



weekly worker

Sir Keir welcomes Tory bigot Natalie Elphicke, while silencing voices raised against Zionist genocide in Gaza

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Towards a mass Communist Party

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Marching ...
but towards
what solution?

LETTERS



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

Sentenced

The trial in Austria against the pro-Palestine activist, Michael Pröbsting, ended with a guilty verdict and a conditional prison sentence of six months. Michael was prosecuted for a video statement expressing solidarity with the Palestinian resistance and opposition to the Israeli apartheid state. The public prosecutor's office claimed that this would constitute an "incitement to commit terrorist offences and approval of terrorist offences".

Michael, who is also international secretary of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), strongly rejected the prosecutor's allegations in a statement published two weeks ago. During the proceedings, which lasted almost two and a half hours, Michael emphasised the deeply political nature of the process. His only crime was to have expressed his support for the legitimate armed resistance of the Palestinian people against the Israeli occupation forces and his rejection of the Zionist state. In reality, the indictment shows how far the support for the Israeli terrorist state extends in leading circles of politics and prosecutors.

He ended his closing remarks with the following: "We are currently experiencing a historical moment of great importance. As one of the worst genocides in recent history takes place, a huge movement of solidarity with the Palestinian people, reminiscent of 1968, is emerging worldwide. I and many others who consider the Palestinian resistance as legitimate - we are on the right side of history. You, Mr Judge and Ms Prosecutor, are here today to judge me. But you also decide how history will judge you."

In his verdict, the judge said that "both sides are right" and that he is issuing of a "Solomonian verdict". The public prosecutor's office had demanded a "rigorous" or "draconian" punishment (the maximum penalty in this case is two years in prison). A conditional prison sentence means that, if Michael commits such an offence again, he can be sentenced to six months in prison.

Before the trial began, a rally with more than 40 solidarity activists took place in front of the State Criminal Court in Vienna. Palestinian, Syrian, Egyptian, Iraqi and Basque activists were present. The International Communist League has also organised solidarity rallies in New York, Los Angeles, Mexico City, Berlin, London and Milan.

Unfortunately, almost none of the activists were allowed to take part in the trial as observers, as it was moved to a very small hall at short notice in order to keep public participation as low as possible. Not even all of the journalists present or Michael's wife were allowed to attend the hearing! Nevertheless, many activists waited outside the courtroom to find out the outcome of the trial. At this point we

would like to thank all brothers and sisters and all comrades for their great support!

Regardless of the outcome of the process, our solidarity with the Palestinian liberation struggle will not diminish! We continue!

RCIT International Bureau
email

No substance

It doesn't surprise me in the least that the *Weekly Worker's* resident Stalinist (aka Andrew Northall) didn't like my criticism of Sharon Graham, Unite's general secretary. But did he have to take up over 750 words in order to say absolutely nothing (Letters, May 9)?

Graham stood on the basis that she was apolitical and no longer would Unite give support, as Len McCluskey had done, to the left in the Labour Party. She even contemplated abandoning Labour altogether and disaffiliating. But by last year's rule conference she was all in favour of the affiliation remaining and she even invited Sir Keir to be her dance partner. Unfortunately her love was not required.

Graham has, throughout the seven months of genocide in Gaza, not only done nothing to support the Palestinians: she has actively tried to prevent anyone else doing anything. Not only has she refused to implement Unite policy on Palestine, including BDS, but she has gone out of her way to attack direct-action and anti-arms trade activists who have tried to shut down arms factories. She has refused to attend even one of the 13 national demonstrations and forbade the national banner being taken.

According to Graham, there is only one issue - the right of workers in the arms trade to manufacture weapons that help murder Palestinian men, women and children. This is where the bankrupt politics of Northall ends up. It is the politics that believed the rights of workers manufacturing Zyklon B outweighed those who died in the gas chambers.

Graham represents non-political trade unionism, which has long been the curse of the British union movement. That is why it is so weak today - it has confined itself to operating within the norms of the British legal system and has opposed anything that is seen to challenge the state. From one of the strongest labour movements in Europe it has become a shadow of what it was, and this is what Northall is cheering.

What his letter lacked in substance he more than made up for with an eclectic variety of adjectives and phrases expressing his incoherent rage - "poisonous creature", "foul, bitter, personal and vicious", "disgusting and repulsive", "garbage and filth", "vicious and active enemy", "poisonous individual", "twisted, bitter and hostile". Uncle Joe must be looking on with envy.

And then, thinking 'more broadly', Northall can't resist having a pop at veteran Israeli anti-Zionist Moshé Machover, who comes off rather lightly with his alleged "specific and sectarian political history [which] provides a far too narrow and exclusionary take".

Northall, of course, comes from the very non-sectarian political tradition of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and Stalin's 1947 about-turn at the UN supporting the partition of Palestine (to say nothing of Stalin's purges of the old Bolsheviks).

Tony Greenstein
Brighton

State power

The Tony Greenstein article about Sharon Graham and Unite the Union has caused quite a stir ('My Zionist general secretary', April 25).

My feeling is that trade unions of its size cannot help but take on the colourings of the state power, but this isn't the whole story. The state power is itself composed of myriad antagonisms and, compared to before the war, it is a much weakened entity. The hope comes from its weakness and our strength, which is the natural strength of the people who compose the nation.

The rise of China and Russia is threatening its interests abroad, as it is threatening the interests of the wider so-called west. Europe and the US are both beset by tremendous social pressures at home and this complements and reinforces the external challenges to their illiterate and insane rule. They will be crushed between the two.

Elijah Traven
Hull

Shut Elbit

Former chair of Labour Friends of Israel, John Woodcock (aka 'Baron' Walney), plans to issue a report recommending the government implement new measures to deter Palestine Action's direct action campaign against Israel's largest weapons firm, Elbit Systems. Whilst acknowledging the "enormous damage" our campaign has had on the arms industry, he suggests a "proscription-light" label for us which aims to restrict our ability to meet and fundraise. He also wants "buffer zones" around weapons manufacturers like Elbit to protect the company from protests against them.

Despite posing as an 'independent' government advisor, Woodcock is deeply affiliated with the Israel lobby and the arms industry. He is chairman of the Defence Purpose Coalition, which brings together senior figures within the deadly arms industry, to promote it. Since 2011, he's travelled to Israel numerous times on all-paid-for trips by the Israeli government and other pro-Israel lobby groups.

During our nearly four-year direct action campaign, we've faced arrests, raids, imprisonment, beatings, convictions and more, by a state desperate to protect the Zionist war machine over the freedom of their own citizens. Despite this, our movement's determination and resilience has resulted in Elbit permanently closing two weapons factories, being dropped by several partners and losing hundreds of millions of pounds in contracts with the ministry of defence.

We are seven months into the Gaza genocide, so does Walney think this scare tactic is going to make us surrender? He couldn't be more wrong.

When Palestine Action began, we were under no illusion that the route to victory would be an easy ride. As a movement, we understand that every obstacle we face and overcome is a step closer to ending Israel's weapons trade in Britain. For years the political class repressed us behind closed doors, but refused to show publicly their frustration at our growing campaign. Now, they're showing their hand, which means we are winning.

Rather than deter us, Walney's rampage to the press three days after we dissed him on Twitter exposes his own motivation: to save face. He's more concerned with protecting the military interests of a foreign genocidal entity over the will of the British people, who overwhelmingly support imposing an arms embargo on Israel.

His alliance is with Elbit Systems, who use Gaza as a laboratory to develop its "battle-tested" weaponry and is crucial to arming the ongoing genocide. Our alliance will always be with the Palestinian people.

Collectively we must refuse to surrender. No matter what, we will shut Elbit down!

Palestine Action
email

Min or max?

Mike Macnair, in his analysis of the results of the elections to the Greater London Assembly, notes that they "show Tusc polling in the same range as the SPGB" ('Local election barometer', May 9).

In other words, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, appealing to trade union-conscious workers with a programme of attractive-sounding reforms (what used to be called 'the minimum programme'), polled more or less the same as the Socialist Party of Great Britain, which was standing on a straight platform of socialism - the common ownership and democratic control of the means of living, with production directly to meet people's needs, not profit - and nothing but (what used to be called 'the maximum programme').

But what's the point of standing on a minimum programme when you are not going to get more votes than if you stood on the maximum programme? Workers who just want reforms understandably prefer to vote for reformist parties they consider have a chance of being able to implement some.

Seeking support on the basis of reforms to capitalism confuses the issue, by encouraging workers to continue to think in terms of getting a better deal under capitalism rather than to get rid of it. The time and energy spent on this could be more fruitfully spent in campaigning directly for socialism. After all, what is needed is more socialists.

Adam Buick
SPGB

Local communists

Communists in Manchester will be standing in the general election, whenever it is called. We will be standing in Manchester Central on a communist manifesto that argues that not only is an alternative to the capitalist present needed, but there is an alternative: communism.

We need to have confidence that our ideas can in time become popular and common sense in society. Therefore, we must make the case for a communist alternative in public, in a manner open to scrutiny and debate, and seek to win people to our vision of humanity overcoming capitalism.

It is long overdue that communists, revolutionaries and militant workers should organise together in a party. Our contention is that, through common work, common organisation will be shown as necessary and desirable.

We say that the power to supersede capitalism rests in the hands of the majority in society, the working class. Our manifesto states: "Change - real change - must look beyond this system. This means breaking the domination of the minority and instead putting the control of society and its resources into the hands of the majority, the working class."

When it comes to the here and now, we are against the war drive and oppose all spending on arms. Further, any step that improves the lot of the majority in society - either materially, culturally or in terms of political power - should be supported. However, small gains and wins are only temporary. We are for a complete break. As we write in our manifesto, "It is not the project of communists to manage this system."

Manchester is a city that displays all the contradictions of capitalism today. Enormous wealth alongside crushing poverty, fake official anti-racism alongside thuggish attacks on migrants by the council - and, of course, a city where landlords and property barons call the shots and pocket ever greater cuts from Mancunians' wages. We say: "Brand Manchester makes the claim, 'This is Manchester - we do things differently here'; but in reality this empty slogan is a cheap facade barely covering up an all too familiar scene of widespread poverty, brought about by profiteering and control of our city by a tiny minority. We say let's *actually* do things differently."

In order for us to do this we need money. To those who want to see a bold communist intervention at the elections, we ask that you donate to our campaign. Even better - get in touch with us and get involved. We have many doors to knock, conversations to be had and connections to be made. Go to our website: www.comunistfuture.com.

Communist Future
Manchester

Landlordism

The current housing crisis started in 1979 with the election as prime minister of Margaret Thatcher, who introduced the so-called 'right to buy' council houses, sold to tenants at a discount. The money from the sale was supposed to go to local councils, so they could build new houses, but this never happened, the money going to the treasury instead.

Then in the early 1990s, under John Major, the Tories introduced assured shorthold, six-month tenancies in the private sector, together with the abolition of rent controls. This led to an explosion in so-called 'buy-to-let' petty landlordism to such an extent that in 2024 one in 21 adults are now buy-to-let landlords.

Tony Blair's New Labour governments could have stopped this by making buy-to-let interest-only mortgage payments non-deductible for tax purposes. But New Labour didn't, preferring to let such landlordism grow as an alternative to allowing local councils to be able to borrow the money needed to build new houses. The result has been that we have a whole generation of young couples stuck paying exorbitant rents to blood-sucking landlords.

So what should be done? Buy-to-let petty landlordism needs to be destroyed. This can best be done by reintroducing rent controls and rent control officers. This would lead to landlords selling up. Local councils should then be allowed to buy up these properties, as happened in London and other areas of Britain in the 1970s.

We need to nationalise the privately owned, large building companies, land banks and estates. This would allow local councils to build desperately needed council houses. A target nationally should be set at building one million new council houses a year - equivalent to 1,500 new council houses per parliamentary constituency.

John Smithee
Cambridgeshire

Communist University

Saturday August 3 to Saturday August 10 (inclusive)

International Student House, 229 Great Portland Street, London W1
(nearest tube: Great Portland Street)

Cost: Full week, including accommodation in en suite rooms: £250
(£150 unwaged). Solidarity price: £300.

First/final weekend, including one night's accommodation: £60 (£30).
Full day: £10 (£5). Single session: £5 (£3).

Make payments to account 'Weekly Worker'. Account number: 00744310.
Sort code: 30-99-64. Please quote payment reference 'CU2024'

Email your booking, stating single or double room, to: office@cpgb.org.uk

STUDENTS

Encamping against genocide

Yassamine Mather reports from the city of dreaming spires and student protest

On May 5, Oxford University students - organised by the newly founded Oxford Action for Palestine (OA4P) - established an encampment in front of the Pitt Rivers Museum, in coordination with a similar protest in Cambridge.

Student demands on the university primarily relate to assets and investments. They are asking for disclosure and a divestiture of all holdings in arms and other companies "complicit in Israeli genocide, apartheid and occupation of Palestine".

They also demand that the university and its subsidiaries end all banking with Barclays and agree to end institutional relationships with Israeli universities. This would involve the ending of exchange programmes, joint projects and conferences. Students also demand that the university "end research, career and procurement partnerships with companies and institutions that are complicit in Israeli genocide, apartheid or occupation".

It should be added that Oxford University Hospitals - one of the largest NHS teaching trusts - has a long history of supporting Medical Aid for Palestinians, while its doctors and nurses often spent weeks in Gaza hospitals that are now part of the rubble.

The protest started with the support of 60 members of staff who wrote:

As members of faculty and staff of the University of Oxford, we stand firmly in support of the members of the university community, who have begun an encampment outside the Pitt Rivers Museum to demand that the university divest from Israel's genocide in Gaza, as well as from Israel's ongoing apartheid regime against Palestinians and its settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Our students have demanded that the university call for an unconditional and immediate ceasefire, condemn the destruction of all of Gaza's universities by Israel's bombardment in the last six months, and commit concrete resources both to support Palestinian scholars' education and to rebuild Gaza's destroyed institutions of higher education.

By this week over 500 members of the faculty and its staff had signed this support and a new petition for Oxford alumni started.

I personally visit the camp most days and it is well organised - a very peaceful, internationalist environment. From Chinese Americans to African-American US students, white British, European and American students to Sikhs and Middle Eastern students. Many people drop by to bring food and drinks for the students, while vehicles passing on the adjacent road honk their horns in support.

The media tent is named after *Al Jazeera* journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, who was killed by the Israeli military, while the library is named after Dr Refaat Alareer - a Palestinian writer, poet and academic killed in December 2023 by an Israeli air strike.

The camp has a well organised inventory, with a timetable of meetings and other events available on Instagram (@oxact4pal) that make good use of secure means of contacting students and staff who are actively supporting the action by giving moral and practical help.

Last week around 500 demonstrators attended a vigil held just outside the encampment. It was a vigil in solidarity with the healthcare and education workers of Gaza, whose



Clear message

workplaces have been destroyed by Israeli bombardment. During the vigil speakers, in scrubs, read out the names of the healthcare workers killed as a result of Israeli bombings.

In various emails sent to staff, university authorities emphasise this is a peaceful occupation. However, this has not stopped the rightwing press going on about how the action poses a 'threat to Jewish students'! Oxford Israel Society's statement tells us they are disappointed with staff and students, who "have chosen to mimic pro-Palestine encampments at US universities", which, according to their statement, "have already led to violence and anti-Semitism there". No mention of who inflicted the violence, no mention of the hundreds of Jewish students and staff who are part of this movement in the US, the UK and elsewhere.

The statement from Oxford Israel Society ends by "calling upon the university to reject all the protestors' and petitioners' demands" and expressing confidence that the university authorities will ensure that "anti-Semitism is swiftly and sharply addressed".

In direct contrast to this, Oxford Jewish Students for Justice (JSJ) have issued a statement in solidarity with Oxford Action for Palestine, saying they "fully support the encampment's struggle" and "call for the university to accept their demands in full".

The only violence so far has come from rightwing thugs. According to a report posted by one the students,

On the evening of May 11, a group of six men arrived at the encampment, shouting abusive and threatening remarks at the protestors - including "Terrorist!" and "I'll fucking kill you!" They also accused a Jewish student in the encampment of being a "fake Jew", according to video footage available on Instagram (@madeleine observes). The group of men also forcefully pushed several encampment members trying to block their advance.

Last week, former secretary of state Hillary Clinton, speaking on MSNBC TV, claimed the pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel protest movements that are active in American colleges were

misinformed by propaganda on social media and in the classroom ... I have had many conversations with a lot of young people over the last many months. They don't know very much at all about the history of the Middle East or frankly about history in many areas of the world, including in our own country.

Nothing could be further from the truth - both regarding the US protestors, and also the students I have talked to in the Oxford encampment. What Clinton and others fail to understand is that history and social sciences

students have been told repeatedly that the period of colonialism is over - we are in the post-colonial era. One history student in Oxford explained it well: "As a history student, I could no longer sit idly, reading about past atrocities, with so many occurring before my eyes. We won't be silent."

The first statement put out jointly by Oxford and Cambridge students tells us:

The wealth and prestige of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge stem directly from their role in the British empire and its disastrous colonial legacies - including the Oxford and Cambridge men who authored the Balfour Declaration in 1917, ceding Palestinian land to the Zionist project.

In 2024, these universities may claim to be confronting their role in historic colonial violence - but their words ring hollow, while they lend financial and moral support to Israel's genocide, occupation and ethnic cleansing of Palestine.

Maybe it is Hillary Clinton - who during her time as secretary of state was busy wiping out emails about her role in Middle Eastern affairs, including Libya - who failed to read much about the history of the region.

An Iranian British student from the group, Oxford Students and Staff against Repression in Iran, told me:

Oxford, as an institution, is directly implicated in the ongoing genocide: it currently has investments in arms companies that deal with Israel, such as Raytheon, and legitimises the Israeli regime through exchange agreements with Israeli universities.

As students who both pay tuition fees to this university and produce knowledge in its name, it is our moral imperative to speak against these university policies and to advocate for change. For if we do not, and go about our day without acknowledging these truths, then we too are complicit. Occupying a piece of the university's land is our way of showing that - though we all attend a university that accepts and participates in perpetrating injustices - we do not accept these and demand that the university acknowledge its complicity in the crimes against the people of Gaza.

Further, we must acknowledge that Israel is a colonial creation, and the minds behind British colonialism came from institutions like Oxford. For example, Alfred Milner, one of the architects of the Balfour Declaration, studied at Balliol College. As we know, the Balfour Declaration promised Palestinian land to the Zionist movement and took the right of self-determination away from Palestinians - a right that would become enshrined into international law within the framework of the United Nations.

The university must know that the age of colonialism is over and that it is dealing with students who will not stand for its support of genocide.

Finally, our encampment is dedicated to preserving the memory of the Gazan martyrs. Every night, we hold a vigil to honour the victims. Despite the fact that the genocide has been continuing for seven months, we remain steadfast in ensuring that the martyrs are never forgotten. And, in this way, we will not let the university forget its complicity in their deaths ●

ACTION

Rally for rent controls

Saturday May 18: Rallies organised by Living Rent. Demand better housing with lower rents and greater protection against evictions.
Glasgow, 10.30am: Mary Barbour statue, Govan subway station, Glasgow G51: www.livingrent.org/rally_for_rent_controls_glasgow.
Edinburgh, 12 noon: Bute House, Charlotte Square, Edinburgh EH2: www.livingrent.org/rally_for_rent_controls_edinburgh.

Nakba 76: end the genocide, stop arming Israel

Saturday May 18, 12 noon: National demonstration. Assemble BBC, Portland Place, London W1. 76th anniversary of the ethnic cleansing that saw 750,000 Palestinians driven into exile.
Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: palestinecampaign.org/events.

Free Julian Assange

Monday May 20, from 8.30am: Protest outside Royal Courts of Justice, The Strand, London WC2. If the extradition is allowed, moves to transfer him to the USA could begin immediately. Defend press freedom - journalism is not a crime.
Organised by Free Assange: freeassange.org.

What it means to be human

Tuesday May 21, 6.30pm: Series of talks on social and biological anthropology. This talk is online only, via Zoom: 'Remember who you are: kinship in an age of crisis' Speaker: Morna Finnegan.
Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: www.facebook.com/events/2166444457030768.

A very British conspiracy - the Shrewsbury 24

Thursday May 23, 6.30pm: Book event, Working Class Movement Library, 51 Crescent, Salford M5. Eileen Turnbull discusses her book, *A very British conspiracy - the Shrewsbury 24 and the campaign for justice*. Registration free.
Organised by Working Class Movement Library: www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=819158960252648.

Revolutionary theory and practice

Thursday May 23, 7pm: Online session in the fortnightly 'ABC of Marxism' course, presented by Ian Spencer.
Organised by Labour Left Alliance and Why Marx?: www.whymarx.com/sessions.

Woolwich march and rally for Gaza

Saturday May 25, 1.30pm: Assemble by Greenwich Islamic Centre, 131 Plumstead Road, London SE18. Ceasefire now, stop arming Israel.
Organised by Greenwich Stop the War and Greenwich Palestine Action: stopwar.org.uk/events/woolwich-march-rally-stop-arming-israel.

Israelism

Tuesday May 28, 7.30pm: Film screening followed by discussion led by Na'amod, Cultplex, 50 Red Bank, Manchester M4. The film reveals a generational divide among USA Jews, as more question the narratives their synagogues and teachers fed them as children. Tickets are pay what you can, to raise money for Medical Aid for Palestinians. Organised by Cultplex: cultplex.eventive.org/schedule/66422860b9fff700a849b30d.

A walk through radical Clerkenwell

Thursday May 30, 6.30pm: Assemble at Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. David Rosenberg leads a stroll through the streets of Clerkenwell. Ticket required (free). Includes light refreshments and a display on local radical history.
Organised by Marx Memorial Library and Islington Council: www.marx-memorial-library.org.uk/event/463.

Communist Culture Club

Thursday May 30, 7pm: Fortnightly online meeting. Sport and leisure under capitalism - Peter Kennedy. Their sport and ours - John Reid. The workers' Olympics, a real alternative? - Ben Lewis.
Organised by Labour Left Alliance and Why Marx?: www.whymarx.com/sessions.

Stop fascist Tommy Robinson in London

Saturday June 1: Counterdemonstration, The Strand, London WC2. Oppose far-right groups led by Tommy Robinson, who are planning to march against migrants. Organised by Stand Up to Racism: www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=776533081257764.

War, peace and Palestine - trade union issues

Saturday June 8, 10.30am to 4.30pm: Trade union conference, Resource for London, 356 Holloway Road, London N7. Facing up to the warmongers and sharing experiences of building pro-Palestine initiatives in unions and workplaces. Tickets £10.
Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk/events.

Tories out - fight for a workers' manifesto

Saturday June 22, 11am to 4.30pm: Conference, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1. An opportunity for union reps, members and activists to share experiences from struggles and to set out the programme needed for the general election. Registration £8.
Organised by National Shop Stewards Network: www.facebook.com/events/2164260670591261.

Jarrow rebel town festival

Saturday June 22, 11am: Parade, assemble pedestrian tunnel, Tyne Street, Jarrow NE32. Led by Felling Silver Band. Speakers include Arthur Scargill, Kate Osbourne MP and David Douglass. Followed by stalls and music at The Crown and Anchor, Chapel Road, Jarrow NE32.
Organised by Follonsby Miners Lodge Banner Heritage and Community Association: www.facebook.com/FollonsbyBanner.

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

Continuing the war of lies

Truth is notoriously the first casualty of war. But the onslaught on Gaza requires Israel and its supporters in the main parties, the trade unions and the capitalist media to balance contradictory narratives. We need our own mass media, says **Mike Macnair**

Israel's war on Gaza continues in all its horrors. Half a million people have been told yet again to evacuate (from the place the Israeli army told them to evacuate *to* in the first place).¹ Médecins sans Frontières has decided to cease operations because of Israeli targeting of medical facilities.² Egypt, evicted from the Rafah crossing on May 7 by the Israeli Aggression ('Defence') Force, decided on May 13 to join South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice.³

On May 8 the US 'paused' a bomb shipment to Israel, briefing that this was a 'message' about a Rafah offensive. And on May 13, CNN reported that "two senior administration officials" had told the channel that an Israeli offensive in Rafah would be in "direct defiance of president Joe Biden".⁴ David Cameron similarly said on May 12 that Israel was 'on notice' on the UK's opposition to a "major" Rafah operation and on the supply of arms.⁵ Nonetheless, on May 15 - after Israel had demanded evacuation and commenced large-scale bombing - the administration announced that another billion dollars in arms supplies would go to Israel, and also briefed that approaches had been made to Arab countries to supply an "intervention force" for Gaza after the expected complete destruction of Hamas.⁶

Aggression Force

Belen Fernandez commented on *Al Jazeera* on May 14 that Washington was characterised by "conflicting chatter", and the channel headlined the story: "Not even the US government knows the US government line on Rafah".⁷ One of the lines being put out by Washington must be a lie - and the 'facts on the ground' point to the conclusion that the lie is the claim that Washington is holding Israel back from the completion of its Gaza ethnic cleansing/genocide plans, and the token pausing of a bomb shipment to lend a spurious plausibility to this narrative. On the contrary, the Israeli Aggression Force is dependent on continuous resupply by the US, and the US is absolutely committed to this continuous resupply.

Meanwhile, at home, the big lie that anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism continues in full flood. The vice-chancellor of Oxford University has just issued a statement to staff in response to the protest camp outside the University Museum of Natural History, which has the usual weasel verbiage about 'respect' as a ground to restrict protest:

Whilst I am grateful that protests have been largely peaceful, we have heard directly from some members of the university and the public that they have been feeling fearful or uncomfortable as a result. At times such as these, we must work together as a community and treat one another with respect and courtesy ...

In *The Times* on May 14, Guy Dabby-Joory for the Union of Jewish Students offers a polemic against the Office for Students' new guidelines under the Tories' Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act, on the grounds that it "takes a radical approach to freedom of speech" and that the guidance against universities "mandating any 'controversial' training, which could potentially include our [UJS's] anti-Semitism awareness training"



Gaza Strip: battered by US-supplied planes, US-supplied missiles and US-supplied bombs

... and "Moreover, the guidance prevaricates on the legality of adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism..." This remains milder than the open use of police (and non-state far-right actors) to attack student protests in the US.⁸

The government-sponsored media campaign of defamation is telling us a story that Jews are not 'safe' in British or US universities - or in the US or the UK more generally - because of endemic anti-Semitism, which, however, is in reality almost entirely *no more than* opposition to the state of Israel.

But the effect is, if the smear story is to be believed, to *require* the 'right' of all the Jews in the world to a territorial state with "secure borders" to protect them from endemic anti-Semitism. Never mind that a state which could accommodate all the Jews in the world would have to be substantially larger than the territory of Mandate Palestine. Never mind that neither the US (bordering only two countries, Mexico and Canada) nor the UK (an archipelago with a land border only on the island of Ireland) has actually succeeded in 'securing' their borders, so that 'secure borders' is an impossible aspiration: the most that can be achieved is peace, on the basis of *concessions to reach agreement*, which the Israeli state refuses.

Reservations

The anti-Semitism smear campaign thus entails refusal to accept reality on a series of points. First, 'two states', as formulated by the US and its supporters, is actually a proposal merely for 'Arab reservations' in a greater Israel analogous to the 'Indian reservations' in the US (to call them Bantustans is to dignify them). Even this limited concession to the Palestinians has never been accepted by Israel, including at Oslo - which the US fraudulently represented as offering such an agreement.

Second, the Israeli government actively promoted Hamas as an alternative to the secular nationalists - and governments led by Netanyahu were particularly prominent in doing

so.⁹

Third, in 2006 Hamas won the elections for the 'Palestinian Authority'. Israel and Egypt responded, among other operations, by imposing a blockade on Gaza, which continues in place until the present day. There was also an attempt in June 2007 by Fatah to oust the Hamas local government in Gaza, which ended in the defeat of Fatah and the present regime - of Fatah 'authority' in the West Bank (without new elections) and Hamas 'authority' in Gaza (without new elections).¹⁰ The effect of the blockade is to convert the Gaza Strip into the world's largest concentration camp: since the occupants, barred from normal trade and travel, are made wholly dependent on aid supplies authorised by Israel and Egypt (in fact by Israel alone, since Egypt retained only *nominal* control of the Rafah crossing). The consequence is that the presentation of the Gaza jailbreak of October 7 2023 as pure Hamas malice, and as *proving* an anti-Semitic genocidal intent (and ability) on the part of Hamas, is indefensible to anyone who pays any attention to the actual history, as opposed to taking the smear campaign at face value.

Without *any other element* of Israeli conduct towards Gaza, on the assumption that Gaza is occupied territory governed by the Fourth Geneva Convention, this operation is a war crime, being 'collective punishment' of the inhabitants of Gaza (for electing a local government not acceptable to Israel). The settlements in the West Bank are also war crimes under the same convention, being expropriations for the purpose of population transfers.

The Israeli claim, which is *half*-supported by the US, is that Gaza and the West Bank are *not* occupied territories under the Fourth Geneva Convention - *either* because they are Israeli sovereign territory under the terms of the 1920-22 League of Nations Mandate agreements for Palestine and the 1924 Anglo-American Convention on the same subject, which gave the whole of 'from the river to the sea' to be administered

by the British, by article 6 under a duty to

facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions and ... encourage, in cooperation with the Jewish agency referred to in article 4, close settlement by Jews on the land, including state lands and waste lands not required for public purposes.

Or alternatively, the Israelis claim that, because the UN proposed partition of Palestine in 1947 was never performed and Egypt and Jordan merely occupied Gaza and the West Bank till 1967, there is no juridical sovereign at all, and in consequence the occupied territories are not 'occupied'!

These Israeli legal arguments are frankly tortured. On the face of the 1920-22 mandate and 1924 treaty, the provision for Jewish immigration is explicitly qualified. To restore the first clause to the sentence quoted above, it is "The administration of Palestine, while ensuring that the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced, shall facilitate Jewish immigration..." Hence the territorial claim on this basis would imply that the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza are full citizens of Israel, like the Arab Israelis, with the right to vote, and so on. This is not a view consistent with the conduct of the Israeli state.

On the other hand, to say that there is no juridical sovereign at all does not alter the fact that the Israeli state *holds* these territories by force and without accepting their inhabitants as citizens. Hence, the view of the overwhelming majority of public international lawyers, and the overwhelming majority of states, that this *is* an occupation and the Fourth Geneva Convention *is* engaged, is really the only plausible view.

Pretence

What I have just described is that the big lie - which is the anti-Semitism smear campaign and the Israeli state's claim that it is not guilty of war crimes - entails deep implausibility of its claims to the overwhelming majority

of public international lawyers and the world's states, as well as the world's population outside the imperialist centres.

The problem this poses to the US is that unequivocal backing for Israel threatens to explode the basis of the political regimes in the region. This is reflected in the unwillingness of Arab governments to supply 'boots on the ground' for an 'intervention force', and in Egypt joining South Africa's case against Israel, as well as in the political difficulties faced by Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt (for example),¹¹ and the Houthis' continuing and extended attacks on shipping.¹²

The result is that the US and its senior vassals (like the UK) continue to *pretend* to play the role of 'honest broker' in the Palestine 'conflict' - when, in reality, at the end of the day they back the Israeli settler-colonial regime to the hilt.

The problem is that this activity is, in fact, inconsistent with the big lie which 'justifies' unconditional backing for Israel. It amounts to a recognition that there is a real danger that the Israelis are guilty of war crimes. And this recognition - itself a lie, because of being a pretence of neutrality - can have the effect of opening a crack in the wall of lies.

Just a little crack, though. The state institutions, the advertising-funded media and the loyalist politicians - including the loyalist leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions - continue to spew out from day to day the big lie that anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism and that Jews are under permanent threat from it. To fight against this big lie the workers' movement needs our own media and our own political voice in the form of a unified Marxist party - in place of which we have today only an array of competing grouplets ●

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Notes

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EUROVISION

Israel's nightmare

Rewritten lyrics, canned applause and media spin could not hide the almost universal revulsion against the pending genocide in Gaza. Paul Demarty looks at the politics behind the songs

It may seem, on the face of it, strange for the Eurovision Song Contest to get swept up in global controversy.

As readers will probably be aware, the sticking point this year was - what else? - the participation of Israel, which offered a propaganda song about its suffering at the hands of Hamas. It was so guileless in its original form (title: 'October rain') that it was rejected by the Eurovision powers that be, and - after a tense standoff and the intervention of Israeli president Isaac Herzog - was rewritten to be less inflammatory (new title: 'Hurricane').

That result was not satisfactory, to put it mildly, to the thousands of Swedes who protested on Saturday night in Malmö, where the contest was held. They made such an almighty ruckus that word spread in the international media that the situation was getting out of control. Boos were drowned out in the venue itself, reportedly by canned applause that the organisers have taken to using for such purposes in true late-Soviet style (in earlier stages of the contest they were heard). It was a tough old road for Eden Golan, the Israeli entrant, to her eventual fifth place finish, the poor dear. The bigger crisis on the night was the last-minute disqualification of Dutchman Joost Klein, for some utterly artificial crisis over a backstage interaction with a journalist; he had previously made statements apparently against Israel's participation. The Dutch broadcasters - this is all, remember, a lash-up of broadcasters - declined to vote, in protest.

The recriminations continued: Israeli voices were incandescent with rage when Ukraine offered Golan *nul points* - and gave 10 to Ireland, whose at least verbal protest against Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza has been a minor bright spot in a generally bleak western political scene for all those in solidarity with the Palestinians. (The Irish contestant, Bambie Thug, has also made some lukewarm statements supporting Israel's exclusion.) Were not both Ukraine and Israel defending "western civilisation" from various Asiatic hordes? Where was the solidarity?

Political subplot

The politics has long been a fun sub-plot of this event. Towards the end of his life, Terry Wogan - who *compered* Eurovision for the BBC for many years - became notoriously sulky at the way that, for example, the Balkan countries tended to vote for each other. (Some wondered, acerbically, whether Wogan would prefer that the Balkan countries revert to their previous levels of diplomatic relations.) Russia has been effectively excluded from participation since its invasion of Ukraine.

What, exactly, is worth fighting for here? Whatever else it is, Eurovision has never been mistaken for a titanic contest between great artists (something Wagner might make an opera about). The first edition I have any great memory of is that of 1996, when the British entry was by the (Australian) singer Gina G, a cheerful Eurodance number typical of mid-90s chart trash, which I was convinced was going to win, because I was



Malmö Arena entrance: it was ordinary pop fans who were doing the booing

a rather Whiggish nine-year-old and I thought its use of computers and synths simply made it more advanced than the competition. The voters disagreed, and chose an Austrian piano-playing soul singer by the name of George Nussbaumer. As far as I am aware, Nussbaumer's subsequent career never took him to the stratosphere, still less outside the German-speaking areas of central Europe. (Gina G had a few hit singles in Britain, and is now an also-ran on the 90s nostalgia circuit.)

This is oddly typical. We have gotten used, in our time, to the format of competitive reality TV shows that produce stars, in the form of the *X-factor*, *Pop idol* or *American idol*, and so on. For a time, the winners of these contests were nailed on to top the charts the next week (usually timed, in this country, to be the last count before Christmas). Exasperation with this phenomenon created the counter-cultural Christmas number one, when in 2009 people managed to get Rage Against The Machine's swearsy leftist rap-metal anthem, 'Killing in the name', to the top. Yet no such viral grassroots campaign has ever been necessary to preserve us from Eurovision chart-toppers. It lives in its own, weird, parallel universe, which is visited from time to time by 'legitimate' pop stars, but never for long.

Culture and fun

Eurovision is a product of the European Broadcasting Union - one of the many minor lash-ups in particular industries that cropped up between the European Coal and Steel Community and then the European Economic Community. It brings together various public service broadcasters and, because

it predates the formalisation of European federalism in the EEC and later the European Union, it is not limited to the countries in formal union. Israel has been a member of the EBU, but so in fact are many countries in the Middle East and central Asia, including Turkey and Azerbaijan, which have offered Eurovision songs many times, and Lebanon (which did so briefly once, until its broadcaster was told it could not censor the Israeli performance).

Nationalism

Golan was not stepping outside the usual bounds of Eurovision content: nationalist bugbears (sanded down well enough to pass muster, according to the strictly 'apolitical' self-image of the EBU mandarins) have long had a place in these songs. Yet really what is produced is the spectacle of the big night itself. This is perhaps the only chance that, say, a random Bulgarian *chanteuse* has of impressing anyone outside her home country; but she does so in the context of a grand display of irrepressible camp. (I suspect that, if you took the names of everyone in Britain holding a Eurovision party at their house, on the one hand, and everyone who has watched more than 10 episodes of *RuPaul's drag race*, on the other, you would have essentially the same list of names twice.)

In the classic black comedy film *In Bruges*, one of the Irish hitman protagonists reluctantly agrees to allow the other to lead the next day's tourist activities: "I suppose it'll be all culture and that", he sulks. "Oh," the other replies, "I think we will strike a balance between culture and fun." That is the Eurovision way: hardcore

nationalism (culture) meets glitter, glitz and fluff (fun).

The politics is always combustible, of course: a pain in the arse for those merely trying to keep the show on the road. The fact that there is an Israeli entrant and not a Palestinian one is hardly surprising: Palestine is not a state, never mind one with a broadcaster in the EBU. The effect of wars within Europe proper - in the Balkans and more recently Ukraine - is badly destabilising. Yet it is not something like the Olympics, where we really do expect to see the world's greatest athletes competing, and so there is the *possibility* of the relevant bureaucracies tut-tutting about the 'politicisation of sport'. If we really were, *per impossibile*, looking at a Europe-wide equivalent of the contest in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, perhaps a similar anti-politics argument would make an impact. But Eurovision is candyfloss - that is the whole point. Precisely because it is itself unserious, it invites the incursions of the serious. Genocide rather kills the vibe.

It is clear, then, what states are fighting for when they politick over this avowedly lightweight event. At stake is the ability to be *normal* - to participate in a frivolous event *just as* frivolous people. It is Israel that is on the inside of this circle, and the supposed 'hateful Palestinian terrorists' on the outside. (Given the camp aspect of things, it also plays into Israel's disingenuous pinkwashing.)

Good night out

On balance, I think we can say that the Palestinian movement had a good night out in Malmö. It is true that, contrary to our hopes, nobody

pulled out in protest, and that - in the end - the thing came off without serious interruption. Nevertheless, the mere fact of a mass protest in the area tended to dominate coverage - whether by progressive types who welcomed it or rightwingers who got into a hysterical lather about 'hateful mobs'. Insofar as these events are remembered, on this occasion it will be for the *failure* to take politics off the table; for the way this most frivolous of occasions for once bore the highest possible stakes.

It goes, together with the wider protest movement, against the immolation of Gaza, of course, and even the willingness of states at the United Nations to vote in favour of Palestine in various contexts - most recently a General Assembly vote to welcome Palestine into the UN - and of the drift of world opinion, including in the heartlands of Israel's firmest backers, against what is going on. It is not a very great comfort, given the horrors being inflicted, to win the moral victory. Still, it matters: it restricts the room for manoeuvre of the wretched accomplices we have for rulers.

That goes for Eurovision and similar affairs as well. It was entirely reasonable for Isaac Herzog to get involved in the lyrical minutiae of Israel's entry. For him and his ilk, at stake was the ability to project Israel as a victim of aggression, rather than a tyrant in its own right: a brave nation of the Zelensky type, as opposed to a Putin. He justly failed.

Our view is simple: there will be no 'good, clean fun', so long as the world's hands are dirty with Palestinian blood ●

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LABOUR

Sir Keir's Tory bigot

Natalie Elphicke is welcomed in. Jeremy Corbyn and Diane Abbott are kept out. Meanwhile, the Corbynista left limps on in 57 insipid varieties, writes **Carla Roberts**

Sir Keir Starmer had big hopes for the defection of rightwing Tory MP Natalie Elphicke just after the boost of the local election results and the defection of former health secretary Dan Poulter, he orchestrated a bit of political theatre by having Elphicke cross the floor just before prime minister's questions, all in front of live cameras.

Starmer's intention was to prove to the establishment and big business once more that Labour is not just more popular than the Tories at the ballot box, but also very much a safe pair of hands. See, even a rightwinger like Elphicke now finds the Labour Party more attractive than the crazies who presided over the Brexit disaster, crashed the economy under Liz Truss and are now banking all on getting a few hundred traumatised refugees sent to Rwanda! It was also supposed to be a signal to other Tory MPs to jump the sinking ship and join Sir Keir's merry second eleven.

Alas, he picked the wrong kind of Tory. The press had a weekend of great fun after former justice secretary Robert Buckland (Tory MP for South Swindon) chose to dish the dirt on his erstwhile colleague: in 2020, she allegedly asked him to intervene on behalf of her now ex-husband, Charlie, in his sex assault trial, hoping that Buckland would be able to switch the trial to a different court and a different judge. Buckland now says she behaved "outrageously" - it was "completely inappropriate".¹

Not inappropriate enough to report it straightaway, obviously. He and the rest of his Tory chums would no doubt have continued to cover up her behaviour, had she not changed sides. This, and similar tales about her defection being due to thwarted ambition - she was not made a minister - and her ill-considered attacks on her husband's victims, are supposed to serve as a powerful warning shot to other Tory MPs, some of whom must be toying with the idea of following her example ... and perhaps prolonging their parliamentary careers. There are doubtless compromising files in the whips' office detailing all manner of indiscretions, scandals and missteps waiting to be published. (Despite that, however, rumours are circulating of other possible defectors.)

The press backlash over Elphicke somewhat overshadowed the more obvious point: while Sir Keir welcomes with open arms a particularly unpleasant rightwinger into the party, left MPs like Jeremy Corbyn and Diane Abbott remain in limbo land, having had the whip withdrawn over nonsense charges and, in Abbott's case, an admittedly stupid letter to *The Guardian*, in which she claimed that white people cannot experience racism "all their lives". Travellers, anyone? But if stupidity was a crime, the current parliament would be a very empty place indeed.

The Labour left, as far as it still exists, has been relatively outspoken over Elphicke's change of party. Zarah Sultana MP told the BBC that Elphicke was

a member of the [Euroceptic] European Research Group; she voted for Liz Truss in the leadership; she's at odds when it comes to fire and rehire; she has attacked trade unions and their activities; [she's] not great on the environment either. So, unless



We need to do more than stop them: we must replace them

she's had the biggest Damascus conversion ever, I just don't buy it.

Incompatible

Matt Wrack, general secretary of the Labour-affiliated Fire Brigades Union and, since September 2023, president of the Trades Union Congress, complains in a letter to Sir Keir (published by *The Guardian*) that the "disgraceful" MP for Dover has spoken "in support of the new anti-union laws and blamed firefighters for the deaths of three people who perished during a national strike". This is "alarming", he says,

considering that it is current Labour policy to repeal the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act, which effectively bans strike action across parts of the public sector: Labour's pledge to repeal this authoritarian legislation within 100 days of taking office, alongside the 2016 Trade Union Act, is a crucial commitment. Natalie Elphicke should never have been given the Labour whip, but these remarks further undermine the decision to accept her into the party.²

Sir Keir has since promised not to waver on this commitment. At his meeting with trade union general secretaries on May 14 he reaffirmed his pledge not to water down workers' rights. But we all know that it would not be the first time he has broken a pledge or two, nor will it be the last.

Brother Wrack thinks that Elphicke's political views make her "incompatible" with being a party member, while the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy has produced what might well be the tamest model motion in the history of the soft left: It reads, in full: "This CLP calls on the NEC to consider the party's membership criteria for the PLP to ensure they are in line with Labour values." That is it!

Members are further given 'advice':

not to mention either Jeremy or Diane when discussing this motion in local party meetings. This because the general secretary previously banned local parties from discussing any individual who is subject to the party's complaints and discipline processes. The ban is undemocratic and it is applied in a factional way. However, breaching it has led to party members being suspended. So for the present it is advisable to observe these factional

restrictions that have been imposed on local party meetings.

Real fighting talk there!

There is, of course, no definition of what such "Labour values" might be and how Elphicke's views are "incompatible" with them. Historically Labour government values have been to throw a few crumbs to the working class while promoting the interests of British capitalism at home and abroad (including, of course, fighting colonial wars against the uppity natives). However, so supine is Sir Keir, that he promises few if any crumbs when he's in government.

For example, Labour has just been outflanked on the left by 'Cruella' Braverman, who has argued for the scrapping of the two-child benefit limit, which "aggravates child poverty". No shit, Sherlock. Starmer's mini-me Wes Streeting, however, has confirmed the decision that a Labour government will *not* scrap the limit, because capitalism simply "cannot afford it".³ Meanwhile, David Lammy has praised the "misunderstood" Donald Trump; Rachel Reeves celebrates Margaret Thatcher as a "visionary leader"; etc.

Clean party

This is all designed to assure the ruling class and soft Tory voters that Sir Keir has now fully cleansed the party of the last traces of Corbynism. It is not surprising that there is very little opposition inside Labour. After all, most members with a spine have long ago been expelled and whoever remains on the left of the party seems to have no problem with keeping their mouths shut - useless.

Presumably both Kate Osamor and Andy McDonald have promised to do exactly that, which is why they both recently had the parliamentary whip restored (having been suspended over their comments on the genocide in Gaza). Shadow foreign minister David Lammy might have been sent out to demand a "pause [!] in the sale of weapons to Israel that could be used in an assault on Rafah" - after US president Biden did the same thing.⁴ But that does not mean that Labour Party members or MPs are suddenly allowed to speak out freely in support of the Palestinians. The same 'good behaviour' cannot be expected of Abbott or Corbyn, of course. They have proven themselves over many decades to be somewhat more 'unreliable', so there is little chance they will get the whip back.

While Abbott seems to be

preparing for retirement, Corbyn is, we understand, still planning on joining or leading Andrew Feinstein's semi-launched party, 'Collective' - after the general election: until then, he does not want his prospects sullied by any 'dodgy' lefties being involved. Further proof of his lack of leadership skills, if any were needed.

What's left

Labour's candidate selection process is now under way for Islington North, Corbyn's seat.⁵ That will put pressure on him to confirm very soon that he will, as expected, run as an independent candidate.

Collective, incidentally, has formed a "political pact" with 14 other groups "in order to stand a single candidate for each electoral seat". It seems to be working quite closely with the Reliance Party ("Rely on us. We stand for you") and Assemble - the latest project by Roger Hallam, founder of Extinction Rebellion. Collective's website features two lists: one of eleven candidates supported by Collective (including Andrew Feinstein and "should he stand", Jeremy Corbyn); and a list of another 100 'independent' candidates supported by a variety of local campaigns and groups. However, it looks like not everybody is playing ball. Only six candidates of the Workers' Party (including George Galloway, Chris Williamson and Craig Murray) are listed, and two candidates standing for Tusc. The left cannot even get together for a non-aggression pact, it seems - underwhelming as this one is.

In the meantime, the left outside of Labour is tying itself into ever smaller knots. Two new 'organisations' have emerged in the last few weeks - joining the myriad of existing Corbynista grouplets and campaigns.

There is, firstly, the Reliance Party, based mainly in the West Midlands and led by Kamel Hawwash, vice-chair of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, who is running against shadow veterans minister Steve McCabe (chairman of Labour Friends of Israel) in Birmingham Selly Oak.⁶

Then there is Laura Pidcock, former MP for North West Durham. She is involved in the 'Rise Movement', which was launched on May Day this year and "re-commits itself to the pursuit of working class liberation, socialism and world peace".⁷ Its short programme is somewhat to the left of the countless other Corbynistas, but its structure and internal democracy are much more opaque.

A number of self-declared Marxists and socialists have been meeting in secret for 18 months, we are told, working out Rise's programme, constitution and membership criteria: just like Talking About Socialism, it wants to build a "mass working class party" for socialism, but does not allow members of other political organisations to get involved, because "we all know they can behave in a sectarian manner". Differences of opinion "are allowed, but not for public consumption - that's counterproductive".

The comrades want to go "straight to the working class" and ignore the rest of the organised left - yet another group based on anti-sectarian sectarianism, in other words. And just like the new and shiny Revolutionary Communist Party (aka Socialist Appeal), Counterfire, RS21, the SWP, the Socialist Party in England and Wales and similar groups who think

they are 'it', these sects are likely to end up as a short footnote in history (if that).

Despite the mass demonstrations in support of the Palestinians and the obvious discrepancy that the onslaught on Gaza has revealed between the vast majority of the population and the warmongering ruling class, the left in Britain is weaker than it has been for decades. The defeat of the Corbyn movement (in large part self-inflicted) has demoralised many - and given others the idea that all they have to do is put up a version of Corbyn's reformist programme and the masses will come flocking.

Cue in to Momentum, the most well-known of the pro-Corbyn groups. Co-chair Hilary Schan has just resigned from her position, which will probably lead to the overdue collapse of the organisation founded by the born-again Zionist, Jon Lansman. Schan wants to "campaign for the Green Party and independent candidates"⁸ as part of turncoat Owen Jones' campaign, 'We Deserve Better'. We certainly do!

General election

Communists will judge tactically who to support in the forthcoming general election - but things look admittedly dire. Where left Labour candidates are allowed to stand - Zarah Sultana, for example - communists should support them critically, while at the same time proposing the immediate demands they *should* be fighting for: stop arms sales to Israel, for example, plus the ditching of the Rwanda scheme and an end to all immigration controls.

Millions of working class people will be looking forward to the end of the Tory government. Rather than moralistically abstaining from any contact with the Labour Party - which is still a bourgeois workers' party, due to the affiliation of the major unions - communists should seek an active and principled engagement.

The same goes for left candidates standing, for example: on a platform of opposition to Israel's genocide; as part of George Galloway's Workers' Party; as candidates for the Socialist Party's Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition; or on any other socialist or communist platform. Where such candidates stand against each other (which, after Galloway's announcement to stand more than 500 candidates, is now likely), communists should decide according to the programme and the electoral prospects of the candidates.

Should George Galloway stand again in Rochdale, for example, we certainly would call for a vote for him, despite all our criticisms. His election was a victory for the pro-Palestine solidarity campaign, not for his reactionary views on abortion, immigration or trans and gay rights. In other places, a vote for Tusc might be the better call. None of them, we should say, are the kind of principled, partyist, anti-imperialist, Marxist alternative we so desperately need. ●

Notes

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IMMIGRATION

Toxic red-brown rhetoric

Mass migration is causing political instability across the whole world. Far-right support grows in leaps and bounds and the tailist left eagerly follows. But, asks Daniel Lazare, why are huge numbers of people moving in the first place?

Anne McShane reported last week that in Ireland “scaremongering over asylum-seekers has intensified as never before”.¹ Carla Roberts quoted pseudo-leftist George Galloway in the same issue as warning that mass migration in Britain “will break society into identity wars and tribalism, no matter how much we would like it to be otherwise”.²

In Germany, according to Paul Demarty, the red-brown Sahra Wagenknecht says that women in her Bundestag group “are happy to live in a country that has by and large overcome patriarchy, and they don’t want to see it being reintroduced through the backdoor” by Muslim immigrants.³ And in the United States, of course, I also noted last week that Donald Trump is vowing to use the military to round up 11 million illegal immigrants, mostly from Central and South America, if elected in November.⁴

The picture is thus clear. Voters in growing numbers see immigration as little less than an inundation. Not only do they want it to stop, but many want to throw it in reverse via mass expulsions.

But what nobody is talking about is the reason for mass migration in the first place. If the phenomenon is growing in leaps and bounds, it is not because millions of third world residents have developed a sudden hankering to see other parts of the world. Rather, it is because social breakdown leaves them no choice but to pack up and leave.

A half century ago, the number of forcibly displaced people stood at just 3.5 million, according to UN estimates. Such numbers bounced around over the next two or three decades, as events like the Soviet incursion into Afghanistan, the 1990-91 Gulf War and the fratricidal slaughter in Rwanda sent millions fleeing for their lives. But they still remained at a relatively manageable 19.2 million as of the year 2000.

That was less than 0.3% of the global population at the time - or roughly one person in 345. But then the numbers began to climb in the wake of the 2008 financial meltdown. They reached 41 million in 2013 and 73 million five years later. Thanks to Covid-19, the numbers rose even more, hitting 90 million in 2020, 97 million in 2021, 132 million in 2022, and 134.2 million in 2023.⁵ Worldwide, that means that one person in 74 is now forcibly displaced, a 240% increase over the course of a decade. If the trend continues, the ratio will reach one person in 31 by the year 2033.

Hundreds of millions more people will find themselves in camps and shantytowns or on leaky boats heading for European shores. The nation-state system already functions as a multi-layered defence structure. Borders are loose and porous in the third world, which is why many of the five million people fleeing economic collapse in Venezuela have been able to find refuge in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru or why millions more fleeing war and breakdown in Afghanistan and Syria have made their way to Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq and Turkey.⁶

But defences are far stronger around the EU, Australia, Japan, Israel (which has seen a significant African influx) and the US. And they will grow stronger still, as the migratory wave grows and host-country resistance surges in response. Volatility - already



US-Mexican border: yet people are driven to cross

at dangerous levels in countries like Ireland, Britain and the US - will become even worse. The same goes for repression, authoritarianism, racism and xenophobia - they will increase too.

Causes

Needless to say, this is bad news for social democrats eager for passions to cool and populations to stabilise, so they can get on with the business of incremental reform. But it is manna from heaven for ultra-rightists banking on a rising tide of resentment and alarm. Liberals may sneer at the ‘great replacement theory’ - the idea that international elites are conspiring to bring in millions of dark-skinned poor people for the sole purpose of outnumbering local whites. But it will seem more plausible rather than less, as migration swells and birth rates in advanced capitalist states continue to plummet due to rising living costs.

Yes, ‘they’ (ie, Jews, woke liberals, Marxists, feminists, etc) really are out to replace ‘us’ (ie, hard-pressed Irish, Brits or Germans). Or so it will seem, no matter how much well-heeled intellectuals sneer at the unwashed masses for entertaining such notions. Regardless of the details, the politics of migration are destined to grow bumpier and bumpier.

But if migration is a key mover, what is the cause of migration itself? The United Nations breaks down the process into three parts: war and violence; socio-economic breakdown; natural disasters and climate change. But such categories are misleading, because they leave out how they feed into one another and drive chaos to greater and greater heights. Last September’s massive flooding in Derna - a regional centre of 90,000 people in eastern Libya - was a textbook example of how such negative symbiosis works. It began when super-storm Daniel - a Mediterranean hurricane or ‘medicane’ driven to new extremes by climate change - unleashed millions of gallons on poorly maintained local dams weakened by more than a decade of anarchy and civil war. More than 10,000 lives were lost when the dams gave way and thousands more made homeless.⁷ War, climate change

and economic decay all played a role.

Such neat categorisation leaves something else out too: the larger political forces shaping the general process. Given America’s role in all too many third world disasters and wars, it is clear where the responsibility lies. US imperialism, simply put, is setting in motion forces that it now seeks to combat with ever growing violence and repression. It is throwing itself into crisis in order to drive itself further and further to the right.

The three largest sources of international refugees, according to the UN Refugee Agency, are Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine - countries in which the USA helped fan the flames of war, with uniformly disastrous results. The story is even clearer in terms of the gang violence that put 121,000 Haitians to flight in 2022 - along with 73,000 Salvadorans, according to the same UN data. Gang violence did not reach unprecedented heights because Central and South Americans suddenly turned trigger-happy. It rose instead because the international drug war - a prime US obsession for more than half a century - has caused a black market to spread over the region as a whole. Illegal markets are violent by definition, because they leave participants with no way of settling business disputes other than at the point of a gun. But, when astronomic sums are at stake - a 2014 study put the international drug trade at \$652 billion - amid a general climate of poverty and desperation, they grow more violent still.⁸

This is why Haiti, which emerged as a major drug transshipment centre beginning in the 1990s, is now in a state of collapse, as drug gangs run riot and government officials cower in fear. It is why Ecuadoreans voted overwhelmingly last month for military patrols, stepped-up penalties and other emergency measures to deal with their own out-of-control drug trade, and why Salvadoran president Nayib Bukele has acquired near-dictatorial powers after imprisoning over one percent of the population on drug-related charges.⁹ It is the same thing that happened in Chicago and Detroit, when prohibition led to a vast black market for bootleg alcohol in the 1920s. But it is on a far

more stupendous scale. As tough as Al Capone may have been, he would not have lasted a second against such super-predators as Los Zetas or the Sinaloa and Medellin cartels.

America also bears a high degree of responsibility for the Islamist chaos that has displaced nearly 800,000 people in the Sahel, according to the western-funded Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre in Geneva.¹⁰ As much as America claims to combat jihadi terror, it was US-Nato intervention in Libya in 2011 that plunged the country into chaos by toppling strong man Muammar Gaddafi and letting loose a flood of military weaponry that has since fuelled countless marauding bands across the Sahara’s southern reaches. Of course, it was also the US-Saudi alliance that midwifed jihadism in the 1980s by funding holy war in Afghanistan. And it was the oil-based rentier capitalism of the Saudis and other Persian Gulf monarchies that allow them to pay for thousands of jihadis to battle the Soviets before going on to become foot soldiers for Islamic State and al Qa’eda (which the oil monarchies also supported to one extent or another).

If US imperialism causes the lion to lay down with the lamb over the next decade, the problem may well go away. Otherwise, it will continue to grow, as old wars ignite new ones and havoc spreads. As for climate change, that will also intensify, as the US leads the world in doubling down on oil and gas production.

Our response

So anti-refugee riots in Dublin and surging far-right poll numbers in Germany are merely one aspect of a complex international breakdown due to capitalist decay and imperial aggression. For socialists, there is only one possible response: proletarian internationalism. As Anne McShane put it last week,

The challenge for the left is to demand full citizenship rights for all migrants and take up the struggle, so that they become part of our movement - join trade unions and working class political parties and fight in a united way for

the interests of our class.

Quite right - except that *we* must join *their* movement too, so as to combine the various elements all the more effectively.

For people like Wagenknecht and Galloway, the upshot will meanwhile be to throw the dead-end nature of red-brown politics into stark relief. A couple of months ago, Galloway went on an extended rant on his TV talk show about

65,000 people, uncharted, undocumented, unvetted ... who are now being put up in at least three-star hotels, sometimes a little better even than that, at the expense of the public, potentially forever more, when our forces cannot interdict a single one of the boats bringing illegal migrants ...¹¹

Dangerous as such rhetoric is now, what happens when the tide rises even more? What will Galloway do then - rant even more furiously about the need for stepped-up interdiction? How will Wagenknecht respond? In a recent interview, she said of the refugee problem that “it’s essential that the scale of it doesn’t get out of hand and that sudden surges of migration are kept in check”.¹²

But keeping migration “in check” is utopian at a time when neocolonial storms are raging. Sudden surges will become more common rather than less, and, the more Wagenknecht tries to stop them, the more she will end up driving herself into the arms of an increasingly repressive bourgeois state. Instead of nationalism or protectionism, the only viable socialist response is to mobilise the international working class against the capitalist decay that fuels such crises to begin with.

Otherwise, we all might as well pack up and go home. While socialism undoubtedly faces a rocky path in the near term, stepped-up working class unity represents the only possible solution down the road. The journey will not be easy, but there is no alternative, as dear old Maggie Thatcher used to say. Workers stand not only to lose their chains as a consequence, but the wars, bankruptcies and disasters forcing them to set out across treacherous terrain.

They still have a world to win, as in 1848, but one that is many times more populous and productive ●

Notes

1. ‘Migrants as a means of diversion’ *Weekly Worker* May 9: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1490/migrants-as-a-means-of-diversion.
2. ‘Third period Bennism’ *Weekly Worker* May 9: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1490/third-period-bennism.
3. ‘Interview with an opportunist’ *Weekly Worker* May 9: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1490/interview-with-an-opportunist.
4. ‘Egging on the mob’ *Weekly Worker* May 9: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1490/egging-on-the-mob.
5. www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics.
6. www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2022.
7. yaleclimateconnections.org/2023/09/the-libya-floods-a-climate-and-infrastructure-catastrophe.
8. See ‘Why is there a drug war?’ *Weekly Worker* February 8: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1477/why-is-there-a-drug-war.
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DEBATE



Marching towards what solution?

Steve Freeman gives a Menshevik twist to the old PLO demand for a single capitalist Palestinian state by making the case for a single capitalist federal republic. The perspective of working class rule and socialism is denounced as ultra-leftism

The February 29 debate held by the Labour Left Alliance and reported in the *Weekly Worker* identified four proposals for peace in Israel-Palestine ('Thinking beyond ceasefires', March 21).¹ Carl Stevens reported on the arguments for 'one democratic Palestine' (ODP), as proposed by Tony Greenstein; Adam Keller's case for two states (TS); Moshé Machover proposing a Middle East socialist solution (MES); and the Republican Labour Education Forum's position paper for a federal republic of Israel-Palestine (FR).

Then on May 2 Moshé Machover restated his case and explained it further.² In the first part of this article I will review the issues from the original debate before taking up the arguments in his article.

The present war in Gaza and the West Bank seems to have two possible outcomes. The first is more massacres, ethnic cleansing and genocide to complete the Zionist plan for one Israeli state 'from the river to the sea'. The second is a US-led two-state 'solution' supported by the UK, the EU and the United Nations. These are not necessarily opposed. Politics may deliver some combination.

At the LLA meeting Adam Keller

(TS) made a left case for a two-state solution based on 'realism' - accepting the existing balance of power between the military might of the US and Israel, the neighbouring Arab states and the Palestinian resistance. The other three positions for 'one Palestine', 'Middle East socialism' and a 'federal republic' all seem unrealistic or unlikely. However, this conclusion is drawn from a simple extrapolation from the present.

Moshé rightly criticises Tony Greenstein's attitude to the Israeli working class as restricted to present-day consciousness. He says: "Tony's dismissal of the Israeli working class ... is derived from rigid (non-dialectical) thinking that assumes that what *is* is permanent and unchangeable". Science is not simply extrapolation from the present; it has to uncover contradictions that open up possibilities for a different future.

The present war in Gaza and the West Bank is a deep existential crisis for the Palestinian and Israeli people. We cannot rule out sharp turns, unexpected events and evolution in new directions - or even revolutions. The armed uprising on October 7 was an unexpected, even if predictable, turn of events. The current crisis

is so deep that it may yet throw up other seemingly unlikely or more 'unrealistic' options. This is why all approaches should be considered on their merits and not just the illusion of two states.

Republicanism

The case for a secular federal republic (one state, two nations) is based on the politics of working class republicanism. This supports the struggle of the working class for democracy, unity and a democratic secular republic. It is an internationalist, not nationalist, ideology. It addresses the interests of working people within the national question of all nations. It opposes all nationalist ideologies, whilst making a distinction between reactionary-conservative and revolutionary-democratic nationalism.

Working class republicanism opposes Zionism and the Jewish republic of Israel as a reactionary form of nationalism, which depends on the oppression of the Palestinian people. In recognising the Palestinian people as an oppressed nation, it supports their fight for freedom, democracy and justice. However, working class republicanism does not support the ideology or programme of Palestinian

nationalism and makes the central democratic demand for the unity of the Israeli-Palestinian working class.

Working class republicanism recognises that the struggle for freedom and democracy in Israel-Palestine is not confined to the territory 'from the river to the sea'. It directly or indirectly involves working class and popular struggles for freedom and democracy in Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Iran, etc, and in the US, EU and the United Kingdom. The emphasis placed on the fight for democracy and working class unity in Israel-Palestine does not reduce the importance of wider regional and international struggles (emphasised, for example, by the MES position).

The proposals, 'Two states' and 'One democratic Palestine', are based on nationalism. Zionist nationalism justified the partition of British Palestine and the continuation and extension of the Zionist state. Left Zionism supports a Zionist state through the TS 'solution'. Adam said he is not a Zionist, yet he supports two states. According to Carl in his *Weekly Worker* article,

Joe Biden is taking up a two-state solution, Adam stated, but he did not know if the US president can

be trusted on this. In his view the only practical solution is two states: any other solution might be nicer or more just or beautiful, but it is not possible to implement it.

Palestinian nationalism demands one state for Palestine. Both the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Hamas sought to restore one Palestine until the historic compromise made by the PLO to accept two states. A strand of Palestinian secular nationalism has continued to demand the dissolution of the Israeli nation into one Palestinian state. This is not based on the interests of the unity of Israeli-Palestinian working class and the struggle for a democratic republic, yet many socialists in England support Palestinian nationalism.

Moshé's case for 'Middle East socialism' (MES) expresses the idea of an international socialism. He rejects the national programme of Zionism (two states), Palestinian nationalism and working class republicanism. He says the answer cannot be "confined to the box of Israel-Palestine" any more than the working class fits into a national box. However, this truth does not negate the idea that the working class within both nations must become the leader of the struggle for

republican democracy. A republican (national minimum) programme is needed to unite the working class imprisoned in this box and serve their common democratic interests.

The international working class - in Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, the rest of the Middle East, the UK and the US, etc - supports the struggle for democracy in Israel-Palestine. Across the world the working class has been taking to the streets in mass popular protests. This struggle is not confined to the box of the Middle East, not least because of the role of the US. The fact that Biden is facing an election with a pro-Palestinian movement and Arab voters in key US states is making a difference.

The MES case provides an international perspective and is therefore a useful reminder or corrective. A democratic revolution that overturns the Egyptian military or the Jordanian monarchy would transform the balance of forces in the struggle between democracy and fascism. A democratic revolution in the US would be a fatal blow to Zionism. Therefore an international perspective should not be confined to the Middle East region, where US imperialism - diplomatic, financial and military - is the dominant force.

The difference between working class republicanism and MES is not about the role of the international working class - or even that a democratic revolution in Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon or the US would be a game-changer (there is no doubt that democratic revolutions would radically shift the balance of forces). Moshé goes further than the overthrow of Middle Eastern autocracy. He makes the abolition of capitalism in the Middle East a condition for the Hebrew working class to reject Zionism. It is a very high bar indeed.

It is not internationalism that makes the MES position so restrictive. It veers into ultra-leftism, because it has no political programme for the Israeli-Palestinian working class. It sets international socialism against the national democratic struggle and lingers the Hebrew working class with a passive 'wait and see' politics. A national programme makes the ambition of fighting for the unity of Israeli and Palestinian workers central. It is not that Moshé simply ignores the national dimension: rather he adopts a limited programme of minimum conditions, not a minimum programme.

Achievable

Working class republicanism makes the democratic secular republic the central plank of a programme of achievable reforms. This was called the minimum programme in the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. In the case of Israel-Palestine, a minimum programme would recognise two nations 'between the river and the sea' in the demand for a federal republic (one state and two nations). The debate between TS, ODP and the federal republic is in essence a debate over the republican minimum programme. 'Two states' and 'One Palestine' both avoid the demand for a 'democratic secular republic' for nationalist-political, not linguistic, reasons.

Moshé appears to have rejected the minimum republican programme for Israel-Palestine and substituted for it a Middle Eastern socialist programme. Instead of a minimum republican programme he sets out minimum conditions, which are almost the same thing. It is as if the minimum programme was expelled from the front door only to sneak in again via the back door. He asks: "What are the minimum conditions that a benign and equitable solution must satisfy?" We ask: "What is the minimum programme for working class democracy?"

Moshé identifies these minimum conditions as "equal rights for all and national rights" and adds: "The right of return is a minimum requirement recognised under international law." He dismisses the minimum programme as a "blueprint", when in fact it is merely a more extensive set of minimum conditions that rise to the level of a democratic secular republic. For Israel this means and can only mean a deZionised republic. This must be a minimum condition, regardless of whether a 'democratic secular Israel' can form a federal republic with the Palestinian people.

Adam identifies one minimum condition for Israel - ending the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank. Tony (DP) says: "It is a question of equality, not national rights. They (Israelis) do have certain national attributes such as a language and this could be accommodated in a 'constitutional settlement'." This is the first time that Tony mentions the importance of a 'constitution' (ie, law). Normally he scorns all 'constitutionalism', because political laws would be unnecessary under socialism and a waste of time under capitalism.

One of the central questions in this republican minimum programme is about nations. Should the programme identify one nation or two? Three of the four positions (TS, MES and FR) recognise two nations - one described as Israeli or Hebrew and the other as Palestinian. The terms, 'Hebrew' and 'Israeli', are not the same, but are different ways of describing one of the contending nations - I will examine the differences between them later.

Adam (TS) defended the idea that Israel is a nation. He argued, states Carl, that:

Nations created by conquest - like America, Australia, New Zealand, Canada - are still nations. Adam says that nobody denies that America is a nation and Israel is a nation in a same way. There are seven million people in Israel and they have as much right to exist as a nation as those in any other settler-colonial state.

Moshé recognises there are two nations that he identifies as Hebrew and Palestinian. He adds that Zionist colonisation is based on the displacement of the indigenous population (like Australia, the US and Canada). Hence he says there is a Hebrew nation established through colonisation.

Tony's ODP is the only position that rejects the idea of an Israeli or Hebrew nation. Hence he says: "It is a question of equality, not national rights. [Israelis] do have certain national attributes, such as a common language". This is why he is forced to conjure up a "constitutional settlement" as something to pacify or placate Israelis concerned about the implications of losing their national identity and being remade as Palestinians.

Working class republicanism (FR) makes equality between the two nations a political demand to end the relationship between oppressor and oppressed nations. Neither 'two states' nor 'one democratic Palestine' accepts equality between nations. TS proposes a different relationship between nations, but not equality. ODP does not support equality, because it denies the Israeli nation equal status.

Moshé (MES) makes equality between nations one of his minimum conditions. The case for a federal republic is based on equality between nations, backed by the constitutional law of one federal state, which includes the right to self-determination. It is the only position that meets Moshé's minimum conditions, as he recognised in his comment on the federal republic.

Moshé draws out the logic from

Tony's denial of the existence of an Israeli-Hebrew nation. He says: "No nation will accept an unequal status that leads to a state of permanent conflict and war. Underdogs will not accept their role." Two nations will exist in a permanent state of war if one denies the other the right to exist - and oppresses it and creates national resistance. Moshé rightly says that Tony's Palestinian 'one state for one nation' is a "dangerous illusion", because "it has to be done by brute force against the Israeli people". He concludes, "This will end very badly. If one state was possible, it could only be kept in existence by constant repression. The Hebrew nation would not accept a subordinate position and the removal of national rights."

A major difference between the four positions concerns the role of the working class as the driving force for democratic change. Working class republicanism identifies the international working class as the agency for change. Here we are dealing with the crisis facing the two nations of Israel and Palestine. The case for a federal republic is based on the struggle to unite the 'Israeli-Palestinian' working class as the only class able to act as the vanguard of the struggle for democracy.

Working class

The case for ODP is not based on the Israeli-Palestinian working class. Tony says: "... the working class is a revolutionary class in some circumstances and not in the case of a settler-colonial state like Israel. Then the working class becomes the most reactionary." Here he is speaking only about the Hebrew part of Israeli-Palestinian workers. He compares the situation with the white working class in South Africa or the southern working class in the USA. He argues that believing the working class can play a revolutionary role in social change is failing to understand the distinction between the working class 'in itself' and 'for itself'. But this gap in class-consciousness reveals a gap in Tony's thinking. He has not understood that the struggle of the working class for democracy is about the self-transformation from a class 'in itself' and 'for itself'.

The TS solution does not identify the working class as the agency of change, but looks to US imperialism to force the Zionist state to concede two states. By contrast the MES case looks to the working class in Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, etc as the driving force for revolution against their own regimes. This Arab revolution should inspire the Hebrew part of the Israeli working class to abandon Zionism.

Moshé summarises the contradiction over the role of the working class. He says: "The overthrow of Zionism is only possible with the participation of the Israeli working class." (The Israeli-Palestinian working class must be seen not simply as a participant, but the leader of all classes.) However, he says the Israeli working class has "no interest in overthrowing Zionism" - here he equates 'Israeli' with 'Hebrew' and this is surely Zionism?

He asks: "What would the Israeli working class have to gain if they lost their privileged position?" The question is, what would the Israeli working class gain if the Hebrew section lost its privileges over Arab-Israeli workers. The answer is that a united Israeli working class (Hebrew and Palestinian Israelis) would be stronger and extract more 'privileges' from the capitalist class. These would be greater and more universal than divisive racial 'advantages', which are the false promise of Zionism. The Hebrew working class is exploited, but has national privileges - which are insecure because of capitalist exploitation. The class struggle in

Israel-Palestine does not wait for a socialist Middle East to convince the Hebrew working class to ditch Zionism.

The case for a federal republic is the only position based on the leadership of the Israeli-Palestinian working class. Those who have written off the Hebrew section of this working class 'inside the box' do so on the grounds that the settler-colonial state has bought off the Hebrew working class. But 20% of Israeli workers are Arab-Palestinians. This can be seen as a version of the theory of the aristocracy of labour, in which surplus wealth 'buys off' a section of the class and renders it conservative. (This difference requires further discussion.)

Two nations

In his article, 'One-state, two-state illusions', Moshé explains again the fundamental pillars of his case and in doing so helps us to clarify the federal republican case. First the argument over states (one or two) is an attempt to put the cart before the horse. The 'states' are framed as 'one Zionist state', 'one Palestinian state' or a Zionist-Palestinian 'two states'. Working class republicanism rejects all three options on principle. We start from nations, not states. Trying to decide, in the first instance, the number of states is like trying to build a house without foundations.

In recognising two nations, we include the right of nations to self-determination, which means two nations cannot be forced into one state. Hence the federal republic is not the imposition of one state on two nations, but the democratic agreement between citizen-voters for one state, with the constitutional right to leave. Working class republicanism is focused on the existence of two nations and the unity of the working class of both of them.

Zionism created two nations in the territory of Israel-Palestine (ie, formerly British Palestine). Over the decades since 1948 two nations - an oppressor and a resistance nation - have been forged in struggle. This was the consequence of a Zionist settler-colonial project supported by imperialism. Moshé's analysis of Zionist settler-colonisation draws out unique aspects of Israel-Palestine, "where both settlers and the indigenous people formed new nations". He says this is "the only case in which not only the settlers form a new settler nation (as in Australia, North America and so on), but where the indigenous people also constitute a single nation".

In addition, unlike early primitive colonisation (Australia, United States, South Africa, etc), this Zionist colonisation is taking place in a world of advanced or late capitalism. This is not a fight over land between farmers with Gatling guns and nomads with spears or bows and arrows. Zionists expropriated indigenous land by ethnic cleansing and mass murder. The unintended consequence of this has been to expand the capital-wage labour economy. In this, Zionism is building up its own gravedigger in the Israeli-Palestinian working class and its proletarian allies in the rest of the Middle East and the imperialist centres like the US and UK.

In a capitalist world, whether the border between the two nations divides the land 50:50 or even 80:20 is less significant for the working class than whether the border is 'open' for capital, and labour can move freely across it. In a single market the economic border is dissolved or becomes irrelevant, whether there are two states or one. Farmers need land and access to markets, but workers need access to jobs in the whole Israel-Palestinian territory.

The minimum conditions must include the recognition of two

nations, full equality between nations, their right to self-determination, the free movement of workers between territories, the right of return, the freeing of all political prisoners and compensation for victims of Zionism. These are best achieved within an overarching political-constitutional peace treaty of a democratic, secular, federal republic. This is the best solution for the working class, which does not put the abolition of international capitalism as a precondition.

One issue is how we understand the Israeli nation. This is not something fixed, but evolving through the class struggle. The Zionists have defined Israel as the nation-state of the Jews. This implies that American Jews are not really Americans, but Israelis in disguise. Yet the invention of Israel has changed this and made a distinction between Hebrews and Jews. An American Jew may identify as Jewish, but she is not a Hebrew.

At the same time we must make a distinction between Hebrews and Israelis. Twenty percent of Israelis are Arab Palestinians - imagine if we defined the English as white Protestants, so that black and ethnic minority citizens living in England were excluded from being identified as English by culture and law.

As republicans, we recognise that an Israeli nation has come into being over decades and that there must be complete equality between all citizens - between the Hebrew majority and the Palestinian minority. Hence the official ideology of Israel as a Zionist state of all Jews has to be overthrown and replaced by a democratic secular republic. It implies a democratic cultural revolution in the laws and values of Israeli society. These values are found in the history of the Jewish people fighting for freedom and democracy.

When we claim the Israeli working class is capable of leading the struggle for democracy inside Israel, we are speaking of Israelis as both Hebrew and Palestinian workers. The 20% of the Israeli working class are Arab-Palestinians - oppressed, not privileged - and cannot be relied upon by the Zionists. We cannot write off the Israeli working class by the simple expedient of equating it with Hebrews. In any case many Hebrew workers are not materially privileged, even if Zionism ideologically convinces them otherwise.

In some ways the Palestinian nation is a mirror of the Israeli nation - containing, as its does, a Palestinian-Arab majority and a Hebrew settler minority. At present these settlers are privileged in relation to Palestinian Arabs, because they have rights guaranteed by the Israeli Defence Forces and the Israeli courts. In any constitutional-peace treaty, Hebrews living in Palestine (ie, West Bank/Gaza/East Jerusalem) will have equal rights, not superior rights.

No doubt some Hebrews would return to Israel, but some would remain, provided they felt safe and secure. The issue of occupied land would have to be resolved by restoring land rights to Palestinian Arabs and in some cases providing generous compensation.

The issue of equal rights applies between the two nations of Israel and Palestine - and *within* both nations. A federal republic provides the most obvious means of securing democracy, peace and security for all its citizens ●

Notes

1. 'Thinking beyond ceasefires' *Weekly Worker* March 21: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1483/thinking-beyond-cessfires.
2. 'One-state, two-state illusions' *Weekly Worker* May 2: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1489/one-state-two-state-illusions.
3. 'Thinking beyond ceasefires' *Weekly Worker* March 21: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1483/thinking-beyond-cessfires.

REVIEWS

Breaking free of their mindset

Percival Everett James, Mantle (panmacmillan.com) 2024, pp320, £20

In 1884 US humourist Mark Twain published his novel, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, but he was not the first to write about American youth. Louisa May Alcott had brought out *Little women* in 1868, where four young girls face issues of love and death, and attitudes to the Europe that dominates their imaginations, just like the male characters in Twain's novel.

Twain's book went on to sell across the world and be translated into languages from French to Lithuanian. Ernest Hemingway said that "all American writing come from [this] one book by Mark Twain", while F Scott Fitzgerald remarked that Twain "was the first to look back at the republic from the perspective of the west". The book became a comedy classic with its vernacular exuberance: it reminds this reader of certain film westerns with their wild 19th century towns without squire or parson.

The first objections to the text came on the grounds of gentility, from Boston. The writing was judged too rough and naughty for well-brought-up children. More recently, criticism has been about the fact that so many pages display the epithet, 'nigger', while Jim, a runaway slave, is portrayed as a slow and bug-eyed figure - a characterisation that seemed to have informed most of later movie stereotypes, as quoted on YouTube in 'Blackface Montage from Spike Lee's *Bamboozled*'.¹

Author and professor of English Percival Everett has written over 30 books, won several awards and been up for the Booker and a Pulitzer. His great-grandfather was Jewish and married a formerly enslaved woman. The film *American fiction* was based on Everett's novel *Erasure* (2021) about an African-American professor who writes a satire of stereotypical 'black' books. Now Everett has written his own version of the Huck and Jim story. But what are we expecting? Is it just for readers interested in cotton field slavery and blackface minstrelsy? Does it offer us a slave superhero who massacres his "enemy" (*Django unchained*) or marries them (*Bridgerton*)? Is it obligingly 'woke'?

Twain composed *Huck Finn* as the first-person narrative of a boy brought up in the slave-owning society along the Mississippi, who connects up with Jim, the runaway slave - both of them escaping cruel masters. (With Huck it is his drunken father). However, during their journey Huck finds himself violating the ethic of a good southern boy by not wanting to give Jim up to his pursuers.

He knows he is 'immoral' in helping a slave escape his legal owner, but he decides he would rather be condemned as a bad boy or even a criminal than betray the man who has become his comrade. For Everett, on the other hand, although he has the two escaping for the same reasons, it is Jim who narrates the book and whose thoughts we hear - and whom we overhear in private conversation without Huck. In Twain's novel Jim says things like "Is Frenchman a man? Well, den! Dad blame it, why doan' he talk like a man? You answer me dat!"² Jim is not unknowledgeable though: he can tell when someone



Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: illustration by EW Kemble 'Jim and ghost' (1884)

is dead or when it is going to rain. He can sense danger and it is not just panic. For his part, Everett does not remove the dialect, but he shows it in a different light - one essential to the point of the novel.

His James starts from the same premise as Twain's, but the novel form allows us to appreciate the other side of the slave, inside his mind and in like company, that is hidden from the owners class. Jim is even shown teaching his children how they have to address masters and clients. For example, if there's a fire, you don't say, "Fire, fire", but "Lawdy, missum, Looky dere." That is because the master class has to "name the trouble", to feel in control and know everything.² Have you ever reassured your boss or said the right words to please those in power? This is not just cotton-field subordination - it is universal alienation.³

Control

As in slave Frederick Douglass's memoir,⁴ Jim has also learnt to read. In his position he takes advantage of using his employer's library at night. On his hazardous journey with Huck he then dreams of talking to Enlightenment writers Voltaire and John Locke.

These were figures who supposedly believed in universal equality, but also accepted that people were still innately different enough to allow superiority by the colonial powers. As Locke put it, indigenous peoples in the Americas had not "mixed" their labour with the earth: they were mainly hunters rather than farmers, and so were "savages".⁵ 'Social backwardness' - that is, lack of property ownership - was every bit as effective an excuse for imperialism as colour or biology. It took post-Enlightenment philosophers like Feuerbach and

Marx to make the issue one of control of your life - criticising the idea that sacred notions, invented by humans, should hold sway over anybody, workers or masters.

Everett's plot soon departs from Twain's original. In his 'adventures', Jim has to learn things. It is painful, his education has been poor, but out of necessity he learns the way to do things. He becomes a blacksmith and, while singing in the forge, is 'bought' by a minstrel show. He eventually meets up again with Huck and actually saves him from drowning rather than another slave. Now they are closer than ever before and they discuss the US civil war that has just begun. Jim reveals the diction of his 'private' speech and the boy is confirmed in his respect for his fellow escapee.

Huck decides to go north to join up for the union - although he does not fancy taking orders. Jim tells Huck that the boy can be anything he wants, but we are aware that this is only because Huck can pass as one of the owning class. Jim, however, must go and free his family. He takes the pistol he has learnt to use and, along the way, meets other slaves who join him to help out. Individual liberation relies on solidarity.

Much as I would have liked Everett to deal with the last few chapters in Twain, I see the discussion of who has the means to be 'anything they like' as an effective substitute. In Twain, Jim is captured and chained up to be sold again. However, when Huck wants to free him, the 'good boy', Tom Sawyer, refuses to help unless it is done the way 'the authorities' have it - as in European adventure books,⁶ like Walter Scott. This section was presumably done for humour, but goes on too long: readers can get the point soon enough that Sawyer is fetishising

fiction from hegemonic Europe. Of course, Jim's feelings and thoughts about the matter are dismissed by the boys and the book.

At last, in Everett, the runaway James finds his family at a farm. A cornfield is set on fire as a diversion. This freeing of the slaves is not done by a desperate mob, but by a tactical united front organised by those who know injustice.

By writing in the novel form, Everett uses the revelation of a narrator's thoughts and conversations to mark the

difference between reassuring the boss and breaking free of their mindset. That is why this is a tale for everybody ●

Mike Belbin

Notes

1. www.youtube.com/watch?v=C45g3YP7JOK.
2. M Twain *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.
3. K Marx, 'Estranged labour' *Economic and philosophic manuscripts* (1844), Moscow 1977, p66.
4. F Douglass *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass, an American slave* (1845).
5. CW Mills *The racial contract* New York 1999, p67.
6. See M Twain *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* chapter 35.

Fighting fund

Help required

Unfortunately, we've fallen a little bit behind the going rate in the second week of the *Weekly Worker* fighting fund for May. We received just £286 in donations over the last seven days, when the monthly target is £2,250!

Unusually, the largest part of that £286 came in the shape of PayPal gifts - thanks go to comrades BL and PM (£50 each), KS (£25), TB (£20) and MZ (£10). Then we had those regular standing orders/bank transfers from PB (£70!), OG (£24), SA (£12), and PM and CC (a tenner each). And finally we had that stalwart, comrade Hassan, who handed his usual £5 note to one of our team.

But all that takes our running total up to just £866 with almost exactly half the month gone - something like £250 below the going rate! On the other hand, regular readers will know that we're nearing the time of the

month when those half dozen or so large standing orders come our way, so hopefully this time next week things will be looking better.

If you're not a regular contributor to our fighting fund, please think about what you can do to help us out. We really rely on our readers and supporters to keep us going, so how about playing your part? Please visit the web address below to find out about the different methods you can use: PayPal, standing order/bank transfer - or even a cheque!

We really do need to pick up the pace if we want to ensure that the *Weekly Worker* continues to play its essential role. Comrades, we need your help! ●

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

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.

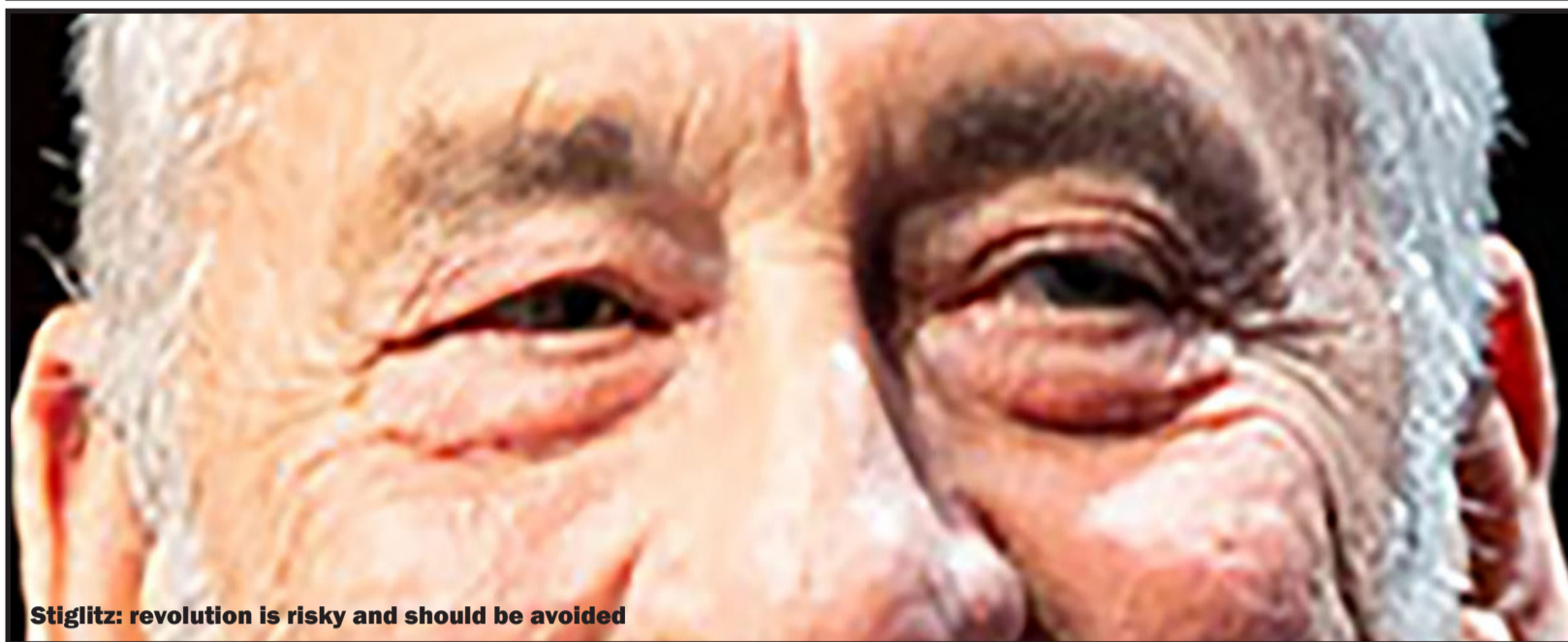
■ Communists are champions of the oppressed. Women's oppression, combating racism and chauvinism, and the struggle for peace and ecological sustainability are just as much working class questions as pay, trade union rights and demands for high-quality health, housing and education.

■ 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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Stiglitz: revolution is risky and should be avoided

Delusions of a progressive capitalism

Joseph E Stiglitz *The road to freedom: economics and the good society* Allen Lane pp384, £25

The liberal leftist economist and Nobel (Riksbank) prize winner, Joseph Stiglitz, has another book out to proclaim the benefits of what he calls "progressive capitalism".

*The road to freedom*¹ is a play on the title of Friedrich Hayek's infamous book, *The road to serfdom*, published in 1944, which claimed that government intervention into the "freedom of markets" would cause shortages and misallocations of resources - and eventually the end of democracy and freedom in a dictatorship à la Stalinist Soviet Union. John Maynard Keynes expressed his agreement with Hayek after reading his book. He wrote: "...morally and philosophically I find myself in agreement with virtually the whole of it - and not only in agreement with it, but in a deeply moved agreement".

But Stiglitz certainly does not agree. For him, Hayek's claim that 'free markets' mean freedom for the individual really means "freedom for the wolves and death to the sheep"

(Isaiah Berlin). Free markets are designed to make profits, not to meet the social needs of the many. "Externalities are everywhere," Stiglitz writes. "The biggest and most famous negative externalities are air pollution and climate change, which derive from the freedom of businesses and individuals to take actions that create harmful emissions." The argument for restricting this freedom, Stiglitz points out, is that doing so will "expand the freedom of people in later generations to exist on a livable planet without having to spend a huge amount of money to adapt to massive changes in climate and sea levels."²

For Stiglitz, the enemy of human freedom is not capitalism as such, but 'neoliberalism', which has bred soaring inequality, environmental degradation, the entrenchment of corporate monopolies, the 2008 financial crisis, and the rise of dangerous right-wing populists like Donald Trump. These baleful

outcomes were not ordained by any laws of nature or of economics, he says. Rather, they were "a matter of choice, a result of the rules and regulations that had governed our economy. They had been shaped by decades of neoliberalism, and it was neoliberalism that was at fault."³

Stiglitz has argued in previous books that it is not capitalism that is at fault, but the decisions of governments and their corporate backers to 'change the rules of the game' that had existed in the post-war period of managed capitalism. The rules were changed to deregulate; to privatise; to crush labour unions, etc. But Stiglitz never explains why the ruling elite felt it necessary to 'change the rules of the game'. What happened to swing the post-war rules into the neoliberal ones?

Anyway, Stiglitz reiterates his call for the creation of a "progressive capitalism"⁴. Under the rules of this form of capitalism, the government would employ a full range of tax, spending and regulatory policies to reduce inequality, rein in corporate power and develop the sorts of capital for social needs, not profits - like 'human capital' (education), 'social capital' (cooperatives) and 'natural capital' (environmental resources).

Stiglitz does not want to get rid of capitalism, but to regulate it, so it works for the many (sheep) over the few (wolves). "We need environmental regulations, traffic regulations, zoning regulation, financial regulations, we need regulations in all the constituents of our economy," he writes.⁵ But Stiglitz is either naive or applying sophistry here. The history of regulation is a history of failure in controlling capitalism or making banks and corporations apply policies and investment in the interests of people over profit.

How can anyone not see that, after the global financial crash of 2008 or the subsequent financial scandals galore? Or the failure to stop or regulate fossil fuel production and finance? Regulation has not stopped recurring crises of production under capitalism, whether in the imagined 'progressive era' of 1945-75 or in the neoliberal era since. Stiglitz has nothing to say on this.

Indeed, he almost recognises that his policy proposals of taxing the rich, regulating finance and the environment, and increasing public spending to achieve 'progressive capitalism' are not likely to be adopted by governments and big business. But, when asked whether maybe the only real alternative

to achieve human freedom is a revolutionary transformation of the economy and society, he replied at an LSE presentation of his book that revolutions are violent and risky and so should be avoided in favour of gradualist change.

His answer reminds me of Geoff Mann's comment in his excellent book, *In the long run we are all dead*: "...the left wants democracy without populism; it wants transformational politics without the risks of transformation; it wants revolution without revolutionaries".⁶ Stiglitz is really echoing Keynes, who once said:

For the most part, I think that capitalism, wisely managed, can probably be made more efficient for attaining economic ends than any alternative system yet in sight, but that in itself it is in many ways extremely objectionable. Our problem is to work out a social organisation which shall be as efficient as possible without offending our notions of a satisfactory way of life.⁷

How would regulation and more equality deal with the impending disaster that is global warming, as capitalism accumulates rapaciously without any regard for the planet's resources and viability? Programmes of redistribution will do little for this. And, if an economy is made more equal, would it stop future slumps under capitalism or future 'great recessions'? More equal economies in the past did not avoid these slumps.

'Progressive capitalism' is an oxymoron in the 21st century - and even Stiglitz doubts that it is possible to achieve ●

Michael Roberts

Michael Roberts blogs at thenextrecession.wordpress.com

Notes

1. See www.penguin.co.uk/books/461399/the-road-to-freedom-by-stiglitz-joseph-e-9780241687888.
2. www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/joseph-stiglitz-and-the-meaning-of-freedom.
3. See www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/07/24/the-rise-and-fall-of-neoliberalism.
4. See thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2019/04/27/progressive-capitalism-an-oxymoron.
5. Quoted at www.theguardian.com/books/article/2024/may/12/the-road-to-freedom-economics-and-the-good-society-by-joseph-e-stiglitz-review-an-ardent-but-flawed-defence-of-progressive-capitalism.
6. G Mann *In the long run we are all dead* London 2017, p21
7. archive.org/details/in.emet.dli.2015.89977/page/n339/mode/1up.

Online Communist Forum



Sunday May 19 5pm

A week in politics - political report from CPGB's Provisional Central Committee and discussion

Use this link to join meeting: communistparty.co.uk/ocf-register

Organised by CPGB: communistparty.co.uk and Labour Party Marxists: www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk
For further information, email Stan Keable at Secretary@labourpartymarxists.org.uk

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

weekly worker

List of banned organisations grows ever longer

Rot runs deep

'Extreme protest groups', such as Palestine Action and Just Stop Oil, are now under threat of an effective ban. But, writes, **Eddie Ford**, this is only the thin edge of the wedge

Surprising no-one who reads this publication, there are now proposals to effectively ban protests by groups like Palestine Action and Just Stop Oil.

Actually commissioned three years ago, but due to be published this month (timing is everything in politics!), the 100,000-word report by the scab former Labour MP John Woodcock (Baron Walney) will recommend a new category for proscribing "extreme protest groups" - as distinct from doing so on grounds of 'terrorism': ie, the use of "criminal tactics". If implemented, which seems possible, the new laws would limit a group's ability to fundraise and its right to assembly in the UK. For example, activists would be banned from holding protests near defence manufacturing and anything designated as "vital energy supplies and infrastructure".

In other words, the 41 recommendations - including a blanket prohibition on protestors wearing masks during marches - effectively amount to an insidious state ban on PA, JSO and potentially other protest groups. Indeed, we read in the *Mail Online* - which has seen extracts from the report - that, while the government has clearly taken steps in recent years to "improve understanding of the extreme right" and "jihadist activities", it has "not done the same with the far-left or single-issue threats, violent or non-violent" (May 12). Therefore the intelligence services and home office should reclassify "leftwing, anarchist and single-issue threats" (LASI to use the jargon) and add the word 'extreme' in order to avoid unintentionally conflating mainstream leftwing views - which apparently are perfectly fine - with those of the far left that are beyond the pale.

Appointed an advisor on 'political violence and disruption' under Boris Johnson (also bizarrely as the trade envoy to Tanzania), our Lord Walney complained to the *Mail* that being arrested "is not acting as enough of a deterrent" for these undesirable people - especially if you look at how long it takes to get them to trial and the way charges are often dropped before you even have the proceedings. Then damned juries find them innocent! No wonder protestors and demonstrators, we further read, have developed a "mindset", in which "they think they're going to be able to get away with what they're doing" - so something must be done to prevent lawless anarchy. It is worth noting in passing that Lord Walney has form - resigning from the Labour Party in 2018, because it had been "taken over by the hard left", which tacitly endorsed "anti-Semitism", while now Jeremy Corbyn represented "a clear risk to UK national security".

With great relish, the *Mail* informs us that other "hard-left protestors and groups" named in the forthcoming



Just attacking waxworks

Walney report include Piers Corbyn, brother of Jeremy, notorious for his rejection of the scientific consensus around climate change, claims of a Covid-19 "hoax" and other unhinged conspiracy theories - not to mention the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, which has been prominent in organising the Gaza solidarity protests. Extinction Rebellion must be among the targets as well - though, of course, you can add your own names to the list.

Extremist

We have got to the sorry stage in Britain where protest groups can be banned even though they advocate nothing more than protest. Indeed PA, JSO, PSC, etc, specifically advocate *non-violent* protest. Certainly, if an ambulance had to pass in case of an emergency, Just Say No activists immediately let it through - though that hardly ever gets reported in the media.

So they are just protesting in the same way as was done at sporting events during the apartheid years - mass protests outside Twickenham rugby stadium, inside the self-sacrificing elite like Peter Hain (now Lord Hain) would invade the pitch, getting their ten seconds of TV fame by getting themselves dragged off by the police. At the time, the Tories accused them of being spoilers, disruptive ... and above all naive. Surely you must realise that if you have 'One person, one vote' in South Africa, that will let in the African National Congress, who are communists and tools of the Soviet Union - which is why we in Britain stand by apartheid South Africa.

But what they did not do is say that the anti-apartheid protestors were *anti-white racists*, as the idea was obviously risible. However, telling you everything about the extremely irrational times we live in now, this is exactly what Rishi Sunak - plus the Republicans and Democrats in the US - are doing now by brandishing as 'anti-Semitic' those taking part in the huge London demonstrations against the Gaza genocide, or the inspiring

student camps in the US, now being widely emulated across the UK.

If you actually bother to look at the demonstrations and camps, what you have - quite rightly and understandably - are large Jewish contingents among those protesting against the heinous crimes of the Israeli state, whether Torah-religious or secular progressive. Are Jews put in danger. Of course not. What about Zionist Jews? Hardly. Take Sharron Haskel, the Israeli MP, who recently strode about Oxford waving a big Israeli flag and a beaming smile on her face - was she in fear of her life? No, of course not. To claim otherwise, as the Zionists of CAA, etc, have done, is all part of their Goebbels-like *big lie* campaign we have been subjected to, especially since 2015 and Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party.

The proposed ban is a perfectly logical move by the Tories and the bourgeois establishment. As alluded to above in the *Mail* article, a whole series of Islamic and Irish organisations have been banned, plus Nazi ones. For the left, the problem with these bans is that they are a bit like pastor Niemöller's famous poem, 'First they came ...', which concludes by pointing out that when they came for us, there would be no-one left. Not actually true, of course, but the poem has a profound truth - you must stand up for the rights of all, even for those you strongly disagree with.

We in the CPGB have done precisely that by standing up for the explicitly fascist National Action - not because of what it advocates, of course not, but rather because we defend the unrestricted right to freedom of speech. Just in the same way that Leon Trotsky was prepared to go the US to testify before the House Committee on Un-American Activities as to why he was against any bans on the thoroughly Stalinite Communist Party of the USA or the American Nazi Party - because he was in favour of full freedom of debate and free speech.¹ Once we let the bourgeoisie and state

restrict that right, ultimately they will come for us, since their real enemy is not National Action or some marginal Islamic group: it is the working class and its natural leadership - the left.

Paving the way for such bans that we are now facing was a study published back in July 2019 by three academics from Goldsmiths, King's College and the University of Bristol, which the *Weekly Worker* and others flagged up at the time. With the scary-looking title, *Violent extremist tactics and the ideology of the sectarian far left*, and calling themselves the Commission for Countering Extremism (sounds familiar?), it had lots of impressive looking graphs and formulas, but politically it was plain dumb.² If this is an example of the academic standards promoted in institutions of higher learning, then the country is in serious trouble.

Quoted

Anyway, as an example of those on the far left who will be attracted to extremist tactics, it quoted a certain Jack Conrad from the Provisional Central Committee, saying that there is a great danger that the 'anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism' witch-hunt inside the Labour Party could spread to wider society. The authors of the report then sagely tell us that this is clearly a far-left conspiracy theory that can be "identified with two themes that were also seen elsewhere within the leftwing publications that we examined": firstly, the idea that "society is as it is because the wealthy have arranged it to their exclusive advantage"; and, secondly, the notion that "what appears in the 'mainstream' media is a manipulative falsehood disseminated on that minority's behalf" - what a crazy idea!

This stupid study, heavily promoted by the bourgeoisie and its manipulative media - sorry, guys - was part of the long-running attempt to silence and demonise people: attacking the left of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, the likes of you and me; painting them all as

violent extremists. Fast-forward five years and we can see that we are not too far away from that repressive scenario - hence the Walney report. Today they are talking about an imminent ban on PA and JSO, so who will be next - the CPGB for openly advocating a workers' militia and the possibility of armed struggle? How about John Rees's Counterfire or the Socialist Workers Party, both of which are named in this so-called academic study?

Investigation

Now, they can ban us either on the basis of being 'terrorists', 'extremists' or 'racists' - slogans like 'Palestine should be free' or 'From the river to the sea' are now deemed anti-Semitic. But how about this one? Mothin Ali - one of the 34 new Green councillors in Bristol and a practising Muslim - is now under 'investigation' for proclaiming that this was a "win for the people of Gaza", "we will not be silenced" and (perhaps worst of all) shouting "Allahu Akbar!" - literally meaning "God is greater".

Presumably he is being investigated for anti-Semitism or Islamic extremism (or both?). Hey, why not add 'terrorism' to the charge sheet? But it is no more a crime than this journalist, who was brought up in a Christian culture and went to a Church of England school, being investigated for crying out 'God help us', or 'Jesus Christ!', at times of stress or excitement - it is bound to come out. When a person from a Muslim background is put under investigation for shouting out 'God is greater', which is part of his cultural thought-world, it shows you how deep the rot is and also how deep the potential for repression is in this society.

The CPGB is not expecting a massive clampdown overnight - rather an incremental process. But at some moments we have *qualitative* turning points, as we did with the suspension of Jeremy Corbyn from the Parliamentary Labour Party. But it should never be forgotten that it was the wider left who led the way by setting up the doctrines of 'no-platforming' and 'zero tolerance' for ideas deemed politically unacceptable, and all the rest of that anti-democratic crap.

We need open and unrestricted debate, whether on transgender issues, women's abortion rights, republicanism, drugs, open borders, China, the EU, Palestine ... That will benefit the healthy left and should be accepted by all, not regarded as an eccentric aberration ●

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Notes

1. marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1939/12/dies2.html.
2. assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d8b892540f0b6098cb653d2/Allington-McAndrew-Hirsh-2019-Jul-19.pdf.