Labour Affairs

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An Uninspiring Budget

In his first speech as Prime Minister to the September Labour Party conference, Andy Burnham announced that he intended to reverse the damage caused by 40 years of neoliberalism. One could be forgiven, therefore, for expecting that the first budget of his administration would contain some interesting proposals. But it did not. John Healey, Burnham's chancellor, delivered a very low-key budget that was aimed at reducing a little the tsunami of cost increases that people will experience over the next 6 months.

There is much talk in the media that the chancellor was severely constrained by the geopolitical situation. That situation is dominated by two ongoing wars in Ukraine and the Middle East which have severely limited the supply of energy and fertilisers to the world market. But Britain is not an innocent bystander in these wars.

Britain and the United States strongly supported the eastern expansion of NATO which inevitably led to the war in Ukraine. And Britain seems even more determined than the US that this war should continue. Yet, if the war were wrapped up, and Russian oil and gas were allowed to again flow westwards then many of Burnham's immediate cost of living problems would vanish.

The war in the Middle East is a somewhat different matter. There seems to have been little enthusiasm in the Foreign Office for Trump's war against Iran. Perhaps it was understood that this war could have serious implications for energy supplies and could limit Britain's ability to continue the Ukraine war.

Certainly the government story is that it is Trump's war in the Middle East that must bear primary responsibility for the cost of living increases that Britain will experience over the winter and beyond. Little is said about the initial responsibility of the war in Ukraine for cost of living increases.

Burnham seems intent on supporting the continuation of the Ukraine war. He will meet with no opposition from the other political parties who compete with each other in stating their support for that war. When Healey announced in his budget a further £10 billion of economic and military support for Ukraine including £500 million over this winter there was no dissent within the House.

One might have hoped that the unions would point out the relationship between the war in Ukraine and the cost of living crisis in Britain. But the unions are, for the most part, equally vociferous in demanding that the war against Russia should continue to be prosecuted. They show no political understanding that the war is essentially a NATO war to weaken

Russia using Ukrainians as cannon fodder.

Burnham's situation is certainly made very difficult by the wars of choice in Ukraine and the Middle East. But another constraint is his commitment to follow Rachel Reeves' fiscal rules. It is possible that this will be the more important constraint since it appears that it will be the constraint on which Kemi Badenoch will choose to fight the next general election. In order to meet the fiscal rules Badenoch demands that welfare should be cut. She argues that people are choosing not to work because welfare payments are so good.

Burnham's answer to this argument is vague and stems from the fact that, despite claiming to want to reverse 40 years of neoliberalism, Burnham fully subscribes to the neoliberal belief that the UK state is financially constrained. In other words, Burnham has swallowed completely the carefully managed neoliberal myth that if the state is to spend money then it must get that money from taxation or borrowing like a household would have to do.

The Tories successfully boxed Starmer and Reeves into a corner with this false account of government spending. Despite a huge parliamentary majority, the Starmer/Reeves administration had collapsed within two years. Badenoch has now started to do the same with Burnham in preparation for the 2029 general election. It is unclear whether Burnham understands the danger or knows how to avoid the trap. On the economic side, Burnham appears to live in a pre-Keynesian world that fails to understand how it could ever make sense to pay people decent wages to dig holes and fill them in again rather than to let them decline in a pool of unemployed labour.

With the exception of the Greens, all the political parties live in this pre-Keynesian world. At their 2026 conference the Greens passed a motion basically saying that government spending decisions should be taken based on their effect on society rather than on how they affected financial ratios like debt to GDP.

If Burnham does not move into an equivalent space, his project to reverse 40 years of neoliberalism will likely fail.

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Sahra Wagenknecht Newsletter

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

This is a major parliamentary success for the BSW! Together with the AfD, we have secured the passage of a motion in the Magdeburg state parliament calling for diplomacy and an end to the ruinous sanctions against Russia. This marks the first time a parliament in Germany has spoken out in favour of peace negotiations, an end to the highly dangerous escalation, and a halt to the billions being gifted to Kyiv. In an interview with WELT TV, I discuss why this sends an important signal to the federal government and why Chancellor Merz should finally agree to a change of course, rather than continuing to prolong the suffering in Ukraine at the expense of German taxpayers.

BSW is the Anti-Firewall Party

"The BSW is the party whose founding consensus included overcoming the 'firewall' and the associated camp mentality – on one side the self-proclaimed democrats, on the other the AfD. Not because we overlook the far-right wing of the AfD, but because we consider politicians who could lead Germany into a nuclear war to be at least as dangerous as ethnic fanatics who believe that a 'true German' must have German ancestors. And because we have witnessed how fundamental democratic rights have been destroyed in recent years, not by the AfD, but by so-called democrats." In a guest article in the Ostdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, I explore why the 'firewall' has failed and why only a policy opposed to the 'firewall' can point the way out of the highly dangerous polarisation in the country.

We are taking the Magdeburg approach

With the peace motion, we at the BSW are fulfilling a key election promise for the first time: we reject the 'firewall' and intend to make constructive use of our majority in the state parliament to improve the lives of people in the state through objective cooperation with all democratically elected forces. Why this 'Magdeburg Way' represents a great opportunity and what the future holds for Saxony-Anhalt – I discuss this with Claudia Wittig, the deputy chair of our state parliamentary group.

Kiev Chancellor Merz

Friedrich Merz travels to Kiev in the morning with a briefcase full of cash and recoups the money from the public in the evening – through cuts to care, pensions and healthcare. Enough is enough! I gave Merz a proper piece of my mind about this during a phone call.

Diesel deal for Germany

It's completely mad: the US government is now importing diesel from Russia again to bring down skyrocketing fuel prices for American consumers. Yet the German government continues to cling to its senseless sanctions policy, which is driving our economy into ruin and making citizens ever poorer. Enough is enough! Fuel prices are still outrageously high. Germany, too, needs a diesel deal with Russia and a general return to Russian oil and gas! Without affordable energy from Russia, the decline of our industry will be unstoppable.

The TUC, the cost of living and economic growth: a failure of leadership

By Dave Gardner

According to the Guardian of the 15th October, the TUC informs us that UK households have paid an extra £13,961 on bills since 2021. The TUC acknowledges that this is not an act of God. According to Paul Nowak, General Secretary:

"From austerity to the pandemic to energy shocks and Trumpflation, working people have borne the brunt of crisis after crisis. When the crackpots in the White House or the Kremlin launch an illegal war, everyone pays the price in their bills." (LA comment: no 'crackpots' in Tel Aviv?).

Nowak makes it look as it there is nothing we can do about the actions of various 'crackpots'. This is a puerile comment that shows how the TUC and the broader trade union movement is evading its responsibilities to make clear to British people how the government's actions are leading to a cost of living and growth crisis in the British economy. For it is clear that the 'crackpots' in Washington and Tel Aviv have the support of the British government, although they may pretend otherwise. With much reduced household purchasing power and industry's incentive to invest much reduced, there is bound to be a negative effect on economic growth, about which so much ink is spilled.

The UK chose to sanction Russian energy and chose to support (while pretending not to do so) the US/Israeli war on Iran, leading to a blockade of the Strait of Hormuz. The UK government

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have increased their aggression by assisting the Saudis in their war against Ansar Allah, leading to further problems with energy supply and increased inflation. These were political choices made by the government which has not cared to explain the costs to the British people. Neither it seems does the TUC.

Some months ago *Labour Affairs* gave a figure for the cumulative costs of the Ukraine war on the UK. Updating these and adding in the costs of the US/ Israeli war on Iran we come up with a conservative figure of £443 billion since February 2022, which includes energy costs, lost growth and consequent reduction in household spending as well as direct support to Ukraine. These are staggering figures. Any 'theory of economic growth' that seriously addressed the issue of how to revive economic growth would examine how these anti-growth, anti- working class policies could be addressed through a change in foreign policy.

There is an obvious answer. Settle the conflict in Ukraine in a way that addresses Russia's legitimate security interests, end the sanctions on Russia leading to a reduction in energy costs, stop military and logistic support for the wars in Ukraine and West Asia and indicate to Iran that the UK respects Iran's sovereignty and will take steps to broker a permanent peace between the US, Israel and Iran and between Saudi Arabia and Ansar Allah (the de facto government of Yemen). All three of these wars harm British interests, put the British people in harm's way and make them poorer. They are pursued for the sake of American and Israeli imperialist interests. They do nothing for working people in Britain. Apparently the TUC and union leaders don't want point this out to their members or the broader British public, although they must be well aware of the origins of the costs being imposed on their members and working people more generally. Paul Nowak does not even have to advocate peace, although that would be a good idea. All the TUC has to do is to inform the public of the choices that successive British governments have made and the price tag that comes with them. People can make up their own minds as to whether the price is worth paying. Mainstream media will not tell them. It is up to the leadership of the working class to do so. At the moment we have a failure of leadership at the TUC and in most of the trade union movement.

The Senior Doctors Strike, the NHS and Ukraine

By Eamon Dyas)

Having had my first experience in attending an A&E in a UK hospital on Saturday (an aged friend who was staying with me took a turn for the worse) I came to the conclusion that this aspect of the NHS is at creaking point. We were there for nearly seven hours before she was discharged and during the entire time the place was bursting at the seams. This wasn't even on a Saturday night but during the day and when I thanked the members of staff for the way they were trying to cope under such stressful conditions the shared response was that I hadn't seen anything yet as the Saturday night rush hadn't even begun by the time we were leaving at 6.30pm.

Despite what the left might claim it stands to reason that resources like the NHS are in the front line when it comes to a government policy that has encouraged unsustainable levels of official and unofficial immigration over the past thirty years or so. There are obvious other reasons why the NHS is struggling but it's dishonest to deny that immigration hasn't contributed to it.

In the context of this NHS predicament it's interesting to compare the needs of the NHS and the pattern of government spending on its Ukraine adventure.

I've checked and it costs between £350- £600 million to build and equip a medium-sized hospital (typically 100-200 beds).

So far the UK has committed over £25 billion pounds to Ukraine.

Of course, running a health service costs more than the costs of the bricks and mortar and machinery with staff running costs being the biggest ongoing costs. And even if the money now being provided to Ukraine was to be diverted to the NHS it would still require the presence of a highly skilled workforce to operate it.

Where are those people to come from? We hear a lot about them having to be brought in from abroad and how the NHS would collapse without this contingent among the staff. However, my experience at Newcastle Royal Victoria Infirmary on Saturday was that the vast majority of the staff, at least in the A&E department, were not immigrants. While filling in the time while I waited on my friend to go through the various tests I calculated that about 80% were not immigrants. This was similar to the names listed on the cardiac white board for staff rotas in the cardiac unit behind the processing area.

So it seems to me that there are many individuals out there who are willing to undertake the arduous work at the NHS coal-face. However, they need to be offered proper training opportunities as well as the prospect of being adequately rewarded at the end if the promise of those people is to be realised.

For too long successive governments have relied on importing pre-trained medical and nursing staff from abroad as a cheap way of sustaining the NHS. The direction of that policy has tended to prevent the development of a proper domestically orientated training programme that is dovetailed with a generous remuneration schedule. It struck me that this is an area where the £25 billion spent on Ukraine would better serve the British people.

The United States and Europe's energy needs - a brief history

By Eamon Dyas

Early European use of Russian oil and gas

On 18 December 1958 a decision was taken at the 10th session of the Soviet Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (known as Comecon). The decision was that Soviet Russia and other members of the Soviet bloc construct what was to become one of the world's longest oil pipelines. Although it could not be known at the time, that pipeline went on to influence the energy situation in Europe over the next 65 years. The completion of the pipeline became part of the Soviet Union's Seventh Five-Year Plan. However, at the time the Soviets continued to suffer from steel shortages and did not have the technical knowhow to build the wide diameter pipes and large compressors necessary for the transit of oil through long-distance pipelines. In order to overcome those difficulties it was necessary to involve outside resources and expertise in the project and this resulted in the formation of Soviet partnerships with several Western governments and companies.

The entire pipeline became operational in October 1964. In the meantime Czechoslovakia was the first country to receive oil via the pipeline in 1962, Hungary was next in September 1963, Poland in November 1963 and East Germany in December 1963. By the time of its completion 40% of the requirements for largediameter pipes had been purchased from West Germany and Sweden. This pipeline, which was called the Druzhba (meaning friendship) pipeline soon became the means by which Russian oil also found its way to European markets and those markets became more demanding in the aftermath of the Arab oil embargo in the 1970s. But, as we shall see later, it was a development which the United States did all it could at the time to sabotage.

Just as the involvement of the European market in Russian oil began with the development of the energy infrastructure for the Soviet bloc so too was the case with gas. Khrushchev's Sixth and Seventh Five-Year Plans involved a need to invest more in the exploitation of natural gas. This was to eventually result in the construction of new and more extensive networks of gas pipelines to be built across the Eastern bloc, with the Trans-Siberia pipeline forming its basis. Before that however, there was the Soyuz pipeline which was built between 1974 and 1978 connecting the Volga region with the Bratsvo distribution network.

However, before that the first supplies of gas from the Soviet Union had begun to reach Western Europe in 1969 through a range of shorter networks. Deals involving modest volumes of gas were struck with Italy in that year and West Germany in 1970, 1972 and 1974. The Trans-Austria Gas (TAG) pipelines connected Czechoslovakia with Austria and Italy in 1974 and the more ambitious Mitteleuropäische-Gasleitungsgesellschaft (MEGAL) pipeline, constructed from1974 to 1979, linked up with Austria, Germany, and France. By this point negotiations were already under way between France, Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union for what was to become, and continues to be, the most controversial gas pipeline constructed in the Soviet era.

The proposal was mooted in 1978 to construct a gas pipeline linking Western European customers with the newly developed Urengoy gas fields in Western Siberia.

It was known as the Trans-Siberian pipeline (also known as the Urengoy-Pomary-Uzhhorod pipeline). The proposal was to link it with the existing Bratsvo network via the Kursk Oblast and Sumy in Ukraine making a 4,500 km route from Western Siberia to Czechoslovakia, Poland, East Germany, Bulgaria, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Romania.

Just like the Druzhba pipeline was to form the backbone for the transit of Russian oil to wider Europe, the Trans-Siberian pipeline was to serve the same purpose in the case of gas. And just like the Druzhba oil pipeline the Trans-Siberian gas pipeline would require the participation of Western investment and technical knowhow. In July 1981, a consortium of German banks, led by the Deutsche Bank, and the AKA Ausfuhrkredit agreed to provide 3.4 billion Deutsche Mark's in credits for the construction of compressor stations. A group of French banks together with the Japan Export-Import Bank (JEXIM) later made finance agreements relating to the funding of the project. This funding enabled the Soviets to sign contracts with Creusot-Loire of France, John Brown Engineering of Britain, Nuovo Pignone of Italy, AEGTelefunken, the German industrial conglomerate, for the supply of wide diameter pipes, as well as Dresser Industries of the US and Japan Steel Works. The Japanese company, Komatsu supplied the expert personnel relating to the pipe laying work (the appearance of which may have been the source of some US propagandists claiming that the Soviet Union was employing Vietnamese slave labour on the project). And as was the case with the earlier use of Russian oil in western Europe the United States set out to do all it could to sabotage this development from

the outset.

Early efforts by the United States to disrupt Europe's commercial relationship with Russian energy

The United States Government witnessed these developments at the time with profound anxiety. The fear was that the growing trade relationship between Europe and the Soviet Union would at some point lead to the emergence of a Europe with the potential to move away from US influence. Whereas the US had helped Europe to ward off the ideological influence of the Soviet Union it was no longer confident that it could prevent an influence that had its basis in commerce.

US anxiety had become manifest at the outset of the construction of the Druzhba pipeline when it attempted to strong-arm Western companies from assisting in its construction.

"[The] tension between the United States and its European allies grew appreciably during the construction of the Druzbha pipeline. In 1962, three West German firms signed contracts to supply an estimated 163,000 tonnes of large-diameter pipe to the Soviet Union, a deal valued at $28 million. However, the United States attempted to scuttle the Soviet project by pressurising its allies to cancel their shipments of pipes. At first, US policymakers channelled their complaints through the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (CoCom), a multilateral institution founded in 1949 to stop the transfer of dangerous technologies to the Communist bloc, but they were unable to create the necessary consensus to add pipes to the list of banned export items. Instead, the United States worked through the machinery of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), where a vote was not necessary. On November 21, 1962, the NATO Council passed a secret resolution that strongly encouraged member states to immediately halt the export of large diameter pipes to the USSR and its allies. The German government complied with the resolution but faced a political crisis at home for doing so. However, the embargo did not last long as Britain and Italy choose to interpret the NATO resolution as a recommendation rather that an order and fulfilled their contracts with the USSR. Non-NATO members Sweden and Japan also resisted American pressure. This incident demonstrated that although energy technologies were a source of leverage over the USSR and formed the basis of East-West cooperation, exercising it for political purposes was a challenge because it required unanimity among Western countries." (Pipeline politics between Europe and Russia: a historical review from the Cold War to the PostCold War. By Jae-Seung Lee and Daniel Connolly. Published in The Korean Journal of International Studies, April 2016).

Although the NATO embargo, because it proved ineffective, ceased to operate in 1966 the United States maintained its opposition to any significant cooperation between Europe and Russia particularly in the field of energy supplies.

Washington's concerns gathered pace in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's military involvement in Afghanistan in 1979. In response to that involvement the United States once more imposed sanctions on the Soviet Union which it expected its European allies to abide by. However, by 1980 the attractions of trade with the Soviet Union was proving too tempting for many European businesses and there was a gradual fraying of the US-imposed sanctions. In the wake of intense American opposition several contracts were signed by the end of July and late November 1980 between West German banks and businesses and the Soviet Union on the financing and supply of compressor stations as well as the price and amount of gas to be delivered to West Germany.

Under pressure from the growing disregard for US sanctions by many European businesses, British businesses were finding themselves in danger of being pushed out of the lucrative Soviet trade. The problem was summed up by Ronald Scrivener, head of the British-Soviet Chamber of Commerce:

"A factor in this process has undoubtedly been the sure knowledge that Britain's political allies, but commercial rivals, have been less hesitant in resuming government contacts and filling the trade gaps left by the British and the more resolutely hard-line Americans who cut exports to Russia by 67% in the first nine months of 1980. Mr. Scrivener points to the activities of the West Germans, Italians, French and Japanese. The more diplomatic United Kingdom made officials can only mutter darkly.

"Each of these has retained or re-established trade links with the Soviet Union. A number of large contracts have been signed or are in the offing. They include a £33m heavy vehicle deal involving Fiat Allis; a trade agreement between the Russians and Rhone-Poulence, the French chemicals group; and continuing negotiations on the Siberia pipeline project with groups such as ENI, of Italy and Ruhrgas, of West Germany. Various Western nations have indicated their willingness to provide credit for the gas line." ('Thaw begins in British-Soviet trade', by John Huxley. Published in The Times, 23 January 1981.)

Nonetheless, in the meantime

some British companies had continued to trade with the Soviet Union. The Times article again:

"For the time being British companies have continued to show the flag in a variety of markets. An examination of recent contracts notified to the British Overseas Trade Board gives an indication of their diversity - wrapping supplied by Siat Packing Systems, of London; rescue equipment worth £120,000, supplied by RFD Inflatable of Godalming; lathes, valued at £1.4m, by Wickman Automatic Lathes, of Coventry; plastics and packaging machinery for a margarine factory, worth £2m, supplied by John Waddington, of Leeds.

"By far the biggest deal done over the past 12 months was that concluded by ICI last November. The chemicals company, which in 1979 imported products - mainly oil and naphtha - from the Soviet Union, signed a general trading agreement expected to boost its sales to Russia by about £30m a year. It will run for 10 years.

"The deal was signed, on behalf of the Russians, by Mr. Vladimir Sushkov, the Soviet deputy foreign trade minister. This indicated the extent to which the trade cold war between Britain and the Soviet Union had thawed." (Ibid.)

But it was the thawing of European attitudes in the face of US opposition to Europe's involvement in facilitating the importation of Russian oil that was significant. The previous week Sushkov had addressed a conference organised by the London Chamber of Commerce in which he said: "Moscow welcomed participation by British companies in offshore oil, coal, agriculture, synthetic fibres and machine tools. Machinoimports, the Soviet State trading organisation had already begun talks with Rolls-Royce, GEC, Davy International and constructors John Brown on a large pipeline project." [an obvious reference to the Trans-Siberian pipeline - ED]. It was in response to this situation that the Thatcher government dispatched Gavin Dick, the Under-Secretary for Trade to Moscow at the end of January 1981 in what was seen as an attempt to normalise the trading relationship between Britain and the Soviet Union.

Washington's response was not slow in coming. Within a year, the United States found a new excuse to re-energise its sanctions policy on the Soviet Union. This took place in the aftermath of the imposition of martial law in Poland on 13 December 1981 for which Washington held the Soviet Union accountable. And as had previously been the case the main focus was European involvement in the Trans-Siberian pipeline. In a statement which continued to be used in the same context for the next 40 years the US expressed concern that any further reliance on Russian gas would endanger the security of Europe.

In December 1981 President Ronald Reagan announced sanctions prohibiting American companies from exporting oil and gas machinery and technologies to the Soviet Union. The immediate impact of this was to block the sale of 200 Americanbuilt pipe laying machines to the Soviet Union - machines that were to be used in the construction of the Trans-Siberian pipeline. However, there were other aspects of this prohibition that were to impact European industry. In a report with the heading "US threat to Siberia pipeline" The Times reported on the measures being taken by Washington to prohibit the issuing of export licences for components of the General Electric Company that were used in the construction of the pipeline. The company had been supplying compressor turbine parts to a subsidiary of AEG Telefunken of West Germany, John Brown of Britain, and Nuoro Pignone of Italy.

At this time John Brown Engineering had a contract to build 21 of the 125 gas turbines ordered by the Soviet Union for installation in 41 compressor stations. As far as the impact of the US attempt to stifle American company involvement it appears that the subsidiaries of US companies undertaking that work in Europe decided to continue to operate on the understanding that the sanctions were not retroactive.

"The British company [John Brown Engineering] said it understood that General Electric had not stopped production. Construction of the turbines was continuing. Only General Electric parts could be used in the John Brown turbines." (US threat to Siberia pipeline, The Times, 9 January 1982).

And as far as the purchase of Russian gas was concerned:

"France will resume negotiations with the Soviet Union to purchase Siberian gas despite its concern over Poland. A delegation from Soyugaz Export is due to meet Gaz de France, the French gas utility in Paris on January 18 to discuss the purchase of 8,000 million cubic metres a year of additional gas.

"The French Government does not believe that the purchase will create any dangerous dependence on the Soviet Union." (US threat to Siberia pipeline, The Times, 9 January 1982).

The European response was to question the American sanctions and an article in The Times even speculated about Washington's motives in imposing those sanctions. It did so in the following terms:

"But if the Reagan sanctions order of December 29 was intended to set a worldwide

example, it had a serious flaw. By cracking down on the exports of high technology goods and oil and gas equipment it appeared loaded against West European manufacturing and trading interests while leaving America's huge grain business with the Russians virtually untouched.

"Of the $3,700m worth of goods that America sells to the Soviet Union each year, about three quarters are agricultural products against only $300m worth of high technology exports. Although the President announced that he was postponing negotiations on a new long-term grain agreement, the administration has already allowed the delivery of 23 million tons of grain to the Soviet Union this year.

"It has been suggested that a grain embargo should be imposed if conditions in Poland deteriorate but the US Department of Agriculture has been actively reassuring the midwestern farmers since the Polish military takeover that they will not lose the lucrative Soviet market.

"What, therefore, are the Europeans to make of the American sanctions policy? Is it a deliberate move to scotch European industries' export opportunities while midwest farmers continue to make hay? Or is the apparent inconsistency between the approach to sanctions on industrial and agricultural products just another instance of an administration rooted in middle America and on the West Coast picking up a blunt instrument in response to domestic pressure without thinking of the impact on the European allies? There is probably some truth in both these views." (How Reagan's sanctions force Europe's hand, The Times, 11 January 1982).

The arbitrary imposition of sanctions imposed by the US in December 1981 was done with no regard to the economic welfare of Europe. It is worth noting here that the value of the trade in energy between Europe and the Soviet Union at the end of 1981 was becoming a critical component in the economic well-being of Europe. In November 1981 the West German gas distributor Ruhrgas finalised several long-term agreements with the Soviet Union valued at $45 billion over their lifetime. This was based on the relative economic advantages offered by the Soviet Union when it came to price. At the time, the chief executive of Ruhrgas, Herr Klaus Liesen, was at pains to emphasise that the price of the gas supplied by Russia was below "the £2.90 per million thermal units which Norway has demanded for gas from its Stat Fjord field" (The Times, 21 November 1981).

The reunification of Germany led almost immediately to the creation of Verbundnetz (VNG) from the East German gas company Schwartz Pump. This was created with funding from the West German companies Ruhrgas, Wintershall and BEB as well as other international gas companied. Over the following years billions of DM investments poured into a project to create a rationalised gas network extent across the united Germany and the results of this can be seen in the dramatic figures relating to the pattern of domestic gas use in Germany.

"By 2000, town gas had been phased out and more than 90% of total consumption was high CV natural gas. In 1989, 73% of residences had been heated with coal and 21% by district heating based on solid fuels; by 1998, the share of coal had fallen to 10%, direct gas heating was 44% and district heating based on gas was 21%." (Gas pipeline co-operation between political adversaries: examples from Europe, by Jonathan Stern, director of Gas Research, Oxford Institute for Energy Studies. Published by Chatham House, January 2005, p.5)

No doubt this project was facilitated by the growing influence of the environmentalist lobby in Germany. Having been founded in January 1980, by October 1998 the Green Party was sharing power in the Social Democratic government of Gerhard Schröder (the leader of the Greens and one-time close friend of Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Joschka Fischer held the position of vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister in the government and went on to become an enthusiastic European federalist). This was also something that went beyond the domestic energy usage in Germany. With natural gas providing a more environmentally friendly method for producing steel than the traditional coal-fired blast furnaces the years immediately following the 1981 agreement continued to produce a political environment in Germany which tended to favour the ongoing relationship between German industry and Soviet and then Russian natural gas. It was in this political and economic environment that the US continued its scaremongering arguments (later taken up by the EU Commission) based on the assertion that its energy relationship with the Soviet Union and later Russia left European economic security vulnerable to manipulation by the providers of that energy. At the time, in the early 1980s, when nearly two-thirds of Soviet hydrocarbon exports went to a market consisting of West Germany, Italy, France, and Finland - four European/EEC partners - the Europeans countered that this in turn meant that the Soviet Union's economy was becoming symbiotically dependent on its European energy market and it was therefore highly unlikely to engage in any serious commercial brinkmanship likely to lead to it developing a reputation as an unreliable economic partner. And even the Chatham House article quoted above, admitted that

"By the time the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, followed

by German reunification, Soviet deliveries [of gas - ED] already accounted for more than 30% of Federal Republic of Germany gas demand and there had been several years of supplies to West Berlin without any problems." (Op. cit., p.3)

But just as today with Russia, the main concern of Washington's European policy was not with the well-being of the European economies but with weakening the growing symbiotic economic relationship between the Soviet Union and Europe.

Europe's response to US sanctions in 1981

The main difference between the 1981 US sanctions imposed on the Soviet Union as a result of martial law being instituted in Poland and the sanctions imposed in the aftermath of Russia's takeover of Crimea in 2014 (further expanded in 2022 after the incursion into Ukraine) was the way in which Europe responded to the former as against the latter.

Washington announced its sanctions against the Soviet Union at the end of 1981 and expected Europe to follow suit but West Germany, France and even Britain failed to do so. However, while refusing to implement the 1981 sanctions Europe was eager to assure Washington that the refusal did not imply any divergence from the ideological position which they all shared when it came to the Soviet Union. Europe's position was purely based on the disproportionate economic sacrifices which the implementation of Washington's sanctions would demand.

As to its ideological position, Europe continued to assure Washington that it shared its antipathy to the totalitarian Soviet Union but it was unconvinced by the justification which the US used in the formulation of its sanctions policy. That justification rested on the claim that the Soviet Union was directly responsible for the imposition of martial law in Poland on 13 December 1981 and this required a response from the Free World. Both Germany and France refused to accept this interpretation of the events. At the time, a West German government spokesman, Kurt Becker, insisted that the government "did not share the American view that Russia was the instigator of Martial Law in Poland. The West German Government believed that the Polish authorities had acted autonomously." (See: Germany: angry it was not told, The Times, 31 December 1981). In fact, the spokesman added that had the Soviet Union reacted to the crisis in Poland as it had been expected to act the previous year by directly intervening then West Germany would have implemented "joint contingency measures".

Similarly, France's socialist government under François Mitterrand, argued that it was wrong to claim that the Soviet Union was directly responsible for the declaration of martial law in Poland and that sanctions imposed on the basis of that belief could not claim a level of commitment from America's allies that would have been the case if that claim was shared. On the contrary, Jacques Huntzinger, the Deputy Secretary for International Affairs in the Socialist Party stated "Although there is an obvious Soviet involvement in the military coup d'etat of General Jaruzelski, this is not the same as a takeover by the Soviet Government." (See: "France baffled by US approach", The Times, 31 December 1981). It was this difference of opinion between Europe and the US on whether the Soviet Union could be directly held accountable for what had happened in Poland on 13 December 1981 that formed the political basis for Europe's insistence on placing its economic welfare above what the US was demanding by way of sanctions.

In June 1982 Washington responded to the reluctance of Europe to fall in line with its sanctions policy by expanding the terms of its sanctions. The new stipulation meant that any machinery supplied by European companies to the Soviet pipeline project which contained American components should be placed under embargo. This included any components made in Europe under licence from such American companies. A failure to comply with this new restriction would mean those companies being blacklisted by the US Government.

The three turbine companies affected by this were the West German company AEGKanis, a subsidiary of AEG-Telefunken, Nuovo Pignone, from Italy, and John Brown Engineering from Britain as all had contracted with the Soviet Union to supply turbines made under licence from General Electric of the United States. The total threatened losses to these companies was valued at nearly $1,000 million (£581 million) but the real loss to Europe was something which The Times commented upon when it said:

"The wider United States ban was aimed at delaying, if not rendering impossible, the building of the pipeline that will carry vast amounts of Soviet gas (40,000 million cubic metres a year for at least 20 years) to western Europe under long-term contracts." (UK group will lose $181 million Soviet contract, The Times, 29 June 1982).

In terms of the implications for West Germany from any loss of the pipeline, the gas supplier, Ruhrgas, had committed to take more than 100,000 million Deutsch Marks (more than £22,000 million) worth of gas over the following 25 years as part of the contract with the Soviet Union. Needless to say, such a loss would have had serious implications for the future trajectory of the West German economy. Unsurprisingly, the West German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, was the most assertive of the European leaders in the face of this US threat. On a visit to San Francisco the declared that," The pipeline will

be built. And the British, the French, the Germans and other Europeans will stick to the agreements which their firms have been making with the Soviets." (See: 'US-Europe rift widens', The Times, 24 July 1982). Schmidt, further described the American President's actions as an "attempt to apply his own policy decisions to territories outside his jurisdiction". This was a sentiment shared by Lord Cockfield, the British Secretary of State for Trade, when he said that the American embargo was "an attempt to interfere with existing contracts and is an unacceptable extension of American extra-territorial jurisdiction in a way which is repugnant in international law." Compare that with what was to take place in 2018- 22.

US pressures Europe in 2018-22

Since the early 2000s there had' been a sentiment within the EU Commission that leaned towards the United States. The admission of the Eastern European countries to the EU between 2004 and 2013 proved to have been the most visible pointers to a change of emphasis in the politics of the EU from what George Bush described as "Old Europe" to that of "New Europe". The hostile attitude of the European Commission towards the economic relationship of Europe and cheap Russian energy since the early 2000s became increasingly obvious in the aftermath of the arrival of "New Europe's" influence on EU politics.

In the meantime Washington continued with its attempts to sabotage the arrangements that had been evolving between Germany and Russian energy. As with all sabotage strategies they rely to a large extent on anticipating the policies of their targets. In that context it was not surprising when in late 2013 it was revealed by the German magazine Der Spiegel that the US had been bugging Angela Merkel's phone from 2002 until 2013. (See: US Bugged Merkel's phone from 2002 until 2013', BBC, 27 October 2013). In 2002 Merkel was leader of the joint opposition in the Reichstag having secured that position in the aftermath of the defeat of the Christian Democratic Union by the Social Democrats in the election of September of that year. Washington already knew what Gerhard Schröder represented as he had been Chancellor of Germany since 1998 and had shown himself to have been a supporter of Germany's use of cheap Russian energy during his period in office. It seemed that Washington was eager to know the private opinions of Merkel even before she became Chancellor of Germany in November 2005. Merkel remained in office until December 2021 and it was under her Chancellorship that Nord Stream 1 was officially opened on 8 November 2011.

The significance of this pipeline was that it enabled natural gas supplies from Russia to bypass traditional transit countries such as Ukraine and Poland - something which freed Russian supplies of gas to Europe from the shenanigans which Ukraine had gotten up to in 1999. At the time the BBC reported that "Chancellor Merkel described the project as a 'milestone in energy co-operation' and the 'basis of a reliable partnership' between Russia and Europe." (Nord Stream gas pipeline opened by Merkel and Medvedev, BBC, 8 November 2011). Merkel's emphasis on the word "reliable" could be seen to have been directed at the threats to the existing pipeline posed by the corruption and ongoing instability of Ukrainian politics.

It was also under her Chancellorship that Nord Stream 2 was proposed and built. But by then elements within the Washington establishment had determined to stop that project at all costs. The same year as Nord Stream 1 was opened an evaluation of the feasibility of Nord Stream 2 had been initiated. The project was put on hold by Gazprom in January 2015 as a result of the operation of the existing pipeline at half capacity due to EU sanctions on Russia over the annexation of Crimea in 2014. It was revived by June with an agreement to build Nord Stream 2 signed between Gazprom, Royal Dutch Shell, E.ON, OMV, and Engie. Germany granted Nord Stream 2 a permit in January 2018 to access German waters and for landfall near Lubmin for its construction and in May 2018 construction began at the Griefswald, the north German end of the pipeline.

In October 2018, Angela Merkel, the symbol of Nord Stream 2 that its opponents were glad to see the back of, announced she would be standing down as Chancellor in 2021. In November 2018 the US Ambassador to the European Union, Gordon Sondland, issued a warning. "We have not yet deployed all the tools that could seriously undermine or halt the [Nord Stream 2] project." On 13 January 2019, the German magazine Der Spiegel ran a story with the headline 'US Ambassador [Richard] Grenell sends threatening letters to German companies.' The article goes on to quote the Ambassador on the involvement of Germany companies in the operation and construction of both Nord Stream 1 and 2:

"Ultimately, companies that support the construction of both pipelines are actively undermining the security of Ukraine and Europe."

And that:

"We [the US - ED] emphasise that companies involved in the Russian energy export sector are participating in an activity that could entail a significant risk of sanctions."

As far as the response from the German government was concerned the article says:

"Within the German Federal Foreign Office, the letters were reportedly met with bewilderment; Grenell's approach, it was felt, does not align with standard diplomatic protocol. Officially, however, the ministry has yet to comment." Then, in December 2019 the US House and Senate armed services committee agreed on a defence bill that would force the Trump administration to sanction companies that helped Gazprom, the Russian state-owned gas company, complete the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline.

"Lawmakers on Monday evening reached agreement on the 2020 National Defence Authorisation Act, which includes the measures to punish companies involved in Nord Stream 2, from Russia to Germany, and Turk Stream, a Russian pipeline

that crosses the Black Sea to Turkey.

"The decision marks the latest attempt to punish Moscow for meddling in the 2016 US presidential election." ('US lawmakers agree Bill to force Trump on Nord Stream 2 sanctions', Financial Times, 10 December 2019).

It was that election that made Donald Trump president and which the neocons and globalists within the Democratic and Republican parties continued to find difficult to accept. The irony of the US exerting such blatant and extreme pressure on European businesses supposedly in retaliation for alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election was no doubt lost on those proposing it.

Europe's response to blatant US meddling in its affairs

The willingness or capacity of the EU to produce any effective response to the US actions was to a great extent hampered by the fact that the main expression of the EU, the European Commission, shared the concerns of Washington when it came to the expansion of Russian energy in the European economy. Those concerns were not based on an economic assessment but rather on a political one and it was well known at this stage that the reasoning on the part of Washington was merely echoing the position that had already been adopted by many in the EU and the EU Commission.

A BBC report at the time alluded to this when it said that, "Disagreements among EU nations were so strong that, earlier this year, they even threatened to derail the [Nord Stream 2] project entirely." ('Nord Stream 2: Trump approves sanctions on Russia gas pipeline', BBC, 21 December 2019). The disagreements which the BBC was referring to was the events leading up to the agreement among EU ambassadors in February 2019 to the wording of an amendment to the EU Gas Directive of July 2009. That 2009 directive had sought to eradicate situations where supply and distribution of energy operated under the ownership or control of the same or related companies within the EU. However, the original 2009 Directive did not explicitly cover gas pipelines running between EU member states and a non-EU (third) country and in November 2017 the EU Commission introduced a proposal to amend the 2009 Directive in ways that sought to explicitly include such pipelines. Aside from the EU Commission the most enthusiastic exponents of the need for an amendment were the likes of Poland and Romania (which assumed the EU Council presidency in early 2019) as well as other ex-Soviet bloc states that were seeking to restrict the further encroachment of Russian energy into Europe via Nord Stream 2.

Negotiations surrounding the wording of the EU Commission amendment continued between November 2017 and 2019 with the likes of Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and Belgium opposing any amendment that would compromise the ongoing relationship with Nord Stream. In February 2019, with neither side able to secure a qualified majority in the European Council, France shifted its position to support a wording of the amendment endorsed by Germany which brought Nord Stream 2 under European regulations but did not threaten its continuance. The relevant amendment to the Gas Directive was endorsed by the European Parliament on 17 April 2019.

So, by April 2019, under a cloud of US interference, the EU managed to produce an agreement which expressed the balance between the various political tendencies and economic interests within the Union on the question of Nord Stream 2. Given that was the case the main body representing the Union, the EU Commission, should have been in a position to have defended it as such. However, beyond some anodyne words of protest there was no substantial response to those US threats that could equate with the strength of the response to the US threats to Europe in the early 1980s.

Then in December 2019, the Swiss company, Allseas, which had been involved in pipe-laying operations for Nord Stream 2, announced it was to suspend its operations on the project giving the excused that it feared US sanctions. This was followed five months later, in May 2020, the German energy regulator refused an exemption from competition rules to the project that required Nord Stream 2 to separate gas ownership from transmission - this despite the leeway which the April 2019 amendment to the EU Gas Directive was supposed to have provided. This was followed in August 2020 by Poland fining Gazprom 50 million Euros because it claimed a lack of cooperation with an investigation launched by the Polish anti-monopoly watchdog UOKiK. It was charged that Gazprom and companies financing the project had broken Polish competition rules and had continued to work on the pipeline without the permission of the government of Poland.

Despite these crude attempts to hinder the progress of the project the pipe-laying work continued using Russian ships and on 20 July 2021 Angela Merkel felt she had provided a breathing space for the project when she reached an agreement with Joe Biden the US would only trigger sanctions if Russia used Nord Stream as a 'political weapon' by cutting off Poland and Ukraine from Russian gas supplies. The agreement further compensated Ukraine for the loss of transit fees that would result from Nord Stream 2 becoming operational. Then, out of the blue, Germany's energy regulator suspended approval of Nord Stream 2 on 16 November 2021 resulting in a 17% rise in European natural gas prices.

Less than a month later, on 9 December 2021, Poland once more decided to renew its public pressure to have the project abandoned when the Prime Minister of Poland, Mateusz Morawiecki, on a visit to Rome said "I will call on Chancellor Scholz not to give in to pressure from Russia and not to allow Nord Stream 2 to be used as an instrument for blackmail against Ukraine, an instrument for blackmail against Poland, an instrument for blackmail against the European Union." (Polish PM tells Germany's Scholz not to 'give in' over Nord Stream 2, Reuters, 9 December 2021). The same Reuters report pointed out that, "Scholz's predecessor Angela Merkel soured relations with many central and eastern European countries by sticking to a project they said would dangerously increase

dependence on Russian gas. Now, with a new administration in Berlin and regional tensions rising, Warsaw hopes Germany could change tack." And the report ends with a revelation that was to be an augury for what was to come: "US officials have told members of Congress they have an understanding with Germany about shutting down the Nord Stream 2 pipeline if Russia invades Ukraine, a senior congressional aide said on Tuesday."

This was confirmed from the horse's mouth on 7 February 2022, when "Speaking after talks with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Washington, Mr. Biden said the US would "bring an end" to the Nord Stream 2 pipeline" if Moscow invades Ukraine. ('Ukraine crisis: Nord Stream 2 will end if Russia invades' - Biden, BBC, 7 February 2022. And two weeks later Scholz did what Biden said he would do and he suspended certification of Nord Stream 2 on 22 February 2022 under the excuse of Russia's recognition of the Donetsk and Luhansk republics. Two days later Russian troops crossed into Ukraine with the result that Washington's years' long ambition was realised and the Nord Stream 2 project was no more.

Casting our minds back to the early 1980s when the US used the excuse of the Soviet incursions in Poland to threaten Europe with sanctions if it did not comply with its policy toward of withdrawal of technical support for the construction of Russian energy transmission networks we see a different Europe and a completely different response.

The difference between the Europe of the 1980s and that of the EU in 2018-20 is that in the 1980s the economic interests of nation states were more clearly capable of being expressed within what was a more loosely arranged relationship between its members and the central authority. The authority continued to represent the idea of Europe that remained a vague and abstract concept that had not yet developed a bureaucratic and political existence which was capable of influencing the perspective of its member states. The event that shifted the Europe of then to what it has now become was the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was that event which expanded the perspective and ambition of Europe beyond the geopolitical block that it emerged from in the aftermath of the Second World War. Europe became expansionist within Europe and that inevitably involved it moving from the idea of itself which was framed through its experience of the Second World War to one which became increasingly influenced by the anti-Russian sentiment of the nations it was expanding into.

It was in its facilitation of this that it found itself having to abandon its understanding of its own history and replace it with one that was capable of accommodating its new Eastern members - something that in turn inevitably led it to complementing the perspective of the US. The point at which it could be said that the old Europe finally gave way to the new Europe was in 2008 when the US pushed through, despite the protestations of German and France, the invitation to Georgia and Ukraine to join NATO.

This was a development which took place alongside what was happening in the EU where what previously had been incapable of developing a sense of itself was now evolving along lines that have been fashioned by the United States and its new Eastern members. This has resulted in a Europe where all it possesses by way of understanding itself is encapsulated in the only purpose which now provides it with any coherence and that is the self-appointed protector of its so-called values when it comes to Ukraine.

It has been on that particular altar that it has sacrificed the economic interests of its members in favour of a political principle which has itself been shredded by its policy towards the Israeli genocide against the Palestinians. In the process Europe has become a collective of political entities that are no longer capable of perceiving their respective interests except when viewed through the distortion of the EU collective lens.

This is a malaise that has also spread deep into the body politic of the economic heart of the EU as epitomised by the way in which Germany has failed to produce a mainstream politician who can effectively represent the country's economic interests. In the face of US will and EU sentiment Germany has become a creature that is slowly devouring itself. With no means of establishing where its actual interests lie it has reverted to the deep ruts of its past memories and the political expressions of those memories are the only ones that now enable it to span the chasm between what it needs to do and what its EU perspective demands. Russia now provides it with its only means of understanding itself.

Obama on Israel, Belfast 14 October 2026

Barack Obama says Israel has "ceded moral ground" over actions in Palestine during Belfast visit (Hotpress, 14 Oct 2016), (https://www.hotpress.com/opinion/barack-obama-says-israel-has-ceded-moral-ground-over-actions-in-palestine-during-belfast-visit-23164992

The part of Obama's remarks on Palestine that deserved to be headlined is the following, which acknowledges that Israel engaged in ethnic cleansing:

"The fact is that the Jewish people, for millennia, were oppressed, discriminated against, killed. Europe was responsible for much of it. They understandably sought a refuge.

"That is undeniable. What is also undeniable is that they took land off people and they were excessive. And those people understandably said, 'This is injustice and I want my land back.'"

He didn't anything like that when he was President - and most accounts of what he said in Belfast leave out his accusation that Israel engaged in ethnic cleansing (for instance the Irish Times did).

Jewish Voice for Liberation Official Statement

Antisemitism is racism not "a distinct form of harm": response to Bell

JVL responds to David Bell's "Independent review -antisemitism in schools and colleges in England". JVL finds it politically biased, drawing inappropriate conclusions from flawed data. It will silence debate and foster distrust.

We agree unreservedly with one sentence in the government's response to Sir David Bell's review of antisemitism in schools and colleges in England:

"No child or young person should experience bullying, harassment or discrimination because they are Jewish."

It should not need to be stated that no child or young person should experience bullying, harassment or discrimination because of their faith or ethnicity, whatever that may be. But according to Bell, Jewish children need special protection from a "distinct form of harm." He makes no case for treating antisemitism as a safeguarding issue needing special status different from other forms of racist abuse, except to elevate a biased view of politics to the domain of child protection.

By singling out Jews for exceptional treatment, the government has at a stroke confirmed the worst fears of Black, Asian, Muslim, and other racialised communities confronted daily with a hierarchy of racisms.

Bell's report, and the government's response to it, combine contempt for non-Jewish victims of far-right racism with measures calculated to silence anti-Zionist and pro-Palestinian voices. They yoke Jewish identity to Israel, a genocidal state, and demonise those who protest against it, particularly Muslims.

The report is shot through with Jewish exceptionalism. Its emphasis on the Holocaust locks it into a tragic past period of Jewish and European history, hindering us from learning from it to perceive and oppose current genocides in Gaza, Sudan and elsewhere.

Bell's 27 recommendations, all instantly accepted by the government, must be rejected by those who are serious about combatting antisemitism and all forms of discrimination and harassment. Implementation would impose new duties at every level of the education system, on the pretext of combating dangerous levels of antisemitism described as "increasingly expressed through political and geopolitical narratives" … "including when linked to the conflict in the Middle East".

The report builds on a picture of Jewish people disproportionately at risk from hate crime, enthusiastically promoted by politicians, media and pro-Israel lobbies but based on a deeply flawed presentation of official data. Bell quotes from his own idiosyncratic survey which is even less authoritative. A more responsible look at the data shows Muslims at the top of the unenviable league of communities suffering racist attacks. According to Crime Survey for England and Wales data for April 2022 to March 2025, Muslims were the most likely of any religious and ethnic group to face both religious and race-based hate crime. JVL has pressed government officials to stop this misrepresentation of official statistics.

Bell's proposals would impose on every child, teacher, school leader and parent in the country the widely-discredited non legally binding IHRA working definition of antisemitism, which makes any form of anti-Zionism presumptively antisemitic.

We welcome the response of the National Education Union:

"The IHRA's contested framing risks blurring the line between antisemitism and legitimate criticism of the Israeli government and the genocide in Gaza… Schools must enable young people to confront difficult issues openly and develop empathy, not drive teachers into silence or leave pupils afraid to express their views."

The NEU correctly opposes focusing on antisemitism without an equally clear commitment to tackling all forms of racism. "No form of racism should be minimised, and no pupil or member of staff should receive less protection.," said general secretary Daniel Kebede.

Secretary of State for Education Lucy Powell impugned teachers' professionalism when she told MPs there would be stronger guidance on impartiality, to make sure teachers did not "bring their own political views into the classroom." And yet the report and its recommendations could not be more political!

Bell's report was commissioned by Labour Together stalwart Bridget Philipson when she was Starmer's education secretary. Bell himself sits on the board of the Academic Study Group for Israel and the Middle East, encouraging collaboration between UK and Israeli schools. This may help to explain, but cannot excuse, the Review's resolute determination to skirt round the elephant in the room – Israel's genocide and war crimes in pursuit of Zionism's goals. Instead it presents anyone who raises these issues as a threat to the safety of the Jewish people!

This report closely follows Lord Mann's report on the NHS, similarly promoting a sectarian political agenda under the pretence of neutrality. As with Bell's review, Mann's recommendations were instantly accepted by the Government. The objective of both seems to be to stifle debate. That must not be allowed to happen.

If allowed to go ahead, Bell's recommendations will see increasing penetration of Zionist propaganda into our schools. It will shrink the space for our children and young people to undertake the necessary exploration of one of the critical issues of our time and lead to growing distrust between Jews and others in our diverse communities.

Adam Smith Champion of Hard Core Capitalism

Labour Affairs has come across remarks coming from the left putting forward Adam Smith as admirable in some ways.

I don't think we can bring ourselves to reproduce the original remarks. Adam Smith is an early champion of the worst aspects of capitalism: alienated work (the pin maker who makes one part of the pin only and not the whole thing, and becomes dehumanised in the process, as Smith recognises); bad working conditions and the interdiction for workers to unite for better conditions; free trade (which harms weaker countries, as Smith recognises); the idea that only the exchange of money makes for productivity (the commodification of everything) and the dislike for public works.

What is there to like ?

Why promote a champion of those ideas ? and especially, why associate him with China ? is it to say China is capitalist ? is it to promote Smith? but why ?

A piece on Adam Smith might be of interest on its own however. It is possible to give too much importance to Adam Smith's the Theory of Moral Sentiments and neglect the Wealth of Nations. As Dave Gardner says (see below) the two books are not coherent with each other. Smith's moral declarations were directed at the East India Company (immoral) when he preferred exploitation of India to be opened to all merchants (morally acceptable).

For more on this see the book by Labour Affairs contributor Madawc Williams on Adam Smith, called Wealth Without Nations (Athol Books 2000).

As regards the apparent endorsement of pro Smith remarks by a Chinese economist, I wouldn't necessarily give it that much weight. I had occasion to speak with some high ranking Chinese academics at a conference in Germany, and I found they were extremely accommodating and wanting to meet Western interlocutors half way, or more than half-way. For example they said that the fact that Hong Kong was British so long helped to preserve aspects of traditional China; as for the opium wars 'that page was turned'. The Chinese go out of their way to find common ground, which you can't disagree with.

That doesn't mean we should distort the truth about Adam Smith.

From Dave Gardner:

I found these remarks quite disturbing. It looks like yet another attempt to resurrect Smith. Dubious characters like Gordon Brown have also attempted this in the past. My main problem is that it is a caricature of Smith and ignores the harm that his ideas have done and may continue to do in China if this caricature is taken up. I'll make a number of specific points.

1] Smith published the Theory of Moral Sentiments (TMS) in 1759 and the Wealth of Nations (WoN) in 1776. They do not constitute one coherent continuous body of work (see Madawc Williams 'Wealth without Nations' – Athol Books 2000). There is a contradiction between the ideas of sympathy (TMS) and of self-love (WoN) in the two books, which is never properly reconciled.

2] Smith, as well as propagating the idea of universal self-love in WoN was closely allied with the subjectivist ethics of his friend and contemporary Hume (who was more sceptical about self-love). Definitely not a virtue ethicist or Confucian despite some of the rhetoric that may be plucked out of the text.

3] The idea that Smith championed public goods or public works is ludicrous. I'm quoting Smith here from the Liberty Fund edition of WoN Volume 2, pp, 729-30. Talking of public works (a form of public good) in China he writes:

"The accounts of these works, however, which have been transmitted to Europe, have frequently been drawn up by weak and wandering travellers; frequently by stupid and lying missionaries. If they had been examined by more intelligent eyes, and if the accounts of them had been reported by more faithful witnesses, they would not, perhaps, appear to be so wonderful."

In other words, he abuses people whose views he does not like, while offering no counter-evidence himself. There is more of this stuff in the same chapter. In Book one he devotes a whole chapter to denouncing vocational education in the form of apprenticeship 'The Policy of Europe'.

4] His idea of productive labour is also absurd. To quote his great critic, the nationalist economist Friedrich List, on Smith's idea of productive labour:

""The man who breeds pigs is, according to this school (i.e. that of Smith and his followers-CW), a productive member of the community, but he who educates men

is a mere non-productive. The maker of bagpipes or jews-harps for sale is a productive, while the great composers and virtuosos are non-productive simply because that which they play cannot be brought into the market. The physician who saves the lives of his patients does not belong to the productive class, but on the contrary the chemist's boy does so, although the values of exchange (viz. the pills) which he produces may exist only for a few minutes before they pass into a valueless condition. A Newton, a Watt, or a Kepler is not so productive as a donkey, a horse or a draught-ox (a class of labourers who have been recently introduced by M'Culloch into the series of the productive members of human society)."

In other words, markets determine what is and what is not productive.

5] Free trade. Smith's advocacy of this, as List points out, is special pleading. It allows economically and militarily powerful nations to wreck the economies of subordinate nations such as India and China. China (opium) and India (destruction of textile industry) have no good grounds to celebrate Smith.

6] Corruption. Smith's ideas about combinations of employers led to no successful prosecutions under the Combination Acts. On the other hand it was criminal for two or three labourers to assemble to discuss their conditions of work under the same legislation. These abominable acts were inspired by Smith and of course a double standard was applied. Shame this isn't mentioned.

I could go on… I note that the author does not source any of his quotes from Smith. Marx had some respect for Smith because of the labour theory of value, but did not subscribe to his other liberal doctrines. I'd find it especially worrying if the Chinese were to start taking Smith seriously as a 'Confucian'. Anyone who wants to know about the real Smith should read Madawc's excellent book on the topic.

Labour Affairs is not a suitable vehicle for Smith worship. Sorry to be blunt about this, but it's a serious matter for socialist education that we have a clear view about Smith securely rooted in what he actually said, rather than in fantastical reconstructions.

Smith and Jones – the Saint of Capitalism Imagined in Modern China

By Gwydion M. Williams

Adam Smith believed that capitalism was compatible with his picture of social morality. He might well have approved of a ruling party that requires its members to be atheists. Technically he was a Deist, but the difference would be easy to fake. So I was not offended by the comparison.

He also said that both China and India were richer than any part of Europe – true enough in 1776. But noted that Europe was changing fast, while China appeared to be much as Marco Polo had seen it. China had actually boosted its population enormously by learning how to grow crops that the Spanish had brought from the New World. It also imported vast amounts of window glass for its traditional scholarly gardens, and spectacles for its scholars. But even most modern Western books don't know details like that. Smith is remarkable for what he did see.

But Smith was also a defender of the rich. Back in the year 2000, the Ernest Bevin Society published a book of mine about him – the *only* left-wing criticism published since the appearance of Karl Marx's unfinished note on the man, as far as I know. It's still available from *Athol Books*, having never got much attention (https://www.atholbooks-sales.org/alphabetic/search_a.php). And much of its contents are available on-line (https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/#_Toc23413152).

Smith has a blanked opposition in *The Wealth of Nations* to any tariffs and any state regulations. Looking at cases where these go wrong, and not asking whether they might work well much more often.

Smith's basic trick is to look just at cases that support his notion of Free Trade. Pin making was his classic example of Division of Labour. But a brief investigation using books you can only find in the *Library of the British Museum* revealed that it was heavily state-regulated. That this was necessary

because a district specialising in the European market for pins would lose sales by producing substandard pins that would rust after you used them. And I said something about a topic that Brendan Clifford first drew our attention to – that German economist Friedrich List gave a much better account of the state-market hybrids that had industrialised Britain and were to industrialise Germany and the USA (https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/48-economics/037-adam-smith-misleading/how-real-economic-growth-was-not-based-on-adam-smiths-ideas/).

China after Mao trusted much more to List's vision than to Adam Smith's. Notably by keeping land owned by an entire village. Leased for long terms to people who wanted to farm privately, but only the village as a whole could benefit from land prices rising.

Almost anything can be 'proved' if you choose just examples that suit your case. You might go gambling in Las Vegas and return with a small fortune, and not just by the classic method of going there with a large fortune. But choices should be based on what you could reasonably expect. It's disastrous to follow what you hope might happen.

As well as pushing bad or risky choices, the method works for political smears. Back in 2025, I posted an idea about how to demonstrate *Lying by Omission*. A teacher would set half their class to collect bad stories about people called Smith, and good stories about people called Jones. The other half, selected randomly, do the reverse (https://gwydionmadawc.com/ideas-you-might-borrow/2537-2/). This would demonstrate something I first identified with the lies told about supposed anti-Semitism by the Labour Left (https://gwydionwilliams.com/048-anti-semitism-and-zionism/fewer-anti-semites-in-labour-than-tories/).

I imagined a distorting headline:

Tunbridge Wells has a Drugs and Murder Problem

For those who don't know English regions, Royal Tunbridge Wells "*at one time had a reputation for being a bastion of the English middle class and a typical example of 'Middle England'*" (Wikipedia). It has diversified, and those things have faded generally, but it still retains more 'Middle England' than most parts of Britain. The headline would not be exactly a lie, but it would untruthfully imply that the place had become unusually bad.

Campaigners might use this as an eye-catching sound-bite when up against media smears. I have other possible slogans at a 'Space' on Quora, https://electoralslogansfortheworkerspartyincoventr.quora.com/

Naza - the IDF exposed

By John Clayden

This Israeli film is largely shot on a rooftop in Tel-Aviv at night . It consists of interviews with disguised IDF soldiers who have served in Gaza. In the course of the war thousands of innocent civilians including women and children have been killed and these people are referred to by the Israeli military as NAZAS. They just happen to have got in the way.

The Israeli military decided it would be most effective to kill members of Hamas when they returned home.

In Gaza every Palestinian phone is tapped and its camera etc can be accessed . Every occupant of every residence is known.

AI is extensively used for targeting .

The people in the documentary who had the job of listening in to the Hamas' members phones would be alerted when they heard a child joyfully say "Daddies back!" and inform those targeting the drones or bombs.

The family and neighbours would die.

The perpetrators were questioned as to their feelings as to what they had done before they decided to confess . They said they felt they were just doing their job and did not feel any particular hatred for their victims. This has been described in another context as " The banality of evil."

It was pointed out that given the total membership of Hamas and the margin of Nazas allowed, this could entail the total destruction of the entire Gazan population.

It seems doubtful that NASAS will ever appear on YouTube etc ,so if you get to see it take notes!

Comments

This film shows that the Israeli government's claims that the IDF kill civilians because Hamas hides among them and uses them as human shields are false.

On the contrary it is deliberate IDF policy to target Hamas when they are at home at night. Israel has devised the Gaza system of communication masts and has access to all Gazan mobile phones. They can listen to all communications and trace the movements of all phones.

A Jewish Anti-Zionist International Congress

Unpublished letter to the Irish Times October 2026

Sir,

Fintan O'Toole describes "Zionism is a form of racism" as a "stupid slogan" and warns us that

"Jewish people worldwide are having a terrible time" (Zionism is not racism, any more than Irish nationalism is sectarianism, 20 October).

Last June the second ever Jewish Anti-Zionist International Congress was held in the Maldron Hotel, Dublin, over three days. Delegates included Israeli and other Jewish figures such as Ilan Pappé, Andrew Feinstein, Haim Bresheeth-Zabner, Ronnie

Barkan, Wieland Hoban and (from Ireland) Sue Pentel. I attended, and can testify that all of these speakers concurred that "Zionism is a form of racism"

A press conference regarding this major event was held in Buswells Hotel, Dublin, the day before it began. Not a single journalist turned up. Not a single journalist showed up to the spectacularly well-attended conference itself - not even Fintan O'Toole. Quite simply: there was no mention of it whatsoever in the mainstream media.

It appears that our concern for Jewish sensitivities must be restricted to those supportive of Zionism. Might it not seem that, whatever one's view of that ideology, such an exclusionary stance borders on anti-Semitism?

Yours etc.

Raymond Deane

PALESTINE LINKS

Israel's election deadlock: What could happen next? (Lubna Masarwa, Middle East Eye, 28 October 2026)

How Ben Gvir and Smotrich helped drive historic Arab voter turnout (Baker Zoubi, +972, 28 October 2026)

'Detained and interrogated': Israel blocks British MPs from entering occupied West Bank to meet Palestinians (Middle East Eye, 27 October 2026)

'There are no dreams here': How Israel's outgoing gov't remade the West Bank (Shatha Yaish, Oren Ziv & Basel Adra, +972, 26 October 2026)

50 shades of right: An Israeli election primer (Ben Reiff, +972, 23 October 2026)

Greece becomes a bigger partner in Israel's crimes (Camilla Donzelli, Electronic Intifada, 19 October 2026)

European Council warns companies not to finance Israel's E1 West Bank settlement construction (Middle East Eye, 17 October 2026)

Life is an endless battle in Gaza (Hanin A. Elholy, Electronic Intifada, 16 October 2026)

Universities fire dozens amid pressure from Zionist billionaires (Ali Abunimah, Electronic Intifada, 14 October 2026)

Israel's far right has unprecedented power. Why isn't it satisfied? (Meron Rapoport, +972, 12 October 2026)

Gaza ceasefire exists in name only, say more than 100 organisations (War Child, 9 October 2026)

Israel kills Gaza rescuer who saved countless lives (Nora Barrows-Friedman, Electronic Intifada, 9 October 2026)

Susan Abulhawa wins fight against Oxford Union censorship (Ali Abunimah, Electronic Intifada, 6 October 2026)

Gaza's lost generation: The 700,000 students left behind by three years of war (Ruwaida Amer, +972, 8 October 2026)

Why 'NAZA' terrifies Israel's liberal elite (Sebastian Ben Daniel, +972, 2 October 2026)

Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

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Fond Memories of May 68?

As a 17-year-old radical, I briefly thought that the world was about to change. It was astonishing that student protestors who'd taken over the centre of Paris were suddenly supported by workers striking throughout the country.

Before that, I had feared that this small radical movement would be crushed, as had happened before. I'd already read a lot of history, including the brutal slaughter of the 1871 Paris Commune. And of how many crack-downs and coups had repressed popular movements.

I'm not sure what I thought when the students scorned De Gaulle's offer to let the whole of France decide. I just remembered that they scorned it:

On May 24, when De Gaulle proposed a referendum, the demonstrators responded with the cry 'Goodbye, De Gaulle' (Adieu, De Gaulle), openly mocking his authority and calling for his departure… When De Gaulle dissolved the parliament and called for new elections on May 30, some protest groups tried to boycott the vote. They angrily chanted the scornful slogan: 'The youth have already cast their votes on the barricades'" (DeepSeek)

Oddly, DeepSeek left out what I remember vividly – that De Gaulle's supporters organized a massive counter-demonstration on the Champs-Élysées. 800,000, as against the protestor's 500,000 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_68#Revolution_prevented).

From the Wiki, I got confirmation of how foolish it had been to think that they had overturned the state. It emerged that De Gaulle had checked first he had the army with him. A secret trip to Baden-Baden on May 29, 1968, where he met with General Jacques Massu, commander of French forces in Germany. If elections had been prevented, he could have used the army to take over. But this was not needed:

"De Gaulle's party won a resounding victory and the left-wing parties lost over half their seats, signaling the collapse of the immediate movement. Though it failed to bring about a revolution, May 68 had profound long-term consequences. The events weakened de Gaulle's authority, and he resigned the following year. The movement led to increased state investment in education and social policies, though radical leftist politics declined in electoral influence. The strikes forced major concessions in labor rights, including wage increases, better working conditions, and expanded social protections." (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_68).

Lenin, Mao and Castro had their own armies, as did Ho Chi Minh. Anyone without such a thing should be content to change the society one piece at a time. And that could have been done better had the radicals accepted that elections would settle the issue. Instead they scared people, but had nothing to back it up with.

Radicals should have known better. Revolutions happen where there is a disciplined party that is ready to be authoritarian for a good end.

And have a reasonably good chance of winning if you do decide to break all the rules.

In the current student protests, everyone looks to the next Presidential election. Likely to be won by the Hard Right, with Hard Left second and Macron's legacy derided. But protests for more education reforms may succeed.

Note that there was no real trouble when regular organisations ran the demonstrations. A vast popular mass was properly stewarded. Looting and vandalism and maybe some agent provocateurs happened when the demonstrations were spontaneous.

I feel little optimism about the student protestors who've just won an election in Serbia. They are 'Big Tent', meaning they have no idea what they want beyond less corruption. My observation is that anti-corruption movements with no other ideas seldom succeed. They can be manipulated by the rich to spoil sensible government controls.

Much more hopeful is the victory of regular reformist politics in Brazil (https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Brazil-Lula-an-Ogre-and-17-Dwarves).

The 1926 General Strike – Baldwin's Bluff

Thinking about 1968 also made me think of another event sometimes seen as a near-revolution. But if the left were overbold in 1968, in the 1920s they made the opposite error:

"The 1926 British General Strike was not driven by a new set of demands from the trade unions themselves, but was instead a defensive action called by the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in support of coal miners who were fighting against demands imposed by mine owners.

"The central conflict revolved around the miners' resistance to the following proposals from the mine owners:

" Wage Cuts: Owners sought to reduce miners' wages by approximately 13%.

" Increased Working Hours: Owners proposed extending the working day from 7 to 8 hours.

" District-Level Agreements: Owners wanted to end national wage agreements in favor of district-level negotiations, which would have weakened the bargaining power of the miners' union." (ChatGPT)

"The government, led by Stanley Baldwin, viewed the general strike not just as an industrial dispute but as a direct challenge to state authority and constitutional democracy." (DeepSeek)

I'd been told that he said 'if this goes on, you are the government', but there's no evidence he said it. But the TUC could have challenged him to call a new General Election, if he was unwilling to make the coal owners concede the miner's defence of the status quo in their industry. There had been a minority Labour government from 1923 to 1924, and was to be another in 1929.

Baldwin was open to challenge on the claim that he was representing the constitution. But sadly, the TUC backed down and got no concessions. The coal miners fought on for months, but were defeated.

Baldwin had won 47% of the votes in 1924, but had a majority of seats because of Britain's unfair first-past-the-post system. His vote was to fall to 38% in 1929, when Ramsey Macdonald formed another much stronger minority government with the Lloyd George liberals.

And the man messed up. John Maynard Keynes had the right answers, and there were many on the left who supported them. But Ramsey Macdonald lacked the boldness to do what non-socialist Theodore Roosevelt was to do. He would not insist that a government was not a household and that cutting government spending would only make a depression worse.

The same stupid error that Labour has been making since Blair took over. The same trust in gibberish economics shown by Obama and the Clintons, when they picked up the losses of the speculators in the 2008 crisis. When they made ordinary people pay the price, and the very rich went on getting richer.

China Finds Gold Without the Market

"The taxman comes for China's offshore riches

"'To get rich,' according to a saying often attributed to Deng Xiaoping, 'is glorious.' The great Chinese reformer's slogan became synonymous with his campaign to open the country up to the outside world and its capitalist forces.

"And over decades of astronomical growth, many in China did get rich. Today, the country boasts the world's second-biggest economy, with more than 1,000 billionaires and 5mn millionaires.

"Now the pendulum is swinging back again. Strongman Xi Jinping wants those who benefited the most from China's economic ascent to increase their contributions back to the state, embarking on what could be the most ambitious global tax hunt in history.

"From October 22, authorities will begin collecting a 20 per cent tax on dividends and interest earned from offshore trusts, explicitly targeting wealthy Chinese who shelter their assets overseas…

"The sudden move announced this summer came as a shock to many of China's wealthiest people, arriving at a pivotal moment when the country faces a generational handover of wealth. Many Chinese entrepreneurs who built fortunes during the early decades of reform are nearing retirement, raising pressing questions about how their assets will be passed on, who will take control of the family empires — and who will pay the taxes." (https://www.ft.com/content/f31baf40-a753-4cca-86e1-1373f08d99e2?syn-25a6b1a6=1 - Pay site.)

That's the Financial Times, the newspaper for the people who own the country. And who like to think of themselves as the real wealth-creators, but since Thatcher they have taken an increasingly large slice of an economic 'cake' that has grown no faster than it did before Thatcher. No faster than before Reagan in the USA, and that has included accepting vast numbers of immigrants in a land that still has plenty of free space.

China shifted away from radical

equality after Mao, but never lost faith in state power. Gold production is just one of the successes:

"Beijing built its dominance through innovation and meticulous planning, not superior natural reserves…

"Perhaps no story illustrates the secret of China's industrial success better than its rise as the world's gold superpower.

"China has revered the metal for millennia, yet it has never had a gold-based economy. Its own deposits were simply too scarce.

"In 1975, as China began its economic modernisation, it desperately needed gold to fund reform and build up foreign reserves. Despite its best efforts, it produced a meagre 13.8 metric tons a year. South Africa, then the undisputed king of gold, produced many times that. Canada, the United States and Australia each comfortably outproduced China as well.

"Then, slowly but surely, everything changed. In 2007, China overtook South Africa to become the world's largest gold producer, and it has held that position ever since. Today it churns out 380 metric tons a year, more than South Africa, Indonesia and Mexico combined.

This was no miraculous bonanza. Beijing did set up a "gold troop" in 1979, sending the military across the country to hunt for deposits. Yet high-grade finds remained elusive until the past two years, when China announced two world-class mines: Dadonggou and Wangu. By then, the country had long since secured its crown. Its journey from a gold-poor economy with low-grade ore to the top of the league table is among the most remarkable industrial turnarounds in modern history.

"It came from technological innovation, state-led industrial policy and meticulous planning." (https://www.scmp.com/opinion/china-opinion/article/3369170/how-china-became-worlds-gold-superpower).

Snippets

China Helps Africa

"At its annual meeting in Bangkok this month, the IMF said Africa would grow at 4.6 per cent — intriguingly, 0.1 percentage point above China. That would be the first time African growth had outpaced China in decades, as the Chinese population ages and its export-led model hits its limits.

"In Africa by contrast, where the median age is 19 and the population will continue to grow for several decades even as fertility rates fall, at least 10 economies including Guinea, Rwanda, Uganda, Ivory Coast and Tanzania are expected to grow at 6 per cent or above this year. African nations have done a better job managing the war in Iran and consequent disruption in petrol, diesel and fertiliser supplies than many expected." (https://www.ft.com/content/4702e72d-ba3c-43c4-92e7-1dffcddcd16?syn-25a6b1a6=1 - pay site.)

Naturally the newspaper of the rich does not admit that China's non-capitalist policies actually worked well for Africa. But unlike much of the modern Western media, they accept a duty to tell their readers what is actually going on. The people who own the country need some idea of the awkward truths that the rest of the mainstream media cover up.

*

Mars – 'World B' for the Rich?

Green protesters are fond of saying 'There is no World B'. No backup if things go wrong for an increasingly strained global system.

Sadly, there might be. Or many of the people who selfishly control most of the world's wealth might think their is.

One argument for going to Mars is that it would ensure human surivival. But while the Earth will not last for ever, it will be millions of years before we might face destruction from natural causes.

I can't see we could wipe ourselves out, unless someone is mad enough to make Cobalt Bombs. But killing far more than the total deaths in the 20th centiry is all too possible. And the country that produces the vast bulk of the world's School Shooters and other horrors is the place to worry about.

School Shooters is the game of the poor and unsuccessful. But do the super-rich privatly think we do not deserve them? They should ignore climate risks in a world that anyway full of people unfit to live?

*

Whose Wealth Is It, Anyway?

People raised to enormous wealth by the rise of the Internet and other IT advances bitterly resent anyone else having a share in this new wealth.

And all of them succeeded by being the most popular choice for something that was happening regardless. The internet's efficient package switching was invented by blue-skies research paid for by the US military. The separate matter of a World Wide Web was made workable by a scientist doing pure science at CERN. And the ideas that made a fortune for Apple and then for Microsoft with Windows were developed and shared by Xerox, who never made a commercial success of them.

Yet they insist that the world's prosperity depends on the very rich getting an even larger cut of the world's wealth.

This despite Trickle Down never having happened. And countries as different as Finland, Singapore and China flourish while keeping

their rich people taxes and under social control.

*

Database Scares

"Most people may not have heard of PHP, but they probably interact with it daily.

Short for PHP: Hypertext Preprocessor, it powers a vast number of platforms, including online shops, Wikipedia and WordPress – the content management system behind many websites like blogs.

"When you visit a website like Wikipedia, PHP is the code that collects information you need and presents it in a way you can read on the web, Paul Spain, chief executive of Gorilla Cyber Security, told the BBC.

"But due to a flaw that could allow attackers to take control of affected web servers without authentication and steal sensitive data, everything built on PHP was left exposed." (https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3qjnwye0ep5o).

I don't know the details. But for many IT areas, I see problems stemming from the desire of modern businesses to have as few skilled workers as possible. To cut costs wherever possible.

A simple Internet Passport that would get rid of a lot of the fraud. But the New Right still hang onto the hope that unregulated internet will persuade people in regimes they dislike to destroy those regimes.

This despite the visible examples of societies remaining poor and chaotic when they follow this advice. Syria has an Islamist in charge, after years of suffering. It would be a very useful forward base if Turkiye ever decided to attack Israel. Meantime Tunisia runs better, but is run by an authoritarian not so different from the one driven out at the start of the Arab Spring.

*

Zelensky's Heroic Triumph Over Russian Hackers

Social media has recently been full of claims that Kiev's attacks on data centres in Russia has silenced a lot of the voices supporting Russia.

So do you find them saying something like '*Pro-Russian souces Unrumpledstiltskin, NewJerseyBoy66 and BayCityRoller777 claimed to be US citizens, but are now silent*'?

All I've seen are claims that *someone somewhere* has been silenced. Never a checkable fact.

It's not even a sensible idea. Everyone serious about computers has backups at some other location. Data centres are for processing: there is always other processing to be found elsewhere.

*

Inheritance – Saving Family Farms

I can't see why most people should inherit more than five times the average yearly income. But far too many people get much more:

"The most precise breakdown comes from Altrata's Billionaire Census 2026, which categorizes billionaires by the source of their fortune :

" Fully inherited: Only 8% of the world's billionaires (as of 2025) owe their entire fortune to inheritance, with no meaningful wealth of their own creation. This is down from 11% in 2020.

" Blended wealth: About 30% built their fortunes through a mix of inheritance and their own efforts (for example, inheriting a family business and significantly growing it).

" Self-made: The largest group, at 62%, are entirely self-made.

"An earlier estimate from Wealth-X placed the 'fully inherited' figure slightly higher, at around 10.2%."

That's from DeepSeek. And surprisingly, it also found less inherited wealth for those with a mere 50 million.

That should be ended. But farming is the one exception. People can have farms that are worth millions, but still be at stretched middle-class level when it comes to spending.

For this I'd suggest Sleeping Death Duties. Let a farm be inherited without vast immediate financial demands. But if they give up farming, *then* they have to pay. And this would stop it being used by people with no interest in farming to evade death duties.

*

Immigration – Foul Methods Often Work

"Over the past 50 years at least 23m people born in Latin America migrated to the United States. It was the largest sustained flow of migrants in the world to a single country, surging in the years after covid-19. Governments and people in Latin America got used to it, and the money the new American residents sent home.

"Then Donald Trump returned to power. In the year to July 2026 US Customs and Border Protection recorded 137,000 encounters between its agents and migrants at the southern border. That was a decline of 94% from the same period in 2024, which saw 2.4m encounters. The Darién Gap, the jungle route from South America into Panama, tells the same story: crossings fell by 99.9% over the same period. In Costa Rica the number of migrants heading north has fallen to almost nothing, while the total going south has jumped (see chart 1). The world's busiest migration corridor has fallen quiet." (https://www.economist.com/the-americas/2026/10/01/the-worlds-busiest-migration-route-has-gone-quiet).

The whole liberal approach has failed. People's trust in the Welfare State was undermined by loud propaganda about a small number of people cheating. And not helped by most of the left ignoring the fact that there was *some* cheating. Being ready to bring in honest people from a poor background to deal with it.

*

Yemen: BBC Speaks with a Forked Tongue

"Question: The BBC speaks of the 'internationally recognised' government of Yemen. What democratic mandate does it have?

"Answer; The 'internationally recognised' government of Yemen, currently led by the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), lacks a direct, current democratic mandate from the Yemeni people. Its legitimacy is not derived from a recent national election, but rather from a transfer of power by a previous president and international recognition, particularly from the United Nations and key regional powers like Saudi Arabia...

"The core issue is that the last time Yemenis voted in a national legislative election was in 2003. The current body, the PLC, was not elected by the public...

"While the PLC claims to be the legitimate government, its mandate is transitional and externally recognised, not democratically elected. It operates in a prolonged state of emergency where holding a national election is currently impossible due to the ongoing civil war and the Houthis' control over large population centres.» (DeepSeek)

*

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

Imperialism And Russia: A Correction

The last paragraph of my article in the October issue of Labour Affairs was somewhat garbled in the typing. It was about the idea that the Soviet Union became imperialist at the end of the Second World War, and that was a factor leading to its downfall.

The point being made was that the authority asserted by the Soviet State over countries in Eastern Europe in 1945 was different in kind to the authority asserted by the British States, and other European States over their Empires.

Those European colonies were established by conquest. Russian control in Eastern Europe was also established by conquest—but it was conquest of an alliance of states that had attacked it with the object of destroying it.

Those States did not call off their war when Russia demonstrated its power of resisting them. It was not that kind of war.

Britain did not conquer and govern India in response to an Indian attack on it. Nor was that the case with regard to Ireland, or any of its many other Imperial possessions.

Britain could have lifted its subjugation of India, Ireland, etc. without any danger to itself. It stood in no danger from the Empire it had wantonly subjugated if it let go of it.

Russia could, of course, have refrained from conquest. It could have stopped its defensive action when it reached its borders of August 1941, and left the invaders free to decide what to do about it! Maybe that would have been the pedantically correct thing to do. Didn't Marx suggest something like that in the War of 1870?

If Stalin had done that, he would have left the European situation in an interesting condition. Perhaps it would have been the best thing.

But it was not the West wanted. Its terms for settlement with the Axis Powers was unconditional surrender by the enemy, and it would probably have denounced a separate Russian settlement as betrayal.

Although Russia had greatly weakened the invading Armies in the course of driving them back to their starting point, the West did not feel confident of carrying through the War it had started to the unconditional surrender of Germany. It needed Russia to do that for it before preparing for its own war on Russia.

If Russia had stopped at its own borders—so as not to be Imperialist—the War would possibly have ended with three power blocks in Europe.

And Churchill, who had considerable influence despite losing the British Election in 1945, said he had always seen Russia as the man enemy, describing the War that was fought as "unnecessary"—a distraction caused by diplomatic bungling.

Brendan Clifford

Why 'NAZA' terrifies Israel's liberal elite

By Sebastian Ben Daniel (John Brown) October 2, 2026

The film shatters 'respectable' Israelis' illusion of moral superiority: The most prestigious, highly educated soldiers are the primary culprits of genocide.

For decades, the liberal camp in Israel has cultivated a convenient and effective defense mechanism. When faced with uncomfortable moral questions about Israel's actions, responsibility could usually be assigned to the political fringes. The culprits were always the "bad apples": hilltop youth, far-right ministers, a rogue infantry unit, settlers nobody in north Tel Aviv would invite to dinner.

This division of labor was remarkably convenient. The right committed the crimes; the liberals supplied the morality. The occupation and multiple rounds of war in Gaza, with all their ugliness, were things that "they" did, while "we" investigated abuses and protested to save Israeli democracy.

"NAZA" attacks that alibi. The film bypasses the usual villains and goes straight for the Holy of Holies of the Israeli elite: Unit 8200, which supplies the intelligence for airstrike targets, and the Air Force, which turns those targets into ruined buildings and dead families. The people placed under moral scrutiny are not settlers but graduates of top schools and elite military units who go on to universities and high-tech companies — exactly the people liberal Israel sees when it looks in the mirror.

That is the film's most intolerable proposition. If what Israel has done in Gaza is genocide, then it is, in significant part, a liberal genocide. This is not because its architects call themselves liberals, but because the machinery of destruction depends on institutions staffed by the secular, educated, technologically sophisticated Israelis who imagine themselves to be the far right's antithesis. The directors even deny the subjects the old Israeli "shoot and cry" ritual, in which feeling bad about violence somehow redeems it…

The film ends by moving from the rooftops of Tel Aviv to the ruins of Gaza, eliminating the distance that bureaucratic language creates. A Palestinian father digs frantically through the concrete of a collapsed building for his dead children. In the flood of Israeli commentary on "NAZA," I have seen almost no discussion of that father.

This absence is not incidental. The army's systems turn Palestinians into targets and collateral damage estimates; the public debate then turns the film itself into a technical controversy. In both stages, the Palestinian disappears. But ultimately, the dehumanization goes both ways: Only a people who have lost their humanity can disregard such a heart-breaking scene that shows the Israeli public, perhaps for the first time, the result of their actions.

Link: https://www.972mag.com/why-naza-terrifies-israels-liberal-elite/

Reader's Letter about the Student List victory in Serbia

A member of Student List interviewed in the World at One (26 October, 20 minutes in). He spoke plainly and eloquently. Both realistic and idealistic, he was a breath of fresh air.

Asked about Russia he said:

"We are highly dependent on Russian gas so we cannot implement sanctions, but even above that the Student List upholds the principle that sanctions are bad, they only backfire and they hurt the people, not the governments and politicians and those who are corrupt.

"We are for ending wars and conflict.

"[asked if there is a parallel with France he says] The human mind likes to draw parallels but I urge you not to. What we have done in Serbia is a first.

"We worked so hard, went to so many villages.

"We have no leader (and so are not open to corruption). Free people do not need to be led, those who look for a shepherd will be treated like sheep."

Continued From Page 24

based on figures supplied to the Milburn Report by government agencies. The growth rate due to employing NEETS will taper off in the second year, but there will be further annual cohorts until the problem is decisively addressed.

Direct employment of NEETS by the state would therefore largely eliminate the problem of chronic youth unemployment and provide a much needed workforce to help repair degraded public spaces and to do other necessary socially useful work. John Maynard Keynes once suggested that to get the unemployed to be paid for digging holes and filling them again would bring the UK greater economic benefit than paying them to stay idle. Our scheme would give young people a lifeline towards becoming members of society. To get longer term benefits from state expenditure of this kind careful thought would need to be given to the provision of satisfying and productive work and the vocational education and training needed to ensure that young people had the know-how to participate in the economy. But the urgent question now is to get young people off the scrapheap. The final Milburn Report will be tinkering at the edges of a massive social problem if it does not take up the suggestion above.

The inevitable bleat will arise: 'where will the money come from?', a question never asked when aid is shipped off to Ukraine or to some other pet imperialist project. The answer is that the Bank of England creates the money in Treasury accounts and ministers decide what is the most effective way of putting that money to good effect, probably by involving local authorities in preparing plans to repair their public spaces, housing stock and other amenities that are falling into disrepair, not to mention providing care and other needs to the community. As John Maynard Keynes is supposed to have said: 'if we can do it, we can pay for it'.

At the moment, the Burnham government doesn't want to do it.

To read the interim Milburn Report, go to:https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a3111dec39255c595b50928/Young_people_and_work_interim_report.pdf

Helping Neets: How serious is Burnham?

By D ave Gardner

The Milburn Report on getting young people into work was published as an interim report in May 2026 with a final report to follow within weeks. The interim report addresses the very serious problem of young people aged between 16 and 24 who are not engaged in training, education or employment – the so-called NEETS. Their existence is a major social and economic problem which the country has persistently failed to address.

The most recent official data shows that **981,000** young people aged 16 to 24 in the UK were not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the **April to June 2026** period. The recently published interim Milburn Report supposedly addresses the problem of reducing this number by providing a diagnosis of the problem. Note: not eliminating it. As far as the government is concerned a reduction of a few percentage points would represent a triumph. But tinkering at the edges is a false economy. The costs of having 13% of 16-24 year olds NEET is colossal and the costs of enabling them to contribute to society manageable with the potential for stimulating economic growth. Let's look at the numbers. The estimates provided below represent the **lost potential** and the **additional burdens** created by the NEET period. Here are the estimates and their sources. First, for individual young people who are NEET.

Perspective	Estimated Lifetime Cost (GBP)	Key Components & Source
Cost to the State (Fiscal)	**~£244,000**	Average lifetime cost per young person who becomes NEET, as estimated by the youth charity **Impetus**. This includes: - £102,000 in lost tax and National Insurance - £68,000 in higher welfare costs - £65,000 in higher NHS costs - £9,000 in higher criminal justice costs
Cost to the State (Alternative)	**~£240,000**	The **UK Government's** own "ceiling estimate" for the lifetime public finance impact of a period NEET between ages 18-24. This is considered a conservative estimate.

Estimates of the annual fiscal cost (assuming a 50 year life span for someone who is currently NEET) would be: £4, 708, 800,000.

Let's now look at the Milburn Report's estimate of annual aggregate costs of 16-24 year olds who are NEET for six months or more. The numbers are even more startling.

Summary costs of young people NEET

Category	Element	Total annual cost
Economic	Direct economic potential lost	£38 billion
Economic	Scarring economic potential lost	£63 billion
Public finance	Direct tax revenue lost	£3.2 billion
Public finance	Increased health spending	£0.2 billion
Public finance	Direct benefit spend on out-of-work benefits	£3.2 billion
Public finance	Scarring tax revenue and benefit spend	£15 billion
Social	Direct wellbeing impacts	£2.7 billion
Total	-	£125 billion

Source: Young People and Work Interim Report: Analytical Annex

So allowing young people to become and remain NEET costs the UK and its economy £125 billion a year.

If the state were to employ all these young people on the minimum wage, the annual cost, including national insurance and pensions, would be nearly £25 billion per annum. So the estimated *gain* to the UK economy taking away the annual fiscal cost of being NEET from the gross cost of job creation would be £100 billion per annum. In providing these figures we are taking a strictly utilitarian attitude of calculating the cost to the nation's finances excluding the human and social cost of being left on the scrapheap.

Some of this gain arises from the boost that employing NEETS gives to the economy. Using Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) multipliers, the addition to GDP would be nearly £15 billion in the first year, representing an initial boost to GDP of 0.5%. Given the current estimate annual growth rate for 2027 (using IMF and OECD estimates) of between 1.2% and 1.3%, this would represent a significant boost to the UK's annual growth rate. So the initial annual net cost to the state of implementing such a measure would be offset by renewed economic vitality and an improved fiscal position. We are happy to prop up the neo-Nazi regime in Kiev, which provides us with no benefit whatsoever and puts the British population in harm's way to the tune of roughly £32 billion since 2022. To repeat, we are suggesting that, on the **government's own estimates, the net annual economic gain in employing all our NEETS would be £100 billion, four times the cost of investing in NEET employment programmes,**

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