

weekly **worker**



Alan Woods and Socialist Appeal's 'Mad Men' marketing 'Are you a communist?' turn

- Letters and debate
- Corbyn diehards
- Muslim Brotherhood
- Defend jury system

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Towards a mass Communist Party

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**ZIONISM
NEEDS
ANTI-SEMITISM**

LETTERS



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

Global defeat?

I agree with a good deal in comrade Mike Macnair's article, 'A communist appeal to Socialist Appeal', but I cannot agree with the assertion that "From the perspective of 30 years on, it is now clear that, in spite of all their vices, the fall of the eastern bloc regimes was a massive *defeat* for the working class across the globe" (November 9).

The Stalinist regimes did all they could to suppress any kind of independent workers' movement within their own borders, while subordinating them elsewhere to the foreign policy of the USSR and its satellites. This was not just a question of a few "vices". The failure of Stalinism - typified not only by the nonsense of 'socialism in one country', but also by state ownership of the means of production and brutal authoritarianism being passed off as socialism (not communism) - is, after 30 years, still to be welcomed.

After all, it was the working class that made the system unviable. Denied the possibility of organising, politically and collectively, they resisted their oppression in the only way an atomised workforce can; by working badly. To assert that the collapse of the eastern bloc is a defeat would seem to imply that it was okay for the workers of those countries to simply endure.

To argue that the collapse of the most powerful base of Stalinism was a defeat would seem to suggest that there was an alternative, which is at odds with comrade Macnair's acknowledgement that the "defeat may have been inevitable". The political economy of the eastern bloc had no mature form and served only to discredit the entire communist project, as anyone who has had a conversation with someone who said 'Then sod off to Russia, if you like it so much' can attest.

From my own experience, the USSR was a horrible place to live because of the very nature of the system and not the Russian people. The only people I met there who called themselves communists were Great Russian chauvinists with a red veneer as thin as gold leaf.

That brutal repression was one of the few things that kept the powerful contradictions in the system in check is a testament to the fact that what passed for ideology was so far removed from reality that no-one believed it and, if anything, assumed its inversion to be closer to the truth. Tragically, experiencing capitalism is a prerequisite for learning the necessity of superseding it.

World revolution breaking out might, of course, have saved the working class of the eastern bloc from the grisly experience of capitalism, but, while the USSR and its satellites were still operating, what were the chances of that?

Ian Spencer
County Durham

Brittle polemic

Mike Macnair's article, 'Unity based on solid principles' (November 2), evidences important points in practice, I think, on the

question of political clarity.

In my previous letter (October 26), I raised the issue of political culture and suggested that a defensive political culture results, in practice, in the closing down of discussion, criticism, questioning, etc - and so a weakening of political clarity. The concern expressed by members of the CPGB has also been that we may lose political clarity, but from the other side: through self-censure of a different kind - being too afraid to upset others and so withholding criticism of them.

I agree, in principle, that anything which constrains the expression of difference will weaken the movement/organisation - although I think it is something of a false set-up. Firstly, sharp polemic and criticism which meaningfully clarifies difference is clearly possible *without* a culture of defensive, brittle and personal responses. Secondly, opportunistic self-censure (in which open expression of difference is discouraged on the basis that it appears disloyal, weak and disunited) is a very different thing to giving consideration as to how differences and criticism can be expressed in a way that encourages others to engage in this exchange rather than disengage.

In any case, though, the importance of the expression of difference and political clarity can be considered as some kind of starting point.

It is in this context, then, that I struggled to grapple with the approach to polemic Mike took in his article - an approach of variously misreading/misrepresenting the perspectives of others, inappropriately grouping them into ill-fitting wider categories, and then proceeding to dismiss them via these arbitrary categorisations.

As one brief example, from Mike's article, nowhere did I argue that the CPGB "should move away from ideological polemic", or agree to "avoid polemics" around "differences that divide the left". I wouldn't argue these things, because they are not what I believe. What I actually wrote (September 14) was: "... the approach of ideological polemic is absolutely fundamental to advancing Marxist unity - without this forming a core, the idea of unity easily becomes one of fudges and the illusion that if we all just got on and stopped focusing on our differences then we could come together as a whole." So almost the complete opposite.

I don't think this is an effective example of an approach, then, which promotes the exchange of perspectives and the clarification of political difference in practice, given that it is based, by and large, on things that have not actually been written or said by others.

Caitriona Ryland
Bolton

Corrections

Mike Macnair's excellent article, 'Aim for deZionisation' (November 16), is in need of two minor corrections.

First, Mike states that "the origin of imperialist support for the Zionist project from the 1917 Balfour Declaration on" was "at first, attempts by the UK to keep control of the oil taps at the expense of France and Germany". This, however, was less than half of the UK motivation. It is true that since 1913 (when First

Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill converted the British navy from coal to oil) control of oil was a major consideration for UK global strategy. But in 1917 control of the Suez Canal, securing a short sea route to India, was at least as important.

Second, Mike implies that the US "subsidises Israel ... extensively". This used to be the case quite a long time ago, but is no longer true. The annual US aid to Israel is in the order of \$3.5 billion, virtually all of which is military. Israel's annual GDP is in the order of \$500 billion, and its annual state budget around \$150 billion (all figures are before the current war against the Palestinians). So, in purely economic terms, US aid is a significant, but not critical, factor.

However, Israel does depend on the US in having access to certain crucial advanced weapons, in keeping ahead of all neighbouring states combined in conventional weapons, and in having a regional monopoly on nuclear weapons.

Moshé Machover
email

Zionist caste

The recent exchange, over several weeks, between Daniel Lazare and Tony Greenstein, brings out clearly the political weaknesses of both - rampant capitulation to Jewish-Zionist chauvinism by Lazare; a more distanced and residual softness by Tony, that periodically pollutes his much good material and often extremely courageous activities.

On one of the decisive issues - the pan-imperialist nature of Zionism, which is glaringly obvious today - Tony sides with Zionism, as personified by its apologist, Lazare, who is apoplectic when anyone touches the question of Zionism's international dimension and the role of the Jewish-Zionist caste within the imperialist bourgeoisie, in cementing in place the cult of Zionism among them that is obvious today, with virtually universal support for the genocide of Palestinians among them.

It is worth noting that pre-war anti-Semitism was, in that sense, a lesser god, and unlike in Gaza today, the imperialist powers were *not* unified in support of Hitler's genocide of the Jews. Today's cult of Zionism largely derives from the widespread belief among the ideologues of neoliberalism that Jewish-Zionist neoliberal economists and ideologues - a whole gaggle of them most prominently led by Milton Friedman - saved the capitalist system itself from what seemed at the time to be a potentially deadly crisis in the 1970s.

As a semi-Zionist ideologue, Lazare slanders David Miller in characteristic manner by baldly stating that the mere observation that (mainly Zionist) Jews are 'overrepresented' in positions of property and power in this society implies that there should be some kind of pogrom against them. So we get this pathetic injunction to deny reality:

"As for Greenstein's defence of Miller's remark about Jews being 'overrepresented in Europe, North America and Latin America in positions of cultural, economic and political power', it's absurd. Due to some lingering Bolshevik loyalty, he says the comment would be bad if applied to the Russian Revolution, in which the Jewish presence was indeed heavy.

But as a lower-class *enragé*, he says it's totally OK in terms of a despised media establishment, in which 'Jews are prominent ... out of all proportion to their numbers in the population'.

"But 'overrepresented' doesn't mean that there are many Jews in high places. It means that there are *too* many and that their numbers should therefore be reduced. This is anti-Semitism plain and simple" (Letters, September 14).

This is rubbish. 'Overrepresented' means represented in 'positions of power' in excess of the representation of Jews among the population as a whole, particularly in the main imperialist countries. It has nothing to do with any effort to change that situation; it refers simply to the phenomenon of disproportionate representation itself.

It is obvious from this logic-chopping that Lazare does not deny that this disproportionate representation exists. His underlying message is: 'Sure, this exists, but don't dare talk about this overrepresentation, so as to avoid being accused of the dreaded "anti-Semitism"'. In other words, don't talk about the material facts that Lazare, as a semi-Zionist, wants to hide, as that makes you fair game to be slandered as a 'racist' in his warped manner.

That is fundamentally anti-communist and racist in its thrust - anti-communist because of its presupposition that there are some facts (whose accuracy he does not dispute) that Marxists are not allowed to notice and analyse (which completely contradicts historical materialism, the most basic substrate of all genuine Marxist analysis). And racist, because the disproportionate representation of an oppressor group "in positions of cultural, economic and political power" means disproportionately *less* such political influence by their victims: the Palestinian people. So, Lazare's *real* message is that 'Jews are more important than Arabs, and anyone who points to disproportionate Jewish influence over western politics should shut up. And, as for Palestinians, fuck them, and let them be exterminated along with their children'. That's the disgusting subtext of his argument, and that of all the other capitulators to Zionism (of various shades) who have made this wretched argument previously.

The only way he can justify this is with 'arguments' that echo the worst hackery of Stalinism and Zionism - which have a lot in common, of course, given that Stalin actually armed the Zionists in the 1948 war in pursuit of a popular front with an aspiring left-Zionist would-be president of the United States (Henry Wallace). The smear against genuine Trotskyists as pro-Nazi was always driven by popular frontism. But it's funny that most of this kind of 'Nazi'-baiting of anti-Zionists today seems to come from Zionist pseudo-lefts like the AWL, who are also allied with Nazi Banderite nationalists in Ukraine. To his credit, Lazare is sympathetic to the Donbass and Crimean people in this conflict. Which makes his Zionist apologetics seem incongruous (unless they are perhaps a bit Trumpian?).

Anyway, for Lazare, to notice that the disproportionate representation of Zionist Jews

in the ruling classes of western Europe and North America gives Zionists a huge degree of power over the Palestinians - as is clearly visible now, as *every* North American and west European imperialist country has given its backing to this Zionist holocaust - is somehow equivalent to the *Protocols of Zion*.

But this tract said that Jewish capitalists were in league with Jewish communists to erect some kind of world tyranny over non-Jews. Completely at odds with that bizarre thesis, the bourgeois layer that became dominant among western (mainly Ashkenazi) Jews after the overwhelming bulk of the communist Jews were wiped out by the Nazis in the genocide during World War II has, by means of its own transplanted imperialist Israeli state in west Asia, become a full imperialist partner of the west in plundering the global south. If he wants to criticise my positions, he should try to refute this thesis. But he can't, which is why with his pathetic 'Nazi' analogies he sounds like an amalgam of Andrei Vyshinsky and Wes Streeting.

Actually, in itself the overrepresentation of Jews in the ruling class means nothing. It is the overrepresentation of *Zionists* that is important. If Zionism did not exist, then it would have no more relevance than the overrepresentation of the Ismaili Muslim trend among promoters of horse-racing - a mere curiosity. However, in the real world, political Zionism is the overwhelmingly dominant trend among bourgeois Jews, so they approximate to the same thing. And the idea that Zionism is nothing to do with Jewishness in any shape or form, as promoted (at times) by Tony, is an evasion of the truth.

Of course, Zionism is a Jewish trend (though far from the only Jewish trend!). It is a movement to establish a Jewish-exclusivist imperialist state, which it has done. Only Jews are entitled by birthright to become citizens of that state: non-Jewish sympathisers, no matter how numerous and powerful, can only be fellow-travellers of that movement, which could not exist without a sufficient mass of actual Zionist Jews prepared to implement it. That is the whole point of David Miller's point about overrepresentation of Jews in the ruling class. It is the primary driver of the Zionist lobby and its power.

Tony Greenstein (Letters, November 2) agrees with the semi-Zionist Lazare in ridiculing my position that there is a "pan-national" Jewish bourgeoisie. But the core of my thesis is that there is a pan-imperialist (and only in that limited sense pan-national) Jewish-Zionist bourgeois caste within the imperialist bourgeoisie, as well as a cult among that same imperialist bourgeoisie that virtually worships that caste as a class-conscious bourgeois vanguard. Yet Tony has himself admitted that one key difference between South African apartheid and Israel is that white-ruled South Africa never had anything remotely like the Israel lobby at its disposal.

The Israeli Law of Return gives all Jewish bourgeois *citizenship rights* in Israel, and a bourgeois ideological basis centred on a concept of exile and homecoming.

This is *designed* to create loyalty to the Israeli state from Jews overseas; for Jewish bourgeois, it equally is designed to give them a *class* and communal interest in the Israeli bourgeois state. That was always the strategy of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideologues who founded Zionism as a movement to enhance the power of particularly the European Jewish bourgeoisie by giving them their 'own' transplanted imperialist state in the Middle East.

In doing so they transformed Jews from an oppressed population pre-World War II to an oppressor population today. Tony's agreement with the semi-Zionist Lazare's pathetic non-critique of my position and analysis, and denial of obvious reality, really indicates that his critique of Zionism is not as coherent and consistent as he thinks it is, in spite of his sterling work in many fields.

Ian Donovan
Consistent Democrats

Starmer's Zionism

Carla Roberts' letter raises important questions concerning how a real Communist Party is going to be reformed in Britain (November 16). She rightly castigates several organisations for their Corbyn-like programmes, but suggests that he gained support because "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". Ambiguously, this leaves the suspicion that Carla shares illusions held by Corbynites. As CPGB comrades have stated, for a start, Corbyn would never have been allowed to become prime minister by the British state - that was Corbynite cloud cuckoo land.

And, from my understanding of the Stop Starmer campaign in his Holborn and St Pancras constituency, one of its aims is to expose Sir Keir for what he is: a rightwing anti-democrat. It reflects a currently pale, generalised opposition to the thoroughly bourgeois thrust of the Labour leadership as a whole. After all, like many such campaigns, the primary purpose of having a protest candidate at election time is to raise the political profile of the campaign - getting the candidate elected is a bonus. Even the present CPGB has put up election candidates in order to give its policies, agitation and propaganda a wider reach. As a tactic it has its merits, to be debated.

John Wake's letter in the same issue chastises Starmer for opposing a ceasefire in Gaza. But this is naive. Why would someone who personally and politically supports Zionism be opposed to anything that Israeli-state Zionism is doing in Gaza? An article carried by *Jewish News* on February 14 2020 quoted Starmer as declaring: "I support Zionism without qualification." Support for racism, of which Zionism is presently a virulent variety, has long been anathema for the labour movement. And, despite previous covertly racist and openly imperialist stances, Starmer must be the first leader of the party to have brazenly espoused a well-delineated, racist ideology. Now that Zionism powers the murder of thousands of innocents in Gaza (the world's biggest ghetto since Warsaw), Starmer, the leadership and much of the Labour Party are squarely in the class enemy camp.

While undermining the real fight against anti-Semitic racism, the reactionary and revisionist definition of anti-Semitism now embraced by the Labour Party is pervasively, foully and wrongly attached to opposition to Israel or Zionism. It is chilling how some prominent Labour lefts have succumbed to Zionism's pressure, especially as the Israel Defence Forces' ethnic cleansing in Gaza is no better than Nazism: it is genocide.

In that same *Jewish News* article where Starmer boasted of supporting Zionism was the writer's statement that previously he had been "criticised on Twitter after he declined to call himself a Zionist. Other contenders, Emily Thornberry, Lisa Nandy and Rebecca Long-Bailey, did." Is this true? Long-Bailey was the great hope of Labour's left in that leadership contest, after all. Did she call herself a Zionist, as the writer declares, or if not, when and where did her public correction appear?

Of course, the descent of Labour into overt racism in Zionist form is of a piece with the British bourgeoisie's kowtowing to US imperialism, which encourages Israel in its killing spree in Gaza, the occupied West Bank, etc. Nonetheless, the Labour leadership remains complacent about war criminal Tony Blair's triangulation approach: expecting most of the left to vote Labour no matter what. Is that now likely? The truth is out there, motivating hundreds of thousands of demonstrators on a weekly basis. Why should erstwhile Labour voters support a party that encourages Zionist mass murder?

Of course, Labour governments have sent British soldiers to kill overseas plenty of times, and now official Labour fully supports the murder of Palestinians by the Israeli proxies of *its* ruling class and the USA's. The main thrust of British foreign policy is fear of US retribution. The Wilson Labour government failed to support the USA in Vietnam and was punished as a consequence. The USA withdrew international fiscal support in the 1970s, resulting in a floating pound and economic subservience - swiftly followed by a chastened political subservience, which has been the status quo ever since. In this way, Britain's ruling class is perhaps even more obsequious towards the USA than Israel's, which takes more to whip into line.

Labour under Starmer seeks office by outbidding on every reactionary front: support for Israel is one such touchstone. But Britain's working class and democratic forces must not be recruited to this horror: communists must organise to counter the constant anti-democratic thrust of the bourgeoisie, including by the Labour misleaders in their misnamed party. Class traitors are destined to fall, but only by the organised rebellion and, ultimately, revolution of those they oppress.

It is a truism that those who support Israeli war crimes render *themselves* guilty of those crimes: and that includes Führer Starmer, his degraded Labour Party and its members - unless they revolt - who will all rightly be damned forever alongside Sunak's Tories and the rest of the British ruling class dreg. However, damnation needs to be materialised in agitation,

propaganda, organisation and unity in action: characteristics of a Communist Party worthy of the name.

Jim Moody
email

Sugary foam

On November 18, the Labour Left Alliance wrote an open letter, very short and extremely light on politics, to Socialist Appeal entitled 'We need real communist unity' I don't disagree with such sentiments obviously, but I am rather surprised to see an organisation such as the LLA coming out with such a statement, given that under its online constitution there is no mention of communism, the need for a Communist Party or even socialism. Rather it comes across as the usual Labour left 'motherhood and apple pie' of opposing nasty things, such as racism, and democratising the Labour Party.

I'm guessing that this is the work of a communist - or maybe even two or three, if we are being charitable - inside the LLA. I know that some LLA people have done, at times, valuable educational work, but I don't think there should be any pretence that we are talking about hundreds of people here. So I question the methodology of approaching self-declared communists as 'broad' Labour leftists with organisations that have more than an element of 'chocolate teapot' about them. Surely, in this particular political instance (and not discounting any future need to focus on the Labour Party), it makes sense for communists to talk to one another as *communists* without any extraneous 'broad' trappings.

Even more disastrously, the LLA open letter fails to differentiate between a party, or proto-party, and a sect. When it talks of communist unity, it says: "The examples to follow for us in this respect are particularly the Bolshevik Party, the Communist Party of Great Britain in the early 1920s, as well as the Revolutionary Communist Party of 1944." Really, comrades?

The CPGB represented the coming together of the advanced part of the British working class under the influence of the Russian Revolution and the Comintern, including the unity of various factional groups. The RCP (1944 vintage) was a semi-syndicalist sect of barely a few hundred that didn't in fact manage to pull together all the adherents of Trotskyism in Britain. It was the product of an internationalised sect, the Fourth International, that was then in the process of becoming seriously disorientated, as the war was ending. The extreme liquidationism of some of its elements towards the Labour Party found reflection in the later politics of Ted Grant that Socialist Appeal and the International Marxist Tendency show some signs of breaking away from.

All historical formations have glaring errors, but I don't think the RCP offers any positive lessons for communist unity and it is patently obvious that the example of the CPGB of the 1920s is the crucial one. In contrast to the LLA, I'd say forget all about the RCP and embark on a serious study of the CPGB as, in fact, some IMT members are starting to do.

Despite the LLA's new-found insistence on communist unity, it's impossible not to see in its open letter the bitter dregs of liquidationist politics underneath a sugary foam of sentiment.

Lawrence Parker
London

ACTION

National school strike for Palestine

Friday November 24, 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.

Solidarity with striking Amazon workers

Friday November 24, 12 noon: Protest outside Amazon UK HQ, Principal Place, Worship Street, London EC2. Support global action by Amazon workers this Black Friday, including GMB strikers at the BHX4 Coventry warehouse. Amazon must end unsafe workplaces and poverty pay. Organised by Labour Behind the Label: www.facebook.com/labourbehindthelabel.

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 the 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.

The far right is not welcome!

Saturday November 25, 10.30am: Demonstration, assemble Glasgow Green G1. March to a rally at Strathclyde Technology and Innovation Centre, 99 George Street, Glasgow G1. From Erskine to Elgin, fight against the far right. Oppose the UK government's horrific anti-asylum and anti-refugee rhetoric. Organised by Scottish Trades Union Congress: stuc.org.uk/campaigns-and-events/events/st-andrews-day.

National march for Palestine - ceasefire now!

Saturday November 25, 12.30pm: Demonstration. Assemble Park Lane, London W1. Free Gaza. Stop the massacre. End the siege. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign and Stop the War Coalition: facebook.com/events/1436807036900772.

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.

Imperialism, the state and the resistance

Sunday November 26: One-day event, SOAS, 10 Thornhaugh Street, London WC1. Bringing the movement together to discuss the massive crisis caused by Israel's brutal assault on Gaza and how to organise the resistance. Tickets £15 (£5). Organised by Counterfire: www.facebook.com/events/327415936662726.

What it means to be human

Tuesday November 28, 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: 'Oppenheimer and Chomsky: how war research shaped modern science'. Speaker: Chris Knight. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: www.facebook.com/events/1211019556232507.

Workplace action to demand a ceasefire now!

Wednesday November 29: Nationwide day of action by workers and students to call for a ceasefire in Gaza, an end to Israel's oppression and freedom for Palestine. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk/events.

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 weekender 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.

Global day of action for climate justice

Saturday December 9: Protests nationwide, as COP28 is held in the United Arab Emirates - a country planning a massive expansion of oil and gas production. Organised by Climate Justice Coalition: climatejustice.uk/9-december-day-of-action-for-climate-justice.

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.

USA

Zionism needs anti-Semitism

John Hagee's turn as a key speaker caused much liberal consternation - he is, after all, a notorious anti-Semite. Daniel Lazare comments on the aftermath of the huge pro-Israel demonstration in Washington DC

Zionism says it is laying waste to Gaza and killing thousands of Palestinians in order to save Jews from the scourge of anti-Semitism in the form of Hamas. But at the same time it is delivering Jews over to another scourge of anti-Semitism in the shape of Christian fundamentalism.

Zionist hypocrisy has never been in sharper display than in Washington DC on November 14, when as many as 200,000 people took part in a 'Rally for Israel' on the National Mall.¹ Organised by a coalition of synagogues and community groups known as the Jewish Federations of North America, the demonstration billed itself as a march on behalf of the Jewish state, a manifestation of support for the 240 hostages taken by Hamas, and a protest against a rising tide of anti-Semitism. Yet one of the featured speakers was a Texas televangelist named John Hagee, whose own anti-Semitism is so pronounced that he was once regarded as beyond the pale of respectable American politics.

Like most evangelicals, Hagee preaches a 'rapture' theology in which an ingathering of the Jews is supposedly the necessary precondition for the second coming of Christ. God needs Jews to return to the promised land so that the end-times can go into motion, and that is therefore what they must do. Although most evangelists contend that Jews will have to convert in order not to be cast into hell on judgment day, Hagee argues that conversion is unnecessary, because "Jews already have a covenant with god ... that has never been replaced by Christianity".

This may sound relatively benign as far as Christian fundamentalism goes. But Hagee tosses in other elements that are not. He describes the Antichrist as a "blasphemer and a homosexual" who "is at least going to be partially Jewish, as was Adolph Hitler, as was Karl Marx" (Hitler had no Jewish forbears in fact, while Marx came from an old rabbinic family in Trier, Germany). He says that the semi-Jewish Antichrist will "slaughter one-third of the earth's population" and so "make Adolph Hitler look like a choirboy".² He says that god ordered the holocaust to take place, so that Jews would realise that they had no alternative other than to move to Palestine and establish a separate state of their own.

Six million

"Why did it happen?" Hagee asked in a sermon in the late 1990s. "Because god said, 'My top priority for the Jewish people is to get them to come back to the land of Israel'."³ God ordered the death of six million people, so that he could reign on earth as in heaven above.

Hagee tosses in other opinions that are also straight out of the loony American right - which, unfortunately, is not so loony, now that the bourgeois political framework is shifting in its direction. These include the idea that the US Federal Reserve is controlled by the Rothschilds; that hurricane Katrina, which killed nearly 2,000 people in 2005, "was the judgment of god on the city of New Orleans" for hosting a gay-pride parade; that America has become "the new Sodom and Gomorrah" ever since legalising gay marriage; that Muslims "who live by the *Qur'an* have a scriptural mandate to kill Christians and Jews", and so on.⁴

But it is his anti-Semitism that has gotten him into trouble. It is what



David Ben-Gurion proclaiming Israel's statehood beneath Theodor Herzl's portrait

led John McCain, the Republican presidential candidate in 2008, to repudiate Hagee's endorsement and declare that he no longer wanted anything to do with the San Antonio preacher.

This turned Hagee into a political outcast - or, rather, *should* have turned him into an outcast if he had not taken over an obscure outfit called Christians United For Israel (CUFI) and turned it into a political behemoth with more than 10 million members. Now that Hagee has emerged as a powerhouse of the ultra-right, Israel is welcoming him back with open arms. He is once again respectable - and, thanks to Zionism, so is the anti-Semitism he represents.

This is why the Jewish Federations chose him to address its Washington rally - because, while he may be an anti-Semite, he is a *pro-Zionist* anti-Semite, and therefore A-OK. It is why the American Israel Public Affairs Committee - the most prominent pro-Israeli lobbying group in Washington - invited him to address one of its meetings and why the late Elie Wiesel returned the favour by addressing a CUFI convention in Texas. When the US opened a new embassy in Jerusalem in 2018, Hagee was one of two Christian fundamentalists chosen to give the opening benediction.⁵ Evidently, the Trump administration thought people like Hagee represent America. Benjamin Netanyahu did not disagree.

Hagee kept his more outrageous opinions to himself on November 14, confining himself to standard-fare pro-Israel militancy. He drew a roar by telling the crowd that the world must choose between Israel and Hamas: "There is no middle ground in this conflict," he said. "You're either for the Jewish people or you're not."

When "Israel's enemies ... speak of Israel passing away with a sudden storm, you're only speaking of your own demise," he went on. "Where are the nations that have persecuted the Jewish people? They are historic footnotes in the boneyard of human history." More cheers ensued, along with chants of "No ceasefire, no ceasefire".⁶

Liberals

The appearance nonetheless triggered a firestorm among liberals appalled that the Jewish establishment would foist an ultra-rightist on an otherwise progressive-minded community. The Jewish Council for Public Affairs, an organisation that has taken on the hopeless task of rescuing the two-state solution from oblivion, tweeted that it is impossible to "build broad coalitions" with someone "who promotes an apocalyptic, anti-Semitic worldview rooted in hate against LGBTQ, Muslim and other communities".

"We completely agree," added J Street, another liberal pro-Zionist group. "A dangerous bigot like Hagee should not be welcomed anywhere in

our community. Period."⁷

The result is reminiscent of a scandal two months earlier, when the entire Canadian parliament rose to its feet to applaud "a Ukrainian Canadian war veteran from World War II who fought for Ukrainian independence against the Russians and continues to support the troops today, even at his age of 98" - without mentioning, of course, that the veteran, Yaroslav Hunka, had done so as a member of the Waffen SS. If the effect was to shed new light on Nato's proxy war in Ukraine, Hagee's appearance does roughly the same with regard to the war on Gaza. It shows that it is less a battle of good versus evil and more an old-fashioned imperial rampage with increasingly fascist overtones.

Dreyfus

But wait a second - the Jewish state is in league with anti-Jewish hatred? How can this be? Is not Zionism the *antithesis* of anti-Semitism?

The answer is that it is not, for the simple reason that reality is more complex, more contradictory, more *dialectical* than liberals realise. Even when nationalists are at each other's throats, they still have more in common ideologically than they may understand. Among Jews, the gap between nationalists and internationalists has been growing ever since the Dreyfus affair - the case of a Jewish military officer railroaded on trumped-up treason charges - erupted in France in 1894. Where Dreyfus became a *cause célèbre* for the left, he became the opposite for the right, which is to say an excuse to abandon the struggle against anti-Semitism and opt for mass emigration instead.

Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, was an example of the latter. While billing himself as a Dreyfusard, he never mentioned the case until years later and, as Paris correspondent for an Austrian newspaper, assured readers at the time that "everything led" to the conclusion that the guilty verdict was correct.⁸

Where socialist internationalists adopted a policy of strict opposition, Jewish nationalism gravitated toward something more ambiguous: a 'pro-anti' policy, in which anti-Semitism was opposed to the degree it caused physical suffering, but supported to the degree it persuaded Jews to pack up and leave.

"Great exertions will hardly be necessary to spur on the movement," Theodor Herzl wrote in his 1896 pamphlet, *The Jewish state*, published little more than a year after Dreyfus's conviction. "Anti-Semites provide the requisite impetus. They need only do what they did before, and then they will create a desire to emigrate where it did not previously exist, and strengthen it where it existed before."⁹

While anti-Semitism might harm individual Jews, it would benefit the nation as a whole. A few months later, Herzl sent an offer to Abdul Hamid II, the Ottoman sultan notorious for anti-Armenian massacres, to use Jewish influence to improve his public image in exchange for Jewish settlement rights in Ottoman-controlled Palestine. The proposal outraged a leading Dreyfusard named Bernard Lazare, who accused Herzl and his supporters of sending "their blessing to the worst of murderers". Zionism racism was thus on full display. Following a government-instigated anti-Jewish pogrom in Kishinev (now Chisinau, Moldova)

in 1902, Herzl approached the tsarist ministers, Sergei Witte and Vyacheslav von Plehve, with an offer to encourage Jewish emigration so as to reduce revolutionary pressures at home. (Witte and von Plehve readily agreed, although the idea ended up going nowhere.)

"The harsher the affliction, the greater the strength of Zionism," declared David Ben-Gurion some four decades later. Oppression was beneficial to the degree it undermined the diaspora and all that went with it - integration, assimilation, socialism, secularisation, etc. "Like every Jew, I am interested in saving every Jew wherever possible, but nothing takes precedence over saving the Hebrew nation in its land," Ben-Gurion wrote in 1938. "If I knew that it was possible to save all the children in Germany by transporting them to England, but only half of them by transporting them to Palestine," he said, "I would choose the second - because we face not only the reckoning of these children, but the historical reckoning of the Jewish people."¹⁰

Zionism sought to complete anti-Semitism's work by destroying the diaspora *in toto*. In 1942, a Zionist conference at New York's Biltmore Hotel demanded that the doors of Palestine be opened to Jewish refugees, but that those of other Allied countries - the United States first and foremost - remain shut.¹¹ Jews were desperate to escape Nazi clutches. But Zionists wanted to shut down an all-important escape route, so that they would go to the Middle East instead.

The scandal of John Hagee is not that his appearance represents something new, but that it is simply the latest manifestation of a trend going back more than a century. Netanyahu no doubt sees Hagee, with his loud suits, absurd logic and rolling cadences, as an idiot. But he sees him as a *useful* idiot whom Israel can enlist for its own purposes. As an ex-senior US official once noted, Netanyahu "has told many of his own ministers that American Jews were not so important, that they were not going to remain Jewish in another generation or two, and that there was more to be gained by cultivating a relationship with evangelicals".

Where American Jews have gone soft when it comes to the plight of the Palestinians, Hagee continues carrying on the good work of anti-Semitism that Zionism requires. And Netanyahu needs Hagee, because the two men are brothers under the skin •

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TORIES

Desperately seeking martyrdom

With the Tories facing an electoral drubbing and having no coherent strategy, Rishi Sunak is reduced to day-to-day politicking, writes **Eddie Ford**

British politics last week were certainly eventful. There was the shocking news (that we had all been expecting) about the sacking of Suella Braverman, the home secretary. It is hard to disagree with the mainstream commentary that this was a lot more to do with what happens *after* the next general election than the general election itself. In other words, Braverman is attempting to become the leader of the Tory right and eventually the party itself - though how successfully is another question - when Rishi Sunak falls on his sword next year following the election, where the Tories are "heading for crucifixion" (to use the words of polling guru Sir John Curtice).

For some time now, Braverman has been specialising in the vilest version of vile Tory policy. Obviously, she is trying to appeal to the most bigoted, vengeful and narrow-minded section of the Tory rank and file. Now, that is a risky calculation - who knows what the situation will be after the next general election? But she seems to be banking on securing enough support amongst MPs to allow her to appeal to that constituency. If you want an insight into Braverman's thinking, look at the last Tory leader to have done that - which was Liz Truss, of course, who comfortably beat Sunak in terms of the votes of party members. Braverman is clearly calculating that history will repeat itself.

Cruel Suella

We all know the sort of things Braverman has been saying. The pro-Palestinian marches calling for a ceasefire in Gaza are "hate marches", not to mention anti-Semitic, and therefore should be banned. Those living on the streets of Britain in tents or cardboard boxes are indulging in a "lifestyle choice"! When it comes to Sunak's five pledges - crucially those about people trying to enter Britain in small boats - she wants to deal with it not simply by locking up people on hellish barges and effectively concentration camps (whether in Rwanda or elsewhere): she actually wants Britain to abandon its commitment to the European Court of Human Rights, which would put the UK in the same company as Belarus and Vladimir Putin's Russia - an acutely uncomfortable position for many Tories, especially senior ones.

Perhaps what really forced the prime minister to do something about his increasingly rogue home secretary were her public attacks on the Met police for being "biased" towards pro-Palestinian demonstrators - indeed, for actually favouring *the left* as opposed to the right! Well, you reap what you sow. At the last national pro-Palestinian demonstration on November 11, which was attended by up to 800,000 people, a rightwing baying mob led by Tommy Robinson fought the police using the language of Suella Braverman. They chanted "You're not English any more" at the Met officers, having gathered to "defend" the Cenotaph - even though the main rally route avoided the Whitehall area altogether, began at a different time and ended up on the opposite side of the Thames. But that did not prevent Braverman and the rightwing press spouting crazy nonsense about the demonstration, despite the fact that it was overwhelmingly peaceful. In fact, if you look at the number of arrests on the day, it was mainly those on the right - not because the Met is "biased" towards the left (you must be joking!), but because the Robinson crowd were

boozed up and clashed violently with the police ... after taking their cue from the home secretary's remarks.

Given her history, there were many reasons to sack Suella Braverman - some reports say it was actually her remarks about cracking down on the homeless on the basis that "we cannot allow our streets to be taken over by rows of tents". But, whatever the exact cause, she was obviously daring Rishi Sunak to get rid of her - *wanting* to be sacked, so she becomes a rightwing martyr and another victim of the woke elite that rules Britain.

After her dismissal, we had the sideways move - neither promotion nor demotion - of James Cleverly, going from foreign secretary to home secretary. Naturally, his first formal statement in his new role was all about small boats and 'getting the job done' - though *how* the government gets the job done remains a mystery. It is worth noting that he did not talk about Britain leaving the ECHR, but we do have a lot of rhetoric from the prime minister about legislation that will overrule the supreme court and basically announce in law that Rwanda is a 'safe place' to be deported to.

According to lawyers, this is the equivalent of parliament announcing that black is white and the world is flat. Ultimately, parliament is allowed to do things like that, but nonetheless it defies all the evidence that we have in front of our eyes - not only in terms of Rwanda's somewhat grisly past, but its extremely unstable present. It also ignores what happened when Israel also sent some 4,000 of its own Eritrean and Sudanese refugees to Rwanda between 2013 and 2018. They were rapidly deported to neighbouring countries - getting charged a fee for the privilege - and eventually ended up in Europe before the secretive arrangement was abandoned.¹

Dodgy Dave

Following the axing of Braverman, there was also the genuinely surprising return of David 'Dodgy' Cameron as the new foreign secretary. Yes, him of the Greensill Capital scandal and the Panama Papers - just two years after a parliamentary inquiry found he had shown a "significant lack of judgment" over a lobbying campaign for a bank in which he held a personal economic interest. A scandal which will not go away.

The upright and upstanding Rishi Sunak recommended Dodgy Dave for a life peerage - the first former prime minister to serve in a ministerial post since Alec Douglas-Home in 1970 and also the first former prime minister to be created a peer since Margaret Thatcher. He is now Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton - very impressive, Dave. Clearly, this was not part of some Sunak masterplan. What we know of Cameron before he became prime minister was all about greenwashing the Tory Party. There were pictures of him in the Arctic with huskies and a sledge - a transparently cynical and cringeworthy PR

exercise that fooled no-one. The other thing everybody knows about him is, of course, the 2008 financial crash - blaming it all on Gordon Brown and then going for the age of austerity, which saw the Tories ditching "all the green crap".

What else to say about Dodgy Dave? Well, as it happens, only last month we had Sunak's speech at the Tory Party conference. As most readers will remember, he presented himself as Mr Change, the guy bravely challenging the status quo, essentially denouncing all the prime ministers that came before him (except for Margaret Thatcher, of course), including a certain ... David Cameron.

The message coming from Rishi Sunak and the Tory government as a whole is totally inconsistent, which can only lead you to conclude that we have a government that is simply looking at tomorrow's headlines and incapable of thinking strategically - or even a month ahead. All it cares about is digging itself out of the latest hole it has made, and anything will do - even if it contradicts what it said in the previous week. Who cares? But the idea that the reappearance of David Cameron is a brilliant move that will change the Conservatives' electoral fortunes is for the birds - which you would think they must know, but clearly do not. None of it makes sense, because what does Cameron conjure up for your average Tory voter or ex-Tory voter? Not "Green crap", but rather 'Remainer shit'. Not only did he go for an EU referendum in order to defeat the threat posed by Nigel Farage and Ukip, but he lost it as well. Meaning that Cameron is regarded as a joke by almost everybody, whatever their view on Brexit.

But that is what his name will instantly conjure up for a potential Tory voter. No wonder that the rightwing Tory backbenchers are totally fed up with Sunak. Voicing their frustration, Dame Andrea Jenkyns submitted a letter of no confidence in the prime minister to party grandees and added: "It is time for Rishi Sunak to go and replace him with a 'real' Conservative party leader."

Nasty Jeremy

Then we had the Autumn Statement, with chancellor Jeremy Hunt also guilty of some mixed messaging. After saying that the battle against inflation was his priority, not the immediate tax cuts demanded by the right, he has suddenly found himself billions in wriggle room because the UK is apparently on track to borrow less than expected - the UK economy had "definitely turned a corner", he declared, following the release of data showing that inflation had dropped to 4.6% in October.

What is he going to spend it all on? Cuts in corporation tax, which will be sold to the electorate on the

grounds that it will stimulate industry and commerce, therefore generating prosperity. Then we have an appeal to the voter on inheritance tax, with a promise to abolish it altogether in the next Tory manifesto.

The same can be said, but in an even more petty, regressive and selfish way, about the idea being floated by Hunt and other ministers of cutting benefits to the so-called 'undeserving poor' that are supposedly playing the system. For example, in order to get people up and moving - become industrious - we have the entirely unpleasant suggestion of getting rid of free prescriptions for those who "refuse to engage" with the job centre, or for people with mobility and mental health problems who do not do "their duty" by working from home if asked.² The current prescription charge is £9.65 per item. If it is a one-off charge, that is affordable for most people, but imagine someone who has a chronic problem - it could quickly become ruinously expensive. The very fact that a civil servant or political advisor could even suggest such a vindictive measure, let alone that Jeremy Hunt could run with it, shows something about his lack of imagination and humanity. It is not difficult to imagine the *Daily Mirror* or *The Guardian*, even *The Sun*, getting hold of someone with a severe mental health problem that keeps them from getting a job and is denied a prescription - thus potentially doing harm to themselves or others. What sort of headline would that make in the run-up to a general election?

Explaining why Rishi Sunak is panicking at the moment, doing something so obviously stupid like bringing Cameron back, all the opinion polls have been painting the same picture - Labour ahead by 20 points and more. Nothing that Sunak has done or said so far, whether trying to reinvent himself as Mr Change or as the "motorist's friend", has dented Labour's lead. It seems that for the Tories the only way is down - to a big defeat in 2024.

Blundering Sir Keir

True, Sir Keir and his team could still blow it. But so far he has managed to keep his eye on the prize he always wanted: a Labour government with him in No10. That has meant keeping Jeremy Corbyn out, purging the left, showing financial responsibility and, crucially, loyalty - slavishly echoing the Biden administration over Israel's bloody Gaza war.

Defying 56 rebel MPs, even losing eight frontbenchers, actually *strengthens* his claim to represent a safe pair of hands. He did not budge, he did not bend. True, some on the left think Starmer blundered. But imagine for one moment that he had shied away from the US line because of pressure from his MPs and councillors. All hell in the form of the *Sun*, *The Times*, the *Daily Mail* would come down upon him ... and perhaps Anthony Blinken would be darkly talking about 'pushback' and the need for another, responsible, Labour leader.

It was never going to happen. Sir Keir at least, is not so stupid ●

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Suella Braverman: eye on after the next general election



MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD



Cairo's Tahrir Square during the 2011 Arab spring: the Brotherhood proved to be the leading force

ABCs of Muslim Brothers

In the first of three articles, **Jack Conrad** looks at the origins, evolution and current reality of the Muslim Brotherhood in Britain, Egypt and internationally

A few days before November 11, *The Telegraph* ran a shock horror exposé: Muhammad Kathem Sawalha, one of the founders of the Muslim Association of Britain, is a “former Hamas chief”, and the man “behind the pro-Palestine Armistice Day protests”.¹

Given that the MAB was one of the six principal organisations sponsoring the giant demonstration on November 11, the aim of this wafer-thin story was clear - rally bigoted opinion behind Suella Braverman and her grandstanding call for a police ban, demonise everyone taking part on the day as soft on terrorism and shift the entire official narrative to the point where opposing anything Israel does can be defined as anti-Semitic (the western establishment has colonised, taken over, perverted leftwing anti-racism and now wields it as a big stick against the left ... and others not to its liking).

A few preliminary points: Sawalha was undoubtedly one of the founders of the MAB in November 1997: indeed he helped run it till 2007. Yes, once, long before that, he counted amongst the leading Hamas cadre on the West Bank. Having fled to Jordan in 1990 to escape arrest by the Israeli colonial authorities, he eventually settled in Britain. Reportedly he served on Hamas's political bureau between 2013 and 2017, dealing with foreign relations. Almost needless to say, however, he was not the main man “behind the pro-Palestine Armistice Day protests”. Doubtless, he has attended protests, doubtless he has promoted protests, but that hardly makes him Mr Big when it comes to organising more to Ian Fleming, James Bond, SMERSH and *Live and let die*

fantasy, than the humdrum reality of masses upon masses of people coming onto the streets of London protesting against ethnic cleansing in Gaza and the impending danger of genocide.

The usual suspects enthusiastically ran with the *Telegraph's* Mr Big story: eg, the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, *Jewish Post and News* and - no surprise - *Spiked!* (ie, the former Revolutionary Communist Party, which along with Frank Furedi's *Roots & Wings* website, nowadays are unmistakably far-right). Though a cynical piece of news management, with origins presumably in Suella Braverman's Home Office and MI5, it makes a ripping good yarn.

A final preliminary point: Marxism does not reject terror, or for that matter, therefore, terrorism. We reject *individual* terrorism: ie, acts of violence isolated from the mass socialist and democratic movement. Not because of moral objections, which we definitely have: no, rather because we consider isolated acts of violence, even protests divorced from the mass movement, to be ineffective and often self-defeating: eg, the danger of spy cop infiltration, one oppressor easily being replaced by another, public alienation, etc. Hence, while the fact that the Tory establishment relentlessly hammers on against Jeremy Corbyn, demanding that he call Hamas a terrorist organisation, demands abasement to that categorisation, not least when it comes to the BBC, we are perfectly clear. What Hamas did on October 7 was both an act of resistance to Israeli settler colonialism ... to what it has been doing in terms of ethnic cleansing and systemic oppression of the Palestinian people for well over seven decades now. It was also an

act of terrorism. So what? The word does not scare us. Far from it.

All states have and are willing to resort to terrorism ... if necessary. We too. Our movement looks back, though not unthinkingly, to the Great French Revolution of 1789-93 and the Jacobin terror against royalists, aristocrats and moderate republicans. We also more than excuse the march to the sea conducted under general William T Sherman in the final stages of the US civil war, the second American revolution. The northern army burnt, looted and terrorised its way through the confederate state of Georgia in November-December 1864. We certainly defend the red terror unleashed by the Bolshevik-Left SR government against the white terror during the Russian civil war.

Indeed we explicitly threaten the capitalist bourgeoisie, the military high command, the judges, the royals and anyone else in this country tempted to rise up against an expected, or a realised, CPGB majority in the House of Commons with our version of red terror. We will confiscate your property, we will imprison you, we will hold your friends and relatives hostage ... if you dare take up arms against us, if you dare sabotage or connive with foreign intervention.

An international

So who and what is the MAB? According to its anodyne website, the organisation aims at serving society “through promoting Islam in its spiritual teachings, ideological and civilising concepts, and moral and human values”. Hence, we are told, the MAB pledges to tackle “the complex and intractable issues affecting our society”: eg, violence, drug addiction, rising crime,

educational failures, the spread of racism and Islamophobia. So far, so boring.

The MAB is not counted amongst the larger Muslim organisations in Britain. In comparative terms it is quite small - perhaps 600 members in “20+ branches across the UK”.² A clear majority of British Muslims have family origins in the Indian subcontinent - predominantly Pakistan and Bangladesh. MAB members come mainly from the Middle East. Of course, because it wants to relate to, and draw strength from, other Muslims, the MAB works “hand in hand with sister ... organisations, civic institutions, and political bodies”. Eg, it is affiliated to the Muslim Council of Britain, which groups together over 500 national and local organisations under its umbrella.

The MAB boasts of supporting “just causes and demands” worldwide. Hence, besides Uyghurs and Chechens, it champions a Palestine “free from the river to the sea”. Naturally this ‘one-state solution’ is given an Islamic slant. Not that the MAB considers itself anti-Jewish. Palestine “free from the river to the sea” does not serve as code for exterminating Jews. No, it is, as a slogan, a supportable call for the abolition of *Zionist* Israel, just as the African National Congress aimed the abolition of *apartheid* South Africa. Wanting an end to *Zionist* Israel is not anti-Jewish racism, and, of course, wanting an end to *apartheid* South Africa was not anti-white racism. In point of fact, the MAB makes great show of its attempts at “dialogue and cooperation” with Jewish individuals and organisations.³

The MAB is, of course, the British section of the Muslim Brotherhood, which the most *conservative* estimates credit with having a global

membership running into several millions. That is what gives the MAB its particular importance, not its claimed 600 members and 20-plus branches. The Brotherhood is ubiquitous in Sunni Arab countries and under this or that name is particularly powerful, not only in Egypt, but in Jordan, Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Sudan and Algeria too.

After the Arab spring in 2011 there can be no doubt whatsoever about the popular support enjoyed by the MB in Egypt. The Brotherhood played the leading role in the Tahrir Square protests in Cairo, which triggered the downfall of Hosni Mubarak.⁴ The MB's Freedom and Justice Party went on to become the largest parliamentary bloc with the 2011-12 elections: it gained 37.5% of the vote. Mohamed Morsi, its leader, then won the presidential race in May-June 2012. In the final run-off he got 51.73% of the vote.

Despite the June 2013 army coup which overthrew Morsi and put Abdel Fattah el-Sisi into power, the MB is far from being a spent force. Though there are some 60,000 political prisoners, shadow leadership bodies operate from abroad and the organisation remains largely united.⁵ There are pro-MB satellite TV stations such as Rabea TV, safely based in Turkey. Cadres have been well trained ideologically too.

Israel's war on Gaza can only but add to the possibility of MB toppling the Sisi-army-kleptocratic regime and returning to power. Note the *unofficial* pro-Palestinian demonstrations on October 21 2023. Notwithstanding a heavy police presence, many thousands managed to force their way into Tahrir Square. Brotherhood chants and slogans were unmistakable: ‘Bread, freedom, social justice’.

Not surprisingly, the Brotherhood draws strength from historic figures such as Hassan al-Banna, its founder, and Sayyid Qutb, its most renowned thinker (who western paid persuaders claim is the ideological mentor of the Taliban and al Qa'eda). They faced persecution by the enemies of Allah and his messenger and yet stayed true to the holy cause. Their writings are read again and again (more about them in part two).

There is also, it should be noted, a loose international Brotherhood which provides logistical and moral support. Formally it is headed by Mohammad Badie, the eighth supreme guide of the Egyptian MB. However, like many other MB leaders he was summarily thrown into jail following the Sisi coup. On April 28 2014, after a trial lasting no more than a few minutes, in which he was not permitted to present a defence, Badie was sentenced to death along with 682 others. So for perfectly understandable reasons MB spokespeople often prove rather touchy when it comes to discussing global links. Nonetheless, regional groupings are freely reported in Europe, North America and the Middle East.

StWC and Respect

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11 2001 it was, presumably, MAB's global links that brought it to the attention of the likes of John Rees - at the time the leading figure in the Socialist Workers Party and vice-chair of Stop the War Coalition. Having taken over the reigns of the SWP from Tony Cliff he was eager for the big time and glory (he is still an StWC officer, but now leads the somewhat diminutive Counterfire group and presents programmes for the Islam Channel - widely watched by British Muslims).

Al Qa'eda's spectacular suicide attacks on New York and Washington DC were, of course, a world-historic moment.⁶ Not because they dealt a body blow to US imperialism. No, on the contrary, George W Bush and the US neocons, gung ho militarists, calculating oil company executives, toxic media commentators and two-faced social-imperialists alike found exactly what they were looking for: an opportunity to violently unleash Samuel P Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' thesis upon the world.⁷

In what Edward Said aptly dubbed a "clash of ignorance", Muslims were demonised as fanatics, hate-mongers and bloodthirsty irrationalists.⁸ Correspondingly, western powers were equated with modernity, civic rights and an obligation to export so-called democracy. Though there was not a shred of evidence linking Saddam Hussein to 9/11, the countdown for Operation Iraqi Freedom began. The charred, dismembered and smouldering bodies of Iraqi conscripts that littered the road to Baghdad in April 2003 showed that US imperialism is just the flipside of al Qa'eda - only infinitely more destructive and infinitely more dangerous. Military and civilian deaths resulting from the whole Iraq farrago total well over 100,000.⁹

Such a horribly misjudged modern crusade admirably suited Bush and the neocons; ditto the liberal interventionists in Britain - above all Labour prime minister Tony Blair. There was a grotesque 'left' chorus backing them too: Nick Cohen, Christopher Hitchens, Alan Johnson, Norman Geras, David Aaronovitch, the Euston Manifesto, Harry's Place and the Alliance for Workers' Liberty. This was to be the beginning of the new American century and victory for the 'superior' civilization.

Meanwhile, in the name of combating war and Islamophobia - and breaking out from the sectarian

ghetto - various leftwingers sought to align themselves with, even partner, mainstream Islam (naive conspiracy theorists uncovered what they saw as a "global" leftist-Marxist-Islamic alliance designed to bring about the fall of "democratic capitalism"¹⁰). The courtship, at least in Britain, began in 2002, when MAB was invited to become one of the principal sponsors of the anti-war movement. After some initial hesitation it decided that taking part in protests alongside atheist leftwingers was not *haram*. The huge February 15 2003 march was jointly sponsored by MAB, StWC and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. It is still counted as Britain's biggest protest demonstration ever.

MAB agreed an even closer political relationship with the left through Respect - also known as the unity coalition. Respect was, in fact, far more than a coalition: it was an officially registered political party with individual membership, a directly elected executive, an annual conference, a detailed constitution and what passed for a programme. The original hope had been to harness the post-September 11 2001 anti-war movement and make a dramatic electoral breakthrough. It was not to be. No national trade unions were won, nor any Labour Party wards or constituencies. Indeed Respect was one of those typical cross-class unpopular fronts and a disaster for the SWP waiting to happen.

An eclectic range of freelance personalities decorated its leadership: eg, George Galloway, Yvonne Ridley, Salma Yaqoob, Ken Loach and Linda Smith. However, from Respect's formation in January 2004 till the November 2007 split (when the SWP stormed out, ridiculously claiming that they were being witch-hunted), it was John Ress who was captain and commander. Eg, SWP members did most of the donkey work and provided most of the conference votes. While committed Muslims were few and far between at a rank-and-file level, Respect was described as uniting "secular socialists and Muslim activists".¹¹ A wish which excused the SWP voting down standard leftwing principles one after another at Respect conferences: eg, opposition to immigration controls and a woman's right to choose to have an abortion.

True, the traditionalists in MAB's leadership soon asserted themselves. Anas Altikriti was replaced as president by Omer El-Hamdoon. Nonetheless, Altikriti headed Respect's Yorkshire and Humber slate for the European elections in June 2004. Respect secured a magnificent 1.9% of the vote, finishing in seventh place (well behind the British National Party and the Greens, but just ahead of the English Democrats). Altikriti went on to found the British Muslim Initiative, along with Azzam Tamimi and Muhammad Kathem Sawalha. He described BMI as an external faction of the Muslim Brotherhood to me. And despite being ousted from the MAB leadership Altikriti and his co-thinkers staged a comeback in 2018, when he was re-elected president. Hence the return of MAB placards on demonstrations and renewed willingness to cooperate with the leftwingers who lead StWC, CND and the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign.

New foundations

While it constantly references the *Koran*, Mohammed and the first caliphs, the Brotherhood is a thoroughly modern phenomenon. So there are medieval foundations, but many ruptures have occurred and therefore new foundations and new orientations have been established. In fact, the 'mother movement' in

Egypt, is best seen as starting off as a strand of the independence movement: Islam being infused with and shaped by national feelings, the two forming an ambiguous and contradictory unity.

Though dominated by the Mameluk class of slave-warriors till the early 19th century, Egypt constituted an integral part of the Ottoman empire. However, Albanian mercenary troops rebelled and put their leader, Muhammad Ali, into power. He ruled as *khedive* (viceroy) of Egypt and Sudan from 1805 to 1849. British forces occupied the country in 1882 - putting down Egypt's nationalist army and popular democratic movement in the process. The British considered it politic to maintain the Muhammad Ali dynasty and Egypt's place within the disintegrating Ottoman empire. Only in 1914 did Egypt officially become a British protectorate.

Prior to the outbreak of World War I anti-British agitation was confined to elite circles and had little impact. However, with the British administration conscripting one and a half million Egyptians into labour gangs and requisitioning crops, buildings and animals, discontent steadily rose ... till boiling point was finally reached. In March 1919, after demands for independence had been flatly rejected, strikes and mass demonstrations erupted throughout Egypt. It amounted to a national uprising. British military installations were attacked and at least 3,000 Egyptians were killed, as 'order' was painfully restored.

Yet, given the balance of forces, the British had to make concessions. Independence was granted in February 1922. However, this status was purely formal. The extravagant, incompetent, debauched, pro-fascist king had to be flattered, bribed and occasionally threatened, but British rule continued. With the bureaucracy and the big capitalist and landlord classes safely in harness, a form of neocolonialism could be imposed. Mired in debt, the Egyptian state remained hopelessly dependent on the City of London. Egypt continued to be both a "market for British manufactured goods and a cotton plantation to service the Lancashire mills".¹² In other words economic development was skewed and capital accumulation proceeded mainly in the interests of Britain. To underwrite that exploitative relationship British naval bases in Alexandria and Port Said were maintained by binding treaty, along with an army garrison on the Suez Canal. In the event of war British forces were to be free to move anywhere across Egypt.

The Society of Muslim Brothers (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*) was founded under these conditions of bitter disappointment in 1928 by al-Banna and six employees of the Suez Canal Company. A primary school teacher and son of a small landowner, who also served as the local imam, Banna inserted Egyptian national shame into a wider narrative. Islam was portrayed as having been corrupted over the course of many centuries. That is what led to the occupation of Egypt by British infidels. That is what led to the carving up of the Ottoman empire in the aftermath of World War I. The nadir being the abolition of the caliphate by Mustafa Kemal Attaturk in 1924.¹³ A catastrophe for the religiously pious.

We shall deal with its specific early history in the next part of this article, but suffice to say, in the meantime, winning hearts and minds has always been seen as a necessary precondition for re-establishing the caliphate by the Brotherhood: first in Egypt and other Muslim countries; eventually over the whole world.

So narrow nationalism is

eschewed. While Egypt is expected to play the leading role, the ambitions of the Brotherhood are universal. Amongst the stated key aims is building "*khilafa*" (basically unity between Islamic states) and "mastering the world" with Islam. Each MB national section being obliged to draw up programmes for "Islamising" government after what are called "realistic studies".¹⁴ However, for those who might imagine that MB as hell-bent on immediate world conquest, it should be stressed that the Brotherhood has always calculated that it would be too risky to rule over a population which has not internalised Islamic law. The findings of the Carnegie think tank are worth quoting too. With Donald Trump clamouring to declare the MB a terrorist organisation, Michele Dunne and Ander Miller argued that this would be a mistake: "The Muslim Brotherhood does not fit the legal definition of a foreign terrorist organisation. There is no credible evidence that, as an organisation, it is using violence to pursue political aims, and it has not deliberately targeted Americans."¹⁵

There is with the Brotherhood the looking back to a largely mythical past with which to radically refashion the present. There is also the currying of favour from established state powers. MB looks benignly upon those who preside over what are called "true" Islamic governments. They deserve "support and help".¹⁶ That never included upstarts such as Mubarak, Assad or Gaddafi, but the Saud, Hashem, Thani, Sabah, Nahyan and other such 'authentic' Arab dynasties are another matter. Time legitimises. Time consecrates. "What is grey with age becomes religion" (Shiller).¹⁷

Considerable benefits have come in return for "support and help" - hence the description of the MB as an "ideological protectorate of Saudi Arabia".¹⁸ An exaggeration, no doubt. Nonetheless, there was abundant evidence showing the closeness of the MB-Saudi relationship. Eg, the Islamic University of Medina, generously financed by the Saudi monarchy, was from its beginning, in 1961, a centre of Brotherhood teaching (approximately 70% of its 22,000 students were non-Saudi).¹⁹

All that came to a shuddering stop

with the Arab spring and the election of Morsi. The house of Saud feared for its own safety and cut off links with the MB. Within Saudi Arabia itself the Brotherhood was banned and many arrests were made. Anyone guilty of supporting or promoting MB ideas faces a prison sentence "of no less than three years and no more than 20 years".²⁰ However, Qatar, and to some extent Turkey, have filled the gap. Refuge, funds and TV platforms have been provided.²¹

Hence, as Barbara Zolliner, of the Carnegie Middle East Center, reports, the Brotherhood "has proven to be highly resilient, and there have even been signs of internal renewal, underlining that the regime's policies [of severe oppression] may be futile and counterproductive. If this continues, it could eat away at Sisi's legitimacy and even the stability of his regime."²² ●

Notes

1. *The Telegraph* November 6 2023.
2. www.mabonline.net/about-us/our-structure.
3. web.archive.org/web/20120119221236/mabonline.net/?page_id=2.
4. theworld.org/dispatch/egypt/110207/egypt-muslim-brotherhood-tahrir-square.
5. www.newarab.com/news/egypt-had-least-60000-political-prisoners-nyt.
6. On September 11 2001, two planes were flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Center, another into the Pentagon in Washington, while flight 93, targeted against the White House, crashed on a Pennsylvania field.
7. See SP Huntington *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of the world order* London 1996.
8. E Said *The Nation* October 18 2001.
9. www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/warlogs.
10. DJ Jonsson *Islamic economics and the final jihad* Longwood FL 2006, p413.
11. *Socialist Worker* November 20 2004.
12. D Hopwood *Egypt, politics and society: 1945-1990* London 1991, p17.
13. see www.ummah.org.uk/ikhwan.
14. www.ummah.org.uk/ikhwan.
15. carnegieendowment.org/2019/05/03/nine-reasons-why-declaring-muslim-brotherhood-terrorist-organization-would-be-mistake-pub-79059.
16. www.ummah.org.uk/ikhwan.
17. F Schiller *The death of Wallenstein* act 1, scene 4 - see www.gutenberg.org/files/6787/6787-h/6787-h.htm#2H_4_0006.
18. South Asian Analysis Group, paper No3571, December 28 2009.
19. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_University_of_Madinah.
20. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim_Brotherhood.
21. www.counterextremism.com/content/muslim-brotherhood-qatar.
22. carnegie-mec.org/2019/03/11/surviving-repression-how-egypt-s-muslim-brotherhood-has-carried-on-pub-78552.

Online Communist Forum



Sunday November 26 5pm

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LAW

Defend and extend the jury system

Acquittals of pro-Palestine activists, BLM protestors and XR campaigners have infuriated the Tory press and seen a judicial backlash. **Mike Macnair** argues for juries and their right to hear 'lawful excuse'



John Morgan 'The Jury' 1861: an obviously jaundiced portrayal

There have recently been a number of high-profile cases in which juries have “perversely” - from the point of view of the Tory press and at least a section of the judiciary - acquitted protestors. The case of the ‘Colston four’, who pulled down a statue of a slave-trader as part of the Black Lives Matter campaign, got a lot of hostile press attention. Since then acquittals have continued, especially in climate-change protest cases: for example, very recently of Extinction Rebellion protestors who damaged HSBC Bank’s London HQ.¹

The problem with this from the point of view of the government is essentially political. Conviction in the crown court labels the person convicted as a ‘criminal’ in a way in which a juryless magistrates’ court (which deals mainly with traffic and low-level regulatory offences) does not. And an ‘exemplary’ severe sentence in the crown court can be trumpeted in the press and at least *hoped* to deter repetition of the conduct. Some opponents of ‘perverse’ acquittals have suggested extending the magistrates’ court’s sentencing powers. But this does not substitute for the political, ‘criminalising’ and publicity effects of crown court conviction.

A section at least of the judiciary thinks that they have found a way around this ‘problem’. This is to threaten protestors with conviction for contempt of court² if they introduce legal or moral arguments the judges disagree with, or remind jurors of the historical rule that jurors are to decide according to their consciences,³ and of the rule in *Bushell’s case* (1670) that judges may not punish juries for failing to find a verdict according to his direction.

There has been useful campaigning work to fight against this judicial approach.⁴ The point

of this article is to provide some historical context to the struggle over judicial control over juries, which has a long history, and to argue that the defence - and restoration - of jury trial should be a fundamental aim of the workers’ movement: as we say in the CPGB’s *Draft programme*, “Defend and extend the jury system. Anyone charged with an offence that carries the possibility of a prison sentence can elect for a jury trial.”⁵

Origins

Go back to the early Middle Ages and all sorts of disputes - both what moderns would call ‘civil’ and what we would call ‘criminal’ - were decided by groups of the ‘notables’ of a locality (kingdom, shire/county, borough). Around 1100, systems of this sort began to be replaced by forms of professionalised law. The major variety across western Europe was the ‘canon law’ - that of the Roman Catholic church.

Here decisions were taken by professional judges sitting alone, subject to rules of law, and were appealable - from the bishop’s court to the archbishop’s court, from the archbishop’s court to the pope in Rome (and also directly to the pope, who would then appoint ‘judges delegate’ in the province to hear the case and report back to him). The system of decision by judges sitting alone was notoriously dodgy. Archdeacons were responsible for local enforcement of church criminal law, and a joke of the 1100s posed an imaginary examination question in theology: “Can an archdeacon be saved?” - ie, will a church court judge inevitably go to hell?⁶ Canon law procedure was ferociously dilatory and expensive, because judges sitting alone were untrustworthy, and so appealing had to be easy - and easy appeals produced cost and delay.

The government of the English king, Henry II (1154-89) came

up with an alternative approach that tried to avoid these problems. Rather than appeals, the equivalent of modern supreme court judges had to ride round the country, sitting and hearing cases in each county (‘eyres’). Questions of fact were decided by means that could not be contradicted, and thus involved no judicial discretion: thus trial by battle (witnesses on each side, or in privately prosecuted criminal cases prosecutor and defendant, fought each other with spiked clubs) or in publicly prosecuted criminal cases trial by ordeal (the defendant might be made to carry a piece of hot iron blessed by a priest over a set distance, or be tied up and thrown in a blessed pond, and so on, with the results ‘deciding’ guilt or innocence).⁷ And in a limited range of cases, where the facts were likely to be publicly known, like land boundaries or recent possession and dispossession of land, panels of locals were summoned to swear to this public knowledge.⁸ The point of this overall scheme was to avoid both dodgy decisions by individual judges, and appeals leading to cost and delay.

In 1166 the ‘Assize of Clarendon’ (a law made by a meeting of the king’s council at Clarendon Palace, Wiltshire) ordered panels of locals to be summoned to swear to ‘present’ (accuse) persons who were generally believed to be armed robbers, and so on, thus bringing the jury form (later called the ‘grand jury’) into criminal law. The accused would be put to the ordeal. But juries also became available as an alternative to trial by battle in privately prosecuted criminal cases. In 1215 the church prohibited the clergy from blessing the hot iron, cold water, etc in the ordeal, and some alternative had to be found. After some hesitation, the jury form was adopted for this purpose: the ‘petty jury’. Meanwhile, the use of juries in land claims was gradually

extended beyond its original context.

The whole point of these choices was to *avoid judicial fact-finding* and thus the normal consequences produced in terms of arbitrary judicial behaviour by judges sitting alone, and subject to appeals, cost and delay. It was not originally aimed at constitutional liberty or egalitarianism. However, by the mid-1300s trial by jury was beginning to become associated with the “judgment of peers (equals)” guaranteed by Magna Carta, chapter 29, and forms of juryless procedure could be objected to as denying ‘due process of law’.⁹ This evolution did see jury trial as an egalitarian form through the idea of ‘peers’. It is reflected in the guarantee of jury trial in the 7th amendment to the US constitution.

It is a corollary of this regime that judges could not just overrule juries. If the jury was guilty of misconduct, a procedure called the ‘attaint’ could be used. Here a new jury of 24 was summoned to decide whether the original jury of 12 was guilty of perjury. Thus, for an early example, in *Urse de Cadiho v Ralph fitz Ralph* (1204), de Cadiho successfully sued Ralph fitz Ralph for ‘novel disseisin’ (recent dispossession of land), but Ralph brought attaint. Unusually, the attaint jury tells us the story: Ralph’s great-aunt, who had given him the land, died and, while the family was out at her funeral, Urse de Cadiho broke in and put one of his employees in; when they got back, the family ejected him. On this basis the first jury was convicted of perjury: Urse never really had such possession as to properly be said to be dispossessed.¹⁰

The attaint procedure was gradually extended by statute,¹¹ and was still ‘live’ in the 1500s. Thus, for example, in *Regina v Ingersall* (1593) the Court of Queen’s Bench held that attaint was available for

the prosecutor in an ‘information qui tam’ (a kind of prosecution for a misdemeanour (a lesser criminal offence)); but that the special verdict found by the attaint jury in the present case did not amount to a conviction of the first jury, because it was entitled to disbelieve the whole evidence of a witness who was shown to be wrong on a single point.

In 1665, however, chief justice Hyde said in King’s Bench that “jurors ought to be fined if they would go against the hare and direction, take bit in mouth and go headstrong against the court; and said, that by the grace of god he would have it tried, seeing the attaint is now fruitless”.¹² The last actual report of an attaint case is from 1639, so Hyde was probably not wrong to think the procedure had gone out of use.¹³ But that should not imply that the judges should take control. The underlying idea of the attaint - that judges were not entitled to overrule juries - resurfaced in different forms.

Judge control

The feudal regime in decline became more authoritarian - among other means by developing judicial controls over juries. The Court of Wards, used to extract the royal feudal revenue from the landowning class, asserted at least from the 1590s a power to fine and imprison jurors who refused to find a verdict for the crown. This practice was complained of by the 1641 Grand Remonstrance. The Court was abolished by the Long Parliament in 1645, and this abolition was retained at the Restoration with the 1660 Tenures Abolition Act, which asserted that

... it hath been found by former experience that the Courts of Wards and Liveries and Tenures by Knights service either of the King or others, or by Knights service in Capite or Socage

in Capite of the King and the consequents upon the same have beene much more burthensome grievous and prejudiciall to the Kingdome then they have beene beneficiall to the King ...¹⁴

The Court of Star Chamber claimed a general disciplinary power over jurors. It was abolished in 1641, along with similar 'prerogative' courts and the jurisdiction of the Privy Council in England; the statute criminalised any executive or judicial attempt to revive it. This statute had been agreed by Charles I (albeit under political duress) before the outbreak of the civil war, and was not repealed in 1660.¹⁵

In spite of these concessions, the Restoration government was concerned to crack down on religious dissent, and had difficulty with juries failing to convict people as a result. Two months after chief justice Hyde's statement quoted above, the King's Bench in *Wagstaff* ruled that that criminal trial jurors could be fined and imprisoned for refusing to convict under the 'Conventicles' legislation, which prohibited non-Anglican religious meetings, "contrary to their evidence, which in the opinion of the [trial] Judge [Kelyng J] was full and pregnant" or failing to follow the direction of the trial judge "on a matter of law" (unspecified).¹⁶

The political nature of the case is indicated by the government having hired the former Cromwellian chief justice, John Glynn, and Richard Cromwell's solicitor-general, John Maynard, as their counsel to defend the practice, attempting to establish a constitutional consensus for it. Maynard argued that "trust must be laid some where" (hence, in the judge), and Twisden J extended this: "The judge is intrusted with the liberties of the people, and his saying is the law."

They did not succeed in settling a consensus. The fall of the Earl of Clarendon, who was lord chancellor and effective prime minister, in August 1667 opened a political door, and Clarendon was impeached in November for treason by subverting the constitution, and fled to France. On December 11, the House of Commons heard a committee report on the conduct of Kelyng, now chief justice of King's Bench:

That the Proceedings of the Lord Chief Justice, in Cases now reported, are Innovations in the Trial of Men for their Lives and Liberties; and that he hath used an arbitrary and illegal Power, which is of dangerous Consequences to the Lives and Liberties of the People of England; and tends to the introducing of an arbitrary Government.

That, in the Place of Judicature, the Lord Chief Justice hath undervalued, vilified, and contemned, Magna Charta, the great Preserver of our Lives, Freedoms, and Property.

That he be brought to Trial, in order to condign Punishment, in such manner as the House shall judge most fit and requisite.¹⁷

On December 13 Kelyng was heard in his own defence, and the Commons decided not to impeach him, but nonetheless "Resolved, &c That the Precedents and Practice of Fining or Imprisoning Jurors is illegal." And "Ordered, That the Lord St John have Leave to bring in a Bill for declaring the Fining and Imprisoning of Jurors illegal".¹⁸

The bill died in the usual process of parliamentary delays. But the threat of it, and the threat to impeach Kelyng, had their effect. In 1670 in *Bushell's Case* the Court of Common Pleas led by chief justice Vaughan

ordered habeas corpus to release jurors who had been imprisoned until they paid fines for failing to convict Quakers contrary to the judge's direction.¹⁹ The core of Vaughan's elaborate argument, which also involves a lot of technical law, is that there is no reason to suppose that the trial judge's assessment of the evidence is actually better than the jury's.

Conversely, if the trial judge's view of the case is to overrule the jury's, why bother with juries at all? This point is, at the end of the day, the fundamental answer to all arguments for judicial control of 'perverse' verdicts.

Libel law

Bushell's Case was not universally accepted by lawyers,²⁰ but politically it killed the practice of imprisoning and fining jurors for failing to convict contrary to judicial direction. The issue of judicial control resurfaced in a different form after France during the Seven Years War (1756-63) abandoned the Jacobites and with them the hope of feudal restoration in Britain. This, in turn, allowed the Tories, who had been tainted with Jacobitism and hence in opposition since 1714, gradually back into office and into judicial appointments. A section of the Whigs gradually became 'Torified'; another section started to revive 17th century constitutional arguments for liberty.

In this context, sharp arguments emerged about the relative roles of judge and jury in criminal libel (seditious libel, which allegedly undermined the government; defamatory libel by allegedly defaming government ministers and other officials; blasphemous libel by writing that allegedly undermined Christianity).²¹ A new mechanism of judicial control was developed. This was to rule that certain questions posed by an indictment or information (charge against the defendant) were questions of law, not questions of fact. The famous lawyer, Sir Edward Coke, had said: "*ad quaestionem facti non respondent iudices* [the judges do not answer a question of fact]; and matters in law the judges ought to decide and discuss; for *ad quaestionem juris non respondent juratores* [jurors do not answer a question of law]".²² Now the 18th century judges argued that the question whether a published statement was libellous (seditious, defamatory or blasphemous) was a question of law; hence the jury could be forced to give a special verdict *only* on whether the defendant published it.²³

The claim here is as unsound as the argument for judicial punishment of juries before *Bushell's Case*. That seditious libel consists of publications that tend to undermine the government is certainly a question of law (19th century judges cut the definition down). That this tends to undermine the government, so as to be seditious libel, is a claim about the actual likely effect of *this statement* - a claim that a judge cannot make without finding facts to the exclusion of the jury.

This version of judicial control was defeated by political action, though Lord Camden (chief justice of common pleas 1762-66, and lord chancellor 1766-70) opposed the majority view of the judges and in House of Lords debate in 1792 backed the eventual legislation. Fox's 1792 Libel Act asserted the right of juries to give general verdicts in libel cases. Until recently, it was regarded as constitutionalising the right to trial by jury in defamation cases; but the legal profession has recently managed to get rid of it.²⁴

Fox's Libel Act was not broad enough. It simply asserted the right of juries to give general verdicts in

criminal libel cases. It did not strike down the practice of judges turning questions of fact into 'questions of law' and thereby undermining jury trial. Defendants in accident cases (employers, railway companies ...) have been enthusiastic supporters of the practice, beginning in the early 19th century: it helped them to escape liability.²⁵ The result is also to increase the costs of jury trial itself and gradually undermine the advantages of the common law procedure. Eroded in this way, civil jury trial in general was suspended in 1918 and again in 1939 as a war measure, and not reinstated by the 1945 Labour government.²⁶

This, in turn, produces a tendency to marginalise the *criminal* jury trial, and radically increase general public ignorance of the law. The legal profession thus appropriates the law as its own exploitable private property, and the monarchs franchise to the profession the sale and denial of justice in violation of the Magna Carta.

It can thus be seen that the recent 'contempt' rulings are merely the latest version of the judicial power attempting to take over the role of the jury for the benefit of government and of the paying customers (the wealthy). The objection to them in principle is at its core the same objection that Vaughan made to fining jurors in 1670, and Lord Camden made to the majority judges' enforced special verdicts in 1770-71 and 1792. The indictment for criminal damage puts in issue whether the defendant "without lawful excuse destroys or damages any property belonging to another intending to destroy or damage any such property or being reckless as to whether any such property would be destroyed or damaged shall be guilty of an offence" (1971 Criminal Damage Act). On such an indictment, it is impossible for the judge to exclude evidence or argument to the jury that sets up a "lawful excuse" without *finding facts*.

If it is to be ruled that "lawful excuse" does not include the prevention of crime, in the form of Israeli war crimes in the occupied territories or deterring corrupt payments to UK political parties to procure breaches of UK obligations under climate-change agreements, that needs to be openly legislated - just as, if the government is to insist that Rwanda is a 'safe country', they need to legislate explicitly that black is white, and so on. The recent 'contempt' rulings are thus not only a usurpation of the constitutional role of the jury, but also a usurpation of the legislative power in the interests of the executive and animated by judicial bias in favour of the views of the Tory press, manifest in the nature of the rulings.

The fundamental lesson of this long history is that the judiciary are *not*, as Alexander Hamilton claimed in 1788, the branch of government "least dangerous to the political rights of the constitution".²⁷ Judges can and do actively subvert political rights, and vigilance against them is essential.

Left silence

The left and the workers' movement has largely stood silent in this country, as trial by jury has been gradually undermined over the past century and a half. Important steps were, in fact, taken by *Labour* governments - by Attlee and, more recently, by Blair-Brown (though 'reforms' of libel begun under them were actually carried into effect by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition in 2013).

This failure to defend jury trial, and indeed its practical undermining, reflects in the majority of the workers' movement commitments to managerialist forms of socialism, whether these are to be Fabian,

Kautskyite²⁸ or Soviet-bureaucratic: not to the concept of socialism as democratic self-government. Managerialist socialism can all too easily succumb to the supposed 'efficiency gains' of anti-democratic procedures; including judicial fact-finding. But in reality judicial fact-finding is as unreliable as, and more dilatory and expensive than, common law procedure was.

Jury trial is not self-government in the full sense, but it is nearer to self-government than fact-finding by judge alone (or by judge sitting with 'assessors', as they did in early Soviet 'People's Courts').

Within the far left, failure to defend jury trial reflects the general economism that tends to ignore constitutional questions on the basis of the delusion that, by setting these on one side, masses can be mobilised in street action or strikes, and then led by the nose into making a revolution.

It does not work - and the result is the inability of the left to pose a *political* alternative to capitalist class rule. The case of the left's failure to defend trial by jury is one among many examples of this ●

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Notes

1. 'Climate activists acquitted in clothes donated by Stella McCartney' *The Times* November 17. See also extinctionrebellion.uk/2023/10/30/jury-acquits-extinction-rebellion-for-treasury-fire-engine-action-and-crown-drops-remaining-trials-after-judge-suggests-not-in-public-interest; realmedia.press/palestine-action-crown-court-acquittal.
2. Eg. www.palestineaction.org/resistance-repression (February 12); www.itv.com/news/london/2023-03-03/insulate-britain-protesters-jailed-after-flouting-court-order-trial; 'Fears over right to protest after woman with sign at climate trial prosecuted' *The Guardian* September 19.
3. G Woodbine and SE Thorne (eds) *Bracton* Vol 3, Cambridge MA 1968, pp63, 336-38; later medieval usage is in N Doe *Fundamental authority in late medieval English law* Cambridge 1990, pp146-48. For general discussion, see TA Green *Verdict according to conscience* Chicago 1985.
4. Eg. goodlawproject.org/case/silencing-of-protesters; 'Charge us with contempt too, say 40 people, if climate activist prosecuted' *The Guardian* August 17.
5. communistparty.co.uk/draft-programme/3-immediate-demands.
6. RC van Caenegem, 'Public prosecution of crime in twelfth-century England', in CNL Brooke et al (ed) *Church and government in the Middle Ages* Cambridge 1976, pp41-76.
7. R Bartlett *Trial by fire and water* Oxford 1988. *The increase* in the use of battle and the ordeals, as opposed to other methods of proof, in the time of Henry II, is noteworthy.
8. M Macnair, 'Vicinage and the antecedents of the jury' *Law and History Review* Vol 17, pp537-90 (1999).

9. Eg. Criminal and Civil Justice Act 1352. 10. *Curia Regis Rolls* London 1926, Vol 3, pp131, 134 and 138.

11. Extensions are conveniently listed in Blackstone's *Commentaries* Vol 3 (1768) at avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/blackstone_bk3ch25.asp.

12. God did not permit: Hyde died (aged 70) a few days after he made this statement.

13. Cf also *St Bar v Williams* (1674) at p352, where the court says that attain juries had in the past refused to give verdicts, and "it would not be so, were the judgment not so penal; and because of that the new trials were introduced".

14. HE Bell *The court of wards and liveries* Cambridge 1953, pp148, 158-59; Tenures Abolition Act 1660, preamble.

15. TA Green (see note 3 above), pp140-43; 'Habeas Corpus Act 1641' Statutes of the Realm, Vol 5, 1628-80: www.british-history.ac.uk/statutes-realm/vol5 pp110-12.

16. The reporter, Thomas Raymond, was plainly sceptical: he cross-referred to an earlier case in which he had noted the conviction of the infamous Richard Empson, executed in 1510, after being charged among other offences with fining juries for refusing to convict according to direction.

17. *Journals of the House of Commons* Vol 9, p35.

18. *Ibid* p37.

19. This has been extensively reported (see note 4 above).

20. JH Langbein, 'The criminal trial before the lawyers' *University of Chicago Law Review* Vol 45, pp263-316.

21. The fourth variety, obscene libel, gave rise to legal-constitutional argument in 1707 and 1727, but was not part of the late 1700s jury control arguments.

22. The tag is over-general, as JB Thayer already argued in 1890: 'Law and fact in jury trials' *Harvard Law Review* Vol 4, pp147-75 (1890). The principle Coke's tag attempts to express is, on the one hand, that judges were *bound* to decide questions of law *appearing on the face of the record*, not otherwise; and, on the other hand, that juries *might* under the Statute of Westminster II, 1285, elect to give a special verdict and thus dump on the judge's questions of law that have arisen at the trial - though they *might* give a general verdict (at the risk of being attainted if a second jury thought the first jury's view of the law was so perverse as to amount to perjury).

23. See the discussion in RH Helmholz and TA Green *Juries, libel and justice* Los Angeles 1984.

24. The Libel Act was repealed by the 2009 Coroners and Justice Act, while the right to jury trial in civil proceedings was abolished by the 2013 Defamation Act. See 'Luke Cooper's case shows damage of abolishing trial by jury in libel cases' *The Guardian* June 28 2012.

25. D Ibbetson *Historical introduction to the law of obligations* Oxford 1998, pp173-74.

26. P Devlin *Trial by jury* London 1956, chapter 7.

27. *Federalist Papers* No78: avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed78.asp.

28. 'Kautskyite' is less obvious, but it is in fact clear that Kautsky was already committed to the independent role of legal and other 'experts' in the 1893 *Parliamentarism and democracy* (see B Lewis (trans) *Karl Kautsky on democracy and republicanism* Chicago 2020) and continued to be so later.

Fighting fund

Don't let up

As I predicted last week, over the last seven days we've seen an excellent boost to the *Weekly Worker* fighting fund.

With only £827 raised towards our monthly £2,250 target on November 15, we were looking to be in real trouble. But, as I pointed out, the third week of the month is always the best because of those really generous standing orders that come our way then.

And November has been no exception - there were no fewer than four three-figure donations (thanks go to comrades SK, KB, PM and GB). Then there were less substantial, but nevertheless really useful, contributions from MM (£75), TR (£40), DR (£20) and SS (£15).

But that's it. Most unusually there were no donations via PayPal, cheque or cash - all the above were banks transfers of one kind or another (including those standing orders). Not to worry though: what we did get

amounted to a fantastic £736, taking our running total for November up to £1,563.

But that means we still need another £687, with just one week and one day remaining. So, comrades, please don't let up - help us get there. There's still time to send us a cheque or hand some cash to one of our comrades, but better still would be PayPal or bank transfer. To do either, go to our website (details below).

The *Weekly Worker* relies entirely on our supporters, who almost always come up with the goods. Please make sure in the last eight days of the month that November is no exception ●

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

LABOUR

Cowards, careerists and Corbyn diehards

Momentum MP Navendu Mishra claims to be in favour of a Gaza ceasefire. Despite that he followed Starmer's orders to abstain, reports Carla Roberts

In how much trouble is Keir Starmer over Palestine?

Some commentators have been very excited about the fact that a total of 56 Labour MPs ended up voting against the whip and the instruction to abstain on the Scottish National Party's ceasefire amendment. And, yes, 10 frontbenchers were duly sacked from their positions, most prominently Jess Phillips, the vicious anti-Corbyn MP for Birmingham Yardley, who wrote: "On this occasion I must vote with my constituents, my head, and my heart, which has felt as if it were breaking over the last four weeks with the horror of the situation in Israel and Palestine."¹ (Makes you wonder on which "occasions" she consciously voted *against* her constituency, head and heart - a few votes during the Corbyn years spring to mind). No doubt, her role in the witch-hunt and her support for Labour Friends of Israel² will ensure that she will be back on the front bench before long, as will some of the other 'rebels'.

It would be a stretch to call this vote a 'rebellion' - it was more of a small, controlled display of disapproval. Not even all 34 members of so-called Socialist Campaign Group managed to vote in favour. A couple of them at least had an excuse: Olivia Blake had a doctor's appointment and was paired; Kim Johnson was on a "prearranged parliamentary overseas visit";³ and Mick Whitley had a "family emergency".⁴ All three of them let it be known publicly that they would have voted in favour of the SNP's motion.

Labour left

Not so Navendu Mishra, MP for Stockport and formerly Momentum regional organiser (and supported by many on the official Labour left). On November 15, the day of the vote, he had the audacity to post on Twitter: "I stand with Labour Friends of Palestine's call for a ceasefire and enduring peace. I will continue to make that case within Labour and to government, so that humanitarian aid reaches civilians and the siege ends."

But then he did as ordered by Keir Starmer! In other words, the man is lying through his teeth. "Labour Enemy of Palestine Navendu Mishra is a fraudulent liar: he actually abstained on the ceasefire vote, meaning he has the blood of 5,000 Palestinian children on his hands," rages Asa Winstanley on Twitter.⁵

It is very doubtful that Mishra fell for Starmer's last-minute attempt to appease some of his 'leftwing' MPs (it is all relative now) by tabling an amendment that called for "longer humanitarian pauses" instead of a ceasefire. No, the man is an out-and-out careerist who does not want to endanger his position of parliamentary private secretary to Angela Rayner - after all, he was only appointed in September 2023 and, unlike Phillips, cannot rely on being in Starmer's good books. His lack of a backbone really should not come as a surprise. In December 2018, at the height of the anti-Semitism smear campaign in the Labour Party, he actually posted a selfie in front of a protest by the Jewish Labour Movement.

If the Socialist Campaign Group had any bottle, it would expel this toxic careerist weasel immediately. But then it stopped playing any kind of useful role a long time ago. Not even Momentum (which "proudly" endorsed Mishra to become an MP in 2019 and an NEC member in 2020⁶) has sunk that low and has been



Sir Keir at the Cenotaph: loyal to the Anglo-American alliance

calling on all supporters to write to their MPs to demand a ceasefire. Of course, they do not have it in them to criticise their erstwhile creature publicly.

It is very obvious that Starmer has succeeded in clearing the Labour Party of any principled opposition. The 'left wing' is now entirely neutered and most 'left' MPs have stuck to Starmer's orders not to speak at demonstrations and protests in solidarity with Palestine. John McDonnell MP is something of an exception, perhaps because Starmer knows he is very popular in his constituency of Hayes and Harlington, which he has been representing since 1997. And, having shown during the anti-Semitism smear campaign that he is all too willing to dance to the right's tune, he can easily be tolerated as a sort of eccentric old uncle.

Choppy waters

Of course, the political situation in the Middle East does continue to present Keir Starmer with some choppy waters, even if those are not caused by the left. He committed a major blunder when he backed Israel's decision to cut off the water, electricity and food to the Gaza Strip.

showing that he can run capitalism just as well as the Tories. Better, in fact, seeing as they are in severe crisis. By not rocking the capitalist boat, Keir Starmer can sit and watch Rishi Sunak's increasingly wild efforts to save his sinking ship.

Sunak's latest announcements of some possible minor tax cuts were a vague effort to 'bury' the latest horror stories from the parliamentary Covid inquiry - to no avail: Sunak has now *personally* been named as driving the second Covid wave with his disastrous 'Eat out' campaign, according to the government's chief scientific advisor, Sir Patrick Vallance. "I think it would have been very obvious to anyone that this inevitably would cause an increase in transmission risk, and I think that would have been known by ministers." He also said that scientists were "not aware" of the scheme until it was announced.⁹

Bar some major political upset, Keir Starmer will be the next UK prime minister - not because he is so popular, we hasten to add, but because the Tories are so despised. The Labour Party currently stands at 47%, according to a meta survey of *all* the polls, with the Tories on only 23%.¹⁰

Rupert Murdoch can tell which way the wind is blowing - his papers, *The Sun* and *The Times*, have been gradually, but markedly, shifting their support to Starmer's Labour. And, of course, Suella Braverman can tell - that rat jumped ship in rather dramatic fashion, orchestrating her own dismissal with increasingly weird and desperate announcements. When her rants about "hate marches" and "lifestyle choices" failed to do the trick, she attacked the police for their 'softness' towards Palestine demonstrations. That's a big no-no for any home secretary and she really did not leave Sunak any other option but to throw her overboard - straight into her cushy lifeboat.

*Socialist Worker*¹¹ and *The Socialist*¹² have both made rather sweet attempts to try and convince their readers that it was in fact themselves who did the damage: "the hundreds of thousands of people who have taken to the streets in the last month for Palestine ... have forced Rishi Sunak to sack Braverman," writes *Socialist Worker*. *The Socialist* proclaims: "The anti-war movement - whose demonstrations she tried and failed to ban - has scored a victory!"

Nothing more but wishful thinking, sadly. No, Cruella has managed to row free of the toxic Sunak and will be busy building her own leadership campaign. To paraphrase *The Terminator*, she'll be back.

Stillborn

But Keir Starmer, we are told by many on the left, is deeply unpopular 'out there' - very few will want to go leafleting or canvassing for him. There is an element of truth in that - but it matters not.

For a start, the big donors are back. The last quarter saw, in fact, an historic "record": Of the £10.4 million received between June and August 2023, only £2.7 million stemmed from "public funding and donations from trade unions". But there was a £3 million donation from David Sainsbury and £2.2 million from Autoglass billionaire Gary Lubner.¹³ Starmer does not need the membership and he certainly does not need the left.

The snazzily-named 'Organise Corbyn Inspired Socialist Alliance' (OCISA)¹⁴ has now officially launched its campaign to "unseat

Starmer" in his constituency of Holborn St Pancras: it is calling for candidates to apply to stand against Starmer at the next general election - on Corbyn's 'For the many' programme. The organisers think that they have a realistic chance of overturning Starmer's majority of 48.9% by using the "digital community". This method, they think, is so fool-proof that they want to spread it to all areas "where the action of individual attack on the MP becomes necessary".

The small text on the website explains "the mechanics of harvesting the vote", which are:

a matter of technologists who can provide the platform for the votes to be harvested. These votes are applied in two ways, under the model proposed. Primarily to harvest the vote for the candidate, but secondly to make the policy choices and managerial issues relating to the company itself, so that it becomes self-governing by the membership and democratic in nature. This gives it the necessary weight and credibility to approach the constituency.

Clear enough?

Of course, there are a number of campaigns already in existence who want to do exactly that - with slightly less eccentric and technocratic language. The electoral front of the SPEW, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, has called on other groups to "join us to co-host a convention to organise a working class challenge at the next general election".

Ditto 'Transform', the merger of the rump Left Unity and the Breakthrough Party, which will be launched on November 25 in Nottingham. Point 8 of their 10 "core principles" explains that they want to "contest elections".¹⁵ As an aside, this already looks like a stillbirth: we hear that Kate Hudson and Andrew Burgin, 'leading lights' of Left Unity, are growing cool on Transform - for a start, should LU be disbanded in the process, the comrades would lose their affiliation to the European Left Party. Of course, this only exists on paper, as Left Unity has never recovered from its disastrous decision not to join the Labour Party during the Corbyn years - pretty much its entire membership did, leaving a corpse behind. But for some people, such titles matter ●

Notes

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LEFT



Once they were clause four socialists

Doing their party turn

What lies beneath the new communist wrapping? Baris Graham takes a look at Socialist Appeal's latest incarnation

This year's 'Revolution Festival', held over the weekend of November 10-12, was the first such event after Socialist Appeal's recent 'Are you a communist?' turn, and was possibly the best that SA has organised in terms of attendance. Some 400 were there in Friend's House on London's Euston Road (a thousand tickets were sold, though it should be added that the giant Palestine march must have diverted a good few).

What was really positive was that comrades were more than willing to talk. Also, again on the positive side, we were allowed to freely sell and distribute the *Weekly Worker* (unlike at the Socialist Workers Party's 'Marxism', where its leadership ensures a hostile environment, including sometimes even dishing out threats, punches and kicks). So in general there was a very healthy atmosphere.

Communist

However, while the 'Communist turn' is most welcome, it seems to owe more to *Mad Men* marketing than a change in fundamental politics. We are told that 20% of young people in the US call themselves 'communists' ... and so the 'vanguard' follows. Only a few years ago Socialist Appeal was championing Fabian clause four socialism and telling us that communists do not set up a party opposed to and separate from Labour (based on a stupid misreading of the *Communist manifesto*). Before that we had Chavismo socialism and the nationalist socialism of the Scottish Socialist Party. Heaven help us from the next turn.

Most of the comrades - say two-thirds - were directly associated with Socialist Appeal or one or another of the national sections of the International Marxist Tendency (including Germany, Italy and Switzerland). Their chosen reps were called on to report on the stunning successes of their 'communist turns' after the opening speech from Socialist Appeal's leader, Alan Woods.

Over the weekend there were talks ranging from the French Revolution (Keelan Kellegher) to morality and communism (Ellen Morton).

Most were pitched at the young and inexperienced. The sessions I attended included 'How Marx became a communist', 'Race and class: do we need a "black Marxism"?' and 'The Soviet economy: how it worked, and how it didn't'.

The first of these on the young Marx was a fairly uncontroversial retelling of his political heritage - from radical journalism to a communist freely borrowing from utopian socialist thinkers such as Henri de Saint-Simon, but, crucially, under the influence of Fredrick Engels, recognising the central importance of the working class movement and the necessity of equipping it with the theory it needed to achieve liberation from wage-slavery.

What immediately struck me, was the subsequent calling of obviously pre-selected contributions. Perhaps this was done in order to give self-confidence to younger comrades, but it more than smacked of stage management and certainly stilted debate. Instead of responses to the actual argument we got written or memorised statements. It came over as rather strange and even robotic.

The two sessions on Frantz Fanon and Black Marxism (referencing the book by Cedric Robinson) were used to reinforce IMT's line against intersectionality and identity politics. Much of Jorge Martin's talk on Fanon, for example, was used to critique the post-colonial theory prevalent in academia. As an example, Jorge highlighted an academic article arguing that Fanon was a pacifist (which is hilarious for anyone familiar with his work). Alongside this, both men were criticised for taking the point of focus away from the proletariat to other sectional groups (the lumpenproletariat in the case of Fanon and ethnocultural identity for Robinson). Crucially lacking, however, was the absence of a positive programme to deal with the issues of identity, oppression and class in a modern context.

The two sessions on the Soviet Union touched upon issues of culture and economy under proletarian rule and the difficulties faced by the Bolsheviks under conditions of 'combined and uneven development', as put forward by Leon Trotsky.

Major debates concerning the Soviet economy (such as those on foreign trade, war communism, the New Economic Policy, etc) were discussed in chronological order and what was highlighted in particular was the difficulty of organising a socialist economy in conditions of continued capitalist world domination.

Inaccuracies

One concern I had, however, was the factual inaccuracies presented regarding the immediate economic debates after Lenin's death (such as the claim that Nicolai Bukharin and the so-called right opposition wanted to preserve the NEP as it was). This is sloppy.

On Soviet art and culture, much of Nelson Wan's talk was devoted to giving out specific examples of works born out of the October revolution. A wide ensemble of artists, such as Vladimir Mayakovsky, Vladimir Tatlin and Konstantin Stanislavsky, were touched upon and used as examples of the proletariat's potential for artistic creativity. Not that they were from the lower depths. Likewise the debate on 'proletarian culture' was also mentioned, in which the post-revolution artistic school, Proletkult, was portrayed as both negative and positive, and ultimately the speaker predictably sided with Lenin and Trotsky against the notion of a 'proletarian culture'. Wouldn't it be great to have a speaker who is 'off-message', - an outside speaker (heaven forbid a CPGB speaker) - and a real, testing, debate?

The French Revolution (both 1789 and 1793) was given as an example of a lesson to be learned from by all revolutionaries. The lack of concern of the feudal aristocrats for the peasantry, the decadent lifestyle of the House of Bourbon and a rising capitalist class were given as causes for the revolution. The latter stage of the revolution alongside the terror, were, however, pictured as a continuation of the bourgeois revolution, instead of representing a partial break with it. Rather paradoxically, the same government abolished slavery, introduced universal suffrage, and in the 1793 constitution stipulated social welfare as a right and government

intervention in economic affairs as a duty (much to the chagrin of the French bourgeoisie at the time). Despite the sentencing of members of the disaffected bourgeoisie to the guillotine, 1793 was represented as mainly defending the interests of that same bourgeoisie!

In Saturday's closing session *Socialist Appeal* editor Rob Sewell announced SA's pending name change - it is to be reconstituted as the 'Revolutionary Communist Party' some time next year. In line with this, *Socialist Appeal* itself will cease publication this January, to be replaced and re-released as *The Communist*. This is SA harking back, not to the RCP of Frank Furedi but the RCP of 1944 - a confessional sect squabbled over by Jock Haston, Ted Grant, Tony Cliff and Gerry Healy, which produced modern-day British Trotskyism in most of its not so glorious 57 varieties.

Rabbit

Unless I am wrong, these name changes came as a complete surprise to the membership. Comrade Sewell seemed to pull his communist rabbit out of his Socialist Appeal hat. They clapped and hooted in approval. But did they have any say in the matter? It appears that they are treated more like speaking tools than thinking militants who jealously hold their leaders to account. That or they were good actors and fooled me. Either way, bad practice.

Having had a glimpse of what lies beneath the new, shiny, communist wrapping, I fear it is really business as usual. This is best exemplified by the remark made by comrade Woods on the Sunday: "Comrades, beware of imitations". In other words, he is not interested in engaging with the rest of the Marxist left to achieve communist unity, but rather promoting his particular confessional sect in the hope that one day the workers will see the 'light' of Marxism-Leninism-Grantism thought.

That said, there were many who were prepared to talk with us. While most loyally parroted the words of Alan Woods, Rob Sewell and Fred Weston, some appear willing to think for themselves. Excellent ●

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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Nigel's next adventure

However he gets on in the jungle, Nigel Farage is far from done with frontline politics, writes Paul Demarty

There are not a huge number of things Nigel Farage has in common with Matt Hancock.

Both are, in the broadest sense, reactionaries; but in terms of temperament, style and - let's be honest - raw talent, they are rather different beasts altogether. Farage is a sharp, hell-raising trickster; Hancock a gormless yes-man. Farage is intelligent; Hancock stupid. Farage, despite his youthful Tory membership, has made most of his chaos from the cheap seats outside the Westminster mainstream, with Ukip, the Brexit Party and then Reform. Hancock is, by all appearances, the product of some laboratory experiment at Conservative HQ.

Yet they are now sharing one more quirk - a stint in the notorious jungle of ITV's *I'm a celebrity ... get me out of here!* Hancock had the Tory whip suspended for taking leave from his parliamentary duties; the same fate befell Nadine Dorries, late of mid-Bedfordshire, back in 2012. Farage has no such threat over him, of course: he is already, strictly professionally speaking, more or less a 'media guy'. We shall see how he comes over, not that we anticipate a smooth ride.

Look stupid

It is always possible to make yourself look stupid on these things, of course, but one must accept that the incidence of such outcomes is rather overstated by the prudish worthies of the bourgeois media, frantically trying to maintain the facade of seriousness over the political circus they must cover. Dorries barely glanced off *I'm a celebrity* before returning happily to parliament for another decade. (The Tory leadership of the time indulged her, fearing an embarrassing defection to Ukip.) Hancock's popularity likewise rose over his appearance (albeit from a rather low starting point!).

There is something about eating a marsupial's anus on terrestrial television that is humanising, it seems; and so for the various other reality TV gambits of professional politicians we could mention - none of which, so far as we are aware, have proven career-ending. If Farage fails, it might be because he is *too* well suited to this sort of pantomime.

We cannot quite decide whether this comes at a good or bad time for him. He has been removed from the equation here in good old Blighty at exactly the moment that he might have had an opening. Sunak's reshuffle clearly favoured Tory moderates; Suella Braverman finally succeeded in her "suicide by cop" routine, and her net replacement, David Cameron (or Baron Cameron of Chipping Norton - a name we might have satirically invented for him back in 2011, but is now his for real) is a totem for the 'sensible', post-Blair Toryism that people once thought was the wave of the future. Alas for Nigel! He is condemned to nibble on possum gonads, while Braverman cements her credentials



Nigel Farage: meet the next Tory leader?

as the standard-bearer for the Tory right.

Farage, of course, is not *formally* in the running to take that role. Yet he surely must fancy it. The Conservative Party has proven itself vulnerable to his sort - why not him? Michael Crick, who recently wrote a biography of him, made the point in the *i* newspaper:

From becoming a Tory member, it would be a simple step to finding a safe seat - possibly at a by-election ... And, once an MP, Farage would not be able to resist standing for the Tory leadership - trying for an extraordinary hat-trick of party leaderships, having led both Ukip and the Brexit Party in the past.¹

Practical matters

The prospect of Farage leading the Tories is intelligible for two kinds of reasons - practical and historical.

The practical matters first: the 'natural party of government' looks on course for a serious hiding next year, after which it will likely prove difficult for the sensible, sober men and women in grey suits to

arrange a coronation of a sensible, sober leader (who anyway?). There will be an open field, and the next leader will likely be vulnerable. So, if Farage does manage to sneak in through a by-election, he will have a good shot at being in the mix - he is, after all, well known, and probably popular among the Tory membership at large, to whom the decision will ultimately devolve.

As for the strategic factor, it ought to be all too obvious, given the recent history. The strange obliviousness of the political and media establishment to the *success* of politicians subsequent to their appearances on various reality shows is a token of the same establishment's incredulity at the success of Farage overall. It was not too long ago, after all, that Cameron could dismiss Farage's Ukip as a bunch of "closet racists, fruitcakes and swivel-eyed loons". Yet Farage had the last laugh. He said as much to the European parliament after his Brexit triumph - "you're not laughing now!"

In 2014, it might have seemed that British politics was in a kind of bipartisan steady state. A Blairite Labour government had

been replaced by a crypto-Blairite Tory-Liberal coalition. Both had administered the state favourably to capitalist and imperial interests, and meanwhile tacked between socially-liberal legislation and law-and-order, anti-scrummer, anti-immigrant rhetoric. It *seemed*, almost, to be working, despite the disasters of the Iraq war and the 2008 crisis, which in reality implicated both parties.

But an unexpected outright Tory victory in the 2015 election ruined everything - by, first of all, offering up the Labour leadership to Jeremy Corbyn, and then obliging Cameron to actually deliver the EU referendum. The victory for Brexit - as all 'wrong' referendum answers must - caused a political crisis; but in another respect it was an effect of a latent political crisis. With the total inability of the Tory Party to cohere around a clear lead, and the manifest unsuitability of the 'second eleven' under Corbyn, the Brexit settlement took years and two further general elections to push through. Boris Johnson's commanding victory in 2019 lanced the Brexit boil at last, routed Labour (compromised by

its collapse into 'remainerism' in its heartlands), and seemed to indicate an enormous expansion of the plebeian reactionary electorate.

Yet that did not put an end to the chaos at the top of the Tory Party, which has in stages been forced to abandon the more populist aspects of the Johnson programme. Despite no end of Blue-Labourish wonkery, it seems quite implausible that Starmer should capture that ground except by default. That is not least because it always was a fantasy. There were no 'sunlit uplands'; Brexit would only ever transfer whatever sovereignty was formally devolved to the EU *informally* to the US, with the mere friction of the shift leaving Britain worse off.

The paralysis is ultimately therefore *objective*. Sabre-rattling Tories made an enemy of the EU - it had been all fun and games until the bill came due in 2016. Since the separation with the EU was finalised, we have had a hard lesson in the internationalisation of production, and indeed of military-political power. For all his *bons mots* and devil-may-care charm, Farage cannot magic food import replacements out of thin air.

State power

There is no way out from this bind but internationalism, which in turn requires the *delegitimisation* of the official ideologies and power centres of state power, in both liberal and conservative versions. Short of that, there is only the accusing gaze of counterfactual history - the better world we could have had, had we not been *stabbed in the back*. The very failure of Brexit - and national chauvinism more generally - to deliver on its dodgy promises ironically ensures a ready role for someone like Nigel Farage, should he want it, in frontline politics.

Still more ridiculous is the idea that the Conservatives, being a mainstream party, could not host such a character. Quite apart from its present state (is Farage meaningfully to the *right* of Suella Braverman?), the Tory Party has always been more hospitable to far-right ideology than it would like you to think, and has, since the 17th century, been a source of endless panics about immigration, resulting frequently in mob violence.

We wish Nigel a jolly good time eating unmentionables in the *I'm a celebrity* jungle - but if we want to prevent him making the leap, like Johnson, from trickster to prime minister, then we must first of all abandon any illusion that there is a firewall between 'legitimate', 'mainstream' politics and the far right. The famous Overton window can shift very rapidly - and in this case it already has ●

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Notes

1. inews.co.uk/opinion/serious-chance-nigel-farage-rejoin-conservatives-work-way-very-top-2757358.