general public don’t hear off-message facts like that.

Most will also have missed the success of the refounded Russian Communists. They had peaked with nearly a quarter of the parliamentary votes in 1999. Since 2003, when it was clear Putin was restoring health to Russia, they have fluctuated between 11.57 and 19.19 percent. Seven million and 12.5 million votes (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Party_of_the_Russian_Federation#Parliamentary_elections). This time they got 8,938,889 million votes and 13.82%.

The Hard-Right Liberal Democrats came third, as usual. After getting nearly 23% in 1993, they got 13.14% in 2016 and less than 9% this time. A weak party of Moderate Socialists has lost ground, and fairly new centrist party has gained. But Putin retains the trust of a clear majority of the Russian people.

Artificial Cleverness and Job Destruction

Stories about evil computers taking over the world popped up almost as soon as the public realised that some sort of artificial brain was possible. And before that, a common theme was robots or androids as an oppressed underclass rising up against humans.

All such dramas assume that humans are foolish enough to give independent killing power to an artificial device. No one ever has, apart from enhanced mine fields where a defined area is intentionally made unfit for human life.

A 1986 film called *WarGames* filled this gap – it starts with an exercise in which some human employees failed to fire the missiles when they were made to believe it was a real war. Rather than cutting back to the loyalists who would trust, as I’m sure happened in real life, they decide to give total power to a computer.

Much more realistic was when the All-American-Lad hero seeks help from two young-adult hackers who appear to be employees of a small computer firm. I took them to be experts who got a lot more tolerance than most professionals because that sort of mind is good at fixing computer problems and keeping other hackers out of the company’s system. Both are comically asocial, though one worse than the other. That was before ‘autism’ became a familiar concept, but the *thing* was known before the *word*. Rising use of the word has since led fools like Robert Kennedy Junior to believe the long-discredited notion of blaming vaccines.

People who imagine themselves magic mystical healers are enraged by the awkward truth that vaccines and other medicines became much better than they were at actually saving lives and ending chronic illness. By contrast, those claiming no magic powers and who modestly give emotional support accept it as a supplement to the best available professional cures.

To get back to the film, I’d rate it as more like what a real intelligent machine would do, if this were ever possible. It does not want power. It may not even care whether it survives or not. According to the Wiki:

“WOPR [the sentient computer]

nonetheless continues the simulation to trigger the scenario and win the game, as it does not understand the difference between reality and simulation.” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WarGames>).

Meantime Microsoft seems to have added an AI function to the grammar checks for their Word software. It was always imperfect, but increasingly it is being silly in a way only AI can be. One instance – I was noting a news story for possible use here:

“A confrontation in Northern Ireland after a long-banned march was unexpectedly allowed.”

It asked if I possibly meant to say ‘March’, which is surreal.

Another time, I wrote about ‘working in vain’, and it asked if I’d actually meant ‘vein’.

Why do they do such things? Total arrogance, that gets worse as their successful control of events gets weaker. I’ve found other software insist that when I use British spelling rather than US, this is an error.

Anything they don’t do, isn’t proper.

Additional to this is the way that big corporations are pushing AI to replace skilled middle-class work. AI still makes silly errors in translations, as with a bizarre menu that spoke of cooking lawyers rather than avocado pears: both in French are *avocats*. But one qualified human vetting many decent AI translations can do work that would once have needed ten. And so for many other tasks that offer decent employment for humans, but the dogma now is that profit must always command.

SpaceX Starship Still Unready

An obsession with privatisation has crippled NASA’s efforts to get humans back to the moon. It no longer seems absurd that China might get there first.

NASA’s own big rocket has put people round the moon. But an

extra vehicle will be needed to land and return. Alternate versions were promised by SpaceX (Elon Musk) and by Blue Origin (Jeff Bezos). But neither of them has yet shown they can do the job.

Before now, several versions of SpaceX Starship crossed the line between thin atmosphere and near-vacuum, and were defined as being 'in space'. But did not go into orbit, which is a lot harder.

This time, Starship orbited despite one of its six engines failing. It deployed satellites. But then returned early.

No one currently has a rocket that can do what the Saturn 5 rockets did – fly alone to the moon with a moon lander craft. NASA chose not try to create an upgraded version: instead the Senate insisted on re-using engines from the failed Shuttle program. Maybe a mistake, though it wasn't those engines that failed. But SpaceX seems to have done better by redesigning from scratch.

A rocket carrying enough of a payload for humans to land on the moon is a huge engineering task. It needs many large rocket motors working in harmony. They did get an amazing 33 engines on the first stage working reliably. But not so far the six on the vital second stage.

SpaceX will need to do better to pass the planned low-orbit rendezvous scheduled for late 2027. This was sensibly added by the man Trump appointed to head NASA, meaning that the planned 2028 moon landing can be postponed if there seem to be risks. It would avoid probable pressure to save prestige by taking extra risks if an actual landing had been promised as part of the mission.

Neil Armstrong, first man on the moon, reportedly said the chances of his successful landing were 50/50, with a 10% chance of not returning. He took a risk actually landing when there were warnings.

And later the first shuttle disaster was caused by taking off when the vehicle was too cold by existing rules: a series of launch delays over safety issues had become politically embarrassing.

Space X may have made an error in spending effort on recovering and reusing rockets. Needed for a long-term space program, including dreams of Mars. But getting the system ready on schedule for the moon landing should have taken priority.

The Soviet mission to put men on the moon was abandoned when their own giant rocket blew up on the ground four times in succession. Getting 30 separate rocket motors to work together was just too tough. And a promised gigantic Chinese Long March 9 is still in design, with many revisions of the basic idea.

The immediate Chinese idea is more modest – two separate launches by the smaller Long March 10 rocket, separately sending a crewed lunar orbiter and an uncrewed lunar lander to the moon. The crew would transfer, land, ascend, and transfer back to return to Earth. Scheduled for 2029 or 2030.

They might copy Apollo and Artemis and first do a lunar orbit mission that does not land, but I've not seen it mentioned. Also the parts are still being tested, but the USA must be worrying.

Someone else will be US President by then – Trump cannot get round the absolute Constitutional rule prohibiting a third term. Beyond that, a lot depends if we do get the expected triumph by US Democrats in the November Congressional election.

China Still Rising

President Xi could not be bothered speaking at a major UN gathering at which many national leaders gave their viewpoints. He

left the task to his deputy.

President Trump spoke aggressively to the UN, and got mocked. But Xi talked directly to Trump, details unknown. Addressing a forum for almost-powerless posturing is not something he need bother with.

Though imperfect, China's economic performance is the least bad of any major nation.

"The transition to raise consumption is a long-term process. Household consumption currently accounts for around 40 per cent of GDP in China.

"In the United States, it accounts for around 70 per cent. But the number is so high because it is driven by housing, healthcare and education expenses. In China, healthcare and education – which form the bulk of service consumption – are not priced according to the market and are pretty affordable. In the US, healthcare and college tuition are relatively expensive. Do we really want to depend on this to drive consumption? I don't think so.

"Germany and Japan are better international benchmarks, with household consumption at around 50 to 55 per cent of their economies. But if China raises its consumption share by one percentage point per year, the rebalancing will still take over a decade." <https://www.scmp.com/economy/global-economy/article/3366326/economist-lan-xiaohuan-balancing-act-needed-boost-chinas-consumption>

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

Sports and Politics: Ireland v Israel

By Michael Murray

The furore over Republic of Ireland playing Israel in the UEFA Nations' League raises the question of what happened in the days of the boycotts of rugby games with apartheid South Africa. The record shows a huge contrast between the Fianna Fáil government stance on the issue of sports and politics - then compared to now.

"The Irish government was "outraged" after the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU) took part in a rugby event in apartheid South Africa, state papers have revealed.

"Details of correspondence and government letters on the 1989 rugby tour controversy have been released by the National Archives as part of the 30-year rule.

"The IRFU was widely criticised at the time after its committee allowed international board members to attend the sporting event despite government opposition.

"The event was held in celebration of the centenary of the South African Rugby Board (SARB) in 1989.

"At the time, apartheid South Africa was under a blanket boycott by many international sporting bodies.

"Among those taking part

was Irish rugby veteran Willie John McBride, who managed the visitors' side and had been under political pressure not to attend the tour.

"The former Ireland captain was asked by the Sunday Independent about the opposition.

"He was quoted as saying: *"There is no reason why I shouldn't go. I have the blessing of the Rugby Union."*

"Referring to an attack on him by the anti-apartheid movement, he said: *"I wouldn't expect anything else. They are political. I believe in communication of people through sport and that is the way it should be."*

"I believe in trying to break down barriers."

"After the tour, Mr McBride said rugby players should be allowed to play against *"whomever they please without politics spoiling everything"*.

"However, in a press statement issued weeks after the tour, GP Moss, secretary of the IRFU, said it was concerned that its recognition of the event had "aroused reaction and controversy".

"This occasion had been approved by the International Rugby Football Board and it was agreed by the committee of the IRFU

that its international board members would attend," the statement added.

It went on to say that, on reflection, it regretted its decision.

It said that no Irish team at any level or any other team from Ireland was allowed to play in South Africa, nor would teams from that country be invited to play in Ireland while the remainder of the apartheid laws in South Africa existed.

"In a statement, Foreign Affairs Minister Gerard Collins said he was satisfied that the IRFU regretted its decision to take part in the centenary celebrations in South Africa.

"He described it as *"an unjustified decision which involved needless public controversy"* in both Ireland and South Africa.

In a letter to Sean Farrell, first secretary at the embassy in London, Department of Foreign Affairs official Philomena Murnaghan revealed that the Irish government was outraged over the IRFU attendance.

"She said the decision had been taken "in total disregard" for government policy on sporting contacts with South Africa." ITV NEWS, 29 December, 2019

The Coming of Censorship in Britain.

Liberal democracy in action.

By Dave Gardner

It is often proclaimed with pride by politicians and their media in the UK that we are privileged to live in a 'Liberal democracy' unlike the unfortunates in countries such as the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China who languish under 'authoritarian regimes'. We enjoy a variety of competing political parties, freedom of expression and public display of political views, a pluralist media and freedom from fear of expressing our views. A key feature of a liberal democracy is that it cultivates and values critically alert citizens, whose vigilance keeps politics in liberal democracies in a healthy state. A critically alert citizen does not take an assertion at face value but evaluates the evidence and arguments that back it up before making an informed judgement.

Let's look at these claims in more detail. We do have competing political parties but they tend to share very similar view, particularly on foreign and defence matters. Those who stray from a consensus that sides with Israel, against Iran and Russia and is sceptical at best towards China are subject to *ad hominem* insults which imply that they are traitors, at best unconscious, at worst conscious. Freedom of expression and demonstration still exists but is under pressure. The liberal application of terror and bribery legislation, liberally interpreted, makes dissidents fearful about how they express themselves. And justly fearful: people have been arrested, debanked or imprisoned for

expressing political views. In practice, public media only tolerate a narrow band of views and those who dissent from this narrow band do not have their views represented. In addition, and perhaps even more important, the media are selective in what they present to the public and are certainly not above misrepresentation, distortion and outright lying. This is particularly evident in treatment of the war in Ukraine, but can also be seen in scare stories about vigilante bond markets, poised to strike if narrow economic orthodoxy is breached in any way.

This last feature of our political life is particularly important for the 'critically alert citizen' as this person cannot be critically alert without access to all the relevant arguments and evidence that relate to the question about which they wish to form their views. Be they ever so good at dissecting arguments and distinguishing rhetoric from argument, they need accurate information in order to form their own views. Unless they are prepared to depart from the mainstream media, their ability to consider questions rationally will be limited.

There is one gap in the defences of the political class. Total control of the sources of opinion forming have fortunately been frustrated by the existence of independent outlets on the internet. The existence of these outlets angers the political class and their funders as they have little or no control over them. They are constantly dismissed as 'conspiracy theorists' and

peddlers of 'misinformation' who will disorient the poor critical citizens and lead them astray. Suddenly those prized critical abilities, developed within our education system, count for nothing against the onslaught of a few bloggers.

What really angers the opinion formers of the political class is that they may no longer be able to manipulate public opinion as easily as they used to. For them this is intolerable as prized projects such as the Ukraine war may become unpopular. This would threaten plans to develop war hysteria, the conversion of large parts of the economy to arms manufacture and the eventual introduction of conscription to provide cannon fodder for the next war on Russia or Iran.

We are now at the cusp of legislation to make the deliberate spreading of 'misinformation' or 'acting on behalf of a hostile foreign power' illegal. This can already be done if it is accompanied by payment from a foreign agent. But since most dissidents work independently of foreign powers and are proud of doing so, they cannot be caught in that net. But other nets will be provided.

The last thing the UK government and its sponsors want is a critically alert citizenry. As there is a growing danger that they may get one, they are taking steps to ensure that this does not happen. We have been warned. Liberal democracy does not tolerate dissent.