

weekly **worker**



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Towards a mass Communist Party

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**WEST PUNISHES
UNRWA AND GAZA
NOT ISRAEL**



LETTERS



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

Ignoring reality

Tony Greenstein sets himself the supremely difficult task in his most recent article of proving that Hamas is not anti-Semitic at all ('Is Hamas anti-Semitic?', January 18). Needless to say, he fails.

"If Hamas was anti-Semitic," he begins, "then why, when Hamas was formed in 1988, did Israel continue to support it?" He quotes *The Washington Post* describing how "Israeli authorities actively enabled its rise", plus a *Wall Street Journal* article saying the same thing - that "Israel helped to spawn Hamas." His conclusion: Hamas cannot possibly be anti-Semitic because the Jewish state would never have backed it if it were.

Is he serious? As I've pointed out twice in recent months ('A Jewish crisis', November 2, and 'Zionism needs anti-Semitism', November 23), Zionism's attitude toward anti-Semitism is ambiguous at the very least. The problem goes back to Theodor Herzl, the movement's founder, who could never stop saying how much he liked anti-Semites because they agreed that Jews had no future in the diaspora. He lauded them in his 1896 pamphlet, *The Jewish state*, for "provid[ing] the requisite impetus" for Jews to go, and said: "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." He regarded Jews as "a people debased" and said that both sides would be so happy, once they moved to Palestine, that they "will pray for me in the synagogues and in the churches as well". Not only would Jews be liberating themselves, he said, but they would be liberating Christians - "liberating them from us".

So the fact that Israel initially backed Hamas does not mean that the organisation is free of anti-Semitism. All it shows is that the heirs of Herzl were once again making cynical use of anti-Semitism for their own ends.

Things get worse when Greenstein moves on to Hamas's infamous 1988 covenant. He calls me a Zionist for being "obsessed" with it, even though, like most left apologists for Hamas, he's equally obsessed with ignoring it. He quotes something called the Islamic Human Rights Commission to the effect that, even though the 1988 covenant contains "undeniably anti-Jewish elements", it "was drafted by one member of the old Ikhwan movement [ie, the Muslim Brotherhood] and was released as Hamas's charter without proper consultation within the organisation. Hamas is therefore stuck with it..." He quotes Saednews, a Tabriz-based news agency, as saying that, even though the charter is "loaded with anti-Jewish rhetoric", Hamas subsequently distanced itself from its own statement by "[e]mphasising that its struggle has been merely against Zionists and Judaism".

This is hardly convincing. The IHRC is an Islamist organization that backed Abu Hamsa, the notorious imam of Finsbury Park, and Omar Abdelp-Rahman, the "blind sheik" convicted of bombing New York's World Trade Center in 1993. Saednews describes itself on its website as "following the general policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran" - which, of course, backs Hamas to the hilt. So neither is trustworthy.

But if, as the two organisations imply, Hamas truly wishes to take back all it said about Jews in its founding document - that they are responsible for the French Revolution and two world wars, that they want to control the world, that they should be killed, etc - then the solution is easy. All it has to do is rescind the covenant and apologise for putting out such garbage in the first place.

But this is what Hamas pointedly refused to do when it issued a supplementary charter in 2017. As I recently noted (Letters, January 11), a top Hamas official named Mahmoud al-Zahar assured Reuters at the time that the 1988 covenant was as valid as ever and that "there is no contradiction between what we said in the [2017] document and the pledge we have made to god in our [original] charter". So who's right - Greenstein, who says the covenant is irrelevant, or Hamas, who says it's not?

Greenstein is at his most absurd when he says that "October 7 was directed at Israelis not because they were Jewish" and offers as proof the fact that "many non-Jews (even Arabs) were victims". But videos surfaced back in November of Hamas fighters screaming at a captured Israeli Arab on October 7 that he works for "the infidel Jews", as they beat him and threaten to cut his throat (*Times of Israel*, November 9). The fact that Hamas is an equal-opportunity brutalizer hardly gets it off the hook.

Greenstein fills his article with so many ludicrous and nonsensical statements that it would take a book to refute them all. So suffice it to say that there is absolutely nothing pro-Zionist about pointing out that Hamas's politics are reactionary and anti-Semitic, and that its actions on October 7 have resulted in an unparalleled disaster for the Palestinians. On the contrary, it's obligatory. Marxists should shout the Leninist principle from the rooftops that bourgeois nationalism, Islamism, or whatnot can only lead to catastrophe, and that the only way to achieve national self-determination and equality is through international socialist revolution.

Greenstein's refusal to face facts about Hamas renders him politically useless. He is determined to ignore reality, when the task is to change it.

Daniel Lazare
New York

Minimum demands

Is it anti-Semitic to deny Israelis (and Palestinians) their right to a minimum (ie, democratic republican) programme? The answer is uncertain. But this is the road that the CPGB's 'Theses on Israel-Gaza war and communist strategy' has taken by ruling out a two-state solution, which "effectively falls at the same hurdle as the single-state solution". Denying the people of Israel and Palestine their right to a minimum programme is surely discrimination. The CPGB would never tolerate here what they deny to Jewish workers in Israel and Palestine. (*Weekly Worker* January 25).

The theses argue against two states because "We cannot expect Israel, as presently constituted, to concede the territory necessary to create a viable Palestinian state. Without a serious transformation of the regional, and indeed global, balance of forces, any such solution will simply not happen. Benjamin Netanyahu has the virtue of making that abundantly clear." Yes, the Israeli ruling class has ruled it out and will not budge. The British ruling class will not agree to a democratic republic here either.

The minimum (republican) programme is not ruled out because

of the opposition of powerful ruling classes and the regional and global balance of forces. To argue that this programme is not relevant for Israel-Palestine alone is to descend towards the murky waters of Jewish exceptionalism. Is Israel so democratic that it has no need for a democratic republic?

If the two-state solution represents the minimum programme, then communism has taken a wrong turn. It is not simply that Netanyahu won't allow it: more importantly, we should reject it regardless of the Israeli ruling class. The two-state solution is Zionist policy built on the 1948 partition of Palestine. It is no solution. It is an imperialist game for manipulating public opinion, whilst the Palestinian people suffer ethnic cleansing and the real threat of genocide. The thesis is far too tolerant of the two-states policy - the means by which the Labour Party, TUC and the major trade unions line up behind the policy of Zionism.

The only alternative minimum programme is 'one state' and the theses rule this out too. One state as a republican demand means *one democratic, secular, federal republic of Israel-Palestine*. The CPGB theses oppose one state and two states and thus the minimum programme as such. This essentially puts an equals sign between a Zionist policy and a democratic policy. Then, of course, there is no distinction between the Israeli nation and the Jewish 'nation', which is identified as the Hebrew nation. The Israeli nation is 80:20 Jewish and Palestinian Arab. Zionism defines Israel as a Jewish nation and Israeli democrats (ie, Jews and Arabs) must stand opposed to this and for a democratic secular deZionised Israeli republic.

Section 14 says: "The Palestinian national resistance movement cannot win by its own efforts alone." This is true. But neither could the South African democratic movement win on its own without international solidarity. However, international solidarity is not a substitute for the South African masses or the Israeli-Palestinian masses taking up the fight for a democratic republic. Unfortunately the theses suggest the Jewish workers stand by their beds and salute the Arab socialist revolution. When it arrives, they will gain "the right to join an Arab socialist republic with the right to self-determination".
Steve Freeman
London

No factions

Blimey! Some people are so addicted to their oppositional factions and sects, they really can't imagine political life and activity without them! (Letters, January 25).

(Actually, no, Jack - I haven't written a "string of letters on factions". I was originally writing much more substantively on the subjects of a mass socialist/independent working class political formation and the relations between that and a much bigger, much more influential Communist Party. It is you and others who have, revealingly, chose to focus on the question of factions within a Communist Party).

There is a straight contradiction between Peter Manson's definition of 'factions' and Jack Conrad's. Peter suggests they are merely a grouping of like-minded individuals and certainly not as I described, having their own memberships, leaderships, policy platforms, aims and objectives, organisational disciplines, etc, separate from the party itself. Jack uses the example of the Bolsheviks in the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party as a prize example of a faction, who most certainly did

have their own distinct membership, leadership, policy platform, aims and objectives, and organisational discipline.

Is Peter in favour of factions which are *merely* groupings of like-minded individuals, but *opposed* to them having their own membership, leadership, policy platforms, aims and objectives, organisational disciplines, etc? I suspect not, so his quote from Wikipedia is, I think, a bit of cover to try and soft-focus the real logic of factions.

Certainly, my description of factions fits *exactly* the real-life examples of the opposition factions in the former Communist Party of Great Britain, including the Communist Campaign Group, *Straight Left*, *The Leninist* (forerunner, although very different politically, to the current *Weekly Worker* group).

All three claimed to be the true advocates of Marxism-Leninism in this country and in the CPGB. All three claimed adherence to some previous historical versions of the CPGB and claimed they were merely trying to re-establish those in the then present. All three had their own internal logic and reasoning as to why they had organised into a faction - and I could understand and sympathise with some of those - but equally I could see then and now how the logic of factionalism ultimately destroyed the CPGB, as it would any Communist Party. All three were top-down organisations, parties or proto-parties within a party, and issued orders from the top to their factional foot soldiers on the front line. There was no internal democracy within any of them.

In branch meetings - the branch being the basic primary unit of the Communist Party - whenever a member of one of those factions spoke, moved a motion, etc, you knew damn well it was not coming from them as an individual, from their own experience, thoughts or intelligence, but they were merely acting on orders from on high. How was this not deeply offensive and insulting to the branch or a contravention of that branch's democracy?

Fundamentally, this is about party democracy. It is not surprising that Trotskyists, liberals, social democrats, etc rail so bitterly and furiously against the basic working class discipline of abiding by democratically decided majority decisions, policies and actions. That is basically what democratic centralism and forbidding organised factions is all about.

Why form or join a faction? Surely in order to increase the collective power, influence and control that members of that faction can exert over the wider party. At whose expense is this increased power and influence obtained? From the majority of ordinary front-line members of the Communist Party who are not members of any faction, because they actually support and agree with the majority direction and leadership of the party. In that very clear way, factions are detrimental/antithetical to the democracy of the whole party, by, in effect, crowding out the democracy available to ordinary members in their branches and elected committees.

I did *not* equate the RSDLP and the Labour Party as *similar* sorts of broad working class political formation. I used the RSDLP and Labour Party as *different* types of examples, where Bolsheviks/communists have had to work in formations which included very many non-Bolsheviks/communists.

Yes, absolutely, the RSDLP at its Second Congress "committed itself to the revolutionary overthrow of tsarism" and the "dictatorship of the proletariat" (yes, obviously,

completely different to the British Labour Party, which was founded for the purpose of obtaining parliamentary representation for the organised working class), but Jack concedes the very point that the RSDLP then *split* because very significant elements, Mensheviks and other non-Bolsheviks, did not agree to the practical, political and organisational implications of how to carry that out in practice.

Yes, the RSDLP committed itself *on paper* to revolution against the autocracy, to a "revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the working class and peasants", which would grow into a dictatorship of the proletariat and socialism, but the basic problem was that significant sections of the RSDLP were in fact fundamentally opposed to both the direction of travel (revolutionary transformations in the direction of socialism), and the strategy for achieving them. As we well know from the example of the German Social Democratic Party, it was very common for many at that time to pay lip service to Marxism and socialism but in practice, in deeds and actions, they were antithetical to Marxism and socialism.

As Jack probably knows better than many of us, Lenin over the whole period of the inner-party struggles incurred a vast amount of time, capacity, energy and words, systematically, ruthlessly, painstakingly, effectively, decisively *exposing* the pretensions and the falsehoods of Mensheviks, social democrats, Trotsky, etc, who *claimed* they were Marxists, socialists and communists, but in actual fact and practice were working against the aims, objectives, strategy and tactics of the Bolsheviks/communists, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Was it *really* ideal or even satisfactory for the Bolsheviks to have to "work with Mensheviks in joint committees up to and after the October 1917 revolution"? A tactical and pragmatic necessity, yes, but surely far more ideal and effective to have operated as a single mass, democratic-centralist organisation.

Democratic centralism provides more than adequate opportunities for the party membership as a whole to democratically determine programme, policies, strategy, tactics and elected leadership bodies. Organised factions by definition are attempts to systematically *subvert* that basic operation of Communist Party democracy and therefore *reduce* democracy for the membership as a whole. Clearly, factions are sometimes a historical necessity - some members of such would argue that in the CPGB in the 1980s, and certainly for the Bolsheviks in the early 20th century. But they should *never* be seen as the ideal - something to be aimed for or constitutionally enshrined.

Andrew Northall
Kettering

Depressing

As a great admirer of Mike Macnair's writings on revolutionary strategy and the need for communist regroupment, I have found the recent exchanges between comrades in the CPGB-PCC and Talking About Socialism to be deeply depressing. If this is the standard of engagement even between the relatively non-dogmatic, non-sectarian, forward-thinking parts of the left with a shared commitment to communist regroupment, then it feels like we may be doomed!

I wanted to take issue in particular with Macnair's comments - in, for example, 'Communist unity and its refuseniks' (January 25) and 'Taciturns offer nothing positive' (January 11) about "diplomatic formulations", "the principle of

politeness” and similar - which seem deeply confused, if not disingenuous.

It seems that Macnair is using terms like “diplomatic methods” to conflate two completely different phenomena. His critiques of the “diplomatic” approaches of “programmatically fudging”, where substantive political differences are obscured for the sake of opportunistic convenience, are correct and important, but this seems to have little to do with the kind of “diplomacy” that TAS comrades are demanding from the CPGB-PCC.

What appears to be at issue is the basic “diplomacy” of manners, politeness, treating your interlocutors with respect as equals, engaging with the substance of their arguments instead of pursuing dismissive misrepresentations. This kind of “diplomacy” need not have anything to do with obscuring political differences, and any competent organiser knows that it is essential even to run an effective meeting - let alone to engineer a regroupment of the entire communist left! If the comrades of the CPGB-PCC are incapable of understanding this distinction or of practising this basic “diplomacy”, then it is no wonder that their group remains as small as it is, or that their efforts towards regroupment seem to go nowhere in spite of their theoretical cleverness.

While I agree that TAS ought to engage with and meet with comrades from the CPGB-PCC regardless, you need to stop misrepresenting them! It’s clear that their issue with you is not that they want to cover up their political disagreements, but basically that they think you have been talking down to them, misrepresenting them, and acting like dickheads! Is it so difficult to be the bigger seat and say, ‘I’m sorry we got off on the wrong foot. Let’s try to reset this discussion on a more respectful basis’? As an outside observer, it looks as if certain comrades in the CPGB-PCC are just using disingenuous theoretical mystifications about “diplomatic formulations” as an excuse to act like children. Nobody will want to talk to you if you insist on being rude and patronising to them! You can try to justify this with all the theoretical and pseudo-strategic verbiage that you like, but you will never succeed in organising anything.

For what it’s worth, I am part of an informal caucus within Revolutionary Socialism in the 21st Century (RS21), who have been avid readers of Macnair and of the *Weekly Worker* (and of the politically related *Cosmonaut* in the US), but one of the difficulties we have in convincing our other comrades to take this work seriously is that many of them regard groups like the CPGB-PCC as being nothing more than a bunch of miserable, sectarian old men, who are only interested in abstract and self-important polemicising, and who have no presence in the trade unions or social movements and no practical contributions to make to the ongoing class struggle - and consequently that they are simply not worth the effort and unpleasantness of engaging with.

Doubtless these are grossly unfair mischaracterisations rooted in prejudice and ignorance, but we would be much obliged if our comrades in the CPGB-PCC could make every effort to help us to combat these crude and offensive stereotypes.

By the way, Macnair describes RS21 as “basically an organisation based among students”. I’m not sure where he has got this idea from, except perhaps by incorrectly extrapolating from the composition of his local branch in Oxford a decade ago, when the organisation was founded, and (as far as I understand it) the Socialist Workers Party’s student group in Oxford defected *en masse*. Most of those comrades will have long since graduated!

I’m not sure that we keep comprehensive enough data to give a definitive answer, but to the best of my knowledge, students are only a very small proportion of RS21’s membership at present (and undergraduates are probably outnumbered by postgraduates and lecturers), we have no student societies, and no particular strategy for recruiting students (although we probably should work on one!).

Anecdotally I would say that much more of our recent recruitment has come from RS21’s engagement with the strike wave and with the Palestine solidarity movement - a lot of recent recruits (including myself) being basically radicalised ex-Corbynites, who left university long ago.

Archie Woodrow
Camden

Swedish justice

In his recent article Paul Demarty makes a passing reference to the accusations of rape against Julian Assange in Sweden (‘Grim fate awaits him’, January 18). Demarty correctly identifies this moment as the cue for the desertion of him by “the soft left”, including *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*. I should think that these charges have diminished his support across the whole ‘left’ and centrist population, as so many are prepared to accept that he is being attacked, and punished for telling the truth, but ‘maybe he’s not such a nice chap’.

Demarty says: “It seems we will never know if the Swedish charges amounted to anything; they have long been abandoned.” But Nils Melzer, who was the “United Nations special rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” from 2016 until 2022, has produced a book on the subject: *The trial of Julian Assange*.

He was approached by Assange’s legal team to investigate the case, but, as he says in the introduction, “I was initially biased against Assange and even refused to get involved in his case.” Further on, when he was actually investigating, he looks back at this “hasty” and “judgmental” response and says: “I had been deceived by the same relentless and perfidious smear campaign against him, which is still ongoing today and aims to deflect public attention away from what this case is really about.” Quite.

Melzer looks in great detail at the whole attack on Assange, but I would suggest that maybe half of the book is about the attack based in Sweden. It goes into the accusations, how they were treated by the Swedish authorities and how they raised their head throughout his ordeal.

Assange was eventually charged with rape, but, as Melzer shows, this was after actions by the authorities - police and prosecutors - which were wildly at variance with the rules and regulations that were supposed to apply. Two women went to the police: they wanted Assange to have an HIV test after the consensual sex they had enjoyed. He was not willing to do that and they thought the police might help them to force the issue.

They were shocked when they were expected to back up charges of rape and Melzer had access to many email and other messages between them, where their concerns moved from HIV tests to their dismay at their apparent, or alleged, backing for these charges.

Assange hung around in Stockholm for a while for the police and prosecutors to do whatever, but after a few weeks he left. Charges were then brought to imply that here we had a fleeing criminal.

Similar shenanigans were employed in Britain over the many years that the charges were on or maybe off (“Don’t you dare get cold feet,” said the Crown Prosecution

Service lawyer). One of these was the production in Sweden of ‘evidence’ that Assange and the two women had had sex, but this was never an issue. There was a torn condom, which apparently had no DNA from Assange or either of the women. Anything to pretend that there was an ongoing case.

As is fairly well known, Assange agreed to go to Sweden to face charges or investigation, as long as the authorities there guaranteed that he would not be extradited to the United States, as others had been before. This they were not willing to do, so Assange refused to go, and eventually sought sanctuary in the Ecuadorian embassy.

There have been many online accounts of the campaign against Assange - including some pointing out flaws in the Swedish charges, but I’ve seen nothing as thorough and meticulous as Melzer’s book. He covers the later developments - in the embassy, the show trials on extradition, etc - but the Swedish campaign in particular gives some indication of how low the bourgeoisie are prepared to go. And, yes, Assange has been and is being tortured.

This is true especially of the global hegemon, but backing that are the depths of its lapdogs - both political and mainstream media. Or, to quote a more eloquent observer, Melzer has written a “landmark book, the first by a senior international official to call out the criminality of western governments, and their craven media echoes, in the persecution of Julian Assange”. This is from the recently deceased John Pilger - it’s on the back cover of the book.

Julian Assange and Wikileaks told the world of bourgeois crimes and are paying a price. There have been many protests and rallies, but we need a mass communist party leading the working class to stop them committing those crimes.

Jim Nelson
email

Afghan poppies

The conflicts between Iran, Pakistan and separatist groups in their border regions may be exacerbated by the knock-on effects of poppy eradication in Afghanistan since the Taliban’s takeover.

Despite the international coalition’s efforts, a couple of years ago roughly 80% of the world’s illicit heroin came from poppies grown in Afghanistan. A global heroin shortage is setting in with the first full year of much reduced harvests - both Iran and Pakistan are likely to be alternative locations for poppy culture.

As in South America and south-east Asia, the chance to participate in the drugs trade will make it easier for extranational armed groups to fund themselves, while nation-states might seek to use conformity to international norms of drug prohibition as a pretext for political repression.

Jack William Grahl
email

Lurid claim

In his article, ‘A comedy of errors’ (January 25), Eddie Ford highlights the link between nuclear power and nuclear energy. Nuclear power is “inextricably linked to weapons of mass destruction”, according to the subheading, highlighting “the madness of nuclear power”.

A lurid claim and not accurate, because in Europe there are 12 countries without a nuclear weapons programme, but who have civil nuclear power. A further 14 countries around the world have a civil, but not military, nuclear programme, which is therefore not inextricably linked to weapons of mass destruction.

Paul Russell
email

ACTION

EP Thompson at 100

Saturday February 3, 9.30am to 3.30pm: Conference, Trinity Sixth Form Academy, Northgate House, Halifax HX1. To discuss and reflect on communist historian EP Thompson’s intellectual and political legacies, as well as the ongoing relevance of Thompson’s approaches to history and politics for the world of today. Registration free, includes light lunch. Followed by a social until 6pm. Organised by Society for the Study of Labour History: www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10161837245934973.

Preparing for a general election challenge

Saturday February 3, 11am to 4.30pm: Organising convention, Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham B4 and online. Preparing a challenge by trade unionists, socialists and campaign groups, with candidates standing against Sir Keir Starmer’s Labour Party in the forthcoming general election. Registration £5 (£2). Organised by Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition: www.facebook.com/TUSCoalition.

Ceasefire now! End the siege of Gaza!

Saturday February 3, 12 noon: National demonstration. Assemble BBC, Portland Place, London W1A. As Israel continues its bombardment of Gaza, the call for a full and permanent ceasefire remains unwavering. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.facebook.com/events/7133507213412167.

Israel: the making of a racist state

Monday February 5, 7pm: Pamphlet launch, Lighthouse Bookshop, 43-45 West Nicolson Street, Edinburgh EH8. Author Neill Rogall describes the Zionist colonisation of Palestine: territorial expansion and ethnic cleansing. Forcing Palestinians out to guarantee the dream of an ‘ethnically pure’ settler state. Tickets: £3 (includes pamphlet) or free. Organised by Edinburgh rs21: www.rs21.org.uk/event/israel-the-making-of-a-racist-state.

What it means to be human

Tuesday February 6, 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: ‘Raising tomorrow: BaYaka hunter-gatherer childhoods and global perspectives on child development’. Speaker: Deniz Salali. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: www.facebook.com/events/1376872836576343.

Stand with Gaza

Tuesday February 6, 6.30pm: Trade union rally, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1. Speakers from Unite, NEU, UCU and RMT. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk/events/standwithgaza-london-trade-union-rally.
Wednesday February 7: Nationwide workplace day of action. A call to all those in work, college or university to organise a walkout, lunchtime or early morning protest to demand a permanent ceasefire. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk/events/standwithgaza-workplace-day-of-action.

Israel-Palestine: oppression and resistance

Thursday February 8, 7pm: US/UK imperialism and Israel - who is wagging the dog? Speaker: Roger Silverman. Part of an online education and discussion series. Organised by Labour Left Alliance and Why Marx?: www.whymarx.com/sessions.

Fighting for anti-racist workplaces

Sunday February 11, 12 noon to 4.30pm: Conference, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1. To discuss strategies and actions to combat racism in the workplace and shed light on the challenges faced by marginalised communities. Registration £6.13. Organised by Stand Up To Racism: www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=716937430550663.

Stop bombing Gaza; stop bombing Yemen

Tuesday February 13, 7pm: Public meeting, Friends Meeting House, Ship Street, Brighton BN1. Stop the escalation of wars in the Middle East. Oppose the wars, the arms trade and nuclear weapons. Organised by Brighton and Hove Stop the War: www.stopwar.org.uk/events.

The secret US-UK nuclear weapons agreement

Thursday February 15, 6.30pm: Webinar. The Mutual Defence Agreement is a little known US/UK treaty that controls their nuclear collaboration. It’s coming up for renewal in parliament later this year and has to be challenged! Speakers include Richard Norton-Taylor and Mark Curtis from Declassified UK. Organised by Declassified UK and CND: cnduk.org/events/exposed-the-secret-us-uk-nuclear-weapons-agreement.

The Workers’ Committee

Friday February 16, 7pm: Pamphlet launch and social, Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Reprint of JT Murphy’s 1917 pamphlet, which delves into the struggles and triumphs of the early shop stewards networks. Tickets £5 (free). Free refreshments. Organised by Strike Map: www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=688785040119446.

Revolution! Imperialism and the political crisis

Sunday February 18, 12 noon to 5.30pm: Conference, SOAS University of London, 10 Thornhaugh Street, London WC1. Israel’s assaults on Gaza and the West Bank have created a global crisis. Millions have taken to the streets and the risk of a wider war grows. Hear the causes and consequences of the crisis and how to strengthen resistance. Registration £15 (£5). Organised by Counterfire: www.facebook.com/events/235140999630540.

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.

PALESTINE

Full-spectrum complicity

By 'suspending' funding, the west's diversionary campaign against UNRWA gives the lie to bourgeois cant about 'genocide prevention', argues Paul Demarty

In our untrusting age, people live in fear of the psy-op - that some major news event should turn out to be somehow manufactured by the powers that be. People identify 'ops' seriously, or in jest. Covid lockdowns were an op; Jeffrey Epstein's suicide was an op; Taylor Swift's latest boyfriend is an op; it's all gravy.

For a state with a formidable record of, let us say, *aggressive* reputation management, however, Israel seems to be losing its touch. The ops are so blindingly obvious that only bourgeois journalists, state department spokesmen and presidents of the United States could possibly fall for them. The increasingly threadbare assertions that this or that hospital is a " Hamas headquarters" were laughable to start with - the evidence cited after the fact obviously planted. The beheaded babies story lasted just long enough to make a tit out of Joe Biden.

Allegations of sexual assault and rape - surely at least *partly* true, on the evidence of every war ever fought in human history - were rendered fantastically implausible by cartoonish exaggerations and a total refusal to provide evidence beyond the say-so of the Israeli state and state-connected charities. Beyond that, so little has been found that even *The New York Times* has had to shelve a special podcast episode based on its own, entirely Israel-backed, coverage of the affair, because its journalists can no longer sell it to themselves.¹ Here, truly, is an Israel without guile.

Diversion

It is in that light, of course, that we should view Israel's allegations against UNRWA, or to give it its full name the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. Israel claims that a dozen or so of UNRWA's employees took part in the October 7 attack. This is not wholly unbelievable: UNRWA, a specially created organisation for aiding Palestinian refugees, employs thousands of people in Gaza; Hamas is a mass organisation and so are some of its allies; and so on. But really. Before taking this allegation seriously, given the relentless flood of readily and rapidly disproven lies coming from such quarters, any honest individual will want a few things in hand. Who confessed to this? When will they be brought before the public? Will they be permitted to tell the world how their 'confessions' were extracted? How come this was discovered contemporaneously with the International Court of Justice's finding that Israel has a case to answer on charges of genocide?

We are long past expecting such minimal exertions of scepticism from our rulers and their paid persuaders, however. The response instead was to give the *genocidaires* exactly what they wanted - create an absurd, hysterical media circus to distract from the ICJ ruling. If only it had stopped at the media: US-aligned governments began pulling funding from UNRWA, one by one. It is now the best part of a billion dollars short of funding (it has long been running on basically zero reserves). It is also, to put it mildly, rather busy at the moment.

No reader of this paper needs to be told that the US, UK and allied countries are complicit in the Gaza genocide. Israel drops our bombs on Gaza, fires our dumb artillery shells; we will go to bat to shield it from the



Gaza Strip: body bags

consequences of its provocations, in Yemen and who knows where else, by the time you read this. (We should never have called Biden 'Sleepy Joe' - it seems that every day under his presidency brings a new and exciting adventure in the near east!) What is remarkable here is how quickly and breezily Israel's western backers will abandon what idiotic fig leaves they can be bothered to adopt. Remember when Biden's people endlessly leaked that the administration was doing everything it could to avoid regional escalation? Remember when they then bombed Yemen?

And all along, the line has been that we are working so hard, so very hard, to make sure that vital humanitarian aid gets into Gaza, so Palestinians can patch up the wounds caused by our weapons. ("We cut them in half with a machine gun and give them a Band-Aid," mused Martin Sheen in *Apocalypse now - plus ça change ...*) It is UNRWA that provides the aid. So we are now, I suppose, down to urgently insisting that wholly notional aid gets in, to be replaced with real aid when Israel is finished torturing 'confessions' out of its captives. What we have achieved is full-spectrum complicity: we give Israel the munitions to slaughter and maim Gazans, and we ensure that the victims cannot be treated or even fed.

There was an additional irony at work, of course, in that, in the midst of this despicable manoeuvre, we were all solemnly called together to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The date commemorated is the Soviet liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the most prolific and long-lived of the Nazi death camps, and, though a relatively recent innovation - put in place by the UN in 2005 - fits into a larger narrative about the meaning of World War II.

That meaning is, roughly, that the good guys won, and we were the good guys; that the bad guys lost, but in doing so committed incomparable crimes. We must ensure that such crimes are not repeated: 'Never again!' '*Nie wieder!*' Its naivety, of course, is

based on a reality - that such crimes were committed, according to a chilling bureaucratic rationality, with all the instruments of modern 'civilisation'. Though holocaust memorialism took a while to get going, the impact of the liberation of the camps was quite real, and broadcast - itself - with the state of the art in communications. Soldiers who conquered such camps faced horrors even the general slaughter of the Eastern Front could not have prepared them for.

Memorialism

The peculiarity of this memorialism is found in the dispute today over what it is supposed to mean. For pro-Palestinians, 'Never again' means stopping what is going on *now*, with the Palestinians as the European Jews of the moment. All communists uphold this interpretation, naturally. Our enemies, however, take on a rival interpretation: that the lesson of the holocaust pertains specifically to anti-Semitic slaughter, and therefore the appropriate action - given that they accept, by and large, the claim of Israel to be the state of the Jews *per se* - is to wipe out Hamas - which signalled its genocidal intention on October 7 - at any cost. Thus European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen (clearly auditioning for Jens Stoltenberg's job at the head of Nato) went on her autumn solidarity tour of Israel with the slogan '*Nie wieder ist jetzt*' - "'Never again' is now'.

The paradox of memorialist ideology is that, though it gains its legitimating force from the premise that we must be made alert to the crimes of the present by knowledge of the crimes of the past, its use *as an ideology* means that it must be made to *blind us* to (some of) the crimes of the present by the same means. Holocaust memorialism achieves this by emphasising the singularity of the Nazis' extermination campaign, and angrily rejecting all attempts to 'relativise' it. If this was taken seriously, we would have no coherent concept of genocide at all.

Perhaps we do not. The responsible authorities decided long ago that Serbia was guilty of genocidal acts during the Bosnian wars in the 1990s. In the three years of conflict, Serbia and its Bosnian-Serb proxies notched up some 60,000-odd casualties, half and half military and civilian, in a country with roughly double the population of Gaza. Some 2.2 million people - about half the population - were displaced. In a few short months, Israel has displaced over 90% of Gazans, and killed, proportionately, three-quarters as many as Serbia killed among the Bosnians - mostly civilians. The Americans and their allies created entirely new international institutions to ensure that the G-word was fixed on Serbia. Today, it denounces the successors of those institutions for *even allowing for the possibility* it might be fixed on Israel.

The truth is that acts of genocide, according to the usual law of semantics, *are* comparable. They have things in common, as well as specific differences. There is, above all, an indissoluble relation to war. The Armenians were slaughtered by the Ottoman Turks as 'revenge' for allegedly betraying an important military operation in World War I. The mass slaughter of Rwandan Tutsis was the nadir of a long-running civil war that spilled over into neighbouring countries. Despite the oppression, pogroms and other outrages of 1930s Germany - indeed, despite the first bureaucratically directed extermination of the Nazi regime (of the disabled) - it was not until the war that German policy alighted on wiping out the Jews, in areas they conquered (the rationale given was the suppression of partisans, which Jews were assumed to be).

The policy became something quite different with the corpse-factories of Auschwitz, Treblinka and Majdanek. The singularity of the holocaust is striking in this way; if I may be forgiven for a grammatical error, it is *more* unique than its comparators. In a certain way, this makes it a better blinder

for those who do not wish to see contemporary crimes. Because of its horrendous human toll, the holocaust naturally takes place as the pre-eminent example of genocide. To hear the word, therefore, is to picture the holocaust - camps, guards, gas chambers, ovens. That already does not look much like the machete-wielding mobs of Rwanda, never mind the combined-arms onslaught of Israel in Gaza, the shutting off of food, water and medical supplies. It certainly does not if one does not wish to see it: it is right, more or less, for people to describe Gaza under the blockade regime of recent years as an open-air concentration camp.

Never again

That is the state of the backers of Israel, even beyond the interpretation of 'Never again'. Politicians, confronted by the few journalists who can be bothered to do their jobs with evidence of some new outrage, avoid comment - I haven't seen it, these allegations are serious, we'll raise it in our conversations with Israel. Pinned down by a Scottish nationalist in a parliamentary committee to say whether turning off Gaza's water was a genocidal act, David Cameron refused to answer - "I'm not a lawyer". (His 'Sir Humphrey' was later asked the same question, and gave the same answer initially, before half-conceding the point in a low, incoherent mumble: so whose job *is it* at the foreign office to understand international law then?)

Between their long records of pompous, 'Never again' chest-beating (and their present intention to ensure that, indeed, 'Never again' happens again *now*) our rulers are reduced to silence, kettle logic and nonsense. Unfortunately, however, despite their bad faith and moral self-injuries, they still have the power to bomb, to starve and to scatter entire populations ●

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Notes

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USA

Coming apart at the seams

Despite last week's E Jean Carroll defamation verdict, Trump's popularity continues to surge. Daniel Lazare explains why events keep boomeranging in his favour

Democrats are hoping that E Jean Carroll's \$83-million victory over Donald Trump turns out to be the event that finally convinces Americans that, whatever they do, they absolutely cannot put a sex assailant in the White House.

But it is 99% certain that it will not do that. Like all Trump scandals, real or imagined, it is all too likely to disappear in the flood of events. The reasons are many. Joe Biden is too old. Prices are too high. Homelessness is up 12% in the last year alone, and a record 22.5 million households are officially "rent-burdened" - meaning that they must spend 30% or more of their income merely to keep a roof over their heads.¹ There is war, immigration and political polarisation - all just about ensuring that the Carroll verdict will be lost in the shuffle.

But that is not all. There is also a growing sense that Democrats are using their control of the legal machinery to unfair advantage. Poll after poll shows Trump's numbers rising, not despite the Democratic legal offensive, but because of it. The mug shot of him glowering beneath a mass of orange-blond hair, taken when he was booked for election interference in Georgia, is now so popular that it is being turned into a campaign ad. *The New York Times* admitted in September that the legal "pileup ... seems like a boon to his re-nomination effort", while *The Washington Post* wrote a month later that 91 criminal charges "have boomeranged to his favour".²

Indictments, lawsuits, headlines about inflated real estate and stolen documents, etc - all are a reminder that more is not necessarily better. By accusing Trump of everything short of beating his grandmother, Democrats are merely confirming that they will stop at nothing to bring him down before an election takes place. That means stopping at nothing to prevent a growing number of Americans from voting for the candidate of their choice. Ever since Hillary Clinton lambasted Trump followers as a "basket of deplorables ... racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic" at a 2016 fundraiser gala, the sneering elitism behind such efforts has been all too apparent.

It is hard to see, therefore, why the E Jean Carroll verdict will not boomerang as well. Carroll, of course, is the 80-year-old journalist, author and advice columnist who says Trump sexually assaulted her at a high-end department store nearly 30 years ago. As she recounted in a 2019 magazine article, he had asked her to help buy a gift for a female friend after bumping into her at Bergdorf Goodman, a block or two from Trump Tower in midtown Manhattan. But, after checking out handbags and hats, they wound up in a dressing room in the lingerie section, where Trump proceeded to kiss her, pull down her tights, and rape her before she could escape.

A lawsuit decades after the fact may seem like a long shot, given that there was no physical evidence, no surveillance video, no witnesses and no police report. Carroll could not remember the year in which the attack supposedly took place, testifying that it might have been 1994 or 95 or maybe 1996. She could not remember the month or the season.³ She had accused ex-CBS chairman Les Moonves of sexual

assault in the same article. But, even though Moonves issued an emphatic public denial, she did not see fit to sue him as well - no doubt because her financial backers did not think it would be worth the effort.

To be sure, two fellow journalists testified that Carroll confided in them about the assault shortly after. But that was the extent of corroboration.

Nonetheless, Carroll had a number of things in her favour. One is that she was highly effective on the witness stand. "I'm here because Donald Trump raped me," she told a federal court in April. "And when I wrote about it, he said it didn't happen. He lied and shattered my reputation. And I'm here to try and get my life back."

That got jurors on her side, especially in anti-Trump Manhattan. A second thing is that it was a civil trial entailing a lower burden of proof - not beyond reasonable doubt, but based on a preponderance of evidence.

Trump response

But a third factor in her favour was Trump himself. Roberta Kaplan, Carroll's lawyer, played for the jury the famous 'Access Hollywood' tape, in which Trump bragged back in 2005 about women being drawn to him "like a magnet" due to his fame. "And when you're a star," the tape went on, "they let you do it. You can do anything ... grab 'em by the pussy, you can do anything." When Kaplan asked during a pre-trial deposition if he still felt the same way, he said yes:

Trump: Well, historically, that's true with stars.
Kaplan: True with stars that they can grab women by the pussy?
Trump: Well, that's what - if you look over the last million years, I guess that's been largely true. Not always, but largely true, unfortunately or fortunately.⁴

Kaplan could not have got a better answer if she had written it herself. In May, a nine-member jury found Trump "liable" for sexual abuse, battery and defamation and awarded Carroll \$5 million in damages. When Trump continued attacking her on *Truth Social* and other outlets as much as 40 times a day, she went back to court to ask for more. The upshot was last week's follow-up judgment, in which a second jury, after deliberating less than three hours, awarded her an additional \$65 million in punitive damages and \$18.3 million for pain and suffering for a grand total of \$83.3 million.

"This is a great victory for every woman who stands up when she's been knocked down and a huge defeat for every bully who has tried to keep a woman down," Carroll said in a statement. Trump, who had walked out of the courtroom

during Kaplan's closing arguments, posted that the amount was "absolutely ridiculous", adding: "Our legal system is out of control, and being used as a political weapon. They have taken away all first amendment rights. *This is not America!*" But he refrained from attacking Carroll personally, to avoid opening himself up to yet more charges.

A great day for fairness and equality? Perhaps. But progressive victories have a way of turning into their opposite in a society rushing backwards as rapidly as the United States.

Whether or not Carroll was a woman wronged, there is no doubt as to her role as a foot soldier in America's growing social and political wars. The person who persuaded her to go to court was George Conway, a wealthy lawyer who was then the husband of top Trump advisor Kellyanne Conway (they are now divorced). While one Conway was growing famous for defending her boss to the hilt, another was emerging as a leader of the Republican Party's last-ditch anti-Trump wing.

George Conway met Carroll in 2019 at an anti-Trump 'Resistance' party catered by a pricey New York restaurant called Momofuko.⁵ After complimenting her on her tell-all magazine article, Conway persuaded her to file a defamation suit and recommended that she get in touch with Kaplan, a prominent attorney whose clients included New York governor Andrew Cuomo, a fellow Democrat.

But things did not take off until Reid Hoffman came on board. A Silicon Valley billionaire who provided early seed money for Facebook and founded the LinkedIn social media platform, Hoffman is a savvy investor, a Pentagon advisor and a corporate strategist who has co-authored two bestselling business books. *The start-up of you*, published in 2012, informs readers: "All humans are entrepreneurs not because they should start companies, but because the will to create is encoded in human DNA, and creation is the essence of entrepreneurship." *The alliance: managing talent in the networked age*, published two years later, recommends that employers and employees think of one another "as allies on a tour of duty ... of finite duration".

Hoffman is also a major backer of Nikki Haley, the 'never-Trumper' who says that the US civil war was not about slavery, but about "how government was going to run, the freedoms and what people could and couldn't do" and who also insists that the United States "has never been a racist country".⁶

Presumably, Hoffman decided to finance E Jean Carroll out of the same 'progressive' motives that led him to finance Haley. It is an attempt to cripple Trump's business without confronting him politically - and without facing up to what little Democrats stand for either. It is an evasion of the real problem at hand, which is the rapid disintegration of the US political structure.

Tremors

Indeed, the Carroll verdict arrived just as the breakdown was beginning to accelerate. As Trump's popularity surges in the wake of his Iowa and New Hampshire victories, Democratic panic is growing. *The New York Times* has taken to running scary stories - some of which may actually be true - about how Trump could engineer "a backdoor federal abortion ban" or how he might turn the department of justice "into an instrument of vengeance against his political adversaries".⁷ "Trump keeps doing appalling things," *Times* columnist Michelle Goldberg complains. "... But his misdeeds have lost the capacity to shock."⁸ The reason is that liberals are

now resigning themselves to the fact that a second Trump presidency may be just a year away.

Tremors are being felt as a consequence. Thanks to the Trump surge, Republicans are refusing to approve military aid for Ukraine - a foreign-policy setback for the Biden administration of inestimable proportions. House Republicans are preparing to impeach Alejandro Mayorkas, Biden's secretary of homeland security, as the crisis along the 2,000-mile US-Mexican border intensifies. With illegal immigration quadrupling since the Covid-19 pandemic, ultra-rightists in Texas are in open revolt.⁹

Rio Grande

Indeed, a major constitutional crisis has been brewing since January 10, when the Texas state militia seized control of a mile-long section of the Rio Grande waterfront and kicked US border agents out. Two weeks later, Texas governor Greg Abbott issued a statement declaring that "the federal government has broken the compact between the United States and the States." He went on:

For these reasons, I have already declared an invasion under article I [of the US constitution] ... to invoke Texas's constitutional authority to defend and protect itself. That authority is the supreme law of the land and supersedes any federal statutes to the contrary.

Supersedes any federal statute? The standoff combines elements of the Capitol Hill uprising on January 6 2021, and the shelling of Fort Sumter 160 years earlier. Trump is calling on other states to send troops, while 25 Republican governors have signed a letter of support and a Canadian-style truckers' convoy calling itself the Army of God is making its way south. After the Supreme Court ruled in the Biden administration's favour, a far-right Texas congressman named Chip Roy told the court to "go to hell".

What will happen? No-one knows. The only thing that is clear is that after 30 years of gridlock on Capitol Hill, two overturned presidential elections, a runaway Supreme Court and one attempted coup d'état, the system is now cracking along another fault line - that of federal-state relations.

Given all this, it is a sure bet that the E Jean Carroll verdict will be forgotten within days. What is a little matter of sexual assault, when the constitutional structure is coming apart at the seams? ●

Notes

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E Jean Carroll in 2006: "reputation shattered" by Trump's repeated lies and attacks



ARMS

Sir Patrick Sanders' citizen army

There is much talk in establishment circles about the British army being too small and the need to gear up for war against Russia. Under these circumstances the left needs clear programmatic answers, says **Jack Conrad**

Perhaps it was clever news management. In the week in which the International Court of Justice in The Hague issued its inconvenient judgement about potential Israeli genocide in Gaza, the British media was dominated by lurid stories about Britain going to war with Russia, with China, with Iran and even with North Korea.¹ Upping the ante came with the non-news that US nuclear weapons are going to be based on British soil once again - that "amid a growing threat from Russia".² Note, upgrading RAF Lakenheath to house BH-12 guided nuclear bombs quietly began in 2022.³

The top brass piled in right on cue. General Sir Patrick Sanders, chief of staff, in a speech delivered to a conference on armoured warfare held in south-west London, made his call for a much expanded army. Instead of the current 75,000 regulars, he wants a force of 120,000, with back-up provided by the creation of a citizen army of up to 500,000. Though general Sanders ruled out conscription, he talked about "national mobilisation" and putting the country "on a war footing" being "not merely desirable, but essential". General Sanders added that Britain must be prepared for the consequences of all-out war.

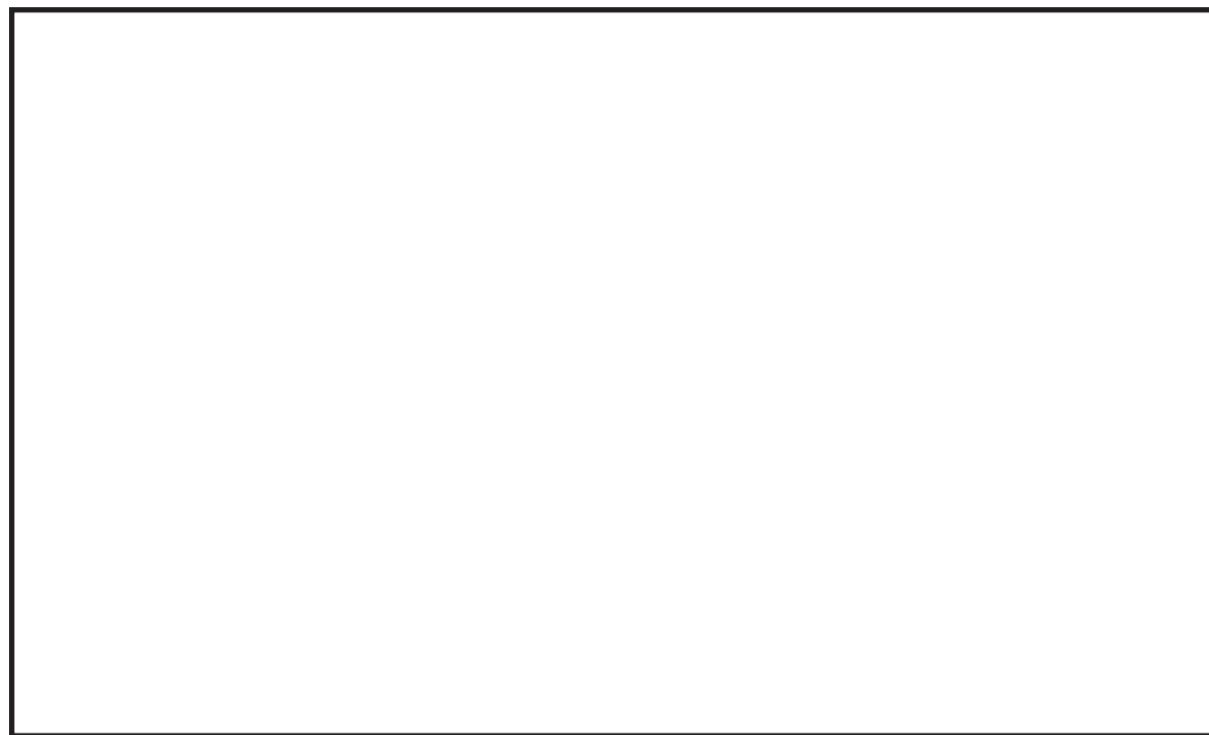
Basically, that war has already begun, he argued. Russia's invasion of Ukraine was

not merely about the black soil of the Donbas, nor the re-establishment of a Russian empire. It's about defeating our system and way of life politically, psychologically and symbolically. How we respond as the pre-war generation will reverberate through history. Ukrainian bravery is buying time, for now.⁴

Lieutenant general Sir Roly Walker and Admiral Rob Bauer provided support for the essential thesis that main battle tanks and piloted fixed-wing aircraft are now hugely expensive white elephants. They are easily taken out with cheap mines and shoulder-launched missiles - a conclusion drawn from Ukraine. It is artillery, drones and missiles that win territory nowadays, but it is boots-on-the-ground infantry which keeps it. Hence the latest military catchphrase: "Regular armies start wars; citizen armies win them."⁵

Defence minister Grant Shapps had already weighed in with his January 15 Lancaster House speech. He too highlighted the importance of giving Ukraine "unwavering" support and declared that the halcyon days of the peace dividend are over. Instead, he announced that we have moved from a "post-war to pre-war world". Shapps boasted of the government spending more than £50 billion on defence for the first time and being committed to raise the percentage of gross domestic product devoted to the military from 2% to 2.5%.⁶

While Max Blain, the prime minister's spokesperson, denies that there are any plans to reintroduce conscription and warned against "engaging in hypothetical wars", there are plenty of media editors determined to add fuel to the fire.⁷ "World War III is fast approaching, and too few are willing to admit why," comments Sherelle Jacobs in *The Daily Telegraph* (the "failing autocracies" are to blame)⁸; *The Sun* asks "Could World War III happen?"; *The Mirror* provides the "five chilling



'Dad's army': "bankers, butchers, spivs" take their place amongst the armed people

signs UK and US are heading for all-out conflict amid global unrest"¹⁰; as for the *Daily Mail*, it touchingly advises its readers of the safest countries to be in "if World War III starts".¹¹

Three lefts

What about the left? How has it responded to the war fever and general Sanders' call for a citizens' army? Largely there has been an eerie silence. Three exceptions.

Laura Tiernan, on David North's World Socialist Web Site, writes about Sanders issuing a "call for conscription" (wrong) and Labour and the Tories functioning as a "single party of war" (right).¹² Apart from that though, nothing of any political substance.

The Stop the War Coalition, as might be expected, sticks to waving its social-pacifist olive branch. "The idea of dragooning ordinary people into these wars is utterly reprehensible and underlines the dystopian nature of the increasingly aggressive foreign policy being pursued by this government," said vice-chair Chris Nineham.¹³ The alternative being to persuade governments, including a possible Labour government, to be kind and peaceable through a never-ending cycle of rallies and demonstrations. Capitalism as a system is let entirely off the hook.

Then there is Ben Chacko, editor of the 'official communist' *Morning Star*. He dismisses the Sanders plan for a citizens' army as being a combination of 'Dr Strangelove' and a "laughable" 'Dad's Army'. Supposedly, "if Britain finds itself at war with Russia, there is a serious danger that this country would be knocked out of the conflict and, indeed, existence, in a morning". Well, that could conceivably be the case in the event of total war and an all-out nuclear exchange, but that would mean mutually assured destruction. Given the reasonable assumption of US involvement, all belligerents would find themselves wrecked, burnt and suffering tens of millions of casualties. So much for Stanley Kubrick's *Dr Strangelove, or: how I learned to stop worrying and love the bomb*.

But what Ukraine shows is that nuclear powers do not automatically resort to nuclear weapons. Instead, there can be, and is, conventional warfare and that is clearly what

general Sanders and other members of the top brass are envisaging in eastern Europe in five or ten years time. Comrade Chacko also, stupidly, writes about Sanders wanting to "march on Moscow". He wants no such thing, because he at least is not so stupid. What about the 'Dad's Army' stuff? This 1968-77 BBC comedy series poked good-humoured fun at the Home Guard raised during World War II. But Chacko dismisses the very idea of a citizens' army made up of "bank managers, butchers and black market spivs" as a "farce".¹⁴

In actual fact, what he dismisses as a "farce" is not only general Sanders and his citizen army, but the Marxist programmatic demand for the abolition of the standing army and its replacement by a popular militia: in other words, the armed people, as upheld by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in the *Communist manifesto* and the parties of the First, Second and Third Internationals ... and today championed by the CPGB. Point 3.12 of our *Draft programme* is unequivocal: "The dissolution of the standing army and the formation of a popular militia under democratic control."¹⁵

Put another way, we favour general Sanders' citizen army plan - minus his commitment to the standing army and with the vital addition of democratic control. Naturally, our citizens' army would include "bank managers, butchers and black market spivs". However, it would also include every able-bodied adult man and woman of the appropriate age (in Switzerland military service is obligatory from the age of 19 years and after that there is the reserve till 34 or in some cases 50). Comrade Chacko's claim that such an army "would be a farce" exposes his profound ignorance not only about military matters, but crucially, politics.

Our tradition

When it comes to opposing standing armies and demanding a militia, we communists stand as part of a long tradition. The Florentine bourgeois republic of the 15th and 16th centuries deserves particular mention. Having overthrown the Medici dynasty and experiencing the failure, incompetence and betrayal of the professional (mercenary) army, the republic adopted a system of district militias. In the humanist

mind the militias of ancient Rome served as the model - an ideal spread throughout renaissance Europe via the writings of Niccolò Machiavelli (*The prince* chapters 12, 13 and 14, *Discourses on Livy* and *The art of war*). Machiavelli, of course, himself helped create the Florentine militia. Between 1498 and 1512 he served as a senior official in the republic. Incidentally, both Marx and Engels held Machiavelli in the highest esteem.¹⁶

English radicals such as James Harrington (*Commonwealth of Oceana* 1656) and John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon (*Cato's letters* 1720-23) took up Machiavelli's militia ideal. From England it made the journey over the Atlantic to America, where the militias famously sparked the revolutionary war by taking on the Redcoats at Lexington and Concord.

Even after victory and the Treaty of Paris, the militia was seen by the camp of plebeian and middling democracy as their best defence against another unacceptable regime. There were, after all, those - eg, Lewis Nicola - who wanted George Washington crowned king. To guard against such an outcome, guarantees were demanded against the "establishment of a standing army, the bane of liberty" (Elbridge Gerry, 1789).¹⁷ Hence the second amendment: "A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed" (the echoes of the 1689 English Bill of Rights and, before that, the *Magna Carta* are unmistakable).

Marx and Engels considered themselves the inheritors of Machiavelli, English radicalism and the second amendment. Clause four of the *Marx-Engels Demands of the Communist Party in Germany* (1848) is quite explicit:

Universal arming of the people. In future armies shall at the same time be workers' armies, so that the armed forces will not only consume, as in the past, but produce even more than it costs to maintain them.¹⁸

The Marx-Engels team never wavered. Read *Can Europe disarm?* (1893). Written by Frederick Engels 10 years after the death of his friend and collaborator, here

we find a concrete application of Marxism to the dawning epoch of universal suffrage and universal conscription. Engels concluded that the key to revolution was mutiny in the armed forces. His pamphlet outlined a model bill for military reform in Germany. Engels was determined to show that the proposal to gradually transform standing armies into a "militia based on the universal principle of arming the people" could exploit the mounting fears of a pending European war and widespread resentment at the ruinously costly military budget.¹⁹

For propaganda purposes, Engels proposed an international agreement to limit military service to a short period and a state system in which no country would fear aggression, because no country would be capable of aggression. Surely World War I would have been impossible if the European great powers had nothing more than civilian militias available to them.

Not that Engels was some lily-livered pacifist. He supported universal male (!) conscription and, if necessary, was quite prepared to advocate revolutionary war on the model of Napoleon's *Grande Armée*. Needless to say, his *Can Europe disarm?* was not only intended to prove the undoubted military superiority of a militia over a standing army, at least when it comes to defensive wars (it can fully mobilise very large numbers at speed and is capable of successfully surviving a whole series of initial setbacks). No, Engels wanted a citizen force, where rank-and-file troops would, if necessary, turn their guns on any officer tempted to issue orders that ran counter to the vital interests of the people. Subsequent Marxists took the militia for granted: August Bebel, Leo Jogiches, Karl Kautsky, Clara Zetkin, Vladimir Lenin, Eugene Debs ... even Eduard Bernstein.

Take Jean Jaurès and his *L'armée nouvelle* (1910). True, his book is marred by various reformist assumptions, a muddle over defensive and offensive wars, and is tainted by French nationalism: eg, he wanted men of military age in departments bordering Germany to keep their arms at home. Nonetheless, *L'armée nouvelle* provides solid arguments in favour of the militia system and even outlines a detailed implementation plan (in the form of a draft parliamentary bill). Interestingly, Charles de Gaulle, a champion of mechanised warfare and the professional army *par excellence*, expressed his admiration for Jaurès - though a civilian and a socialist - because of his ability to grasp military matters.²⁰

A précis. According to Jaurès, society and army have to be brought together: he wants the armed nation. Democracy and morale are of crucial importance. There will be millions of reservists and the number of full-time officers must be drastically reduced, with those who remain kept for purposes of instruction. All levels of public education must contain a military element. The working class movement is to be encouraged to organise military-gymnastic and shooting clubs. Trade unions should make provision for the selection of officer material. Promotion to be decided by panels that include elected representatives of the army rank and file. In the event of a government attempting a counterrevolutionary coup against the "enemy within", or launching a war of foreign conquest,

the new army - the militia army - does its duty to the nation and launches a "constitutional" insurrection.²¹

The mass parties of the Second International unproblematically promoted the militia idea. In the political section of the programme of the French Workers' Party (Parti Ouvrier), authored jointly by Karl Marx and Jules Guesde, we find the demand for the "abolition of standing armies and the general arming of the people" (clause 4).²² A proposition faithfully translated by the Germans: "Education of all to bear arms. Militia in the place of the standing army" (clause 3).²³ The Austrians too are adamant: "The cause of the constant danger of war is the standing army, whose growing burden alienates the people from its cultural tasks. It is therefore necessary to fight for the replacement of the standing army by arming the people" (clause 6).²⁴ Then the Russians: "... general arming of the people instead of maintaining a standing army" (clause c9).²⁵ Even with the newly formed, though hardly Marxist, Labour Party in Britain, there is this call in its first general election manifesto (1900): "Abolition of the standing army, and the establishment of a citizen force."²⁶

A further point. Having established the hybrid Red Army out of dire necessity - part popular militia, part standing army - Leon Trotsky, Soviet Russia's commissar for war, looked not to going back to the "wonder working powers of the barracks", but towards the "militia system".²⁷

Not today

Sad to say, nowadays the majority of the left in Britain, in almost all its piteous manifestations, takes a social-pacifist position: eg, Peace and Justice, Momentum, Young Labour, the Socialist Workers Party, the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain, Counterfire, etc. There are, naturally, minor differences and gradations: eg, some stand for overt pacifism; others shade over into it. Basically, though, all peddle the same old lie: there can be a lasting peace while capitalism remains.

Stop the War Coalition is their main umbrella. Its steering committee includes representatives of various unions and organisations: FBU, PCS, NEU, Day-Mer and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, as well as the CPB (Andrew Murray and Liz Payne), *Morning Star* (Ben Chacko), SWP (Judith Orr and Tomáš Tengely-Evans), Counterfire (John Rees, Lindsey German and Chris Nineham), Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and Left Unity (Kate Hudson).

StWC statements reek of pacifism. So, when it comes to Ukraine, there are pious pleas for "respecting" UN treaties, national sovereignty and for governments to behave in a less bellicose manner. It sees its particular role as pressuring the British government "to stop fuelling the escalation of conflict in Ukraine" and, instead, favours a "negotiated peace immediately".²⁸ An approach which effectively lines up the StWC behind António Guterres and the United Nations bureaucracy.

Not surprisingly, any idea, any suggestion of calling for a mass revolutionary party (not yet another bureaucratic-centralist confessional sect), and linking the demand for peace with the struggle for socialism, simply does not occur. After all, that practical *first step*, in the direction of organising the working class into a class for itself, would be unacceptable to the Labourite and trade union reformists, who actually set the programmatic limits for the entire current crop of so-called united fronts. Eg, Stand Up to Racism, People's Assembly, StWC, etc, etc.

But what ought to be acceptable, in *principle*, to any radical, any democrat, certainly any revolutionary, is the demand for the abolition of standing armies (and the police) and their replacement by the armed people - a popular militia. If that demand was tirelessly fought for in the left press and media, in trade union conferences, in parliament, if the demand was directed at new recruits and serving members of the armed forces, if the demand featured prominently on anti-war demonstrations and in election leaflets, manifestos and broadcasts, it would, as wider and wider acceptance was gained, deliver a powerful political and moral blow against the forces of militarism and war.

Certainly, winning the demand for a people's militia *in practice* would make a huge contribution to reducing the danger of war. Foreign adventures - especially of the US kind in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq or Afghanistan - would be more or less impossible. A militia is made up of civilians and is totally unsuited for fighting long wars in the far abroad. By equal measure, however, foreign invasion would meet the stiffest resistance - resistance in depth, resistance from every angle. True, initially, there might well be defeats. After retreating though, the militia army would make advances by enemy forces ever more difficult by striking back from well-prepared trenches, tunnels and underground bunkers. Sabotage and guerrilla warfare sees the invaders' supply lines disrupted and eventually broken. Fraternisation and establishing links with the rank and file, class appeals, including to the population back home, help break the hold of the officer caste and bring over enemy units. The militia army, having gathered its strength from the armed people, stages its decisive counter-offensive.

We unashamedly fight for a *popular* militia. Not a copy of the US National Guard, the Israel Defence Forces, the Ukrainian National Guard or the Swiss Army. Officers must be elected and recallable, discipline self-imposed and military instruction linked to political education.

This is admittedly a reform demand. But, of course, no Marxist discounts the importance of putting forward demands for reform, not least in order to expose opportunists. They would be glad if we left demands for reform to them and them alone. Then they would be free to peddle - unchallenged, unimpeded, unembarrassed - the fantasy of a "just peace", a "non-annexationist peace" an "enduring peace", where every country's sovereignty and legitimate security concerns are guaranteed by legally binding treaties: an StWC fantasy that pulls the wool over the eyes of far too many working class militants, student radicals and anti-war activists.

Thankfully, not least due to our efforts, the opportunists are challenged, are embarrassed, are exposed. Eg, according to Sam Fairbairn, former national secretary of the People's Assembly, calling for a popular militia is divisive, provocative and certainly beyond the "remit" of the anti-austerity movement, and should therefore be avoided like the plague.²⁹ Strange, given that the People's Assembly rejects the renewal of Trident, condemns imperialist adventures in the Middle East and opposes unjust and illegal wars.

When it comes to marking the hundredth anniversary of Lenin's death, the social-pacifist left considers it safe to repeat his call to "make war on war", but not dissolving the standing army and establishing a people's militia - Lindsey German of Counterfire being a sadly typical example. Nowhere in her recent

"What did Lenin have to say about socialism and war?" article do we find mention of either the army or the militia.³⁰ Amazing.

John Rees, Chris Nineham and Lindsey German broke away from the SWP in 2010 and proudly proclaim, true to form, that Counterfire is a "revolutionary socialist organisation". Sneakily, however, it is committed to "eliminating unnecessary barriers between our socialist politics and the thousands of activists being drawn into opposition to austerity and war".³¹ Presumably, Counterfire considers, for its own opportunist reasons, that the dissolution of the standing army and the formation of a popular militia constitutes one of those "unnecessary barriers".

Leave aside Fairbairn and Counterfire. A few years ago, we interviewed Dave Nellist, a leading member of the Socialist Party in England and Wales. Revealingly, the comrade refused point-blank to say whether or not he supported the demand for a popular militia.³² In truth he does not, but just does not want to say so. The entire *Militant* tradition, upheld not only by SPEW, but its Socialist Appeal and Socialist Alternative splits, testifies to a thoroughgoing reformism, as can be seen from *The state* - a little 1983 pamphlet jointly authored by their three 'great' teachers: Ted Grant, Peter Taaffe and Lynn Walsh.³³

True, nowadays Alan Woods and his confessional sect have swung from the dullest of dull Labourism to calling themselves 'communists'. A change brought about, on the one hand, by the abject failure of their campaign to reinstate the old Fabian clause-four version of socialism back into Labour Party rules under the Jeremy Corbyn leadership and, on the other hand, the growing popularity of socialism and communism amongst young people. But, whether they market themselves as Socialist Appeal or the Revolutionary Communist Party, the group's leaders have no conception, not a clue, about the necessity of a minimum programme. They say, for example, that they want to abolish the police - good. A step forward from previous calls for mere police 'accountability'. But ask them what they want to replace the police (and the standing army) with - under capitalism (that is, *before* we achieve socialism) - and they have no answer. Their launch issue of *The Communist* reports on the "farcical chest beating" of Grant Shapps, but noticeably fails to raise the people's militia demand or the demand to abolish the standing army.³⁴ If we are to treat their recent 'communist turn' with anything short of derision, that needs to change.

CPGB provocation

At least, Robert Griffiths, general secretary of the *Morning Star's* CPB, has the virtue of openly admitting his craven prostration before the bourgeois state. He *aggressively* dismisses the demand for abolishing the standing army and a popular militia as "nothing to do with real struggle". Of course, what we are dealing with today, in the here and now, is the battle of ideas. The *idea* of the popular militia therefore has everything to do with the *real* ideological struggle between Marxism and reformism. And, when the class struggle rises, becomes intense, the question of the popular militia is posed point blank as an urgent *practical* necessity. But there is, Griffiths dumbly announces, no revolutionary situation in Britain today - as if Marxists should wait till it is *already too late* before raising the demand. Either way, Griffiths lambasts what he sees as a CPGB "provocation". Showing he is just

a yellow-belly, he splutters that the very idea of a militia presents "a gift to the British state". If we dare advocate such an outrage, "MI5 will be around straightaway".³⁵ Note, for the benefit of comrade Griffiths, if no-one else, MI5 routinely monitors, infiltrates and acts against the left.

However, programmatically, comrade Griffiths is committed to *Britain's road to socialism* (a repeatedly updated version of *The British road to socialism*, first drafted in the early 1950s with the generous help and assistance of JV Stalin). This tawdry, thoroughly reformist document, in all its versions, simply takes the existing armed forces (the police included) as a given. All that is required, when it comes to a "left government", is replacing "key personnel".³⁶ Certainly not fighting to abolish the standing army and the police and their replacement by a popular militia. Yes, we are seriously meant to believe that the entire capitalist state apparatus, including the US hegemon, will sit idly by, while some putative left Labour-CPB majority in the House of Commons votes to legislate capitalism out of existence step by careful step. No, counterrevolution would, using the immortal words of Trump's secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, "push back".³⁷ Replacing one Sandhurst-educated officer with another Sandhurst-educated officer makes not a jot of difference.

The latest iteration of the *BRS* programme (the ninth) myopically peers into the future and a left government, and says this:

The state's corps of military reservists would have to be expanded and linked with large workplaces and local working-class communities. The trade union movement could be involved in its recruitment, education and administration. Over time, reflecting the development of an independent foreign policy based on peaceful coexistence, the balance of resources will tilt away from a full-time, selective, professional army towards popular military reservists with specialised professional units.³⁸

A mealy-mouthed reformist fudge. Instead of the traditional demand to abolish the standing army there is the expansion of reservists and a "tilting away" towards "popular military reservists". The open, clear, unambiguous fight for a popular militia is infinitely preferable - in no small part because the demand itself prepares millions of minds to expect capitalist armed coups and outside interventions against an actual or expected communist popular majority, but also in part because the demand can be practically realised, even if only partially, by establishing workers' defence squads, red guards, etc ... and winning army, navy and airforce units over to socialism and a position where they agree to only obey orders issued in effect by the Communist Party itself.

Clearly comrade Griffiths is no revolutionary though. Faced with a Young Communist League gone a little bit rogue, he clamped down with this edict, which effectively bans his minions from even discussing the militia question:

... it is essential that the party and its members do not publish or post anything that could be interpreted as support for the possession of weapons in Britain or for armed struggle at home or - except when explicitly endorsed by our party - abroad. Party members should make themselves aware of the home office list of proscribed terrorist organisations.³⁹

So the idea of possessing arms in Britain is explicitly ruled out of order, while armed struggle in Britain, including resisting a coup, or a US regime-change operation, is likewise fearfully rejected. Doubtless, Griffiths - a home office 'communist', if ever there was one - thinks the words of *The Internationale* are a risky provocation too, that most certainly should not be published or posted either. Here is the second stanza:

No more deluded by reaction,
On tyrants only we'll make war!
The soldiers too will take strike action,
They'll break ranks and fight no more!
And if those cannibals keep trying,
To sacrifice us to their pride,
They soon shall hear the bullets flying,
We'll shoot the generals on our own side.⁴⁰ ●

Notes

1. That and, of course, Charles and his prostate, Kate's abdominal operation and Israeli allegations about a dozen UNRWA employees being involved in the October 7 attack.
2. *The Guardian* January 26 2024.
3. fas.org/publication/lakenheath-air-base-added-to-nuclear-weapons-storage-site-upgrades.
4. *The Independent* January 26 2024.
5. *Ibid*.
6. www.gov.uk/government/speeches/defending-britain-from-a-more-dangerous-world.
7. abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/britain-plans-conscription-after-top-general-uk-citizen-106635845.
8. *The Daily Telegraph* January 29 2024.
9. *The Sun* January 24 2024.
10. *The Mirror* January 27 2024.
11. *Daily Mail* January 18 2024.
12. www.wsws.org/en/articles/2024/01/25/lvbd-j25.html.
13. www.stopwar.org.uk/article/army-chief-speech-reflects-dystopian-nature-of-british-foreign-policy.
14. *Editorial Morning Star* January 25 2024.
15. *CPGB Draft programme* London 2023, p32.
16. Eg, writing to Engels, Marx describes Machiavelli's *History of Florence* as a "masterpiece" (K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 40, London 1983, p187). In his *Dialectics of nature* Engels praises Machiavelli as the "first notable military author of modern times" (K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 25, London 1987, p319).
17. S Cornell *The other founders: anti-federalism and the dissenting tradition in America, 1788-1828* Chapel Hill 1999, p161.
18. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 7, Moscow 1977, p3.
19. K Marx and F Engels *CW* Vol 27, London 1990, p371.
20. C de Gaulle *Letters, notes and notebooks, 1919-June 1940* Paris 1980, p 448.
21. See J Jaurès *Oeuvres* tome 13: 'L'armée nouvelle', 2012. An abbreviated translation was published in 1916 and can be found on the Marxist Internet Archive: marxists.org/archive/jaures/1907/military-service/index.htm (though I think the 1907 dating given is mistaken).
22. marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/05/parti-ouvrier.htm.
23. marxists.org/history/international/social-democracy/1891/erfurt-program.htm.
24. I am grateful to Ben Lewis for his translation of the *Hainfeld programme*.
25. marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1902/draft/02feb07.htm.
26. I Dale (ed) *Labour Party general election manifestos 1900-1997* London 2002, p9.
27. L Trotsky *How the revolution armed* Vol 2, London 1979, pp163-92.
28. StWC press release, June 6 2022.
29. 'No controversy, please' *Weekly Worker* December 10 2015: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1086/no-controversy-please.
30. *Counterfire* January 23 2024.
31. web.archive.org/web/20180925225503/http://www.counterfire.org/about-us.
32. 'Over a pint in the pub' *Weekly Worker* May 21 2009: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/770/over-a-pint-in-the-pub.
33. T Grant, P Taaffe and L Walsh *The state: a warning to the labour movement* London 1983.
34. *The Communist* January 24 2024.
35. 'A well ordered militia' *Weekly Worker* February 5 2015: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1044/a-well-ordered-militia.
36. *Britain's road to socialism* Croydon 2020, p64.
37. *The Guardian* June 9 2019.
38. *Britain's road to socialism* Croydon 2020, p64.
39. CPB members' bulletin, *Unity!*: www.comunistparty.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/September-2021-Unity_.pdf.
40. www.marxists.org/history/ussr/sounds/lyrics/international.htm.

LAW

Symbolic victory in The Hague

Whatever its limitations, Mike Macnair welcomes the ruling of the International Court of Justice. It helps undermine the 'anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism' big lie

On Friday January 26 the International Court of Justice at the Hague ruled on "provisional measures" to (attempt to) preserve the *status quo* in South Africa's complaint that Israel's conduct in Gaza is in violation of the 1948 international convention on genocide.¹

This was the minimum possible decision against Israel, but it is still against Israel, and as such has attracted silencing efforts from the Tory press. The Australian *ABC News* website commented that "Both parties to the case went into full media-management mode",² but in this country what we have chiefly seen is pro-Israeli media management.

Looking at Saturday's papers, the *Morning Star*, *The Guardian* and the *Financial Times* rightly led with the decision. The *Independent* led with a (presumably state-planted) story: "UK's 'golden age' with China harmed British intelligence, says former MI6 spy chief". But a box on the front page said: "UN's top court orders Israel to prevent genocide - but no ceasefire call" and the ruling did get the best part of a page inside.

The Times led with "Nottingham mother calls for inquiry into killings", with "Trump must pay \$83m in damages for defamation" as the second front-page story. The ICJ ruling was relegated to p42. The *Telegraph* led with another probably state-planted story: "US to move nuclear weapons back to UK". The second-largest first page story, in terms of column inches, was "Church in trans row after boy, 4, joins primary school as girl." The ICJ ruling did appear, but not as a report of it, but as Rishi Sunak's condemnation of it, headlined "No 10 attacks irony of Israel genocide ruling". The main leader (p19) was "Britain must renew solidarity with Israel".

The *Mail* chose a royal headline - always useful when the news is inconvenient: "Camilla's smile that says: the king's fine". Like the *Telegraph*, it did not report the ICJ ruling, but merely denounced it in a leader: "Hamas is bent on genocide, not Israel" (p16). The rest of the double page (pp16-17) is a long article by war journo David Patrikarakos denouncing the waste of money on the two British aircraft carriers commissioned by the Blair government in 2007, which remain in harbour awaiting work, urging that they should be sold to the US, which can afford to make them fit for service and deploy them. Inside there is a double page of pro-Israeli propaganda: "Girl hostages beg for help in Gaza video" (it does not occur to the *Mail* that they would be more likely to get out alive if Israel would negotiate) and "UN staff sacked for 'taking part' in Hamas attack".

The international edition of *The New York Times* (January 27-28) may have gone to press too soon to report the ICJ decision. It carries an opinion piece on the case by Sean Jacobs: "South Africa and a moral conscience". This is, however, overshadowed in terms of column inches by a full page from Thomas L Friedman, headlined "A gigantic geopolitical struggle is underway", denouncing the "resistance network" (identified as Iran, Russia, North Korea, etc), which he says is merely destructive, in favour of the "network of inclusion" of Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states and international markets,



In session

which he argues is the constructive future; and by two thirds of a page on "Gaza's 'day after' seems ever more distant", discussing US and Israeli ideas of what will happen after the war on Gaza.

The US-based *Foreign Affairs*, an 'establishment' journal that publishes articles overlapping between 'practitioner' and academic opinion of its subject-matter, got a quick comment from David Kaye of the University of California Irvine School of Law: "The ICJ ruling's hidden diplomacy". Kaye notes the limited character of the ruling, but goes on to argue:

the court's ruling also contains a hidden ambition: it challenges all states - and especially the United States - to take international law seriously at a time of increasing violence and conflict and decreasing respect for the authority of international legal institutions. Indeed, at a time when the Biden administration's efforts to limit the war's harm to civilians seem to be flailing, the court threw it a lifeline, a path to a new policy toward the conflict that is rooted in international norms. The White House should embrace the court's ruling, deploying it as a new diplomatic tool to end Israel's military operation and force Hamas to release the hostages it still cruelly and unconscionably holds in Gaza.³

The background to the decision, and to these various responses to it, has several elements. In the first place, the decision against Israel is minimal. This reflects in part the nature of the definition of genocide in the 1948 convention, in part the nature of the proceedings (a decision on "provisional measures" in a claim by South Africa against Israel), and in part the nature of the ICJ.

Secondly, even the most minimal decision against Israel is unacceptable to the Tory press and to the British state. This reflects the nature of the 'anti-Semitism' smear campaign. The greater ambiguity of the US press reflects the fact that under the Biden administration the USA is still promoting the ideas of the 'rule-governed world order' and the delusion of a 'two-state solution' (which is in reality merely 'Indian reservations' within a greater Israel), for political and diplomatic consumption *outside* the European

vassal-states. The European vassal-states are, in contrast, to be held down to the US by the 'anti-Semitism' smear campaign.

Thirdly, at the end of the day the point of US support for the state of Israel is for the US to hold veto control of the Middle East. This global, and hence regional, geostrategic purpose underlying US support for Israel means that the *symbolic* significance of the ICJ's decision may have more profound consequences than at first appear.

In what follows, I should say that I am in no sense an expert on international law, and these are the politico-legal speculations of a legal historian who is a communist, and no more.

Genocide

The 1948 Genocide Convention is a treaty between states that begins with "the declaration made by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 96 (I) dated 11 December 1946 that genocide is a crime under international law". So genocide is *asserted already to be* a crime under international law. By article I, "The contracting parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law, which they undertake to prevent and to punish."

Then article II provides the definition of genocide. The material parts are:

In the present convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:
(a) killing members of the group;
(b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
(c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.

Articles III-VII make clear that genocide and related offences - incitement or conspiracy to commit genocide, etc - are crimes committed by *individuals*, and *states* undertake to criminalise and to punish these crimes. Article VIII authorises states to apply to the UN bodies for action to prevent or suppress genocide: this is commonly useless due to the veto powers of the permanent members of the Security Council. Article IX

grounds the jurisdiction of the ICJ:

Disputes between the contracting parties relating to the interpretation, application or fulfilment of the present convention, including those relating to the responsibility of a state for genocide or for any of the other acts enumerated in article III, shall be submitted to the International Court of Justice at the request of any of the parties to the dispute.

According to an old tag, *actus non facit reum, nisi mens sit rea* ('an act does not create guilt, unless the mind is guilty'). Like most serious crimes, genocide thus contains both a conduct element and a mental element.

That the present Israeli government and armed forces command have performed the conduct element of the offence of genocide is not in doubt: they have killed members of "a national, ethnical, racial or religious group" (Palestinians in Gaza), "caused serious bodily or mental harm" to others, and are presently "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part".

The issue disputed is whether the members of the Israeli government and high command have the necessary mental element of genocide: "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such".

The Israeli *ad hoc* judge, Aharon Barak, argues that South Africa "has wrongly sought to impute the crime of Cain to Abel" before embarking on autobiographical remarks in relation to the holocaust, a defence of Israel as a "democracy" and its *general* conduct of military operations. On this basis Barak invites the court to disregard the public statements of intent to get rid of the Palestinian population of Gaza made by several Israeli ministers (on which the ICJ relied for its judgment of plausibility) on the basis of *pro-forma* statements to the contrary by other officials. He ends by urging the acceptance of Israel's 'right to self-defence', and the inevitability of collateral damage and civilian casualties.

The argument that, since Europe's Jews were the victims of genocide in 1941-45, Israel cannot be guilty of genocide now, is deeply unsatisfactory. It is notorious that

people who were abused as children are more likely to abuse their own children; and people who have been bullied in youth are prone to externalise their insecurity in aggression.⁴ Why should we not suppose that Jews being victimised by the German state makes the Israeli state *more* prone to victimise others?

The dissent of Judge Julia Sebutinde, while lacking the personal and historical special pleading, similarly downplays the public ministerial statements and rests on Israel's 'right to self-defence'. This argument is problematical, given the radical disproportionality of Israel's military operation: like, on a radically different scale both of assault and of response, the man who when hit in the face responds by shooting dead his assailant.

It also ignores a fundamental point. Assume for the sake of argument that the Six Day War in 1967 was a war of self-defence (an argument which depends on pre-emptive use of force in response to threats counting as self-defence, which is rather questionable). But on this assumption, as soon as Israel started to annex territory and to plant settlements in the occupied territories, it became (to draw an analogy with English law) a trespasser *ab initio* (from the beginning), as where an original lawful entry on land is turned into trespass by damaging the property. Israel thus converted its self-defence (if it was self-defence) into a war of aggression in violation of the Charter of the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal and the UN Charter.⁵ Hence, until it revokes the annexations and withdraws the settlements, Israel has no more right to self-defence than a burglar has against the householder's efforts to expel him.

That does not alter the fact that the proof of "intent to destroy" is problematic. The mental element of crimes has been a persistent problem ever since legal systems began to allow the accused to give evidence on oath in their own defence: it is just too easy to swear to an innocent state of mind, and too difficult to rebut it. The result is that criminal procedure becomes enormously dilatory, is driven towards fraud or coercion to extract confessions in the police station and towards plea-bargaining, and is incapable of convicting more than a very few among wealthy offenders who can afford high-powered lawyers.

"Intent to destroy" in genocide is, moreover, a *dolus specialis* - a specific intent going beyond general guilty intent. By analogy, 'Coventry's Act' 1671, passed in response to a 1670 attack by royal guardsmen on an MP, created a new crime, but required not merely cutting in the face, but also lying in wait and an intention to mutilate; the act was as a result practically useless. It is clear enough from Israel's conduct that there is an intent to kill many thousands of inhabitants of Gaza, but proving the *dolus specialis* of genocide is much more difficult.

Proof

The court found not proof, but merely *plausible* evidence, and it is still possible that by the time the case comes to final judgment (and the war and the accompanying bad press is over) the Israeli argument, that Israeli ministers' genocidal statements are to be read down because of contrary statements and the 'self-defence'

context, may be accepted. But at this stage it was enough that 14 out of 17 judges found plausible evidence of genocidal intent.⁶

The actual order of the court is very limited:

(1) The State of Israel shall, in accordance with its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, in relation to Palestinians in Gaza, take all measures within its power to prevent the commission of all acts within the scope of article II of this convention, in particular:

(a) killing members of the group;

(b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

(c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; and

(d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

(2) The State of Israel shall ensure with immediate effect that its military does not commit any acts described in point 1 above;

(3) The State of Israel shall take all measures within its power to prevent and punish the direct and public incitement to commit genocide in relation to members of the Palestinian group in the Gaza Strip;

(4) The State of Israel shall take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip;

(5) The State of Israel shall take effective measures to prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of evidence related to allegations of acts within the scope of article II and article III of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide against members of the Palestinian group in the Gaza Strip;

(6) The State of Israel shall submit a report to the court on all measures taken to give effect to this order within one month as from the date of this order.

This really amounts to no more than an order that Israel shall comply with the 1948 convention (which Israel claims it is already doing). Again to draw an analogy with domestic law, it is as if a driver is brought into court having intentionally driven his vehicle into a bus queue, killing several pedestrians, and the court orders merely that the defendant must in future drive carefully and in compliance with the Road Traffic Acts.

This is *not* criminal prosecution, and that point is fundamental. South Africa *sues* Israel for non-compliance with the 1948 Genocide Convention. Although the convention is taken to create obligations *erga omnes* - towards everyone - and to codify an international crime, jurisdiction for such a *crime* would not be in the ICJ, but in the International Criminal Court created by the Rome Statute in 2002, to which Israel is not a party. South Africa's claim against Israel is essentially for breach of the *contract between states* created by the 1948 convention. The role of the identification of the duties under the treaty as obligations *erga omnes* is to justify South Africa claiming for breach of this contract in spite of the fact that *South Africa* has suffered no loss as a result of this alleged breach.

In this context, "provisional measures" are the equivalent of an

English 'interlocutory injunction', which is put into force to prevent damage, or further damage, *pending trial of the claim*. In English law under the test in the patent infringement case *American Cyanamid v Ethicon* (1975) there has to be a "serious issue to be tried", and beyond that the decision is on the basis of the "balance of convenience". Before 1975 a "prima facie case", or "sufficient probability of right" was required. The requirement of "plausibility" in the ICJ's case law seems to fall somewhere between "serious issue to be tried" (which is minimal) and "prima facie case". The point of this observation is that the ICJ's decision did not require *strong* evidence of a danger of genocide, but barely *arguable* evidence of this danger. To deny that there is *strong* evidence of Israeli genocidal intent is certainly possible (it depends on the relative weight to be given to contradictory Israeli government statements). To deny that there is *plausible* evidence, to support minimal provisional measures, would risk the court looking foolish or biased.

English courts

At this point the character of the International Court of Justice itself comes into play. The United Nations is not a world state, and the ICJ is not a state court in the way that the English or other courts are. Suppose that you refuse to implement a decision of the High Court: the sheriff's bailiffs will come to levy execution on your property. If you use sufficient force to resist the bailiffs, the police will come. If you use sufficient force to resist the police, police marksmen will shoot you. At the highest level of effective resistance, where you are able to stand off the police marksmen, the army will be sent in, as in the Bogside in Derry in 1969, or tank-armed police, as in the FBI in Waco, Texas in 1993.

Contrast the ICJ. If Israel refuses to implement its minimal decision, the only enforcement powers it has are through the UN Security Council. Here, no doubt, the USA would veto action against Israel. Again analogising domestic law, it is as if before the bailiffs went in to enforce a High Court judgment, the UK cabinet had to agree (and certain important members could veto it). The nearest approach we have had to that sort of judicial system in England was King John's recorded practice of accepting money, etc to expedite or stop litigation, in 1205-15.

The reality is that, in spite of its name, the ICJ is an *arbitration* institution, whose decisions have effect so far as state parties agree to be bound by them. Arbitration between states as an alternative to war goes back to classical antiquity, though it was temporarily marginalised by the Roman empire turning the states that practised it into local government institutions. It reappeared in the 1100s and has continued to be practised down to modern times. The Hague Peace Conference of 1899 led to the establishment of a 'Permanent Court of Arbitration' (PCA) that still exists.⁷

The establishment of the League of Nations in 1920 was a product of US ascendancy, resulting from the decisive role of the US in German defeat in 1918, and US president Woodrow Wilson's political ideology, though US adherence to the League was defeated in Congress. Creating a new 'Permanent Court of International Justice' was part of this ideological presentation of the League of Nations as a global rule-of-law regime. The name was ideological; having no direct enforcement powers, it was just as much an arbitration institution as

the PCA. When the UN was set up, the ICJ was created as a successor to the PCIJ, which had stopped functioning in 1939. Its name is just as ideological, and it is just as much an arbitration institution in reality.

It is, nonetheless, an institution - more than just a name. And it does significant practical jobs. Yes, states cannot be coerced to give effect to the ICJ's 'judgments' unless the USA is prepared to do the job. (Of the other permanent members of the Security Council, the theoretical veto powers of the UK and France will not be exercised against US action, and those of China and Russia are more narrowly used in defence of Chinese or Russian immediate state interests). But there are many disputes between states in relation to which the states involved would rather avoid war; and the ICJ has dealt with 152 contentious cases and 27 advisory procedures in 1947-2021, and has 20 cases currently pending before it.⁸ Its effectiveness in this activity depends wholly on the willingness of states to accept them, and hence on the perception (justified or not) that it is broadly impartial between states and reaches decisions on legal grounds.

Hence a minimal decision in the Gaza genocide case. On the one hand, to throw the case out altogether on the grounds offered by Israel and its supporters would, for the reasons given above, look foolish or, more probably, biased. The point is made by Judge Xue Hanqin in his declaration concurring with the majority:

Over 60 years ago, when Ethiopia and Liberia instituted legal proceedings against South Africa for breach of its obligations as the mandatory power in south-west Africa, the court rejected the standing of those two applicants for lack of legal interest in the cases. This denial of justice gave rise to strong indignation of the member-states of the United Nations against the court, severely tarnishing its reputation.

On the other hand, an actual call for a ceasefire - the only sort of "provisional measure" that would actually make much difference - would be denounced and ignored by Israel, and denounced by the USA. The result would again be to make the court ineffective in its routine business.

Smear campaign

I have already made the point that the more 'serious' end of the press in the US has been more favourable to the decision than *The Times*, and so on, and suggested that this is about the circumstance that the Biden administration is still promoting the 'two-state solution', while, on the other hand, the anti-Semitism smear campaign is fundamental to securing unequivocal US control of European politics.

In this context it is worth mentioning the Alliance for Workers' Liberty (better called 'Atlanticists for Workers' Loyalty'). The January 17 issue of its paper *Solidarity* carried an article headlined "We look to solidarity with the movement in Israel, not the ICJ". *Solidarity*, of course, continues to report the (small) anti-war protests in Israel. But why *not* the ICJ? "There are good reasons to be wary about insisting Israel's war represents 'a genocide'." And so on. And "It remains the case that the social forces with the best immediate chance of imposing restraint on Israel come from within its own society."⁹ Regrettably, however, this is deeply unrealistic. Small protests in Israel in favour of 'peace' have been ongoing for decades. They have shown no sign at all of becoming mass-scale, and the electoral thermometer of

Israeli politics over the same period shows an ongoing and increasingly sharp dynamic towards nationalism and open aggression.

In this context, the symbolic effects of the ICJ's very minimal decision may turn out to be profoundly important.

I stated earlier that at the end of the day the point of US support for Israel is for the USA to hold veto control of the Middle East, and thereby veto control of the oil taps. As General Michael 'Erik' Kurilla, commander of the US Central Command (Centcom, covering the Middle East) put it in March 2023, "God forbid there's ever a conflict with China, but we could end up holding a lot of their economy at risk in the Centcom region." The same is true of Chinese *military* capabilities, and of those of France, Germany, Japan ..., since oil drives the machinery of 20th/early 21st century war.

Going back, the point of the November 1917 Balfour Declaration, and lying behind it the Sykes-Picot agreement of May 1916 and the associated negotiations, was to secure British control of Palestine, 'TransJordan' and Iraq, with the same aim (the British also expected to control southern Iran by way of their agreements with tsarist Russia as to spheres of influence). The 'Jewish homeland' in Palestine provided a counterweight to France's historic claim to be the protector of the Levantine Christians and of the 'holy places'.¹⁰

But the British found in the 1930s that the *cost* of the "little loyal Jewish Ulster amid the enveloping hosts of Arabism" outweighed its advantages, and turned against the Zionists (who now found French backing against the British). This was not just a matter of the 'Arab revolt' in Palestine itself in 1936-39, but that this developed alongside and fed into the emergence of pan-Arabist nationalism also in Egypt, Iraq and Syria. The context also included rising nationalism in India. The British did not actually lose control, but the cost of keeping control rose substantially in a period in which the UK state was under substantial fiscal pressure.

The present situation is one in which the USA risks finding itself

in a position analogous to Britain in the 1930s, and hence facing, if it chooses not to rein in the Zionists, full-scale US military intervention in the region, which will probably involve major increases in military expenditure and quite likely aims undeliverable without large numbers of US boots on the ground. And hence, in turn, the US may perhaps consider sacrificing the Zionists (at least to the extent of forcing them to back down and accept a negotiated deal over Gaza).

Meanwhile, in spite of the rightwing press's attempt to say of the ICJ decision, 'Move along now - nothing to see here' (a policy *also* adopted by the AWL), the fact that there was a wide concurrence that the ICJ should not throw out South Africa's claim, that it should recognise a real risk of genocide, potentially undermines the whole anti-Semitism smear campaign and assists the legal defence of protestors against police silencing efforts.

So, however minimal the ICJ decision may be in direct legal impact, its *symbolic* impact should be unreservedly welcomed ●

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Notes

1. The decision and the dissents are linked at www.icj-cij.org/case/192/orders. More of the proceedings can be viewed at www.icj-cij.org/case/192.

2. www.abc.net.au/news/2024-01-27/international-court-of-justice-ruling-israel/103393432.

3. www.foreignaffairs.com/israel/icj-rulings-hidden-diplomacy.

4. See, for example, on child abuse www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/the-athletes-way/202105/breaking-the-cycle-of-childhood-abuse; on bullying www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK390414 (subhead: 'Externalising problems').

5. *Principles of international law recognized in the charter of the Nürnberg tribunal and in the judgment of the tribunal 1950*; UN Charter: www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text, Articles 1 (1) and 2 (4).

6. Judge Nolte did not find plausible evidence of genocidal intent, but voted with the majority, because the provisional measures merely required future Israeli compliance with the convention, rather than calling for a ceasefire or sanctioning anything done so far.

7. pca-cpa.org/en/about/introduction/history.

8. *ICJ Yearbook 2020-2021* (the most recent on the ICJ's site), p2; www.icj-cij.org/pending-cases.

9. www.workersliberty.org/story/2024-01-16/we-look-solidarity-movement-israel-not-icj.

10. J Barr *A line in the sand: Britain, France and the struggle that shaped the Middle East* New York 2012.

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ISRAEL



Theodor Herzl at the first Zionist congress in Basel in August 1897

Clear the smoke and mirrors

Zionism relies on anti-Semitism and is itself a form of anti-Semitism. Thomas Suárez discusses the ability of the Israeli state to excuse its crimes and silence critics

Why are we discussing seemingly academic topics like anti-Semitism and Zionism while the Palestinians are being massacred? Seventy-five years of exposing Israel's crimes has failed to stop it, and so its uncanny impunity must be dissected to see how it works. Key to that impunity is Israel's weaponisation of anti-Semitism, and so defeating that weaponisation is essential if we are to defeat its weapons of steel and explosives.

I would like to preface this by explaining that I do not like the term, 'anti-Semitism', and think it should be dropped in favour of 'anti-Jewish bigotry'. The use of a dedicated term for bigotry against Jews - as opposed to bigotry against anybody else - feeds into the notion of Jewish exceptionalism. It is also illogical and inaccurate in its use of the term 'Semitic'; and above all, for reasons I will explain, the term 'anti-Semitism' aids Israeli impunity; it is an asset in its wielding of the smear of anti-Jewish bigotry to silence critics.

But I will continue to use the word 'anti-Semitism' here to avoid distracting from the larger issue at hand. That larger issue is, of course, the ongoing genocide, which requires us to address not the victims, but the perpetrator and its principal weapon: the Israeli state/Zionism and its weaponisation of anti-Semitism.

First, I think we should look at the various roles that anti-Semitism plays in the Israeli state and in its ongoing genocide.

1. Anti-Semitism is, of course, the alleged rationale for Zionism and the Israeli state.
2. For devotees of the Zionist cult, anti-Semitism is both the threat and the fetish that Zionism wields to keep them obedient.
3. The transference of historic western anti-Jewish bigotry onto Palestinian identity is core to the dehumanisation of the Palestinians that Israel requires to justify its slow and not so slow genocide against them.
4. Anti-Semitism is Zionism's essential fuel that it must ensure never runs out, and thus:
5. The cry of anti-Semitism, real or

fake, is the key money-raising tool for the Zionists, and

6. The false smear of anti-Semitism is, of course, the principal weapon wielded to squash opposition to its crimes.

7. Importantly, anti-Jewish bigots were courted by the Zionist movement, with anti-Semitism used as a positive marketing strategy. If you do not want Jews showing up on your shores, support Zionism! Because we have a huge ghetto for them far away from you.

8. And so the last point: actual anti-Semitism, white nationalism and neo-fascism, are soulmates of Zionism, as is the anti-Semitism of the rabidly pro-Israel Christian Zionist movement.

In short, anti-Semitism is integral to the Israeli state - a multi-purpose, inseparable tool. Israel is woven out of anti-Semitism.

Under the hood

Now, for a quick look at the beginning of it all, I would like to quote the correspondent for the *London Standard*, reporting on the first Zionist Congress in 1897:

The idea of founding a modern Jewish state which goes by the name of Zionism, finds little favour in Germany, except among the anti-Semites ... the *Frankfurter Zeitung* sums up an article on the subject as follows: *In short, the degeneration which calls itself anti-Semitism has begotten the degeneration which adorns itself with the name of Zionism.*

'Anti-Semitic' should have been the epitaph that buried Zionism along with Theodore Herzl. But Herzl and those who followed fought back through the only tactic that could counter Zionism's obvious anti-Semitic nature. They claimed worldwide Jewish allegiance and crowned Zionism as the standard by which good Jews and bad Jews are distinguished.

To quote Herzl, "No true Jew can be an anti-Zionist. Only Mauschel [an offensive word for a religious Jew] is one. Merely to look at him - let alone approach or, heaven forbid,

touch him - was enough to make us feel sick." So here we have the beginning of the hijacking of Jewish identity by this racial-nationalist movement, resulting in the nation-state today that calls itself 'the Jewish state'.

Now, we accept this trilogy of words - *the Jewish state* - with little thought. But, even on the obvious level, the term 'the Jewish state' already creates a magic shield around Israel. Compare the psychological difference between 'Why are you always criticising [whatever state]?' and 'Why are you always criticising *the Jewish state*?'

The term, 'the Jewish state', serves as a weapon that shoots its bullets without leaving any forensic evidence. It empowers the smear of anti-Semitism in the most insidious way, because it strikes without the overt accusation, thus leaving the victim not even the option of responding to the smear, unless he or she overtly raises the issue of anti-Semitism - which only has the appearance of vindicating the smear.

So, in order to disable this magic shield, we need to look inside to see what powers it. Under the hood, we see that 'the Jewish state' is a stealth term that creates a messianic gateway to the public mind, sparking its message of exceptionalism past any critical thought. There is an entire world of narrative hidden within these three words, the most powerful of which is the first one, 'the'. Israel does not claim to be merely 'a' Jewish state, in the sense of countries that have a national religion. Indeed to quote David Ben-Gurion, Israel has nothing to do with Judaism, but rather with 'being a Jew'. And nor with being just an Israeli Jew, but the ethnicity itself. According to Israel's construct, it is the state of all Jews, as Jews - free of national borders and indeed free of individual Jewish consent on the matter.

This is anti-Semitism, and it is unique in the world. There is no analogy to it with any other nation-state, as much as Israel's apologists try to pass Israel off as analogous to any other state with a national religion. Simple experiment to prove that. There are multiple Christian states; there are multiple Muslim

states, Hindu states, Buddhist states. Now, imagine that some state somewhere in the world were to establish itself and declare that *it is* a Jewish state, just like Israel. Israel would go ballistic. It would say, 'No, you can't be *the* Jewish state: *we are the Jewish state.*'

For states with an official religion, that officialness extends to their borders and stops. Such states neither claim exclusivity on the religion or its various cultures, nor to have any claim on co-religionist citizens of other countries. Israel is the opposite. Israel is the 'only Jewish state' (as its apologists constantly remind us) not in the sense that there happen to be no other, but because by Israel's construct there *can* be no other. Why? Because its claim over Jews is global and involves ethnicity itself, not citizenship. This nation-state adaptation of tribalism, in which the state is part of the DNA of an ethnic identity, bears no relation to states with a national religion. And it is the internal workings of its weapon of silencing critics through the smear of anti-Semitism.

Now, where else do we come across this same mentality? It is the method of common bigots. Racists blame individuals by virtue of claimed oneness with some ethnicity or nationality or 'type'. And so, during the spread of Covid19, 'Chinese-looking' people were attacked because the virus came from China. 'They', 'the Chinese', caused Covid. This is classic ignorant bigotry, and we all condemn it.

Israel's magic shield works by doing precisely this to Jews - but turning it around in order to hold Jewish identity ransom to insulate its crimes. And, instead of condemning this anti-Semitism, we run in fear from it - which is doubly tragic, because we are also running in fear from Zionism's fatal flaw.

We would say, Israel did *xyz*, while a bigot would say *the Jews* did *xyz*. But that bigot is now the Israeli state and its cheerleaders, who have made state and ethnicity synonymous in order to repackage criticism of the state as anti-Semitic.

Other states deflect criticism of their crimes by 'hiding behind the flag', accusing dissenting *citizens* of

being unpatriotic to the *state*. Israel instead hides behind the *ethnicity*, free of borders, accusing dissenting voices anywhere of being traitorous to Jews as Jews.

IHRA

Now, we are all familiar with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance pseudo-definition of anti-Semitism, which in reality is not a definition of anything, but rather a tool to silence Israel's critics and thus empower Israel's crimes. The IHRA does, however, contain one truth: it states that it is anti-Semitic to hold Jews collectively responsible for the actions of the Israeli state. Well, of course! - but that, ironically, is precisely what the IHRA is engineered to do. That is its purpose, and that is the inner workings of the smear.

You do not even need to unscrew the cover of the IHRA to look inside to see how it works. It is a very simple and obvious mechanism: what Israel does 'the Jews' do, so to accuse the state of crimes is to accuse Jews as Jews of those crimes - which, of course, is blatant anti-Jewish bigotry, and we must start saying so.

This same tactic Israel wields to silence us. It is its Achilles heel, but we have collectively been so beaten down that we have not exploited it. Israeli theft of Jewish identity makes Jews, as Jews, *simply because they are Jews*, the doers of its crimes. Traditional anti-Semitism, for all its horrors, is powerless to harm the integrity of Jews or Judaism, powerless to make its libels true. However, the Israeli state and Zionism - if we accept them at their word - succeed. If we accept their claims on Jewish identity, then we are common racists, blaming Jews as Jews.

The very name 'Israel' is of course also part of the weaponisation of the smear of anti-Semitism. For anyone from the larger western tradition (and I include secular people) the name 'Israel' exists apart from all other place names. Its very sound transcends the realm of the profane and touches a nerve deep within our collective cultural subconscious.

It is a place rooted in Genesis itself, and Israel - the modern nation-

state - very openly exploits this to position itself as that place, the land's ancient artefacts as the nation-state's artefacts, and its settlers as that Biblical land's people. As laughable as that may (and should!) sound, its power is very real, and is the reason the name was chosen.

Zionists' use of Hebrew as the vernacular operates in tandem with the weaponisation of anti-Semitism. Hebrew was necessary for the theatre of the messianic 'return' to biblical lands. It, too, is an artefact serving to place the Israeli state in a protected part of our collective psyche. To criticise someone speaking Hebrew is, in this militarisation, to criticise Jews.

In sum, Zionism has hijacked Jewish individual identity and turned it into a monolithic, racial, supremacist cult. Why is this not blatantly obvious to the general public?

One key aspect, in my view is this: What, as seen by the public, are the two 'sides' to what they are told is a 'conflict'? Well, they would say that 'It's obviously Israel versus the Palestinians (or the Arabs)'. To me, this juxtaposition is very misleading, and it hides Israel's anti-Semitism.

Question: what is it about the Palestinians that makes Israel target them? Why does Israel place them under apartheid, ethnically cleanse them and commit genocide against them? Why? It is not because they are Palestinians *per se*. It is not because they are Arabs. It is solely because they are not Jewish. If they were Jewish, whether Palestinian or Arab or anything else, they would instead be welcomed by Israel and given a generous subsidy to take over a house whose owner was expelled because s/he is not Jewish.

Jews were always part of the fabric of Arab Palestinian civilisation - until the arrival of the Zionists. The Zionists extracted all Jews from Palestinian civilisation, robbing them of their Arab identity. More Zionist anti-Semitism. That the rest were by definition not Jewish - and nothing else - is why Israel has condemned them to apartheid, bantustans and camps, why the Zionist militias depopulated several hundred villages in 1948, and why it continues to depopulate them in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and, especially, in Gaza. The core goal of Zionism is a racially pure Jewish state from river to sea. Anyone there

who is not Jewish is to be gotten rid of.

So, Palestinians are the targets because Palestinians are the native people river-to-sea minus the Palestinian Jews, who were all removed by the Zionists.

Describing the situation as 'between Israel and the Palestinians' falsely frames this racial nationalism as a real estate dispute - a conflict - and indeed provides Israel the rhetorical gymnastics through which it denies it is an apartheid regime. Accurately describing the situation as Israel's ethnic cleansing of Palestinian non-Jews exposes Israel's crimes against Jews - its hijacking of Jewish identity as a human shield to insulate its crimes in the name of Jews.

Thus the Israeli state is genocidal in its very nature, as its goal is and always has been to effectively erase the original ethnic identity by expulsion and the hijacking of their cultural iconography as its own. The ongoing genocide in Gaza, and in slower motion in the West Bank and East Jerusalem - and, of course, within Israel itself - is all part of Zionism's grotesquely anti-Semitic crime of hijacking Judaism into a racial supremacist cult. Israel is in effect conducting genocide and blaming it on the Jews.

Israel's squandering of Jewish identity is also obvious if we look at the people who were ethnically cleansed in 1948 and beyond - ongoing through to this moment - because they are not Jewish, and have for generations been reduced to life in camps. What do we call these camps? Unfortunately, playing right into Israel's narrative, we call them refugee camps, shielding Israel from this aspect of its abuse of Jewish identity.

No - what is a refugee camp? It is a camp for people displaced by conflict or natural disaster, on account of which are unable to return home. But this has not applied to the Palestinians for 75 years. Since the end of 1948, they have been perfectly able to go home, have wanted nothing more than to go home, and there is nothing stopping them from going home ... except that the Israeli state blocks them! Why? It blocks them because they are not Jewish.

So these are not refugee camps - they are Israeli internment camps

for non-Jews, paid for by the 'international community'. The term, 'refugee camps', obscures this crime Israel is committing in the name of Jews, making the fact that millions of people wake up every morning to the squalor of camps sound like some tragedy of circumstances. *No* - Israel keeps them imprisoned in internment camps, because they are not Jewish - end of story.

As an example of how cynical is Israel's theft of Jewish identity, one of these Israeli internment camps for non-Jews, Shu'fat, is already in what is claimed to be Israel. According to Israel, East Jerusalem (where the camp is) is Israeli, as much a part of the state as any other. So, the people of Shu'fat camp do not even need to 'return' - they are already there!

But they are in camps. They are in camps, even though they are in Israel, according to Israel, in order to preserve Israel's self-professed identity as 'the Jewish state' - a remarkably cynical term, in that its exterior demands unqualified respect, while its interior hides a neo-fascist, racist abuse of Jewish identity to empower its crimes against the Palestinians.

Smears

Since its purpose is to protect the state itself, not Jews, and since the very mission of the state is a racist one, anti-racists - that is, the vast majority of the people working for Palestinian liberation - are the targets of the smear, whereas actual anti-Jewish bigots, and even neo-fascists, are not targets because they are invariably avid supporters of the state.

I came of age in the United States during the height of the US-led war against Vietnam, and like many people of all ages at the time, I was active in the movement to stop it. Now, we were called traitors, but traitors to what? Traitors to a state of which I was a citizen by happenstance of the geography of my birth. It was an external aspect, not part of my DNA. Citizenship is like belonging to a club. Everyone - well, except the Palestinians and other stateless people - automatically belong to one of these clubs, and sometimes join another or resign from one.

But people brainwashed from birth by Zionism believe that Zionist ideology and the Israeli state are part of who they are. And it is for this reason that Israel does not allow *Israeli* nationality for Jews. The nationality of Jewish citizens of Israel is, by Israeli law, *Jewish*. Israel claims a hold on Jews by what it treats as 'race', and thus cannot be renounced. Israel claims to own Jews as Jews.

One example of how this plays out: in the 1980s, during former Lehi bigwig Yitzhak Shamir's second term as Israeli prime minister, Russia finally allowed Jews to leave. Most wanted to go to the US, but Shamir, furious, called them 'defectors' and successfully coerced US president Ronald Reagan to close its doors in order to force them to go to Israel, where they were needed as placeholders for the state's expansion into the West Bank.

In my view, this psychosis - this drug of anti-Semitism, to which Zionism has gotten its devotees addicted - is why we have the phenomenon of Zionist Jews faking anti-Semitic incidents, such as scrawling swastikas on the wall or their dormitory door, this sort of thing - even bomb scares - a phenomenon that I believe is more widespread than has been acknowledged.

Anti-Semitism has become a racket. For many years, organisations such as the Campaign Against Anti-Semitism, the Community Service Trust and the Board of Deputies -

or in the US the Anti-Defamation League - have been devoted to maintaining an ever-increasing hysteria over anti-Semitism, both to keep Zionism's adherents terrified and satisfied, and to keep us silent.

Does anyone remember any of these organisations announcing, 'Great news - anti-Semitism has declined this quarter'? Or even levelled off? No. It is so farcical that several years ago the *Daily Mail* reported that "Jews feel as threatened as they did in the holocaust, experts say", and there has been no let-up since. Yet the media continue to parrot one new alarm after the other without betraying the slightest curiosity.

The struggle for Palestinian liberation demands that we counter this weapon - the militarisation of anti-Semitism. What, then, to do if you are falsely smeared with the 'anti-Semitism' label? Absolute rule: never respond on the terms handed you. Do not respond with protestations of your innocence; nor with any form of pseudo-apology for anything you did not do, thinking you will placate the inquisitors.

The smear is to silence you, of course; but they are also thrilled if you protest, because anti-Semitism remains the issue, you remain on the defensive, and because the words, 'Palestine', 'apartheid' and 'genocide' are nowhere to be found.

In my view - and I feel strongly that I am correct in this - when the Scarlet Letter, 'A for anti-Semitism', is scrawled on your chest, you should instead - correctly - boomerang the charge back. And it must include the words that the smear was intended to silence:

■ No - don't blame Jews for the crimes of Israel.

■ I'm arguing for simple human rights. Stop smearing Jews as bigots - as opposing equality - in order to shield Israel.

■ No, the only anti-Jewish bigotry here is from those defending Israeli apartheid, ethnic cleansing and genocide in the name of Jews.

Similarly:

■ It is not enough to say that anti-Zionism is not anti-Semitism: rather, Zionism *is* anti-Semitism.

■ It is convoluted to say that criticism of Israel is not anti-Semitic. Rather, adulation of Israel is far, far more likely to spring from anti-Semitism.

The militarisation of anti-Semitism has to be thrown back - exposed - for the racist outrage that it is. And here is why I maintain that the term 'anti-Semitism' should be dropped in favour of 'anti-Jewish bigotry', or any straightforward term consistent with how one would reference any other target of racism.

The smear, 'anti-Semitic', is a blunt weapon that not only infers Jewish (and is thus understood as Israeli) exceptionalism, but obscures precisely what act is being alleged. If instead the accuser is forced to clarify that bigotry against Jews (as opposed to Israel) is the accusation, that puts the onus on the accuser to explain why, for example, arguing for equal rights river to sea, is somehow anti-Jewish. It suddenly becomes more transparent that it is the accuser, not the accused, who is libelling Jews.

Israel - the world's great purveyor of anti-Jewish bigotry - has created a world of smoke and mirrors out of the crime to grease the wheels of genocide. It is long overdue to clear the smoke and mirrors ●

This is an edited version of Thomas Suárez's talk to 'Why Marx?' on January 25. The ongoing discussion and education series takes place every Thursday at 7pm. See: www.whymarx.com

What we fight for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Fighting fund

Smash through

Good news, comrades. In January, once again, we have exceeded our £2,250 fighting fund target (by £141) and, once again, comrade BK has kept his word and matched that excess as soon as he was told!

But first things first. As I reported last week, we already had £2,138 in the kitty, so we only needed another £112 with seven days still to go. But in fact £253 came our way, thanks to LM (£80), DB (£50), GT (£35), JT (£25), DG (£20), AR, VP and MD (£10 each), DD (£8) and - last but not least - a £5 note from comrade Hassan.

All that took our total to £2,391 - an excess of £141, which led comrade BK to transfer that same sum to the *Weekly Worker* straightaway, taking our final total for January up to £2,532. He says he will do the same in the first part of 2024, up to a maximum of £500 overall

- a good way to encourage other donors, isn't it?

So now we've eaten into the 2023 deficit a little bit - something much needed in view of the increased costs we are facing, especially for printing. As I've informed readers over the last couple of weeks, our printers were hit by a fire, which means we need to find a reliable replacement at a reasonable cost. Hopefully we are making progress in that regard - I'll keep you posted on that one!

But, either way, we really do need the help of our readers and supporters. Let's see if we can smash through that target once again in February! ●

Robbie Rix

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

weekly worker

Still a bourgeois
workers' party
... just about

Safe space for business

Team Starmer is being supported financially by very high-net-worth individuals and big companies. Have no doubts we are on course for the most rightwing Labour government ever, writes Eddie Ford

By all measurements, momentum seems to be gathering behind Sir Keir Starmer - with a resounding general election victory increasingly likely. Labour has been consistently ahead in the opinion polls for some time now, often by 20 points or more, and some are indicating that the Tories face electoral wipeout on the scale of their 1997 defeat at the hands of Tony Blair - maybe even greater, though you have to be careful predicting the future with the first-past-the-post electoral system.

With every day that goes by, 'respectable' and 'sensible' opinion is lining up behind the Starmer team - seen as a welcome dose of sanity after the chaotic madness represented by David Cameron, Theresa May, Boris Johnson and Liz Truss. Yes, Rishi Sunak lingers on like a zombie prime minister, but many Tories are unsure of who or what he is - what does he actually believe in? Everyone agrees that his attempts to present himself as the 'change' candidate, challenging the 30-years-old status quo, has been a risible and predictable failure - he is part of that very status quo! Meaning that Labour is more and more an attractive option for those who consider themselves mainstream or middle of the road.

Poll lead

The latest Opinium poll for *The Observer* at the weekend shows Labour is beating the Tories on most issues, including the economy, health, education, the environment, immigration and crime, and scoring even on ones it normally lags way behind on, including defence.¹ Particularly encouraging for Labour strategists - wanting it to be seen as the party of ambition, success and the homeowning democracy - is the fact that Labour has a lead on housing and house prices, traditionally regarded as 'Tory values'. When Opinium asked voters which party they thought would be best for "housing/house prices", 34% went for a Labour government under Starmer, against just 16% who chose the Tories under Rishi Sunak. Almost alone, when it comes to "fighting terrorism", the Tories are just one point ahead of Labour on 25%.

Therefore it is only to be expected that very high-net-worth individuals and big companies are deciding that Starmer's Labour is the best bet, now that Corbynism has been well and truly vanquished. Jeremy Corbyn himself is, of course, banned from standing as a candidate for the party at the next election - a signal that the party is 'open for business' in every sense of the term!

The latest figure to come out for the Labour leader is the boss of the Iceland supermarket chain and former Conservative donor, Richard Walker - who quit the Tories last October after previously seeking to be a candidate.

After taking time to deliberate on the matter, Walker took to the pages



Keir Starmer: more in line with capitalist interests than not a few Tory prime ministers

of *The Guardian* to say he now believes that Labour and Starmer had a "credible programme" to improve the UK economy and people's lives - the party having moved closer to the centre, while Rishi Sunak's party has caused a "total collapse in public confidence" in the government (January 29). For Walker, Labour's objectives were clear, while the Tories were engaged in infighting and an "apparently endless churn of prime ministers, chancellors and secretaries of state". Having met Starmer and his inner circle, he thought that the Labour leader had demonstrated a "compassion and concern for the less fortunate", as well as an understanding of the cost-of-living crisis that had hurt his Iceland customers so much.

Significantly, the supermarket boss was impressed by Starmer's leadership qualities, saying he had "demonstrated this in the way in which he has transformed his own party by ruthlessly excising the Corbynite extremism that made Labour unelectable in 2019". The party was now a safe space for business, Rachel Reeves being an impressive chancellor-in-waiting, who understood the critical importance of "wealth creation" - Walker was convinced that the party would remove barriers in the planning system, as well as "breathing new life into our wearied high streets". Naturally, he did not agree with everything that Labour stood for and had no plans to become a party member - nor is he understood to be planning to donate to the party. However, Walker will support Labour at the next election and hoped that it would "deliver the majority they will need to begin delivering their recovery programme for the UK".

Not that Labour particularly needs Walker's money. As has been widely reported in the *Weekly Worker* and plenty of other sources, rich individuals and big business are now paying into Labour considerably more than the trade unions - the traditional financiers of the party, of course. In September, the party boosted its election war chest with a record quarter for funding, receiving more than £10.4 million. This included £3 million from David Sainsbury, the

supermarket baron - not to mention his daughter, Fran Perrin, a philanthropist who has given over £1 million to the party since Starmer became leader (apparently giving £20,000 to Wes Streeting personally). Then there is the £2.2 million from the South African-born Gary Lubner, who made hundreds of millions running the company behind Autoglass, who told the *Financial Times* that he had wanted to put the party in power for a "long time". Nor should we forget Dale Vince, the founder of gas and electricity supplier Ecotricity, who has also bankrolled Just Stop Oil in recent years. He has given at least £1.4 million to Labour through his company since 2014, though contributions really ramped up in the Starmer era, with a £500,000 gift. Other business leaders are likely to follow Walker in switching allegiance to Labour, as the general election and the prospect of a Labour government gets nearer.

Donkey work

Whatever some on the left might have said, the Labour Party can function perfectly well without the dues being paid by activists or the left doing the donkey work of leafleting, knocking on doors, and so on. If you have money pouring in from the moneyed class and have media outlets like *The Mirror* and *The Guardian*, even *The Sun*, on board, that is more than enough to get the job done. And have no doubt that Starmer wants to get the job done, even if some argued not that long ago that he did not really want to win the election, as all he was concerned with nothing more than kicking out the Labour left.

In 1998, Peter Mandelson - Tony Blair's right-hand man at the time - famously declared that he was "intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich", just so long as they pay their taxes. Rachel Reeves's recent trip to the World Economic Forum in Davos, which by all accounts was a roaring success, was meant to show the same: Starmer's Labour Party is extremely relaxed about wealth and hobnobbing with the super-wealthy. As some in the rightwing press have waspishly remarked, Labour wants the filthy rich's money for themselves.

To this and other ends, Labour this week is holding a major business conference in central London, hosting leaders from companies including Google, Shell, AstraZeneca, Airbus, Siemens, British Chamber of Commerce, and Goldman Sachs.² More than 600 executives, investors and bosses from the finance world are to flock to the event, indicating that they expect the party to form the next government - so time to work the room. The conference is three times the size of a similar business event Labour held last year, with each ticket costing nearly £1,000 and the whole event selling out in just four hours. At the meeting, the party will unveil its much-anticipated strategy for the City and detail how it plans to harness the strength of the UK's £275 billion financial and professional services sector.

Ahead of the summit, Jonathan Reynolds, the shadow business secretary - who was in Davos with Reeves - pledged to make it an annual event and promised to end the "VIP lanes" for contracts that gave preference to bidders with links to government figures during the pandemic. "Labour is the party of business," he declared - there will be "no back doors or special access for donors" under a Labour government, as "the public and honest businesses" have had enough of Tory "sleaze and scandal". His party will bring integrity back to how the government and business works together to solve the big challenges in our country, said Reynolds, and this conference will demonstrate Labour's "commitment to work hand in glove with the business community". As part of this "commitment", Reeves has said that Labour has no intention of reinstating the cap on bankers' bonuses that was removed in 2022 by the then chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng, as part of the now notorious 'mini-budget' under Liz Truss. The shadow chancellor, of course, wants to be the "champion of a thriving financial services industry".

The huge effort that Labour has put into wooing business leaders appears to be paying off in spades - as evinced by a party-commissioned Opinium poll that took a sample of 500 business leaders.³ 44% said they had backed the Tories in the 2019 election, compared to 27% who had

supported Labour. However, when asked for their preferred outcome at the coming general election, the positions had reversed - with 49% preferring "a Labour government led by Keir Starmer", compared to 34% who wanted "a Conservative government led by Rishi Sunak". Of the 220 business leaders who had backed the Tories in 2019, a quarter (25%) said they now wanted a Labour victory. The survey also found that 69% agreed with the statement that the Tories had "lost the trust of the business community", compared to 25% who disagreed.

Davos woman

Naturally, Reynolds was cock-a-hoop, saying the findings showed that "business has given up on the Conservative Party" and "lost faith in them". He talked about a "really unusual position", where business leaders are looking for a change of government to get "greater stability". Reynolds has also revealed that he and Reeves took the opportunity at Davos to ask international companies whether they would consider listing in the UK - 'Please invest in a Labour Britain that is pro-business and pro-enterprise'.

In other words, while Labour remains a workers' party because of its history, its name, its organisational links with the trade union movement and its electoral base, politically it has sold its soul to the bourgeoisie. The idea that what is needed is a Labour Party mark two, as pushed by the Socialist Party in England and Wales and other disorientated left groups, is merely to invite a comic repetition of the Labour Party mark one. No, we need something serious, something that can really challenge the rule of capital. That is the organisation of the working class into a mass Communist Party ●

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Notes

1. theguardian.com/politics/2024/jan/27/voters-think-labour-would-be-better-than-conservatives-on-housing-and-house-prices.
2. theguardian.com/politics/2024/jan/24/labour-to-unveil-plans-for-city-at-forthcoming-business-conference.
3. telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/01/27/business-support-shift-labour-keir-starmer-over-rish-sunak.