



weekly **worker**



Scooby-Doo Marxism: SWP says a lot about the enemy being capitalism but nothing much when it comes to strategy

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Towards a mass Communist Party

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ANTI-SEMITISM AND OTHER LIES



LETTERS



Letters may have been shortened because of space. Some names may have been changed

Factions test

It is certainly interesting that Socialist Appeal/International Marxist Tendency wants to host a 'convention' of sorts to form a new Revolutionary Communist Party. While we have yet to see the details of this initiative, it does point to a certain wider shift in the political landscape and looks worthy of active engagement. After the defeat of the Corbyn movement, much of the left in Britain is desperately trying to find its political feet.

There have been numerous organisations that have sprung up recently, be they Transform, the For the Many Network or the newly 'revived' Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (the Socialist Party's electoral front). Funnily enough, their political programmes are interchangeable and could be summed up as sub-Corbynism. They seem to believe that by simply holding up Corbyn's programme (or a version thereof), the millions will flock to them. Well, they won't. Just like the electorate in Holborn and St Pancras will not flock to whichever candidate is put up as part of the ridiculous 'Stop Starmer' campaign at the next general election.

Contrary to what these comrades believe, it was not Corbyn's reformist and tame programme that made him so popular. It was, partially, his anti-establishment persona, but crucially the fact that he was the leader of the Labour Party - in other words, he could have actually done something, nationally, about some of the niceties in his programme. These new/old campaigns have no chance in hell. If any of them get their deposit back, I would be very surprised.

But ideas around Marxism and communism are experiencing a certain renaissance too. The Zoom education series, 'Why Marx?', has drawn in hundreds of participants, for example. The SA initiative looks like it might stand positively apart from the sub-Corbyn nonsense and also does not seem to be tainted with the neo-Stalinist tinge of the 'communism' of the Young Communist League and their somewhat childish nod to the anarcho-style 'black bloc'.

So we should welcome SA's initiative, vague as the details still are. It also gives the CPGB a further avenue for engagement with it - in addition to Mike Macnair's very useful 'A communist appeal to Socialist Appeal' (November 9).

Why not put SA's alleged commitment to the tradition of the Revolutionary Communist Party and the Bolsheviks to the test by applying to join the new formation as an organised faction/tendency/platform? After all, open factional battles in both organisations were routine and *Iskra* in particular carried many sharp arguments between the proponents of different factions and tendencies.

Such an active engagement would also allow the CPGB to make valuable arguments in terms of 'what type of party' and 'what kind of programme' a communist party needs. The *Weekly Worker* has done much valuable work re-examining the influence of German Social Democracy on Lenin and the Bolsheviks, for example - work that most SA members are probably unaware of. The CPGB has plenty to say on the need for a minimum-maximum programme, putting democratic political questions centre-stage and organising on the basis of democratic centralism (ie, freedom of debate and unity in action).

Should SA agree to such an approach, the CPGB/*Weekly Worker*

could make some serious steps forward in educating hundreds of often young members in the real tradition of our communist history, as well as all those who would probably turn to the *Weekly Worker* to read about those developments.

And if - heaven forbid - this initiative turns out to be nothing more than a marketing strategy designed to simply enlarge the IMT sect, then the CPGB's unsuccessful attempt to join will have done a great service to the workers' movement by exposing it as such.

Carla Roberts
London

No factions

I am grateful to Mike Macnair ('Unity based on solid principles', November 2) for picking up and responding to some of the points I raised around socialist/communist unity (Letters, October 26). I also appreciate and respect the comradely tone he adopted. I think, however, he has misread significant parts of my letter (a later section was cut due to space in that edition, which might have added some clarity), or wrongly imputed what I was trying to get at in the published sections.

To be clear from the outset, I think it is beyond absurd that in 2023 the socialist and communist forces in this country are so divided and fragmented - and what few actual numbers are spread across so many groups, sects (call them what you like), many of which are pitifully small and irrelevant. Groups with memberships of just about double figures are simply not credible and are clearly fundamentally flawed in the ways they conduct themselves, their politics, organisation, or whatever. And 'groups' of one or two members who themselves split - including a regular correspondent to this paper - are beyond pathetic and in need of serious medical help.

So I very strongly agree and advocate the case for the bringing together of the majority of current socialist and communist groups, with a majority of their members and supporters, into something like the start of a unified and potentially mass (at least with the very clear aim and objective of becoming mass) socialist/communist party.

I agree with the majority of the words in the Wrack/McMahon statement ('Getting in touch', October 19), but I am asking, what is it about their initiative which may succeed, where others have patently failed? How will their call resonate among the more politically advanced layers of the working class where it needs to resonate? I do think there needs to be a concrete basis or grounding in the *real* labour movement, the current organised expression of the working class in this country.

Mike is simply wrong to 'decode' this as meaning "official lefts such as Labour MPs or trade union general secretaries" - I mean leaders with proven track records of struggle, genuine socialist politics and real leadership qualities. Yes, that may include a small handful of Labour MPs, some trade union gen secs, but I am thinking much, much wider than that - I am looking towards genuine 'tribunes of the people' - who may have formal office at various levels in the labour and wider movement, or may be highly visible and command genuine respect in their localities, in their workplaces and communities.

I wasn't proposing to *exclude* Trotskyists from any such new formation. Mike's third major quote from my letter was actually hinting very strongly that we *must include* the larger socialist groups, such as

the Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Party in England and Wales, Socialist Appeal and others, as these currently have managed to attract and organise many of the best socialists and working class leaders within their ranks. What I was objecting to was an a priori *exclusion of communists* from any formation through the use of the pejorative term, 'Stalinism'.

I am happy to repeat a comment I previously made that I think the majority of members and supporters of the Trotskyist parties and groups are good, decent socialists and comrades. It is just their underpinning ideology and some of their leaderships which stink.

Mike repeated a comment he has made before that the extremely fissile nature of Trotskyism (which I argue is completely inherent to it) is not unique and also applies to others, such as Maoism. I have no real interest or knowledge of Maoist groups (apart from, I think, the real Mao, would have regarded them with absolute contempt for their ridiculousness!), but I am not aware of there being that many Maoist breakaways or splits? Low single figures in this country, surely?

But, in any case, Mike is only able to reference Trotskyism and, to a much lesser extent, Maoism. I was explicitly referring to the mainstream communist tradition, where for the most part very significant differences and debates *have* occurred *within* this tradition, but have tended not to result in major splits or breakaways. The Sino-Soviet split and later the Eurocommunism phenomenon *did* result in some splits, with more than one Communist Party existing in some countries at some points - but there really is no comparison whatsoever with the international state and chaos of Trotskyism.

Mike omitted to include my reference to a bringing together within such a 'mass' socialist/communist party of the majority of current parties and groups as *being on the basis of "the correct operation of democratic centralism"*. So no concealing of political differences - historical, relevant or otherwise - but a clear democratic basis for open discussion and debate - and when democratic decisions are taken, including agreed actions, all are committed through that democracy (and that basic underpinning commitment to a mass socialist/communist party and the achievement of socialism/communism) to carrying out those decisions.

I do disagree that "permanent" (or any) factions are in any way compatible with genuine democratic centralism. Yes, there will be different tendencies and trends, but to allow these to become organised in any way would mean that members of those factions would start to put the interests of their faction above that of the party - as well as becoming more interested in faction fighting *within* the party, as opposed to building the party as a whole *and* the mass movement.

Mike is also wrong to interpret my use of "respect" as meaning "deference" and "subordination". No, I used "respect" alongside "equality" in order to complement, not subvert, the latter. We have long and sometimes bitter differences and some bad histories between us. "Respect" in my sense of using it is meant to imply we fully acknowledge our respective histories, rivalries and some clashes of ego and personalities. It is not a code necessarily for "diplomatic", meaning in Mike's sense the covering up or concealing of those differences.

"Respect" for me means starting from the bases on which we (should) all agree, including the need to replace capitalism by socialism and then

communism, the need for a mass socialist/communist party to help carry this out, and that it will be the conscious actions and the movement of millions which will carry out this historical endeavour. "Respect" basically means treating each other as comrades! Yes, we can have ferocious argument, debates, rows, etc. But we remain comrades and still united in our basic aims and objectives. Although I was not and could not have been a member at the time, I thought the experience of the Socialist Alliance in the early 2000s hinted at the art of the possible and practical.

We could envisage the political basis of a potential socialist/communist party as being that basic commitment to replace capitalism with socialism and mass democratic action to bring that about (definitely *not* committed to retaining the current constitutional order, as Mike might put it). That in itself sets very clear boundaries and excludes a lot of the chaff. I wouldn't expect to see any of the existing parties or groups voluntarily dissolving themselves or merging with others. Not immediately anyway.

They could affiliate, retaining their distinct identities, traditions and contributions, alongside ideally at least some trade unions, trades councils, anti-cuts/anti-austerity campaigns and groups, progressive community groups and movements, etc. I would hope such a socialist/communist party would also have individual membership and all affiliated groups would encourage their members and supporters to take out such individual membership.

I would hope and expect the number of separate political parties and groups to reduce over time their collective priorities to focus on the building of the unified socialist/communist party.

Who knows? From this we may at least have a very good opportunity of building an SPD or RSDLP for the 21st century, rooted and representative of the whole of our diverse working class and people, including and especially its organised and leading sections, and capable of leading our class in our millions to sweep away this appalling, destructive, decadent capitalist system.

Andrew Northall
Kettering

Ultra-leftism

Gerry Downing's attack on Jack Conrad is one of the worst pieces of ultra-leftism I have ever read (Letters, November 9). Downing's reply deals with a number of issues and is very dishonest. In historical order he refers to the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917, the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly in early 1918, Lenin's views on Soviet democracy, the Trotskyist transitional programme, Stalin and the *British road to socialism*. Downing also defends the right of the oppressed to massacre innocent people, including women and children.

While I argue that Marxism contains some fundamental flaws, it also contains views which to me are quite sound. One of these views is that communists must not seek to come to power in a backward society. In other words, a society should have reached a certain level of development before any bid for power is made. In Russia, where more than 80% of the population was formed by the peasantry, both Lenin and Trotsky broke this basic correct view of Marxism.

I say this view is correct in general, although there can be exceptions; for instance, when Mao took power in China, the Soviet Union already existed as an industrialised power which could aid the people of China. However, by taking power in a mostly backward society in the first place,

based on a socialist agenda, Lenin and Trotsky effectively derailed the struggle for socialism. In other words, Lenin went over to classic Trotskyist ultra-leftism.

I am not saying the Bolsheviks should not have taken power: what I am saying is this should not have been done to start a socialist revolution. What Russia needed was a radical democratic revolution, which could have been achieved in a united front with the other socialist parties, but Lenin's desire for power got the better of him with help from Trotsky. Ironically, Stalin had the more correct position before he went over to Lenin's.

The other point Downing makes relating to the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly is quite laughable. Lenin dissolved it because it had an anti-Bolshevik majority - that's the truth, whatever spin you put on it. Of course, Lenin's view on the superiority of soviet democracy (the Russian term for democratic socialism) is true in principle, but the point is that he and Trotsky started a socialist revolution under economic and cultural conditions inimical to the soviet democracy which the revolution set up. This is why, with the defeat of the counterrevolution after the civil war, Lenin began his transition to totalitarianism - later called Stalinism by Trotsky when he lost power. The banning of factions in the party is hardly an advertisement for democratic socialism.

Trotsky's ultra-leftism started with advocating a socialist revolution in a society which was materially and culturally immature, and this ultra-leftism continued with the promotion of the transitional programme, which has ensured that Trotskyists have mostly remained tiny sects. Trotsky argued incorrectly that transitional demands acted as a bridge between minimum and maximum demands. He criticised those who said there was no such bridge, who were, from a dialectical standpoint, correct to oppose the 'bridge theory'.

For communists, there are only two sets of demands: minimum and maximum. Any demand, no matter how radical, which can be achieved within capitalism, is a minimum demand. Demands which require the removal of capitalism are maximum demands. Between the two there are no bridges, as Trotsky claimed and his followers still practise, who, like Trotsky, fail to grasp that the change from minimum to maximum demands is a dialectical leap, with no bridge in between. It is a sudden leap from quantity to quality, from reform to revolution.

Downing's criticism of Stalin's support for the *British road to socialism* is another example of his Trotskyist ultra-leftism. The truth is that socialism may or may not come to power through parliament in Britain. It is pure dogmatism to rule out that possibility, just as it is pure dogmatism to insist that a parliamentary road to socialism is the only option. One argument for a parliamentary transition in Britain would be a global energy crisis bringing about the collapse of capitalism, leading to important sections of the ruling class abandoning ship, as Marx argued was possible. With due respects to Downing, I say Stalin was not necessarily wrong about the *BRS* in 1951.

Another example of Downing's ultra-leftism is that he defends the right of the oppressed to massacre innocent people, including women and children. This has nothing to do with socialism. This type of behaviour is usually associated with counterrevolution. Politically intelligent communists, who are never ultra-leftists, do not defend the right of oppressed people to massacre innocent

people. Barbaric behaviour like this, no matter how people like Downing try to justify it, serves to strengthen counterrevolution. Anything which serves counterrevolution is bad. How does the massacre of innocent people, including women and children, serve the cause of the oppressed?

Another point I would like to make here is that certain Islamic groups or individuals are to the right of imperialism, and have hijacked Islam and provide the bourgeois state with an excuse to strengthen counterrevolution. In some cases individuals who carry out terrorist acts are stooges of the intelligence services, whose role is to give the state the pretext to introduce the police-fascism which Downing correctly warns against.

Tony Clark
For Democratic Socialism

Hate marches?

It has been claimed repeatedly - not just in the press, but by holders of the most distinguished offices of state - that the pro-Palestine protests we have seen in recent weeks are in fact "hate marches". Some say that the Palestine solidarity movement is a hate movement.

When we enquire into the evidence on which these claims rest, we find that curated social media content is the only proof available: a picture of an objectionable sign; a video of objectionable conduct; and so forth. From this we are to infer that the marches are driven by hate and violence, but no rational person can agree with that conclusion.

First, an impartial observer will keep in mind that in any large gathering - certainly a gathering of hundreds of thousands of people - there is sure to be some mischief. Everybody knows this, and so the whole question is about the proportion of mischief in the gathering, not whether some examples of mischief can be found. Those supporters of Israel who treat social media content as proof of a pro-Palestine hate movement must accept that Israel's supporters are also a hate movement, because examples of similar mischief can be found among them too. That is not to mention the massacre of civilians in Gaza that Israel's supporters are facilitating.

Second, the available evidence indicates that the pro-Palestine marches have been overwhelmingly peaceful. The number of arrests has been minuscule in proportion to the number of people marching, and it is unlikely that every one of those arrests is justified. Supporters of Israel argue that the police are simply not performing enough arrests, and are allowing 'crime' to run rampant. But there is no credible evidence for this view - indeed, it depends on interpreting common slogans such as 'From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free' in the least charitable way possible. No matter how often the slogans and their meaning are clarified, they are always construed as horribly as imagination allows.

The Palestine solidarity movement is not a hate movement. It is appalling that our political culture should require correction on such a simple point, when - right before our eyes - genocidal violence is being perpetrated by Israel with the assistance of our government. It is that hatred, and that violence, that should concern the vast majority of us - not the real or imagined offence caused by placards and chants.

Talal Hangari
London

Discipline him

I am a member of the Labour Party and I accuse Keir Starmer of bringing the party into disrepute by opposing a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip war.

Clause four, part three of the Labour Party rule book states that the party is committed to cooperating in the United Nations and other international

bodies to secure peace. Keir Starmer is acting contrary to this commitment. Rather than urging the government of the UK to cooperate in the UN and other international bodies to secure peace in the Gaza Strip, Keir Starmer opposes a ceasefire. He has rejected the principles outlined in the rule book and instead supports the line taken by a Conservative government.

Furthermore, the arguments against a ceasefire in Mr Starmer's speech at Chatham House on October 31 were embarrassingly poor. They were neither soundly based on facts nor intellectually coherent.

Labour voters have told me that they are so appalled by Mr Starmer's position on this issue that they will not vote Labour while he is leader. I hope that the Labour Party will have the courage to discipline its own leader for damaging the reputation of the party.

John Wake
Harlow

With Hamas

Daniel Lazare can't bring himself to say anything good about Hamas - an organisation which is the major manifestation of Palestinian resistance to the racist, ethno-supremacist Israeli Zionist state (Letters, November 9). Socialists have the task - indeed the obligation - to defend Hamas in any way possible without compromising socialist principles, because the Hamas armed insurgents are being subjected to annihilation by the second most lethal and destructive nation in the world, Israel (the first being the US).

There are numerous inaccuracies and distortions in Daniel Lazare's letter. In the first place he indicates that Palestinian nationalists shouldn't consider that Israeli oppression is "sui generis" in the Middle East: This evokes the timeworn Zionist accusation that to focus on Israel amounts to anti-Semitism, since it's only one problematic country among many in the world and shouldn't be singled out. This is dangerous denialism. The charge has always been false, especially in the wake of a new round of Israeli mass murder and atrocities. Israel - the demonic apartheid regime which wipes out with impunity entire families, funded by American tax dollars - is an expansionist, bloodthirsty rogue state and, with its nuclear arsenal, is an existential menace to the Middle East region and to the entire world.

I am offended by Lazare's invocation and desecration of the memory of the Warsaw Ghetto martyrs by his use of the uprising to condemn the resistance of Palestinian mujahideen. Furthermore, Hamas hasn't been found guilty of perpetrating "bloody ethno-religious reprisals" and to say that Tony Greenstein is an apologist for the killing of civilians is nonsensical.

After many decades of humiliation, summary executions, colonialist detention, plunder and extermination - there occurs the incipient resistance of a beaten down Palestinian population. To denounce their efforts, whether or not politically distorted in this historical moment, is not what a communist would do: it's what a defeatist would do (and sometimes an arrogant one at that).

Lazare's Vladimir Lenin quote is used to justify the view that a "reactionary" Hamas should be completely rejected and written off. This is a fallacious reading of Lenin's words to suit Lazare's flawed political perspective. Lenin supported anti-imperialist nationalist movements. He would have supported a principled defence of Hamas without the subordination of communist politics; he would have argued for a Marxist programme and aimed for a communist leadership of the Islamist resistance movement. The idea is not to isolate or exclude the Hamas resistance, but to envision it as part

of a broad, mass movement for the liberation of Palestine.

Another problem with Lazare is that he repeats the usual Zionist claims regarding the 1988 Hamas charter and at the same time fails to acknowledge that it was updated in 2017. Either he's ignorant of the newer publication or he cynically chooses to ignore it and erase it from the record. He will notice if he reads it that Hamas has evolved - it does not correspond to his groundless presumptions. Tony is correct: Hamas seeks to distinguish between Jews and Zionists (for example, this is mentioned in their 2017 Charter). Hamas doesn't recognise the legitimacy of a Zionist Israel. And neither would reasonable people have expected that colonised Africans should have recognised the legitimacy of apartheid South Africa.

It's necessary to defend Hamas, the primary Palestinian resistance organisation, as they are in the vanguard of resistance to a Zionist fascist onslaught by the nuclear-powered, American lapdog. Similarly, it was necessary to defend the Stalinist Soviet Union from the onslaught of Nazi fascism.

GG
USA

From the skies

In his article, 'A curse on free speech' (November 9), Paul Demarty salvages the notion of objective truth from somewhere where Louis Althusser would, perhaps, have preferred to leave it.

The statement, "because they are necessarily false, they must be defended by extra-rational means" (without indulging ourselves on a Quinean detour through the borderlands between the necessarily false and the contingently false), implies that true statements never need to be defended by extra-rational means.

Does this finally confirm that correct ideas do, in fact, drop from the skies?

Jack William Grahl
email

Plugging holes

There can be no better example of where the basis - the inviolable priority - for capitalist societies lies than in how Indonesia's president, Joko Widodo, is going on his official visit this week for "talks" with US president Joe Biden.

These talks that are being flagged up (most notably by *Al Jazeera*) as unlikely to be about anything other than trade "opportunities" around electric vehicles and the "downstreaming" of associated critical minerals (such as nickel) - Indonesia places itself as a primary producer for that sector in collaboration with enormous tranches of Chinese investment. All of which is taking place whilst, back in Widodo's home country, highly animated and quite massive demonstrations are taking place in support of Palestinians - most especially in opposition to the current 'genocidal' onslaught by Israel upon Gazans, of course, taking place with full and long-standing US enablement - with its calculated connivance. In parallel to which, corporate executives and shareholders of the global military machine in the USA, UK and EU are nothing less than ecstatic at these latest opportunities for a bonanza in profits from their murderous outputs.

Throwing into that mix we have Indonesia planning to relocate 1.5 million residents of currently "overcrowded" Jakarta to a newly constructed capital city in the region of East Kalimantan (located on the supremely 'biodiverse' island of Borneo!), and here we have an absolutely perfect distillation of how capitalism offers nothing in terms of futurism other than a laughable 'plugging of holes' in a crumbling dam!

Bruno Kretschmar
email

ACTION

National school strike for Palestine

Friday November 17, 11am: Nationwide walkout by school students. Demand a ceasefire now. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk/events/school-strike-for-palestine.

Protest the Affordable Housing Awards 2023

Friday November 17, 11am: Protest outside The Point, Old Trafford Cricket Ground, Talbot Road, Manchester M16. Unworthy landlords will enjoy a three-course lunch paid on the corporate tab, while tenants suffer poor-quality housing and poor-quality services. Organised by Social Housing Action Campaign (SHAC): shaction.org/2023/11/13/protestors-target-housing-awards.

Day of action for Palestine - ceasefire now!

Saturday November 18: Local actions nationwide. Following last Saturday's one million on the streets of London, now build the movement everywhere. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.facebook.com/events/246231868167399.

Peace and Justice international conference

Saturday November 18, 10am to 5.30pm: Conference, ITF House, 49-60 Borough Road, London SE1. Politicians, union leaders, academics and activists discuss solutions to global injustice, inequality and conflict. Tickets £27.80. Organised by Peace and Justice Project: www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=709145511250516.

Resisting the rise of racism and fascism

Sunday November 19, 11am: Conference, central London location, and online. Discuss how to mobilise against racism from the government and a resurgent far right. Registration £5 (free). Organised by Stand Up To Racism: www.facebook.com/events/1335514390724342.

What it means to be human

Tuesday November 21, 6.30pm: Talks on social and biological anthropology. Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taviton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1, and online. This meeting: 'Human evolution: some recent discoveries and their implications'. Speaker: Chris Stringer. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: www.facebook.com/events/2941244432678004.

Engels and revolution

Thursday November 23, 6.30pm: Lecture, Working Class Movement Library, 51 The Crescent, Salford M5, and online. The determining factors in Friedrich Engels' thought and practice were the necessity and possibility of working class revolution and human liberation. Speaker: Dr Katherine Connelly. Registration free. Organised by Working Class Movement Library: www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=711810560987489.

Tackling racism and the far right

Saturday November 25, 10am to 4pm: Conference, Manchester (venue to be advised). Share updates, spread best practice and focus on how to defeat racism in the run-up to the next election and beyond. Organised by TUC North West: www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=727343146100455.

Transform founding conference

Saturday November 25, 10.30am to 5pm: Conference, Nottingham Trent University, 30 Burton Street, Nottingham NG1, and online. Debating and approving the constitution, policy discussions and workshops - building an alternative to the broken political system. Tickets £10 (£5 or free). Organised by Transform Politics: www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100093107503934.

Socialism 2023

Saturday November 25 and Sunday November 26: Socialist Party annual school, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1. 40 sessions around how to fight back, win and change the world! Tickets: one day £30 (£12.50), two days £40 (£20). Organised by Socialist Party in England and Wales: socialism.org.uk.

How do we defeat the anti-union laws?

Wednesday November 29, 7pm: Public meeting, The Bread and Roses, 68a Clapham Manor Street, London SW4. Planning the campaign to defeat the Minimum Service Levels law, and to force a Labour government to repeal *all* the anti-union laws. Organised by Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council: www.facebook.com/events/648755220767194.

The return of US nuclear weapons to the UK

Wednesday November 29, 7.30pm: Public meeting, Crawley Museum, The Tree, 103 High Street, Crawley RH10. Speaker: Sara Medi Jones, campaigns director, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Organised by Crawley CND: cnduk.org/events.

Socialist ideas to change the world

Friday December 1 to Sunday December 3: Marxism weekend for students and young workers, LSE Students Union, 1 Sheffield Street, London WC2. Debate why the system is in crisis - and how to fight to change it. Weekend ticket £20 (£15). Day ticket £10. Organised by the Socialist Workers Party: socialistworker.co.uk/weekender.

Fight together to defend the right to strike

Saturday December 9, 9am: Lobby of TUC special congress, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1. Organise for non-compliance and resistance; fight to repeal all the anti-union laws. Organised by National Shop Stewards Network: www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=712356174256772.

CPGB wills

Remember the CPGB and keep the struggle going. Put our party's name and address, together with the amount you wish to leave, in your will. If you need further help, do not hesitate to contact us.

BATTLE OF IDEAS

Anti-Semitism and other lies

Accusations against the Palestinian solidarity movement of hating Jews *qua* Jews are obvious nonsense, says Paul Demarty. Many Jews support the Palestinian cause and are welcomed and cheered

About the only plausibly compelling moral argument against the Palestinian solidarity movement is that it represents a dangerous revival of anti-Semitism.

But even its plausibility seems at rock-bottom in the present situation. Large majorities in many western countries seem to favour, at least, a ceasefire in Gaza. Despite various desperate attempts to cast doubt on the Israeli state's monstrous assaults, their reality is all too plain, all too resistant to the usual methods of obfuscation. Any principle invoked in the defence of this slaughter, of the deliberate bombing of hospitals and ambulances, the routine violation of the security of so-called safety corridors, the targeting of bakeries - in this situation, critical links in the strip's tenuous food security - tends to look a little suspicious.

Yet that does not stop our rulers and their paid persuaders clinging to it like a plank of driftwood on a turbulent sea. It provides, after all, a pretext for state repression. The German state routinely bans Palestine demonstrations on the basis of their 'anti-Semitism'; Suella Braverman - perhaps the most despicable home secretary in living memory until Rishi Sunak knifed her on November 13 - took it as an increasingly ridiculous pretext to designate the mass protests in this country "hate marches". In the US, naturally, the panic concerns college students. Campuses are declared "unsafe" for Jewish students, with the evidence given being typically reducible to the presence of posters denouncing the genocidal exploits of the Israeli Defence Forces.

All over, statistics are produced declaring some huge increase in "anti-Semitic incidents", usually by organisations with no reasonable claim on our trust, and who no doubt count perfectly ordinary professions of solidarity with the victims of terror-bombings and massacres as "hate speech" against Jews.

Our own eyes

Among other things, this offends the evidence of our own eyes, if we are participants in these movements. After all, if they were vectors of genocidal hatred against Jews, presumably the most dangerous place for any Jew to find herself would be on such a demonstration. She should find a hostile, frosty reception. To put it mildly, this is not so. Thousands of Jews - from the liberal secular wing of this diverse religious and cultural group to the ultra-Orthodox - attend the marches in London alone, and are welcomed, even when (as with the ultra-Orthodox) they disagree with run-of-the-mill secular leftists on just about every other matter imaginable. Jewish speakers are cheered loudly. We rejoice at the sight of Israeli Jews protesting their state's crimes, at great risk to their livelihoods.

We do not cast them out under threat of violence. We do not worry about 'the wrong sort of people' getting involved, as if it were some 1950s country club. These Jews are invisible, it seems, to the state, the media and Zionist organisations; but they are not invisible to their comrades in struggle.

In the mouths of Israel's enablers, the word 'anti-Semitism' has long been distorted into a very strange relation of its commonly understood meaning down to 1967 at least - and really the 1980s, when Israel's bloody intervention in the Lebanese civil war and repression of the First Intifada brought fresh controversy



Many Jews and Jewish groups marched

to the shores of its allies. We used to know what it meant - prejudice against Jews *qua* Jews.

Such prejudice has a long and ignoble history in the west, of course. From the Middle Ages through the early modern period, it typically took the form of Christian religious anti-Semitism. The Jews were hated as Christ-killers, inheritors of ancestral guilt. In the account of the gospel of Matthew, Pontius Pilate - dubiously cast as a woolly liberal - took every effort to spare Jesus crucifixion, but was overcome by the passion of the crowd:

When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it". Then answered all the people, and said, "His blood be on us, and on our children."

The plebeian masses of Europe were all too familiar with this version, from preaching and passion plays and art depicting Jesus's execution being celebrated by crowds of hook-nosed Yids. Pogroms were common, especially around Easter-time, and even more especially in times of famine or epidemic, when Jews were often blamed for poisoning wells and so forth. The role assigned to Jewish communities in the Christian west was to do what the Christians were typically forbidden to do - lend at interest, and get the financial machinery of nascent capitalism in gear. So there also developed the enduring stereotype of the avaricious Jewish moneylender, whose great representative in English literature is Shylock of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* - or, to give it its full title in the *First Quarto*, "the most excellent historie of the Merchant of Venice, with the extreame crueltie of Shylocke the Jewe towards the said Merchant".

In the 19th century, a still grimmer iteration began to form, based on the modish pseudoscience of 'race'. Jews also came under fire for their supposed cosmopolitanism - the very fact that they had been scattered far and wide made them suspicious to those nationalists whose politics were in the ascendant. It was one such scandal - the framing of the Jewish French army captain, Alfred Dreyfus,

and the long and bitter controversy it created in French history - that gave Theodor Herzl, the founding figure of modern Zionism, his key argument. The Dreyfus affair proved that Jews would never be welcome anywhere in their diaspora. Why should they be? They were a 'race' all of their own (although the word 'race' here is not necessarily to be interpreted in its pseudo-scientific, biological sense). Jews could only be reconciled with the other nations when they had a country of their own.

Zionism was only one of many political currents circulating in Jewish communities at the turn of the 20th century. It met with great hostility from many others. Zealous Orthodox believers and rabbis did not think much of these atheistic nationalists; they could not see in Herzl, or later David Ben-Gurion and Ze'ev Jabotinsky, their prophesied *moshiakh*. Those bourgeois Jews, who had tenaciously fought their way into deeply anti-Semitic elites in Britain, France and elsewhere, found the Zionists' pessimism incomprehensible and dangerous. The very many Jews among the working and middle classes who took up the banner of socialism in different ways tended to prefer internationalism.

Above all, the great embarrassment of Zionism was that it was in far closer practical agreement with anti-Semites than any progressive approach to what they used to call 'the Jewish question'. It was the bigot, Arthur Balfour, who after World War I offered the Jews a homeland in mandate Palestine. He was supported by other anti-Semites like GK Chesterton, who put the matter quite plainly in 1920:

it was always much more true to call [my view] Zionism ... my friends and I had in some general sense a policy in the matter; and it was in substance the desire to give Jews the dignity and status of a separate nation. We desired that in some fashion, and so far as possible, Jews should be represented by Jews, should live in a society of Jews, should be judged by Jews and ruled by Jews. I am an anti-Semite if that is anti-Semitism. It would seem more rational to call it Semitism.

And, when Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany - his ghastly plans

for Germany's Jews (and the Jews of his proposed greater German *Reich*) already plain from his published writings and speeches - some Zionists spied an opportunity. Hitler himself seems not to have thought much of them; but the Zionist papers were the last Jewish periodicals to be banned, and contacts were made with many regime officials; they even enjoyed some protection in the 1930s from Reinhard Heydrich, who would later become the architect of the 'final solution'.

This rather discreditable record is a source of acute embarrassment to today's Zionists, and to Israel's state allies. In the name of expiating its guilt for the holocaust, the German state brings the hammer down on those brave enough to object to Israel's present onslaught. Olaf Scholz even went so far as to call support for Israel part of Germany's *Staatsraison* - a strangely sentimental item to file under a noun usually restricted to the icy calculations of national interest; but no less grim in its consequences than the ruthless initiatives of the European powers over recent centuries. Yet the identification of Israel as the target of such support flies in the face of the actual history of the 1930s, and the way the different political factions of German Jews actually reacted to the unfolding horror.

Vulnerable

It is nonetheless undeniable that the holocaust gave great plausibility to the central Zionist claim - that Jews would only ever be safe as a nation-state. It was far more reasonable a proposition in 1948 than 1918 - after all, the Dreyfusards won, and the good captain was restored to his rank and served honourably in World War I. The near extinction of what had been a substantial, thriving nationality, especially in eastern and central Europe, could not be so easily forgotten. The success of the Zionist militias in driving out first the British and then large numbers of Palestinian Arabs, establishing the state of Israel, rather rammed the point home. Such a country would not be led like lambs to the next slaughter. As Mae West once said, a hard man is good to find.

There is a contradiction here, however. The idea that Israel offers protection to Jews is dependent on its fearsome, if currently rather diminished, martial reputation.

Yet the idea that anti-Semitism is a real and immediate threat to Jews everywhere *because of opposition to Israel* suggests it is rather more fragile than all that. Indeed, there are reasons to suppose that, in spite of its deep militarism, nuclear arsenal and all the rest, Israel is more vulnerable than it looks. In particular, it has always depended utterly on fulsome material support from greater powers, latterly the United States.

It is US support - that is to say, the backing of the undisputed global top dog - that has permitted the strange perversion of the idea of anti-Semitism all around us today. US support filters down to other US allies; by the 2000s, there were elaborate theories of the 'new anti-Semitism' floating around everywhere; the evidence certainly included outbursts from neo-Nazi boneheads, ultra-traditionalist Catholics, and more vengeful Islamists, but the numbers of 'anti-Semitic incidents' were padded out with criticisms of Israel. The most prominent expression of this phony analysis floating around today is the International Holocaust Remembrance Association's baroque definition of anti-Semitism, whose canonical accompanying examples make it clear that delegitimising criticism of Israel is the main point of the matter.

Overwhelming

Since the evidence of Israeli brutality is so overwhelming, it becomes a sin to "single out" Israel for criticism, when there is after all no shortage of brutality in the world. Yet, as I have remarked before, the truth is the reverse. The left routinely denounces outrages worldwide; Israel is rather singled out for *protection from criticism* by the imperialist ruling elite. Nobody accuses us of 'singling out' Saudi Arabia for criticism when we condemn its horrendous crimes in Yemen, and others besides. It is our criticisms of Israel which are unfairly 'singled out'.

Thus the 'new anti-Semitism' is not kin to the old - the various ways in which people have been prejudiced against Jews *qua* Jews. Instead, we now have a taboo on criticism of Israel *qua* Israel - Israel as it really is, as a brutal, genocidal coloniser. It is not the case, as David Baddiel complained in his book, that "Jews don't count" from the point of view of the left's opposition to oppression. It is rather, from the point of view of imperialism, that *only* pro-Israeli Jews "count".

The old anti-Semitism is still with us. Indeed, it is at least a more *obvious* presence on the US far right than it was a few years ago, with the rise of the alt-right and e-right, which favour ever 'edgier' statements on the matter, and indeed the revival of ultra-traditionalist Catholicism in many countries. Indeed, the fervent Zionism of certain fundamentalist Protestants - who support Israel as a means of hastening the end-times - is a new and interesting variant of the old religious hatred of Jews, since at the end of the day the big event they are looking forward to is the mass conversion to Christianity of a small number of the Jews and the condemnation of the rest to eternal hellfire for the sins of their fathers.

That is trouble enough. But we should not be cowed into allowing the grim memory of past crimes against European Jewry to blunt our attack on the mass murders of the present day ●

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STRATEGY

Aim for deZionisation

Israel is a work colony based on an ideology of blood and soil. Mike Macnair gets to grips with the logic and history of ethnic cleansing and expansionism

Sometimes writing for this paper feels like taking on the role of Cassandra, who was cursed by the god Apollo to accurately prophesy future disasters, but never to be believed by her listeners. This is mainly a matter of the endless commitment of the left to repeating 'broad front' initiatives which, entirely predictably, fail. But it also affects international politics, where we cannot really expect warnings of coming disasters to have much impact, even if we were much more influential than we are.

We have for years now been publishing comrade Moshé Machover's articles warning of the danger that the next major conflict in the Middle East would be used by the Israeli state as a cover for the next round of major ethnic cleansing, and explaining *why* the Israeli state is driven towards this policy. We are not alone in this: the *Matzpen* analysis of Israel as a special form of settler-colonialism, defended by comrade Machover, has come to have considerable influence: Googling 'Moshé Machover settler-colonialism' produces 78,000 hits. Nonetheless, the effect is still like seeing disaster inexorably approaching, as if it were in slow motion. Now the disaster has arrived. Israel is *immediately* ethnically cleansing Gaza; and, under cover of this spectacular campaign of destruction, the ethnic cleansing of the West Bank, which has been ongoing for years, has sharply accelerated.¹

The analysis of Israel as a special form of settler-colonialism, of the variety called by Karl Kautsky 'work colonies',² has two fundamental virtues, both of which derive from the recognition that the 'work colony' seeks not to *exploit* the natives, but to massacre them, drive them out or confine them to 'Indian reservations', for the benefit of colonist primary producers (peasant farmers, petty bourgeois and workers).

First virtue

The first virtue - unfortunately one with little application to the immediate situation - is that settler-colonialism of this type inevitably implies that a new nation is created - as in the various Latin American states, the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand. The idea of the expulsion of all the descendants of the Iberian colonists back to Spain and Portugal is illusory, and equally that of the expulsion of the descendants of the European colonists of the USA and 'white commonwealth' to the countries of remote European origin. The crimes of the Israeli state do not alter the fact that there is a large Hebrew-speaking population born and raised in Israel, and that any *long-term* solution which is not to merely reverse the poles of oppression - and thus, betray the ideas of political democracy, of human emancipation and of communism - must offer this group a right to self-government in their own language and culture, not merely *religious* freedom.

The idea has little application to the present situation, which is one where the Israeli state is an instrument by which the USA holds the Middle East in military subordination. This is reflected in the US decision to send carrier groups to the eastern Mediterranean to back up Israel in the present war. America backs Israel in order to maintain veto control of the oil taps, which in turn serves to keep US hands on the throats of the *potential*



Idealised picture of female kibbutz guard in 1936

imperial rivals, Japan, China, France and Germany.³ The Palestinians - and the Arabs more generally - are merely collateral damage. The same was, of course, true of the *origin* of imperialist support for the Zionist project from the 1917 Balfour Declaration on - in that period, at first, attempts by the UK to keep control of the oil taps at the expense of France and Germany, then in the 1940s French manoeuvres to undermine this UK control.⁴

The USA prefers Israel because it is more radically dependent on America than any other ally in the region - Arthur Balfour's original project of a 'loyal little Ulster'. Balfour's project was subordinated in the late 1930s when its effects began to threaten radically increased costs for Britain's *direct* colonial rule elsewhere in the region, and was reconstituted under US auspices with the Kennedy administration and after.

Until this problem is overcome, the question of what an Arab revolution could offer the Israeli working class in terms of *national* rights is not immediately posed. The US subsidises Israel too extensively and has too much ability to cripple the economies of disobedient nations for any revolutionary alternative, however politically attractive, to look attractive to Israeli workers.

It is thus first necessary that US policy must either cease to be relevant or change. This means that either the US world-dominance should fall; or military technology should change in ways which marginalise the military benefits of veto control of the oil taps (we may be seeing this beginning at present in the form of the failure in Ukraine of the 'tanks, motor transport and aircraft' model of warfare); or the costs of unconditional support for the Israeli state come to outweigh the benefits for the USA. The last of these options requires a regional movement which is more than a movement of protest, but one which threatens to take *power*.

Explanatory

The second analytical merit of the analysis of Zionism as settler-colonialism of the work colony type is that it helps to explain the persistent *expansionism* of the Israeli state and its complete inability, while remaining true to itself, to make peace on any sort of 'two states' terms or negotiate in good faith: what has at one time or another been offered as 'two states' by Israeli governments is no more than large 'Indian reservations', in which the Israeli state retains sovereignty and control of the borders. Even less than that is now on offer: the 'Palestinian

Authority' in the West Bank controls much less territory and has less practical authority than the Navajo Nation in the USA.

The reason behind this is that, whether or not early Jewish Zionists made significant use of the originally Christian Zionist expression, "a land without a people for a people without a land",⁵ the implicit project of Zionism, of creating a Jewish state in which the Jews would be all classes, rather than merely a 'people-class' of intermediaries, as they were in the middle ages, necessarily entailed very extensive taking of land. This might be 'bought' from local notables who were alleged to be landlords in order to give them title to sell (a common tactic throughout the history of the British empire), or it might be merely taken by force. Endless conflict is inevitable. The creation of Indian reservations merely expresses a radical relation of forces in favour of the colonisers; it does not, as 'first nations' movements across the globe in the last few decades have shown, obliterate the 'first nation'.

At this point it is necessary to note two features of the Israeli colonisation operation which are specific to it and not shared by the cases of the Iberian and British empire settler-colonial regimes. The first is the underlying driver of the emigration; the second is the local relation of forces in the territory colonised.

The Iberian and British empire settler-colonial developments were at root driven by the same dynamics which drove in earlier centuries the German medieval *Drang nach Osten* (pressure to the east) and the English expansion in the same period into Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The peasantry as a class has to save for old age in the form of producing children; and hence naturally tends to overproduce children, leading to land hunger. Early-modern settler-colonialism added to this the tendency, with capitalist development, for the peasantry to be driven off the land either by enclosures or by debts; and took place in the context of the expansion of bulk shipping, which enabled the shipping of people overseas in large numbers.⁶ Once the demographic transition to capitalism was complete, fertility fell and migration began to be driven by access to *jobs* rather than access to *land*.

Zionist colonisation does not have the same material driver: the world's Jews are not a peasantry overproducing children or undergoing capitalist dispossession. It was at first an ideological reaction to the European Catholic anti-Semitic movement of the late 19th century, which remained within the 'universe of discourse' of late 19th century 'blood and soil' nationalism. Then it was sharply reinforced by the holocaust in 1940-45. US subsidies to Israel meant that there was a major wave of ordinary economic migration from the USSR from the 1970s to 1990. But Zionism remains an *ideological* movement which advocates the idea of Israel as a state for all the Jews in the world - in spite of the fact that currently only 30% of the world's Jews live in Israel.⁷ The Israeli state therefore exaggerates the extent of anti-Semitism outside Israel - not only to obtain political backing, but also to win more immigrants.

The consequence of this is that Israel *must* be expansionist. On the basis of the ideological claim to the land god gave to the descendants of Abraham by Sarah, it is, according to

Genesis 15:18, to be "from the river of Egypt [the Nile] unto the great river, the river Euphrates" - that is, the whole of the current territories of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel-Palestine, the several states of the Arabian peninsula, and substantial parts of Iraq and Egypt.

Set the ideology on one side: a state for all the Jews in the world, on the basis that this is the only escape from anti-Semitism, would need a territory more than two times larger than the current Israel in order to accommodate the Jews of the diaspora moving in.

Expulsion

Suppose, therefore, that the present war leads, first, to the actual extermination or expulsion of the Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank, and as a result of the resulting wave of revulsion to a rise in *actual* anti-Semitic attacks (which is not impossible) and hence to a new wave of Jewish migration to Israel. There will then *still* be political pressure in Israel for further expansion. We may guess into southern Lebanon, which Israel has targeted before, and Syria.

The other side of the coin is the regional relationship of forces. The Iberian and British empire settler-colonies were created in the confrontation between late feudal/early and high-capitalist forces and relations of production of the colonisers, with paleolithic, neolithic and chalcolithic forces and relations of production of the colonised. The colonisers were further aided by the introduction of diseases from the Eurasian disease pool into the Americas, which radically reduced the populations of the colonised.

Israel, in contrast, is attempting to colonise a part of the territory of the Arab-speaking eastern Mediterranean and Arabian peninsula, and on the Genesis claim of some of the religious Zionist fantasists, Iraq. This is a population of about 7.1 million in Israel, or 23 million if all the world's Jews were sucked in to this disaster, attempting to reduce to oppressed 'first nation' status 254.7 million Arabic speakers, who are mostly governed by capitalist states, and in a shared disease environment.⁸

The *underlying* long-term dynamic is therefore that of the medieval Crusader states: the state of Israel can only survive if it is either *actively supported* by the USA, as it now is, or if it is tolerated by its neighbours. And it can only be tolerated by its neighbours in the long-term if it is *deZionised*: that is, if it becomes a state of its Hebrew-speaking inhabitants rather than a state which claims to be the state of all the world's Jews ●

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Notes

1. Eg, 'Emboldened Israeli settlers seek to tighten grip on West Bank' *Financial Times* November 16.
2. www.marxists.org/archive/kautsky/1907/colonial/4-work.htm.
3. Cf 'Anti-Semitism of useful idiots' *Weekly Worker* August 31: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1456/anti-semitism-of-useful-idiots.
4. J Barr, *A line in the sand* Washington 2014.
5. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_land_without_a_people_for_a_people_without_a_land has convenient references.
6. The British also 'transported' convicts in large numbers to American colonies between 1618 and 1776 and to Australia between 1788 and 1868.
7. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_population_by_country.
8. Figures from Wikipedia: List of countries and territories were Arabic is an official language.

MIDDLE EAST

Hamas and its backers

Plenty of talk, but precious little action. Gaza offers the opportunity for the Arab masses to rise up and overthrow their own governments, writes **Yassamine Mather**

There is a video doing the rounds of Middle Eastern websites and social media showing George Habash, former leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, telling the people of all Arab states that the best way they can support the Palestinian people is to overthrow their own governments. The idea is certainly relevant today, following the joint Arab-Islamic emergency summit hosted by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) last weekend.

The meeting was heralded by some as a show of unity. After all, it brought together many Arab leaders, including former enemies: Iran's president, Ebrahim Raisi, Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman, Egypt's president, Abdel Fatah el-Sisi, and Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. They signed a joint declaration calling for an immediate ceasefire and rejecting Israel's claims that the current war in Gaza is one of self-defence, and condemning "Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, war crimes and barbaric and inhumane massacres by the occupation government".

However, the conference's critics pointed out its shortcomings. Journalist Hashem Ahelbarra told Al Jazeera that without consensus among the summit attendees, its outcomes are useless:

People do understand that the Israelis don't really care about what is happening at this summit between the OIC and Arab League leaders. When you look at the communiqué you get a sense that the Arab and Muslim leaders do not have a mechanism to push a ceasefire and humanitarian corridor. This summit was just for the sake of a semblance of unity.¹

While all the leaders used very strong words condemning the massacre of Palestinians in Gaza, no concrete decision was taken. Iran's proposal of imposing economic sanctions against Israel did not make it into the final communiqué.

Of course, Iran's Islamic Republic and its regional ally, Hezbollah, have always claimed they were more committed in supporting Palestinians and more radical in their approach to Israel than other Middle East leaders. But the recent war in Gaza has proved that, when it comes to self-preservation, the Shia 'supporters' of the Palestinian people are as opportunist and ineffective as their Sunni counterparts.

Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei delivered a blunt message to Ismail Haniyeh, the head of Hamas, when they met in Tehran in early November, according to three senior officials: "You gave us no warning of your October 7 attack and we will not enter the war on your behalf." There will be continued political and moral support but nothing more.

In Lebanon, Palestinians, including many amongst the 250,000 refugees in Sabra and Shatila, have openly expressed their disappointment with Hezbollah's official stance, as well as surprise at the two meaningless speeches by the group's leader, Hassan Nasrallah. In other words, after four decades of masquerading as radical supporters of the Palestinians, Iran's



Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh meeting Iran's Ali Khamenei in 2012

Islamic Republic and one of its main regional allies can do no better than the likes of el-Sisi and bin Salman.

Of course, the problem does not end with them: Palestinian political groups and their leaders do not score much better. Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas is frequently quoted, mainly because he keeps the illusion of a two-state solution alive. However, when you look at the map of the Palestinian Bantustans surrounded by Israeli settlements, no-one in their right mind can foresee such a thing. The western media have amnesia about the reason Fatah was unceremoniously thrown out of Gaza - because of their corruption and incompetence. In more recent times Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas has postponed elections in the West Bank indefinitely, while his security forces are often accused of cooperating with the Israeli military.

Corruption

In Gaza itself Hamas is not doing much better. The reality is that if there had been elections there prior to the current war, it is unlikely Hamas would have won. Many resent the luxurious life in exile of Hamas leaders and there have been accusations of corruption within the administration, including the diversion of resources for personal gain.

The constant Israeli claims that the people of Gaza bear responsibility for Hamas should also be challenged. It rests on two main arguments, both of which have significant flaws. Firstly, it is claimed that Gaza's 2006 vote for Hamas in the Palestinian legislative elections directly led to the group seizing power through force the following year. Secondly, there is the constant Israeli suggestion that, as Palestinians have accepted 17 years of Hamas rule, there is at least a passive acceptance - if not complete approval - of its ideology and activities.

This despite the fact that Gaza has a very young population, many of whom were not of voting age or even born when Hamas was elected. In a poll taken by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in June, 77% of Gazans expressed a desire for new legislative and presidential elections in the Palestinian territories (although 67% do not foresee such elections being held in the near future). The poll showed that Hamas would receive slightly more support than Fatah - 34% compared to the latter's 31% - and, interestingly, 43% believe that neither group deserves to represent them. In the Gaza Strip, 73% of respondents expressed a belief that there is corruption within institutions run by Hamas. Additionally, 59% indicated that they could not criticise Hamas authorities without fear of the consequences.

When it comes to corruption, as in the case of Fatah, we should not underestimate Hamas's finances. Qatar, Kuwait, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Sudan, Iran and the United Arab Emirates are all financial as well as political supporters. The most important is Qatar. Its financial support began in 2014 - to prevent a "major humanitarian crisis in Gaza". The emirate actually delivers such aid to Hamas through Israel, and there has never been any secret regarding this.

Hamas began as the Palestine branch of the Muslim Brotherhood - a pan-Islamist organisation that was founded in Egypt in 1928. Relations between Palestinian groups based in the Gaza Strip and Egypt were at their best during the rule of Mohamed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, but they have been weakened since 2013, when el-Sisi became president after his coup. For Hamas, Egypt remains important. Before the current conflict, the largest volume of food and other supplies for the Gaza Strip

came through Egypt.

There is not much evidence of Turkish financial support for Hamas, although the Israeli paper *Ha'aretz* has speculated that Turkey probably gives Hamas \$300 million a year. As for Iran, it has often been named by officials in successive US administrations as one of the main funders of Hamas. However, given the country's financial difficulties caused by the ongoing severe sanctions, and the fact that Hamas and Iran were on opposite sides in the recent civil war in Syria, it is doubtful if Iran has donated more than the official \$100 million declared by the ministry of foreign affairs.

In fact, among the most important sources of funding for Hamas are donations from ordinary people in various countries, as well as from political groups and charitable institutions. According to a report by Russia's *Sputnik* news agency in January 2022, Hamas receives more than 95% of its funding from such donations.

One of the most important non-governmental organisations supporting Hamas is the Muslim charity, Al-Ansar, which is related to the Islamic Jihad group, while in the US a number of financial institutions have claimed that Hamas is very active in the cryptocurrency market - *The Wall Street Journal* recently reported that it has gained nearly \$41 million from cryptocurrency investments over the past seven years. This produced calls in the US for stricter rules regarding Hamas and its activities in America.

Leadership

Hamas leader, Ismail Haniyeh, was born in 1962 in the Shati refugee camp in Gaza and by the late 1980s he had become a prominent member of the movement. In 1989, he was imprisoned by Israel for three years during its crackdown on the first Palestinian uprising. He was later exiled in 1992 to a no-man's-land

between Israel and Lebanon, along with other Hamas leaders. After a year in exile, he returned to Gaza and in 1997 was appointed head of the office of Hamas's spiritual leader, solidifying his position.

Haniyeh served as the Palestinian prime minister in 2006 after Hamas won the biggest bloc of seats in parliamentary elections. However, he was dismissed a year later when Hamas ousted Fatah from the Gaza Strip in a week of violence. But Haniyeh claimed his removal was "unconstitutional" and refused to accept it. He remained in nominal office and in 2017 was elected as the head of Hamas's political bureau. There are a number of reports about his personal wealth and properties in the West Bank, as well as in Gaza - one of his sons, Maaz Haniyeh, has not been shy about showing off his life of luxury in Turkey.

Military

Mohammed Deif leads the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas. Deif was born in Gaza's Khan Yunis refugee camp in 1965, at a time when the territory was occupied by Egypt. He survived several assassination attempts in 2002, which resulted in injuries including the loss of an eye, a foot and a hand. Israeli security forces attempted to assassinate him again in 2014 during an assault on the Gaza Strip, which resulted in the death of his wife and their infant son. Israel thought it had killed Deif too, but he was not in the building at the time of the attack.

Then there is Yahya Sinwar, the Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip. Born in 1962, he was the founder of the Hamas security service, al-Majd, which is responsible for handling internal security matters, investigating suspected Israeli agents, etc. There is also Marwan Issa, Deif's right-hand man, who serves as the deputy commander-in-chief of the al-Qassam Brigades. He was detained by Israeli forces during the first intifada for five years due to his involvement with Hamas, and in 1997 the Palestinian Authority arrested Issa, but he was released after the second intifada in 2000.

He has been a high-priority target for Israel and was injured in an assassination attempt in 2006. Additionally, Israeli airstrikes twice destroyed the house he inhabited during incursions into Gaza in 2014 and 2021, resulting in the death of his brother. Issa is believed to have played a significant role in planning incursions into Israel, including recent ones.

Other prominent figures include Khaled Meshaal, one of the founding members of the organisation, and Mahmoud Zahar.

All in all, the Palestinian people can expect very little from such leaders - or those in power in Arab and Muslim states. However, the current policy of genocide pursued by Israel, with the support of the US and its allies, could pave the way for new radical solutions. It is possible that the peoples of the region will rebel against their own governments and the Palestinians will free themselves from the limitations imposed by corrupt and incompetent leaders ●

Notes

1. www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/11/saudi-arabia-to-host-arab-islamic-summit-to-unify-efforts-on-gaza.

USA

America's neo-Weimar constitution

Outwardly, America still seems like a normal country, so predictions of doom and gloom may seem over the top. But, says Daniel Lazare, the danger of authoritarianism is all too real

Following a series of election victories last week and a growing Republican breakdown in Washington, Democratic fortunes must finally be looking up, right?

Not quite. While Democratic wins in Ohio, Kentucky and Virginia were indeed impressive, the party's fortunes are still sinking, even as Donald Trump's ratings continue to soar. So striking is the disparity that it is beginning to resemble a disaster some 90 years ago, when growing legislative paralysis also helped generate a lurch to authoritarianism. That was in Germany, beginning in January 1930, and the upshot three years later was the rise to power of an ex-army corporal named Adolph Hitler. The details differ, but the overall pattern is looking more and more the same.

Broadly speaking, the reason for the first breakdown was a global financial crisis that shook German society to the core. But a growing constitutional crisis contributed by providing a fault line along which the political structure would eventually crack wide open.

The problems with the Weimar constitution (after the city in eastern Germany where it was drafted in 1919) are well known. Simply put, the document combined parliamentary and presidential features in one ungainly package. Elected on the basis of strict proportional representation, the Reichstag was ultra-democratic, in that it allowed small parties to gain a foothold with as little as 0.4% of the vote. Forty parties, according to one count, were thus represented as of 1933. At the same time, however, the constitution subordinated the legislative branch to an independently elected presidency of almost imperial proportions - one that could dissolve the Reichstag at will, saddle it with a prime minister, or chancellor, it did not want and rule by decree.

Friedrich Ebert, the Social Democrat who served as Weimar Germany's first president until his death in 1925, used the last feature on no fewer than 136 different occasions. These included an incident in 1920 in which he backdated an emergency order so as to retroactively legalise summary executions of communists by members of an ultra-right militia known as the Freikorps.¹

Irrespective of whether the Weimar constitution 'caused' the Nazi takeover, there is no question that it took contradictions that the failed Spartacist uprising in January 1919 had left unresolved and then locked them in place, so they would eventually explode.

The constitution also gave the president *carte blanche* to declare a state of emergency and impose martial law. When the Reichstag refused to approve austerity measures in the wake of the crash of 1929, chancellor Heinrich Brüning, who had been appointed by Paul von Hindenburg, Ebert's successor, urged the ex-field marshal to rule on his own. With the economy continuing its dizzying plunge, the effect was to marginalise the Reichstag, as power shifted to a president in his mid-80s surrounded by a secretive cabal of military officer and rightwing politicians.

The rest - Hitler's rise to power in 1933, war on three continents, more than 80 million deaths, and so on - is history, as they say.

At first glance, the US political structure seems very different. But it is anything but democratic: Congress consists of a grossly unrepresentative Senate elected on the basis of equal state representation and a lower house heavily gerrymandered in



Marine brigade marching under the imperial flag during the March 1920 Kapp putsch

favour of the right. Instead of a multitude of small parties, America has suffered under just two for close to two centuries.

If anything, the presidency seems more democratic, since it is elected by the nation at large, even though that is starting to change, as an antique body known as the electoral college increasingly makes itself felt. Otherwise, Americans traditionally see the president as a tribune of the people, whose job is to tame and subdue the counts and barons on Capitol Hill. The US constitution is meanwhile silent about a state of emergency and provides for a seemingly impregnable Supreme Court, whose role, among others, is to prevent the executive branch from violating constitutional norms. So the gross constitutional mismatch that fuelled the German crisis does not exist, and a descent into authoritarianism is therefore out of the question.

Ancient

Except that it is not. If American politics are following a similar path, it is not because constitutional protections are proving ineffective, but because mounting pressures are turning ancient constitutional structures into their opposite. America may seem different on paper, but the resemblance to Weimar continues to grow.

Paralysis, for example, has been the rule in Congress for more than a generation. Despite the long-standing 'Repocratic' duumvirate, observers have counted no fewer than five Mafia-style 'families' among House Republicans alone - the Freedom Caucus and Republican Study Committee on the ultra-right, the business-minded Main Street Caucus a bit more toward the centre, plus the slightly more moderate Republican Governance Group and Problem Solvers Caucus as well.²

Each one functions more or less as a separate party - they elect leaders, vote en bloc and delight in telling other factions where to get off. It is a tendency that last week's electoral

drubbing only served to reinforce. The carnage - in which voters in Ohio overwhelmingly approved a state constitutional amendment guaranteeing abortion rights, handily re-elected a pro-abortion Democratic governor in Kentucky, and in Virginia allowed pro-abortion Dems to take back control of the state legislature - demonstrates how vulnerable Republicans are on the reproductive-rights issue.

But, with moderates pushing back ever more vigorously and conservatives digging in their heels in response, it also demonstrates that fragmentation is not going away soon. On the contrary, with yet another federal budget deadline looming this weekend (they now come every six weeks or so), paralysis is likely to intensify, as a last-minute settlement proves ever more elusive.

Rightists will chortle if the federal government shuts down for the sixth time since the mid-1990s, while centrists will fret, but the breakdown will intensify. This will be bad news for an economy beset by growing deficits and rising interest rates. But it will be good news for Trump, as the balance shifts ever more decisively in favour of presidential authoritarianism.

Democrats cannot stop beating their breast over a November 5 poll by *The New York Times* and Siena College in upstate New York that showed Trump leading by as many as 10 percentage points in five out of the six battleground states that, thanks to the electoral college, could well decide next year's election.³ With two wars raging, voters are spooked by House Republicans who refuse to approve military aid for either Israel or Ukraine. They are put off by a president who is growing frailer and ever more befuddled, as he nears his 81st birthday. And they are equally at a loss over what to do about a supremely unpopular Kamala Harris, who, as vice-president, could well take the reins if Biden dies in office.

Democrats hoping that the abortion issue will somehow turn things around thus find themselves overwhelmed by

a crisis of confidence, from which there is no escape. Voters are tired of gridlock, tired of a system of government that has not worked in decades, and tired of foreign military adventures that are forever spinning out of control. They are longing for someone to shake things up. Trump is just the 'bull in a china shop' to do it.

No exaggeration

As in Germany, authoritarianism is what happens when constitutional structures deteriorate across the board. And 'authoritarianism' in this respect is no exaggeration. With a second Trump administration already looking like a done deal, the consequences are shaping up as ugly in the extreme.

"Where there is a true and total breakdown of law and order ... the federal government can and should send the National Guard to restore order and secure the peace without having to wait for the approval of some governor," Trump warned in July 2022. "I am your warrior, I am your justice, and for those who have been wronged and betrayed, I am your retribution," he added last March. But he went even further at a campaign rally last weekend in New Hampshire:

We pledge to you that we will root out the communists, Marxists, fascists and the radical-left thugs that live like vermin within the confines of our country, that lie and steal and cheat on elections. They'll do anything, whether legally or illegally, to destroy America and to destroy the American dream.⁴

This is cheeky coming from a man who tried to steal an election himself in 2021 - but, then again, cheek is something Trump has always had in abundance. With the term 'fascist' just for show, Trump's real enemies' list is clear: liberals, feminists, Black Lives Matter activists, anti-Zionists, and anyone else who is remotely left of centre. All could end up feeling the full wrath of the federal government if he wins a second term.

In June, *The New York Times* reported that Trump's legal team was planning to strip government employees of civil-service protections, so as to thoroughly purge the federal bureaucracy.⁵ The aim is to prevent anything resembling a replay of the full-scale bureaucratic revolt that nearly drove him out of office in his first term.

Last weekend, the *Times* published a second exposé concerning "an assault on immigration" that is taking shape "on a scale unseen in modern American history". According to the report, a top Trump advisor named Stephen Miller is putting together a programme in which Muslims will again be barred at the border, foreign students participating in pro-Palestinian demonstrations will be expelled, and tens of thousands of Afghans evacuated during the 2021 Taliban takeover will be kicked out as well. No less startling is a plank aimed at abolishing birthright citizenship. If approved, it means that thousands of native-born Americans could find themselves on the deportation list if their parents turn out to have violated immigration law. Conceivably, the sins of the parents could be visited on grandchildren too.

Miller described the offensive as a "blitz" aimed at overwhelming liberals and preventing them from getting in the way. "Any activists who doubt president Trump's resolve in the slightest are making a drastic error," he told the *Times*. "Trump will unleash the vast arsenal of federal powers to implement the most spectacular migration crackdown." Miller added that the plan also calls for detention camps to be built on vacant land near the US-Mexican border, whose purpose will be to house alleged illegal immigrants while their cases are adjudicated.⁶

With 1.8 million people behind bars as of 2021 and another 3.9 million on probation or parole - 1.7% of the population in all - America is already a global leader, when it comes to mass incarceration and regimentation.⁷ But mass arrests and concentration camps will raise such tactics to a whole new level. With Trump also vowing to invade Mexico in order to shut down drug cartels, the upshot will be a dramatic step-up in aggression, repression and belligerence - toward immigrants within US borders and toward entire countries beyond.

The problem with a human wrecking ball like Trump is that, rather than instilling order, his efforts will do the opposite. Each 'solution' will lead to greater disorder, greater anger and hence to an even more drastic response. Authoritarianism is a self-reinforcing process of self-radicalisation ending up who knows where.

Outwardly, America still seems like a normal country, so predictions of doom and gloom may seem over the top. But similar predictions no doubt struck the German bourgeoisie as over the top in 1930. Events showed otherwise ●

Notes

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CLIMATE

Too little, too late

Capitalism is frying the planet. This year will almost certainly be the hottest on record and next year might possibly be even worse, writes **Eddie Ford**

After record-breaking spring and summer temperatures around the world, it is not too surprising that climate scientists last week said with “near certainty” that 2023 will be the hottest year ever since modern records began about 150 years ago - surpassing the record set in 2016 by 0.1°C. This was confirmed by those working for the European Union-funded Copernicus Climate Change Service, using *billions* of measurements from satellites, ships, aircraft and weather stations around the world.

Thanks to “exceptional temperature anomalies”, they found that the year so far is currently 1.43°C above the preindustrial average and last month was the warmest October ever globally - the month as a whole being 1.7°C warmer than an estimate of the October average for 1850-1900. This is on top of the fact that July was the hottest month ever and July 6 was the hottest *day* ever recorded, when the average temperature for the entire planet was no less than 17.23°C (obviously a worldwide mean, not the highest temperature in any one place).

Copernicus also found that October marked the sixth consecutive month that Antarctic sea ice was at record lows for the time of year at 11% below average; sea surface temperatures hit an average of 20.79°C, the highest on record for October, and Europe saw above-average rainfall - notably in Storm Babet, which hit northern Europe, and Storm Aline, which impacted on Portugal and Spain, bringing heavy downpours and flooding. It was also wetter than average in several other global regions, and these conditions were often linked to powerful cyclones, which triggered heavy rainfall and caused substantial damage. In addition, it was drier than average in the US south and parts of Mexico, leading to severe drought, along with central and easternmost Asia, and Australia.

Higher

As for the UK, it had slightly higher than usual average temperatures in October, with southern England seeing between 1.5°C and 2°C above the 1991-2020 average - after experiencing this year its eighth warmest summer since 1884, with June the hottest month ever recorded. So far, the record for the hottest day ever still stands at 40.3°C - set last year on July 19 at Coningsby in Lincolnshire - but for how long? Because the atmosphere holds 7% more water with every degree of warming, you can confidently say that UK will become warmer and wetter because of climate change (leaving aside for now speculation about the collapse of the Gulf Stream, which would have the opposite effect!).

In the words of one climate scientist at Edinburgh university, “Laid out so starkly, the 2023 numbers on air temperatures, sea temperatures, sea ice and the rest look like something out of a Hollywood movie”. So, if the current global efforts to tackle climate change were a film, it “would be called *Hot mess*”.

Yes, it is true that the entirely natural El Niño phenomenon is partially responsible for 2023 looking like it will obliterate all global records. However, with the El Niño phase, with its warm ocean



Bushfires: Australia 2022

water likely to continue into next April, the global average temperature will almost definitely remain at a record high over the next couple of months - bearing in mind that the El Niño effect is actually *lower* than those reached at this time of year during the development of the historically strong 1997 and 2015 events. But, given that the El Niño effects typically play out the year after it forms, it is quite possible that 2024 will turn out to be even hotter.

Perhaps even more sobering - at least according to a recent study from Stanford University - if we turn to *geological* records, then it seems that our planet is warmer than it has been since two interglacial time periods - one about 120,000 years ago and another around two million years ago. This is all before we take into account the calamitous role played by carbon dioxide emissions and other pollutants over the last 150 years or so.² Therefore, it is hard not to wonder what is in store for humanity for the next few years and beyond - yet more unwanted records?

Maybe we already have some understanding, or intimation, of what the future might bring, thanks to another analysis of climate data released by WaterAid and Cardiff and Bristol universities. This shows that under extreme climate pressures, which are increasing, areas that used to experience frequent droughts are now more prone to frequent flooding, while other regions historically prone to flooding now endure more frequent droughts. They call this the “whiplash effect”, in which extreme drought in one country mirrors the climate of another country. Hence, for example, the Shabelle region of Ethiopia - a major water source for Somalia - which between 1980 and 2000 experienced numerous periods of flooding, is exhibiting a shift towards prolonged and severe drought, recently experiencing the worst of the drought conditions in the Horn of Africa. This is something mirrored in northern Italy, the research finding that the number of intense dry spells has more than doubled since 2000. But, as part of what researchers describe as a “climate hazard flip”, the droughts in both regions are punctuated by

extreme rainfall, causing devastating flooding, which was experienced in the Lombardy region of Italy this summer.

The research examined the frequency and magnitude of flooding and drought hazards over the past 41 years in locations across six countries: Pakistan, Ethiopia, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Mozambique - with Italy being included to provide a European comparison. Needless to say, the flip of climate extremes is being experienced by millions of people living in some of the poorest areas of the world, where communities - putting it mildly - are often ill-equipped to deal with them.

Insane

All in all, the latest research from Copernicus and others is an ominous milestone for the Cop28 UN summit later this month in Expo City, Dubai - where they will be reviewing the progress they have made (or not) in fulfilling their pledges in the 2015 Paris Accords to limit global warming to ideally under 1.5°C above preindustrial levels (or at least 2.0°C).

Of course, there could not be a more suitable venue for the conference than the petro-state of the United Arab Emirates - just as the world’s fossil fuel producers are planning insane expansions that would blow the planet’s carbon budget twice over, totally contradicting their climate policies and pledges. Then again, who ever believed them in the first place? Instead of dramatically cutting down on emissions, the world’s biggest fossil fuel businesses are planning scores of “carbon bomb” oil and gas projects and each country is trying to maximise their own production. The plans would lead to 460% more coal production, 83% more gas, and 29% more oil in 2030 than it was possible to burn if the global temperature rise was to be kept to the internationally agreed 1.5°C (the plans would also produce 69% more fossil fuels than is compatible with the alternative 2.0°C target). Petrostates and companies intend to keep on making trillions of dollars a year by increasing production, proving that under capitalism an addiction

to fossil fuels is almost impossible to shake off.

If the 1.5°C target is achievable, what we should be seeing now is a more or less 45-degree-angle drop in the consumption of fossil fuels. But, as we have just seen above, that is simply not happening - in 2023, more fossil fuels will be consumed compared to the previous year, with the prospects for future years looking just as grim. Even in the most wildly optimistic scenario for the years ahead, the graph will be flat - spelling deep trouble for the planet and everything that lives on it.

Yet the precise problem lies in the idea promulgated by the Rishi Sunak government (and undoubtedly the potential Sir Keir Starmer government too) that come 2030 we will start cutting emissions. Then things will get done! But by then, it will be too late. The oil tanker analogy is a good one. They cannot be turned around on

a sixpence. The more fossil fuels you use up with North Sea oil concessions and excuse with anti-Ulez propaganda - the more you keep going on about keeping prices down by burning oil, gas and coal - the more you actually add to the momentum of global warming. Even if the now impossible target of zero net emissions was met by some miracle *today*, you would still have global warming for at least the next 100 years. The ice caps will still keep melting, sea levels will still keep rising and, as a result of that, air temperatures will still keep rising - nothing can stop that, as it is a literal force of nature. Meaning more extreme weather - more drought, floods, fire storms ... and abandoned cities.

Tuvalu

The low-lying island nation of Tuvalu in the Pacific might provide the perfect metaphor for the climate crisis. Obviously expecting the islands to be submerged, Australia has generously declared that it would offer up to 280 people from Tuvalu access to residency, work and study rights each year as part of a new treaty - the island having a population of about 11,000 and a land area of 10 square miles. In response, the Pacific Islands Climate Action Network’s regional coordinator, Lavetanalagi Seru, described the Australia-Tuvalu pact as “a mere Band-Aid solution that in no way adequately addresses the fossil-fuelled climate crisis” - Australia being one of the great producers of fossil fuels, of course, and hence partly responsible for the island’s predicament in the first place.

Tragically, the effective abandoning of the 1.5°C target is a matter of life and death for many people - whether in the Pacific region or elsewhere ●

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Online Communist Forum



Sunday November 19 5pm
A week in politics - political report from CPGB’s Provisional Central Committee and discussion

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A selection of previous Online Communist Forum talks can be viewed at: youtube.com/c/CommunistPartyofGreatBritain

ECONOMY

Sahm recession to downturn

There is a slowdown in productivity and world trade, and increased geopolitical rivalry, So, writes **Michael Roberts**, don't expect increased growth

After a relatively strong US figure for gross domestic product for the third quarter of the year, the consensus is that the US will not have a recession this year or next. Indeed, on the contrary, investment bankers Goldman Sachs not only forecast some economic growth in 2024, but an acceleration for the US - and for the major economies.

I threw a little cold water on that forecast in a recent posting¹ - and not everybody is as confident about the US economy avoiding recession in the next 12 months. Take the view of former New York Federal Reserve Bank president William Dudley. He commented in the *Financial Times*:

My view for two years was that we were going to have a recession at some point ... I've always thought that, once the unemployment rate goes up by more than a certain amount, the chances of recession go up dramatically. That's the key question right now: does the unemployment rate have to rise to 4.25%-4.5% for the Fed to achieve their 'final mile' on getting inflation back down to two percent? If you think it does, then a hard landing is highly likely.²

And on that issue, the work of Claudia Sahm, another former Fed economist, has gained some prominence.³ Sahm reckons that if the unemployment rate runs some 0.5% points above the bottom for three months, it is a very strong indicator of a recession in output. "I have said the whole time that we do not need a recession, but we may get one." As she put it in the *FT*:

I developed the Sahm rule in 2019 as a trigger when a recession has started. It's not a forecast; it's an indicator. The rule has worked in every single recession since the 1970s and basically everything going back to the second world war - it doesn't turn on outside of recessions and it doesn't fail to turn on in a recession. And it shows up early, so it's highly accurate.

... the reading on the Sahm Rule in October was 0.3 percentage points and, while it has been moving up, particularly in the second half of the year, that level would not yet indicate we are in, or going into, a recession ... But it is disconcerting - the unemployment rate is going up.⁴

Even if the US avoids an outright contraction in real GDP in the next few quarters, it is likely that it will suffer a significant slowdown to almost stagnation next year, with inflation still well above the pre-pandemic average and the Fed's own target of two percent a year.

And, as for the rest of the major economies, outright recession appears much more likely. Worldwide business activity stalled in October, as the global purchasing managers index hit 50. The global PMI is a reliable measure of economic

activity in economies - and the 50 mark is the threshold between expansion and contraction. The global PMI has not fallen below 50 since the last global financial crisis (GFC).

And, as I have shown in previous posts, the major developed capitalist economies continue to have a reading below 50 - indicating contraction. Indeed, many advanced capitalist economies are already in recession. The euro zone economy contracted in the third quarter (Q3) of 2023. Real GDP fell by 0.1%, marking the first contraction since 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic weighed in. A 'technical' recession looks likely - two consecutive quarterly declines, as Q4 could also show a contraction. Sweden is contracting, Canada is contracting and the latest figure for the UK showed the economy heading into recession. Real GDP was flat in Q3, and Q4 has started very weakly. The Bank of England is now forecasting five quarters of zero growth at best. And real GDP growth is still well below growth trends before the global financial crisis.

Prospects

Even if the major economies do not suffer a contraction in output, investment and employment in 2024, the prospects for the rest of this decade are not good. In a report covering the G20 economies (ie, the 19 top economies plus the euro zone), the International Monetary Fund projects that global growth will slow to 3.0% in 2023 and 2.9% in 2024 (down from 3.5% in 2022) and this includes forecasts for faster growth in China and India next year.⁵ The slowdown is particularly pronounced in the European Union, where growth is projected to decline from 3.6% in 2022 to 0.7% this year. G-20 emerging market economies other than Brazil, China, and Russia are also expected to experience a slowdown this year.

I have previously reported on the debt crisis that many so-called emerging market economies are suffering.⁶ The IMF reckons that debt servicing costs are likely to rise sharply and with many poor economies relying substantially on foreign currency denominated borrowing, they are vulnerable to a currency crash.

Meanwhile, the World Food Program estimates that about 345 million people will be 'food insecure' in 2023 - almost 200 million more than in early 2020. According to the IMF, high energy prices, particularly natural gas, have contributed to higher food prices and have driven an increased reliance on higher-emission fuels, such as coal, setting back the green transition.

The IMF sums it up:

... the medium-term outlook for global growth is at its lowest in decades. The IMF's five-year ahead global growth projections have steadily declined from a peak of 4.9 percent in 2013 to just 3.1 percent in 2023, lowering the pace of convergence in living standards between emerging market and developing economies and advanced economies, while also posing challenges for debt sustainability and investment in the climate transition.⁷

What is the problem? Well, the IMF refers to "monetary policy tightening to curb persistent inflation" (rising interest rates), "fiscal consolidation" (cuts in public spending and higher taxes) and the end of what I have called the 'sugar rush' in the post-pandemic recovery in 2021 and 2022.⁸

According to the IMF,

Some of this decline reflects the growth slowdown of previously rapidly growing economies such as China or Korea ... But some of the more recent slowdown may also reflect more ominous forces: the scarring impact of the pandemic, a slower pace of structural reforms, as well as the rising and increasingly real threat of geo-economic fragmentation leading to more trade tensions, less direct investment and a slower pace of innovation and technology adoption across fragmented 'blocks'.⁹

But these are surface factors. The underlying cause of the slowdown in productivity and world trade, and the increased geopolitical rivalry, is to be found in the slowing of productive investment growth in the major economies. What has been keeping growth up so far has been unproductive investment in finance, real estate and now military spending -

investment in technology, education and manufacturing has dropped away. And the basic reason for that is the stagnating and even downward trend in the global profitability of productive capital in the 23 years of the 21st century.

The IMF reports that "developing economies face large financing needs to meet their development goals and invest in climate action - to the order of \$3 trillion in additional annual spending by 2030 for emerging market economies excluding China - but many have limited policy space following multiple shocks".

It points out that "capital has generally not flowed freely from advanced economies to emerging market and developing economies, where returns on capital tend to be relatively higher". The imperialist bloc of countries have reduced capital exports: instead they are taking capital and profits out of the peripheral economies:

Despite some reversal after the GFC, uphill capital flows from emerging market and developing economies to advanced economies re-emerged in 2022. Going forward, a prolonged tightening of global financial conditions could trigger broad-based capital outflows from vulnerable emerging market and developing economies.

'Friend-shoring' is the name of the game, where companies in the so-called global north switch their investment to "countries that share similar geopolitical views" and away from their supposed enemies like China or Russia or 'non-aligned' countries.

Capitalist needs

Capitalism is failing to deliver on its own objectives: namely faster real output growth, higher investment and above all higher profitability of capital. What can be done? The IMF wants 'structural reforms' but what are these 'supply-side' measures? It wants more "labor market flexibility". That might mean more women in jobs, but it also means weaker trade unions and an end to protective labour laws and rights: ie, more exploitation.

The IMF wants "fiscal consolidation". That means higher taxes and lower public spending in order to restore 'debt sustainability'. It wants more clean energy investment "to deliver on climate commitments", and "increased multilateral cooperation to help address global challenges and prevent further fragmentation". But these proposals are wild, utopian hopes, given the increased spending on fossil fuel production and rising global

temperatures. Multilateral cooperation on 'debt resolution' for indebted poor countries is not happening, let alone any cancelling of the 'odious debt' forced on such countries.

On the contrary, the IMF is still enamoured by what it calls "financial globalisation", which "by facilitating greater cross-border capital flows has contributed to economic development around the world". This is not only because foreign investment might help poor countries (and we have seen that this is dubious), but also "capital flows may bring indirect benefits by imposing discipline on macroeconomic policies" - in other words, it can be used as blackmail to stop national governments introducing measures to stop 'financial globalisation'.

Indeed, the IMF admits that

... despite the crucial benefits of financial globalisation, it also exposes countries to certain risks, particularly in times of crisis. Capital flows can fuel the build-up of systemic vulnerabilities in the form of currency and maturity mismatches. Excessive capital flow volatility and vulnerability to sudden stops and reversals can be particularly severe in countries with weak monetary policy credibility. Greater integration into global financial markets also exposes an economy to spillovers from the global financial cycle, which can dampen monetary policy effectiveness, as policymakers lose control over domestic interest rates.

Exactly! Ask Africa, Latin America and south Asia.

Another 'reform' advocated by the IMF to boost capitalist growth is to reduce "inefficiencies associated with state-owned enterprises" (ie, privatisation); "lower regulatory barriers to entry" (less regulation and trade barriers) and increased "access to finance to foster business dynamism" (let the banks rule).

The climate change reform for the IMF is carbon pricing - a market solution to reduce emissions that so far has been a total failure.¹⁰ The IMF hopes for "careful international coordination, and consideration of international spillovers".

But don't hold your breath for anything coming out of the upcoming Cop28 international climate conference! ●

Michel Roberts blogs at thenextrecession.wordpress.com

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Claudia Sahm: formula

SWP

Scooby-Doo Marxism

There was a lot about the enemy being capitalism, but nothing much when it comes to strategy. **Scott Evans** reports on the SWP's weekend festival in Glasgow

Last weekend I attended the Socialist Workers Party's 'Marxism in Scotland' festival,¹ though I was only able to be present at three of the available eight parallel sessions (with 18 total individual sessions). The ones I attended were: 'Revolt in an age of catastrophe' (opening rally), 'The new age of catastrophe' (Alex Callinicos's book launch), and 'No rainbow capitalism: fighting for LGBT and liberation'.

The opening rally, 'Revolt in an age of catastrophe', featured a panel of speakers (not all SWP), discussing a handful of independent topics (strikes, Palestine, police violence, etc) for about 10 minutes each. Some of them spoke well, but, as this was a rally, there was little to delve into or criticise here. In each case what was being discussed was an injustice, its source, and some positive take-away on what has concretely been won.

The one identifiable big idea or 'strategy' is, as usual, 'one size fits all' streets and strikes, including for combating the far right. Contributions from the floor in the other two sessions were commonly also rally-esque, as it is the only thing a lot of the rank and file seem to be well trained in: identify and point to injustice, such as general or particular instances of poverty, alienation, homelessness, police violence, environmental degradation, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, etc; then point to the enemies, such as capitalists and bosses, landlords, police, the right, etc; next, cheerlead strikes and bring these broader ideas around injustice to picket lines; and shout about it all on the streets and online.

Alex Callinicos

The second session, on Callinicos's *The new age of catastrophe*,² can be summed up by a twist on Rosa Luxemburg's maxim that what we face is a choice between socialism or barbarism. For Callinicos, barbarism has arrived, and the question now is instead 'socialism through barbarism' ('through' not in the sense of 'by means of', but 'passing through'). Or, in his words, "revolution through catastrophe" rather than revolution to prevent it. For what it is worth, I always understood 'barbarism' in the Luxemburg sense as being something mutually exclusive from capitalism as we know it: more like a generalised warlordism, which massively depopulates, deindustrialises and deglobalises production - a sort of catastrophic non-mode of production.

Beyond this, the book looks to our present "multi-dimensional crisis" and for each aspect names the fundamental driver as the capitalist system. For example, "Putin's nuclear war is capitalism coming to kill us" - despite the fact, Callinicos says, that it is not even in the interest of the capitalist class to wage nuclear war. He picks out all the various environmental crises as being one of the key issues, where naming the system is essential and through which one can reach a new layer with socialist ideas - we agree; see Jack Conrad's *The little red climate book*³

It is a "new age" in comparison to the "first age of catastrophe", which in his talk he referred to as the early 20th century ending in 1945. What distinguishes the first from the second age is that



Every episode contained a penultimate scene in which the heroes unmask the villain

the first age was an economic and geopolitical catastrophe, driven by "fossil capitalism", driving capitalist growth and eventually the industrial war machine, plus the long depression and inter-imperial conflict (Michael Roberts was mentioned here). The second age is a biological catastrophe, consisting of climate breakdown and pandemics, and we also see the return of the spectre of inter-imperialist war, this time between the USA and China (he started the book before Russia's invasion of Ukraine).

I did not quite get the full gist of what Callinicos was trying to say when he referenced Walter Benjamin's writing on progress in *On the concept of history*, but it seemed to me as if he was doing two things: the first of which I agree with; and the second of which I do think has some merit if one avoids 'degrowth' traps.

First, criticising the notion of 'inevitable progress' as not just being wrong, but actually positively demotivating political action and covering people's eyes to the sheer gravity of the emergency situation we find ourselves in. Equally, 'inevitable doom' as doing the same; Extinction Rebellion he sees as a positive example of a group which helped to push back on this fatalism.

Second, the notion of socialist revolution not as a great leap forward, but an emergency break. Personally, I think a 21st century socialist revolution is necessarily a mix of both. It will involve a radical reallocation of labour away from obsolete and wasteful production (advertising, finance, 'here today, bin tomorrow' toys and widgets, huge military outlays, etc), which may result in many fewer labour hours (because all the crap is done away with) or many more (to get the whole world up to a comfortable standard of living) labour hours, spent in reproducing society in the first years of socialist planning. All this will certainly need to be balanced, so as to radically reduce "negative externalities" through reducing output or by pursuing green technologies - or both. Whatever will actually be the case, my conclusion from a "mix of both" is a fairly modest one with regards to agitation and propaganda: you can appeal to different political temperaments among the working class by sometimes stressing the

revolutionary leap aspect, sometimes the conserving our world, plus the standard-of-living aspect of socialist revolution.

Rainbow

The third session I attended, 'No rainbow capitalism: fighting for LGBT and liberation', contained some Marxism on issues of oppression - specifically around sexuality and gender - but also many frustrating elements of how this is often approached on the left.

Tomáš Tengely-Evans was the main speaker from the panel. The other one was too rushed in what he said for me to follow along easily, and did not seem to directly address the title very well; if one already agrees transphobia, homophobia, and so on have to be tackled by socialists, that rightists are awful on the issues, and that 'pinkwashing' of Israel is to be resisted, there was not much there to grapple with, as far as I heard.

One side of Tengely-Evans' talk attempted to take a historical-materialist approach to sexuality, which will probably be fairly familiar to most readers, focusing on the family - especially the nuclear family - as the key source of repression under capitalism. This contrasts to prior modes of production, where the family household was less of a key unit in societal reproduction and so where this unfreedom was absent or less pronounced. Additionally, with capitalism is created the idea of LGBT+ as a matter of being, a social identity. Discrimination based on act (or role-in-act - eg, 'bottoming') becomes under capitalism a more pronounced repression based on being. Because of these changes in class and family relations and attendant re-conceptualisations of sexual identity as such, LGBT+ people under capitalism have become more systematically oppressed as LGBT+ people, and alongside this a repressive heteronormativity took root in society.

As for the title's promised strategy, all we got is: 'The ruling class uses identity issues to divide us, so we need to overcome those divisions'. True as far as it goes, but this alone does not amount to much. Later added to this from the floor was the idea of "first they came for ..." as a powerful motivator of solidarity, including between sexual, gender and racial majorities/minorities. A couple of people argued that it is

impossible to bring socialism about, while some identity or minority rights are left behind, because "we aren't free until we're all free" (a principle of the socialist movement, but surely not an explanation for this so-called inevitability) and the most oppressed among the working class will necessarily rise to the forefront of the movement for socialism. Another argued that oppression cannot persist after the revolution for long, because the abolition of class will result in its withering away in fairly short order.

One of the key thrusts of the talk and the contributions from the floor was the idea that all oppression based on identity is rooted in the capitalist system - this was further expanded (or 'corrected') in the course of discussion to class society in general. Going along with this, throughout all of the contributions were fairly numerous references to pre-capitalist and especially pre-class society which were a bit underdeveloped. Engels' work on this got a citation, but it is disappointingly very rare to hear more modern ethnography and anthropology mentioned before speaking so authoritatively on it, especially as some of the cruder ideas around this come close to being little more than 'just so' stories about angelic human nature, with a couple of skim-read 19th century citations, and sometimes approach the 'noble savage' idea. We do not have to overegg it to be convinced that human nature is communistic.

Some of the discussion was lacking in a more dynamical and emergent view of how some phenomena come about: ie, not variants of 'The ruling class decided to create the nuclear family', and a more variegated understanding of different family structures outside of the patriarchal nuclear family, which continue to exist under capitalism. Surprisingly, none of the speakers spoke on religious institutions, which I would suggest are an important second community beyond the family to consider as part of this.

Any significant oppression or bigotry outside 'the west' was described by some as being created by capitalism and then exported by colonialism, with some going so far as to say that this cannot or should not be addressed without overthrowing capitalism or certain aspects of the imperialist world system. This seems in contradiction

with the point about overcoming divisions, unless revolution is to be delivered to the rest of the world by a revolutionary wave emerging purely from within the imperial core, with little antecedent development in the periphery.⁴ Where is the negative and positive agency of those in 'non-western' countries here, both in terms of having a hand in producing and reproducing oppressive/repressive laws and institutions and of having the possibility of challenging this now without waiting for the end of capitalism or some specific imperial order?

While the correct Marxist position was expressed on speaking for the whole of the oppressed, while insisting on maintaining independent working class organisation and rejecting cross-class organisational unity, nothing concrete was elaborated on this and a bit of introspection on the popular-frontist history of Stand Up To Racism and initiatives like it would have been nice - though the Gay Liberation Front was cited a number of times as a concrete positive example of an 'identity movement' worth following.

Reductionists

The 'class reductionists' were also mentioned, who, according to those who spoke, think identity is a mere distraction from bread-and-butter or more fundamental issues. Certainly there are some so-called Marxists who largely just want to sweep under the rug issues of transphobia, racism, homophobia and so on until 'after the revolution'. But the way in which this question was dealt with highlights a common issue, meaning that the session was not as enlightening as it could have been: namely the method of picking the 'most stupid, but actually existing' or one-dimensionalised picture of one's opponent and attacking that. Perhaps some group of thinkers is missing something very obvious, working from bad assumptions or 'arguing in bad faith', but at least do them and yourselves the benefit of approaching things at least once with serious engagement.

We all pretty much agree on the need to name the system, when confronted with instances of exploitation, oppression or domination under capitalism. The Lenin quote, beginning "the Social Democrat's ideal should not be the trade union secretary, but the tribune of the people", is relevant here and was mentioned in this session. But sometimes when I hear someone do this 'capitalism reveal', and especially over the course of this weekend, I cannot help but think of the term 'scooby-doo Marxism', I believe first coined by the journal *Chuang* in its article, 'Social contagion: microbiological class war in China' on the Covid outbreak: "the simple 'scooby-doo Marxist' exercise of pulling the mask off the villain to reveal that, yes indeed, it was capitalism ... all along"●

Notes

1. marxism.scot, around 500 tickets sold.
2. socialistworker.co.uk/features/new-age-of-catastrophe-mapping-out-the-crisis.
3. communistparty.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/the_little_red_climate-book_Jack_Conrad.pdf.
4. There is some important truth in this. See: migrantsrights.org.uk/2023/02/24/homophobia-british-empire-export; and E Han and J O'Mahoney *British colonialism and the criminalization of homosexuality* Cambridge 2014.

DSA

Success brings challenges

There is a need to struggle against peaceful co-existence between factions, insists **Anne McShane** - an observer at last weekend's Marxist Unity Group congress

We were invited to send two CPGB online observers to the Marxist Unity Group congress in the USA on November 11-12. It was an interesting experience, and we learned a lot about the US left, and the Democratic Socialists of America in particular, over the weekend.

The event began with a presentation by the CPGB's Mike Macnair on unity with the right wing of the workers' movement. He stressed that disagreement is normal in human society, and that the key problem with the sects is training their comrades to act like disciples, rather than skilled thinkers able to connect programme with practice. Homogeneity produces sects, whose members can only spout the line. Instead we need both unity and diversity to develop a political party which is a voice for the working class in *all* its diversity.

In the discussion which followed, a recurring theme was how to criticise and raise differences within the DSA. The founders of MUG now find themselves in a very different position to a year ago. Following a dynamic intervention at the DSA national convention in August, MUG now has two representatives on the National Political Committee. Its arguments on winning the battle for democracy have proven to be effective and influential - in particular its focus on opposing the current US constitution and taking political questions seriously.

But success brings new challenges. And to me there seemed to be a tension around how to fight for its programme in this new context. They are now in a situation where close working relationships have been built with members of other left factions, such as Red Star and Reform and Revolution. Comrades have thrashed out joint resolutions with R&R, which were presented to the August DSA convention. More recently a statement on the ongoing Israeli genocide was issued by MUG and the Red Star faction. It seems that these initiatives have been important and principled



The left is growing - and so is the need to stick to firm principles

moves. However, operating in a multi-tendency organisation like the DSA can push you towards continual compromise in an effort to increase your forces and to 'get things done'. This is particularly a pressure for the comrades on the NPC, who are operating alongside representatives from the other factions. It is something that comrades need to be keenly aware of and consciously fight against.

What unity

There was much discussion around what kind of unity the comrades want to build. It did seem to me that there was far too much emphasis on cooperation with the other left groups in the DSA - with one participant arguing that there was a need to work with other factions without necessarily trying to win them to MUG politics. A resolution entitled 'Protecting the big tent' included a sentence, which read: "In order to function as a multi-tendency organization, we must seek unity in diversity." This is true, of course, but your political criticisms should not be minimised in order to do so. You need to struggle against peaceful coexistence.

Concern about an orientation to broad leftism was expressed by one comrade, who argued that there

appeared to be a tendency to water down principles in order to fit in with the 'big tent' perspective. Instead the comrades should "aim to win, not just try to coexist with other factions". The comrade was concerned that some of the language was "pulling back" on that commitment.

One of the representatives on the NPC argued that it was necessary to block with others like Red Star to get resolutions through. The MUG faction on the leadership body puts forward proposed amendments and resolutions, rather than engaging in "friendly chatter". Differences should not be considered from a 'left v right' framework, but needed a deeper analysis. The same comrade who had expressed concern about the 'big tent' perspective also raised a problem with rejecting the left v right framework and argued that, although it may seem demonising, the distinction is useful. The right are loyal to the bourgeois state, while wanting it reformed, and rightwing tendencies need to be identified clearly as such, in order to combat opportunism.

Connected with this debate was how to deal with the paid staff of the DSA, who continually obstruct action and undermine the left. It was believed that officials were needed, but had to be accountable. This was countered by a representative of Reform and Revolution (there as an observer), who argued that Maria Svart, the national director of the DSA, should be replaced.

Democracy

An amendment was proposed by a number of members to replace all references to "democratic socialist republic" in the 2023 perspectives document with just "democratic republic". The comrade moving it argued that the democratic republic is the form of the workers' state and therefore should be described in that manner. Adding 'socialist' to it creates confusion and removes it from immediate demands. He was opposed by some and one argument was that there was a tendency to deemphasise socialism and stress democracy. The resolution was lost, which is in my view a step backwards. I actually cannot understand the reason for opposing it, particularly given the emphasis of MUG on the need to extend democracy and fight the constitution. That has been what has distinguished it from the other factions.

The discussion then moved on to the question of intervention in the 2024 presidential elections. A resolution had been put forward for the DSA to call for a vote for Cornel West, who has announced his intention to stand. West is a populist academic and political maverick, who describes himself as a socialist and intends to

stand as an independent. The proposal to campaign in a similar way to the previous Bernie Sanders contest was countered by an amendment to drop this commitment. Cornel West has apparently shown himself to be so deeply problematic that giving him any kind of support would do the DSA and the MUG a good deal of harm. Instead the DSA should not support any candidate, but instead intervene to expose the undemocratic nature of the elections and focus on campaigns such as bodily autonomy and trans rights. Contributions in the debate included assertions that elections only represent passive voting, as compared to trade union and base building projects - tenants' rights, unemployed organising and other such campaigns.

The amendment was carried. As an outsider, it seems to me that this gives the MUG a problem. It means that it does not call for the DSA to put forward a political alternative in the election. The proposers of the original motion were correct that, even within the US system, elections are an important time of political engagement. Surely a critical vote for West would create more space for a debate about replacing the two-party system with a democratic republic? Running single-issue campaigns as an alternative just does not address these questions.

The final question which seemed to me to be an important one was the recruitment and education of MUG members. Since 2022 the number of members has grown significantly, and the group has a wider geographical reach. While still small, it has become a significant force within the DSA. But growth has brought organisational and political problems. A resolution was passed to pause the "onboarding and recruitment process" for six months. This involved the launch of a campaign for new forces to join the group, mostly online.

It was recognised that there is a need for the group to organise these new members more effectively and to educate them more comprehensively. And all but a couple of members agreed that this is necessary in order to consolidate MUG's achievements. The newly elected central committee will develop training methods for members to utilise in their DSA chapters. It will review previous recruitment methods, and ensure that greater emphasis is given going forward to interviewing applicants, educating new recruits and coordinating their work.

This is all a huge challenge for the group - stretched as it is across such a gigantic country. The decision to have a pause (and hopefully review) of the onboarding process is definitely a good one, especially as it gives an opportunity to deepen the education of newer members. Something which is very necessary, to ensure that tendencies towards broad leftism, base building and identity politics are countered.

A number of other initiatives were agreed, including establishing a programme commission to discuss devising a minimum-maximum programme for the DSA. There was a healthy, sharp exchange of views and a comradely atmosphere.

The perspectives are to be published, which will provide another opportunity - both for comrades in the US and abroad - to examine and debate the current very welcome development of US Marxism ●

What we fight for

■ Without organisation the working class is nothing; with the highest form of organisation it is everything.

■ There exists no real Communist Party today. There are many so-called 'parties' on the left. In reality they are confessional sects. Members who disagree with the prescribed 'line' are expected to gag themselves in public. Either that or face expulsion.

■ Communists operate according to the principles of democratic centralism. Through ongoing debate we seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support agreed actions, members should have the right to speak openly and form temporary or permanent factions.

■ Communists oppose all imperialist wars and occupations but constantly strive to bring to the fore the fundamental question—ending war is bound up with ending capitalism.

■ Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of working class and progressive parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of national sectionalism. It is an internationalist duty to uphold the principle, 'One state, one party'.

■ The working class must be organised globally. Without a global Communist Party, a Communist International, the struggle against capital is weakened and lacks coordination.

■ Communists have no interest apart from the working class as a whole. They differ only in recognising the importance of Marxism as a guide to practice. That theory is no dogma, but must be constantly added to and enriched.

■ Capitalism in its ceaseless search for profit puts the future of humanity at risk. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, exploitation and crisis. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally.

■ The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote.

■ We will use the most militant methods objective circumstances allow to achieve a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, a united, federal Ireland and a United States of Europe.

■ Communists favour industrial unions. Bureaucracy and class compromise must be fought and the trade unions transformed into schools for communism.

■ Communists are champions of the oppressed. Women's oppression, combating racism and chauvinism, and the struggle for peace and ecological sustainability are just as much working class questions as pay, trade union rights and demands for high-quality health, housing and education.

■ Socialism represents victory in the battle for democracy. It is the rule of the working class. Socialism is either democratic or, as with Stalin's Soviet Union, it turns into its opposite.

■ Socialism is the first stage of the worldwide transition to communism - a system which knows neither wars, exploitation, money, classes, states nor nations. Communism is general freedom and the real beginning of human history.

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Fighting fund

Play your part

I'm afraid to say that, despite a couple of excellent donations, the last week has been a little disappointing for the *Weekly Worker* fighting fund.

As regular readers will know, we need to raise £2,250 every month in order to match all our costs, but, as things stand at the moment, the running total for November is just £827. In other words, with exactly half the month gone as I write, we are just over a third of the way there!

True, we are about to enter that time of the month when several substantial standing orders come our way, but that will not be enough to get us home without a good few other comrades chipping in too. Please follow the example of some of the readers who contributed over the last seven days.

First there is comrade TG, who donated a fantastic £100 by bank transfer; then there were RL and US comrade PM, who both donated £50 via PayPal. Other bank transfers/standing orders came from OG (£24), SA (£12),

PM, CC and JL (£10 each), while MZ transferred the same amount from Italy using PayPal. Finally comrade Hassan made his usual cash donation of a fiver to one of our comrades.

Unfortunately, however, all the above comes to a rather paltry £281 - way behind the going rate, if we're going to get anywhere near where we need to be each month to keep producing the only paper in Britain that fights for the single, democratic, Marxist party that is so desperately needed.

So please pay your part by sending us a cheque, clicking on the PayPal button on our website or making a bank transfer. You could even set up a standing order.

Let's get back on track, comrades! ●

Robbie Rix

Our bank account details are name: Weekly Worker sort code: 30-99-64 account number: 00744310 To make a donation or set up a regular payment visit weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/donate

weekly worker

One of biggest demonstrations in British history



Some 900,000 marched behind lead banners

March of time

There were peaceful multitudes from front to end. Ian Spencer reports on London's giant demonstration

So Cruella Braverman has gone. For those of us on the Palestine solidarity demonstration in London on November 11, her departure is highly satisfying - not before time. Now the government looks afraid and on the road to internecine warfare. No-one has ever wanted to be sacked more than Braverman - she must have relished it. And, if she does not get to lead the Tory Party, a bright future at GB News awaits.

As if the government was not farcical enough, to plug the gap in the cabinet we now see the return to office of the worst ever prime minister but three - a foreign secretary who has not even been elected as an MP, appointed by a prime minister who was not elected to his office either ... so goes the refrain on Labour's benches. 'Dodgy Dave' Cameron is still under investigation for lobbying for Greensill to join the Corporate Covid Financing Facility and letting him take £3.3 million for his shares, before the company collapsed with £1 billion and 440 jobs lost.

However, in Whitehall, Tommy Robinson and his gammon mates had a few hundred out to defend the Cenotaph on November 11 - presumably from the police, who got there first, mainly because they had not spent the morning in the pub. Even the 'breakaway' from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign march went nowhere near the Cenotaph and got into trouble for 'wearing face masks' and 'letting off fireworks' - most of which were those red and

green smoke flares that do so much to bring a bit of colour to a sea of red, green, white and black flags.

Now to the proper demo. It was supposed to be Braverman's finest hour. She did everything she could to ensure that it was a blood-soaked riot, violating the Armistice Day holy of holies. A violent clash would have put those woke lefties in the Metropolitan Police in their place and provided the basis for banning future Palestine solidarity marches, with their irksome hostility to genocide and the murder of children on a biblical scale. Instead, there were peaceful multitudes from end to end, who felt that a day that commemorates the killing of millions is a good day to demand that we stop doing it.

Iraq war

Size may not be everything, but last Saturday it really was. I do not pretend to know how many turned up on the day. I got to Marble Arch at about 12 noon and by 3pm I was making my way around Hyde Park Corner. There were six lanes of marchers, as well as those who passed through the park. The only time I have ever seen such a crowd was during the great demonstration against the Iraq war, which was widely believed to be a million-strong. The police and their media outlet, the BBC, said there were 300,000 (other wild guesses are available). The whole thing took well over six hours go from Hyde Park to get anywhere near the US embassy in Nine Elms.

As far as doublethink is concerned, the description of a call for peace as a 'hate march' would have been dismissed by George Orwell as a bit far-fetched. However, Braverman's use of the term, as well as her accusation that the police were favouring the left over the right, was not well received by the Metropolitan police. Commissioner Mark Rowley clearly felt there must be a legal basis for banning a demonstration (and losing a day's overtime). Mind you, I did not see a cop until I got to Hyde Park Corner, where some were ensconced in their vans, unheeded by the crowds.

Talking of crowds, I saw people of all ages. Particularly heart-warming were young people leading the chants. Some of these were children of primary school age. They were not dragged along and told what to shout by 'competitive dad' types. They were kids who already have a more highly developed moral sense than the leader of the Labour Party, who does not seem to know, as they do, that murdering thousands is a war crime. There were lots of home-made placards, including from Muslims, Jews and pacifists, as well as the left. My particular favourite was from a woman of West Indian heritage, which read, "All Tories are Bloodclarts". Quite so.

The government, police and press have been busy scanning through the placards to assess their anti-Semitic quotient. Funny how the constant government assertion of a deep undercurrent of anti-Semitism did

not put off the many hundreds, if not thousands, of Jewish demonstrators, who like the rest of the march, can tell the difference between Judaism and Zionism. In fact, the organised Jewish groups were particularly warmly received, including the orthodox, who regard the Zionist state as blasphemous as well as murderous.

Distinction

I imagine that a good statistician could work out the likelihood, in any given gathering of near a million people, what proportion of them are likely to have haemorrhoids. By the same token, I should think that at least some will have expressed support for Hamas or failed to understand the distinction between Judaism and Zionism. But they would have been, in comparison with the totality, an extremely small minority - certainly fewer than those with haemorrhoids.

One placard I did see, which has been singled out for attention, features a Star of David with a swastika in the middle and the words, "No British politician should be a 'friend of Israel'". Personally, I do not like the use of 'Nazi' or 'fascist' as an off-the-peg epithet for authoritarian nationalists. These are terms best reserved for ... Nazis and fascists - a feature of that concatenation of events in the 1930s in countries with a large and threatened petty bourgeoisie. However, I understand that a placard is designed for its visual impact, and very few make it

as a basis for a detailed analysis of Middle Eastern political economy. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then it skilfully encapsulates the well-documented historical relationship between the Nazis and Zionists. It points to their common *modus operandi* of ethnic cleansing and annihilation, as well as a reminder of the singular failure of bourgeois politicians to stop the Nazis or help the Jews of Europe when they had the chance.

It is also worth reminding people of the number of politicians who are members of Labour and Conservative Friends of Israel and in receipt of funding from them. I daresay the tourist industry in Eilat would have collapsed years ago without the busloads of politicians on all-expenses-paid 'fact-finding tours'.

The response to the Israeli war on Gaza evokes the memory of how, for many years, the plight of the people of Vietnam was only the concern of the politicised. I would like to think that the sight of children on fire with napalm will always be greeted with horror and revulsion - as it was by me as a child. Not long after that I regarded myself as a communist.

I found the demonstration life-affirming, if only because the obscenity of the destruction of al-Shifa Hospital is just as disgusting to all ages today. While it takes more than demonstrations to change the world, those that span the globe at least constitute a beginning of something ●