

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity

weekly



# worker



**Why the left should oppose all immigration controls, even if they are sugared as 'non-racist'**

- Letters and debate
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- Moshé Machover writes

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# THEIR ARMY AND OURS

## LETTERS



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

## Spats hammered

Comrades might well be aware that back in February the Spartacist League (UK) wrote us a 'let's debate' letter on the election question (*Weekly Worker* February 22).

This was very much welcomed by the CPGB and after a brief exchange of emails we agreed to an online Zoom debate on May 5 and later in the year a face-to-face at this year's Communist University in central London (August 3-10).

For those who want to see the debate, the opening contributions are available on [www.youtube.com/watch?v=99Q4BYsCGqU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=99Q4BYsCGqU). And to get a real handle on the issues involved there is also Eddie Ford's article, 'Debating with the Oehlerites' (*Weekly Worker* May 9) - essential reading for anyone serious about overcoming the debilitating splits and divisions on the left.

Basically, the comrades in the Spartacist League think the way ahead lies with the mushy economism of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. However, they combine this with a purity politics which sees them condemning any Labour vote, including for Labour lefts such as John McDonnell and Zarah Sultana, as "crossing class lines". That despite being forced to admit that Labour remains a bourgeois workers' party. The result is a rather curious Third Period Fabianism.

Meanwhile, the CPGB is committed to communist unity on the basis of our *Draft programme*. A unity process that inevitably involves splits as well as fusions. Without a Communist Party - even a small one to begin with - our class will remain on the back foot and incapable of making any decisive advance. In other words, the Communist Party is the key question of our day.

When it comes to the general election, the CPGB position is clear. If there is a straight fight between a Labour candidate and the Tories, Lib Dems, Reform, Greens, SNP, etc, we say vote Labour. That is a *class vote* because, yes, Labour remains a bourgeois workers' party. However, if there is a left candidate - and that would include the likes of McDonnell and Sultana - we say vote for the best placed or least unprincipled candidate. Without exception, it needs to be emphasised, *all* candidates on offer on July 4 are unprincipled. So that means Jeremy Corbyn in Islington North, George Galloway in Rochdale; elsewhere it could be Tusc, the Workers Party or one of the many and varied independent left candidates. The CPGB most certainly does not advocate auto-Labourism - that we shall leave to Labourites.

Following the online debate, we wrote this short email note on May 19 to Eibhlin McColgan of the Spartacist League.

"Hallo Eibhlin,

Hope you and the other comrades thought the Zoom debate was productive.

Just wanted to drop you a line about Communist University this year - August 3-10. Presume you are still up for a face-to-face. We can slot it in for one of the final sessions of the day to facilitate a get together in a local pub afterwards.

Comradely  
Jack Conrad  
(for CPGB)."

We were disappointed, though frankly not surprised, to get this email back a week later:

"Dear Jack,

Thanks for the invitation to participate in the Communist University. Unfortunately, due to the pressure of other work, now including the general election campaign, we will be unable to take part this year.

Comradely greetings,  
Eibhlin."

Well, the Communist University offer - a full month after the general election campaign finishes - remains open (along with that get-together in a local pub afterwards). So does the offer of another online debate.

Jack Conrad

London

## Never understood

Mike Macnair makes the point: "What full communism will look like will depend on choices made over decades by the working class ruling on a global scale. The minimum programme is a programme for working class rule right now. It is for this reason that it combines a platform for political democracy with some economic measures - ones that are immediately posed."

I have never really understood how anyone seriously interested in promoting the idea of a communist (aka socialist) alternative to capitalism can make this sort of argument. Never mind what Marx may or may not have said. Marx was fallible, as are we all, and there is enough of an unhealthy tendency to invoke the 'argument from authority' as it is when it comes to quoting Marx in leftwing circles. All that is needed is a bit of basic common sense and logic.

Look, we can all surely accept the premise that capitalism as a socioeconomic system can only really be run and managed in one way - in the interests of capital. As 'Marxists' we can all surely agree that capitalism's driving force - the competitive accumulation of capital out of surplus value - is absolutely dependent on the systemic exploitation of a majority working class by a tiny class that owns and controls the means of production in *de facto* terms.

But here's the point - the very existence of these (capitalist) class categories - implies the existence of this exploitative system of capitalism. Consequently, arguing for a "minimum programme" based on "working class rule" (moreover, "over decades" and "on a global scale") is in effect arguing for the retention of an economic system that requires the existence of this class as the object of a process of exploitation. In effect, it is proposing that the slaves should continue to be slaves, while being in charge of a system that can only be administered in the interests of the slave-owners.

This is simply not credible. One can sort of understand why Marx and Engels felt the need to resort to such logically dubious concepts as the "dictatorship of the proletariat" back in the mid-19th century. Objectively speaking, communism was not on the cards. Hence their advocacy of the 10 state-capitalist reforms in the 1848 manifesto to help grow the productive forces (though they later distanced themselves from these reforms, as can be seen if you read the 1872 preface to the *Communist manifesto*).

But we don't live in the year 1848. Today, we live in 2024. We don't need the forces of production to be "further developed" to establish a communist society. What accounts for the persistence of poverty is not the fact that we don't have the technological capacity to make communism completely feasible. On the contrary, material deprivation continues only because we allow *capitalism* to continue.

Capitalism has become the most grotesquely wasteful socioeconomic

formation in human history, with the majority of its human and material resources being devoted solely to keeping the money system ticking over on its own terms. This in itself represents a truly massive diversion of resources away from meeting human needs and it will continue for as long as we allow the capitalist buying-and-selling system to continue,

This is why I find all this talk of transitional societies and minimum programmes so archaic and off-putting. It's not at all relevant to the world we live in today. The transition period is what we are living through now. It is not something we need to initiate, once a communist majority has politically captured the capitalist state - and set about immediately abolishing that state, along with the system that necessitates it. Surely, at that point - if it ever happens - all this would be pretty much universally understood by everyone.

The only remaining precondition we need to fulfil in order to establish a communist society is the realisation of communist consciousness on a mass scale. At the end of the day, the SPGB is completely correct in emphasising this. It is a thankless and difficult approach that it has adopted and one that routinely prompts the scorn of others, but, at the end of the day, it is the only approach that makes any sense. If you want a communist society you have to advocate it and spread the idea. What else is possibly required?

Advocating a minimum programme in this day and age is a sure-fire way of setting yourself up for failure and mass working class disenchantment, with a so-called working class government having been put in power to implement this programme. Any government that tries to take on the administration of a system that is intrinsically predicated on the exploitation of the working class will inevitably transmogrify into a capitalist government.

Surely as materialists, we can all accept this all-too-obvious point?

Robin Cox  
email

## Min or max?

Mike Macnair tries to argue that Karl Marx "advocated, wrote and defended the revolutionary minimum programme" ("Minimal symmetrical errors" *Weekly Worker* May 23). Marx certainly had no objection to a socialist workers' party having a programme of immediate demands, but he wasn't so illogical as to describe these as "revolutionary".

A "revolutionary minimum programme" is in fact a contradiction in terms. The "immediate demands" (the term used in the 1880 programme of the French Parti Ouvrier) that constituted the minimum programme of the pre-World War I social democratic parties were all measures to be implemented within capitalism, even if (some of them) would strengthen the hand of the working class in the class struggle. Only the maximum programme can be described as revolutionary.

Mike Macnair argues (not very convincingly, since in practice the emphasis was placed on the social and economic, rather than political, "immediate demands") that the essence of a minimum programme is a demand for complete - "extreme" - political democracy. He describes this as "revolutionary", as it makes it easy, even inevitable, for the working class to win political control. But this, of course, presupposes a socialist-minded working class. It is the absence of this, not of "extreme democracy", that is currently the barrier to socialism - as a society of common ownership and democratic control of the means of living, with production directly to satisfy people's needs, not for profit.

In any event, it would take as much

time and energy to get the working class to organise and vote for "extreme democracy" as it would to get them to organise and vote for socialism.

It is true that some degree of political democracy does make it easier for the working class both to organise for socialism and to wage the trade union struggle, but it doesn't need to be perfect or "extreme". In countries like Britain is it really necessary to set aside the revolutionary, maximum programme to demand, for instance, the abolition of the monarchy as a step towards "extreme democracy"?

The limited political democracy that exists today is enough to enable a socialist-minded working class majority to transform universal suffrage - in the words of the maximum programme of the Parti Ouvrier, "from the instrument of deception that it has been until now into an instrument of emancipation" - by using it to win political control and introduce socialism, including full democracy. This should be the "immediate demand" of socialists, not a list of reforms to capitalism, whether attractive or not. It's what socialists today should be campaigning for, not chasing reforms.

Adam Buick

Socialist Party of Great Britain

## Abolish prison

One of the reasons I read *Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism* - the bi-monthly newspaper of the Revolutionary Communist Group - is for its regular coverage of people in prisons.

Fredrick Engels famously described the state, in the final analysis, as armed bodies of men and their appendages in defence of private property. Those appendages include the police, the courts, the security services, the civil service, the judiciary and prisons. I would like to say a little about my thoughts about the latter. When Michael Howard was Tory leader he famously said at a Tory Party conference that "prison works".

I believe that the system needs to be abolished. A start can be made by releasing all women prisoners, especially those who are pregnant - no woman should have to give birth whilst in prison. Similarly, we need to have the state legally regulate all drugs, with all those currently in prison for drug offences released. Another start could be the release of all those in prison serving sentences of up to one year. Such people would be far better off being made to do community work as part of a payback scheme.

Abolition of prisons should be part of our communist minimum programme.

John Smithee  
Cambridgeshire

## One republic

In my article, 'Marching towards what solution?' (May 16) the argument for a democratic, secular, federal republic of Israel-Palestine - one republic for two nations - confronted the communist-Trotskyist case for "a socialist federation of the Middle East". The pamphlet published by *The Communist* (formerly *Socialist Appeal*) explains that "a socialist federation of the Middle East is the only way of guaranteeing autonomy of the Jews and Palestinians that is not based on oppression" (p47).

The *Weekly Worker* introduction to my article immediately took the side of *The Communist*, saying: "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." This is partly false and certainly misleading.

The demand for a democratic,

secular republic of Israel-Palestine has two sources. First is working class republicanism, whose historical roots include Marx, Engels and the Russian Bolsheviks, who became known as the Jacobins of Russian social democracy. Of course, the Bolsheviks were working class republicans, revolutionary social democrats and communists. So I 'denounce' all those who are fighting against working class republicanism in the name of 'communism'.

The second source is the case for a binational state, or 'one state for two nations'. This history includes Zionist pacifists, such as Judah Magnus, who wanted peaceful coexistence between Zionists and Arabs; Palestinian nationalists, who saw it as securing equality between nations; and a range of intellectuals, such as Noam Chomsky, Edward Said and Ilan Pappé. Moshé Machover recognises two nations and does not specifically rule out a binational possible outcome.

The *Weekly Worker's* polemical introduction to my article should have said: "Working class republicanism gives a Bolshevik 'twist' to the binational state originally promoted by early Zionist and Palestinian liberal democrats". In fact the word, 'Bolshevik', was deleted and 'Menshevik' cunningly substituted. Readers may think that the Communist Party of Great Britain is a Bolshevik 'twist' on British communism. So what has caused them to abandon working class republicanism for Menshevik-Trotskyism? The editors have mixed up their Menshevik-Trotskyism with their Jacobin-Bolshevism.

I made the accusation of dabbling in leftism. Of course, no republican minimum programme was intended to abolish capitalism. So there is no problem in pointing out that capitalism will still exist in 'one republic for two nations'. The truth doesn't hurt. Even the 1917 October revolution did not abolish capitalism in Russia or introduce socialism in one country. What would be abolished is the present Zionist version of apartheid capitalism, built on the oppression of a divided working class.

So the inclusion of the words, "a single *capitalist* Palestinian state by making the case for a single *capitalist* federal republic" (my emphasis), are more than simply a scientific description. The word 'capitalist' appears twice as a polemical device. It is like a shock-horror headline in *The Sun* - 'Corbyn proposes "socialism" to raise taxes and steal all your money!!' Instead of discussing the matter as science, the polemic says in effect: 'Do not even think about this proposal because it does not immediately abolish capitalism.' Any programme that does not immediately abolish wage labour will outrage every infantile leftwing communist.

Both Russian Mensheviks and Bolsheviks supported the RSDLP minimum republican programme. However, the Mensheviks were soft on republicanism because of their economism and strategy towards the liberal democrats (Cadets). Ultra-leftism opposed it with maximalist 'socialism'. Working class republicanism is therefore a Bolshevik 'twist'. A federal republic won by working class action changes capitalism by changing the balance of class forces in favour of the working class. It does not, in and of itself, abolish capitalism by introducing national socialism. All Stalinists have forgotten this.

Finally "working class rule" was not denounced in my article either explicitly or implicitly. On the contrary, working class republicanism is about the rule of the majority and hence in a country with a working class majority is about the rule of the working class. A democratic, secular republic in

Israel-Palestine does not contradict necessarily Middle East socialism. Moshé Machover can support a federal republic without abandoning his case for a Middle East solution. I did not reject Middle East socialism, even though I believe that the transition to communism has to be wider than the Middle East - not least in relation to the US, China and the EU. I do agree that democratic revolutions in other Middle East states would be transformative, as shown by the Arab Spring before it was crushed in Egypt and Syria.

The slogan of 'Middle East socialism' becomes ultra-left if it is misused to liquidate the republican programme and hence a political role for the working class. It leaves a massive vacuum at the heart of Israel-Palestine class politics. That is a crime against the struggles of the Israeli-Palestinian working class committed by the *Weekly Worker* introduction. Leftwing communism is using the slogan of 'socialism' as a means of opposing a democratic, secular republic. Fake left communists hostile to working class republicanism in the name of 'socialism' should be 'denounced'. They deserve it.

Steve Freeman  
London

## Hutzpah

I thank Daniel Lazare for kindly congratulating me for pointing out that "the overthrow of Zionism is only possible with the participation of the Israeli working class" (Letters, May 23).

However, the tail of his letter is armed with a couple of stings. He says: "So it is good that someone finally spoke up for united working class action." *Finally?* He has got some *hutzpah!*

He then goes on: "Machover is also a supporter of boycott, divestment and sanctions - a movement that includes Hamas in its leadership and whose prime goal is to disemploy Israeli workers, Jewish or Arab, by persuading imperialism to withdraw investment."

That Hamas is "in the leadership" of the BDS movement is a Zionist *hasbarah* porky, which Lazare keeps repeating. As readers must have noticed, *hasbarah* uses Hamas as a bugbear to besmirch any Palestinian anti-colonial initiative. In reality Hamas has no role whatsoever in leading the BDS movement. It is just one of scores of Palestinian groups of diverse political colours that have formally endorsed BDS, including trade unions, women's organisations, etc.

And, as for disemploying workers, I suppose we must not oppose military budgets: we don't wish to persuade imperialism to withdraw investments and disemploy the many millions of workers who make their living in and around the military-industrial complex, do we?

Moshé Machover  
London

## Beyond misguided

Lazare's latest statements about occupied Palestine will not go unanswered. It's a comforting thought to expect that the Israeli working class in solidarity with Palestinian workers can produce a revolutionary upsurge that could deal with capitalism's predations and barbarism, but, presently, as Tony Greenstein points out, the Israeli working class is not a force for change. Lazare disagrees, and in my mind trades in 'pie in the sky' idealism that doesn't relate to material conditions, but conditions can change.

Last time I checked, Hamas doesn't "attack Israelis qua Israelis", while the Zionists kill and torture Palestinians for being Palestinian. 'Israel' was an organised project of racist, ethnic cleansing from its inception. 'Israel' has now graduated from mass expulsion to extermination. Racism and ethnic supremacy make up the DNA of its political system. The fact that the Zionist cancer is starting to

lethally metastasise is not the fault of the Palestinian entity or any aspect of it. Anyone who places blame on Hamas or the Palestinian resistance movement in the context of 70-plus years of mass murder and atrocities, as well as during this Zionist genocide in real time, is a racist, a Zionist or Zionist sympathiser, and a traitor to the Palestinian cause.

"Socialism ... seeks ... to internationalise the conflict by uniting Israeli and Palestinian workers" - this is a rote formula or theory that's divorced from objective reality: ie, what's on the ground. It's necessary to come up with concrete and practical ways to implement a socialist programme. Hollow theory becomes useless political platitudes.

"Zionism and the equally reactionary misleader of Hamas" - this is like a broken record. Lazare never gets past the idea of equivalence à la the ICC's current absurdity that equates Hamas and Netanyahu, etc. He can be expected to agree with this new initiative by the institutional imperialist west, and would be consistent in doing so.

Moshé Machover gains Lazare's approval for adhering to the concept of working class unity yet Machover still doesn't pass the 'Lazare smell test': Machover supports BDS, according to Lazare, which "includes Hamas in its leadership". The Zionist state sees BDS as a strategic and even existential threat, and therefore I'm fine with BDS - as well as anything else that can financially, ideologically and militarily degrade to any degree this child-murdering, Zionist system. The priority is the destruction of Zionism, which BDS could possibly contribute to, not the maintenance of capital's stranglehold on the privileged Israeli working class.

Boycotts of arms transport to Israel by union workers are crucially important. BDS calls for an embargo on providing weapons and military aid. A targeted BDS is no substitute for mass organisation, but it can be an auxiliary tactic. Regarding BDS, Dr Emad Moussa, political analyst, says that the fight for Palestinian rights, a fight against Zionism, is not different from the Jewish struggle against Nazism: "It is not directed at Jews *qua* Jews, much like Jewish anti-Nazism was not a campaign against the German people."

The most effective action is to conquer and put an end to our own imperialist governments. Karl Liebknecht said in 1915 that the main enemy is in your own country: "Turn your bayonets on your own bourgeoisie!"

Lazare says Tony Greenstein "doesn't care what happens" to Israeli workers and he's an "unabashed Hamas apologist", while Machover is "lining up with" the "class enemies" of Israeli workers. Lazare is very wrongheaded to try to discredit Machover and Greenstein; this only divides the left and benefits the Zionists.

GG  
USA

## Gloves are off

Against a background of a multi-media capitalist lie machine, it's good that we do have an independent press in Britain - the socialist press. There are dozens of papers/magazines serving I don't know how many tens of thousands of people who live all over the country.

It offers a realistic and coherent and comprehensive news service. It expresses in the strongest possible terms working class opposition to what can only be described as a thousand-year *Reich* (reign) of monarchs who stand for undeserved privilege, injustice and bandit-style looting of our land and labour. It offers genuine hope in a landscape of pessimism and belief that this tyranny of fools will always be with us.

The Workers Party of Britain is standing in 500 constituencies as a form of political warfare against the Labour Party. Reform is standing (so

they say) in all 650 constituencies as a political challenge to the Conservative Party. The gloves are off, as the centre ground becomes irrelevant.

All power to our working class. More chaos, more chance of victory.

Elijah Traven  
Hull

## Keep 'em out

I read recently a couple of articles in the *Weekly Worker* about immigration into the UK and the Republic of Ireland. The point I want to make is that, with the numbers now coming in, the issue must be managed properly. The "new town" of Milton Keynes was built first before being populated - not the other way around.

It's all very well advocating open borders, but the infrastructure needs to exist to be able to take any increases in population. Those coming in need to be documented and vetted, as we would hope all our neighbours were documented and known to the police and authorities. In a socialist society those holiday homes, or second homes, could well be acquired by the state to accommodate the homeless and those new immigrants, but we're not there yet.

Even in a socialist society, the state (or governing entity) might authorise the movement of 100,000-plus willing persons into a designated area within a short period of time, but not before the additional schools, clinics and homes had been built and the necessary increase in nurses, doctors and teachers trained and qualified. The example with Milton Keynes shows that a type of socialism (or state-managed capitalism) has been evident in the United Kingdom for quite some time - not everything has been left to the markets to decide - which would be catastrophic.

The state at times takes a lead role in matters which normally would be left to the private sector. Which begs the question as to why the state has been so schizophrenic in allowing in so many people before providing adequate infrastructure. Is it a bung to hoteliers, or to the private home-owning class and to further the cause of the property bubble?

The left plays down or ignores the fact that the overwhelming majority of those new immigrants are young, male adults. Are the women and children coming later? Or have the women and children been left in conflict areas to suffer persecution and/or large-scale human rights violations for a reason? Many of these young, male immigrants boast in videos of destroying their documentation prior to arriving on these shores. Such behaviour may well help to seal their acceptance as permanent residents, but it's not so fortunate for the communities in which they reside, as no-one can be sure who they are, where they've come from, or anything about their backgrounds.

I believe that every individual on planet Earth should be able to live where they wish - but within reason. Eight billion people can't all live in Beverley Hills, California, or Sloane Square, London. So we either leave it all to the market and self-destruct, or we manage the issue. Management requires rational thinking, and allowing thousands of undocumented and unvetted immigrants into the country over a short space of time just doesn't make any rational sense.

What would socialists do? Surely they would consult with the communities where the migrants are to be settled. Has that happened? If it hasn't happened then how can anyone condone it? In a socialist society I hope they wouldn't be bussing in the immigrants during the hours of darkness and placing them in hotels at a time when over 2,000 ex-forces personnel are homeless in the UK. It doesn't make any fucking sense!

Louis Shawcross  
Co Down

# ACTION

## Day of action for Palestine

**Saturday June 1:** Local actions for Palestine. Israel's genocidal assault in Gaza has killed over 35,000 Palestinians, and displaced the vast majority of the population. Palestinians in Gaza now face imminent famine. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: [palestinecampaign.org/events](http://palestinecampaign.org/events).

## Stop fascist Tommy Robinson in London

**Saturday June 1, 11am:** Counterdemonstration. Assemble outside Downing Street, London SW1. Oppose far-right groups, led by Tommy Robinson, staging an anti-migrant event at Westminster. Organised by Stand Up to Racism: [standuptoracism.org.uk](http://standuptoracism.org.uk).

## General election: what would Marx do?

**Thursday June 6, 7pm:** Online briefing introduced by Ian Spencer: 'Marx, the Chartists and their attitude towards elections'. Organised by Labour Left Alliance and Why Marx?: [www.whymarx.com/sessions](http://www.whymarx.com/sessions).

## Decriminalise, destigmatise, demedicalise

**Friday June 7, 9.30am to 5pm:** Abortion rights conference, Fetal Medicine Research Institute, 16-20 Windsor Walk, London SE5. Abortion remains a criminal offence in Britain - nobody should be jailed for ending their own pregnancy. Registration £33.22 (£11.55). Organised by Doctors for Choice UK and Abortion Talk: [www.facebook.com/events/806364024265495](http://www.facebook.com/events/806364024265495).

## Derby Silk Mill festival

**Saturday June 8, 10.15am to 4.30pm:** March, rally and free festival. Assemble Market Place, Derby DE1 and march to Cathedral Green. Celebrate Derby's historic general strike (1833-34). Speakers include Kevin Horne (Orgreave Campaign), Matt Wrack (FBU) and Fran Heathcote (PCS). Organised by Derby Silk Mill Rally: [www.facebook.com/DerbySilkMillRally](http://www.facebook.com/DerbySilkMillRally).

## End the genocide - stop arming Israel

**Saturday June 8, 12 noon:** National demonstration - assembly point to follow. The government and the Labour leadership have provided support for Israel's genocide. They have blood on their hands. Demand a ceasefire now. Stop arming Israel. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: [palestinecampaign.org/events](http://palestinecampaign.org/events).

## War, peace and Palestine - trade union issues

**Sunday June 9, 10.30am to 4.30pm:** Trade union conference, ITF House, 49-60 Borough Road, London SE1. Facing up to the warmongers and sharing experiences of building pro-Palestine initiatives in unions and workplaces. Tickets £10 (£5). Organised by Stop the War Coalition: [www.stopwar.org.uk/events](http://www.stopwar.org.uk/events).

## Restore the people's NHS

**Saturday June 22, 10am to 5pm:** Launch conference, London Irish Centre, 50-52 Camden Square, London NW1. Hear from activists, health workers and experts about fighting for a full restoration of the founding principles of the NHS. Registration £10 (£5). Organised by Keep Our NHS Public/Health Campaigns Together: [www.facebook.com/events/789812619952647](http://www.facebook.com/events/789812619952647).

## 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 prepare for the battles that will follow after July 4. Registration £8. Organised by National Shop Stewards Network: [www.facebook.com/events/2164260670591261](http://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 Jarrow Rebel Town Festival and Seven Lads of Jarrow: [ourjarrow.wordpress.com](http://ourjarrow.wordpress.com).

## Restore nature now

**Saturday June 22, 12 noon:** Demonstration. Assemble Park Lane, London W1. March to Parliament Square for rally and entertainment. One in six species in Britain are at risk of extinction. The nature and climate emergencies demand urgent political action. Organised by Restore Nature Now: [www.restorenaturenow.com](http://www.restorenaturenow.com).

## Stop the deportations, stop Rwanda

**Saturday June 29, 12 noon:** Demonstration. Assemble outside Unite House, 99 New Road, Hayes UB3. March to Colnbrook Detention Centre. Stop the snatch squads, close the detention camps. Organised by Stand Up to Racism: [www.facebook.com/events/806604534399911](http://www.facebook.com/events/806604534399911).

## Marxism 2024

**Thursday July 4 to Sunday July 7:** SWP annual school, university locations in Bloomsbury, London WC1. Over 100 sessions, including debates, live music, a culture tent and film screenings. Tickets: day £22.38 (£16.96), full event £44.04 (£27.80). Organised by Socialist Workers Party: [socialistworker.co.uk/marxismfestival](http://socialistworker.co.uk/marxismfestival).

## Durham Miners Gala

**Saturday July 13, 8am to 5pm:** Rally and labour movement festival, The Racecourse, Green Lane, Old Elvet, Durham DH1. Organised by Durham Miners Association: [www.facebook.com/events/343419915171132](http://www.facebook.com/events/343419915171132).

## 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.

## ARMS

# Banging the drums of war

Rishi Sunak's dismal national service plan is certain to flop. However, Paul Demarty takes the opportunity to renew the call for a people's militia

There is a general air of desperation at Tory headquarters after Rishi Sunak's decision to call an early election. It was clear immediately after Sunak got himself soaked announcing it, in pure teleprompter style: "Things can only get wetter", said the press.

So it is, also, with his grand proposal to bring back national service, with 18-year-olds given the choice of joining the armed forces or taking part in various do-gooder activities on weekends. This is not *wholly* senseless. After all, after 14 years of Tory rule, there is little enough for youngsters to do. David Cameron's "great society" plan, which included a variant of the same policy (the 'National Citizen Service'), offered nothing to them in practice: it was merely an *idea* of a policy that might have solved the problem of listless youth; the reality that came was the crushing of what local democracy had survived the tenures of Margaret Thatcher, John Major and Tony Blair. People who, in spite of everything, cared naively for their communities had merely to suck it up; and now, as municipality after municipality falls into bankruptcy, the bill comes due.

It is, moreover, a policy with a certain pedigree among the older voters who make up the Tory shock troops at election time. A mystified version of the last period of mandatory national service, which began after World War II and continued until the early 60s, holds a certain totemic importance. Some who went through that experience were thankful for it, thought it made a man out of them (not all, as my own late grandfather or John Lennon could have told them). They worry, as the old tend to do, about the dissolution of today's youth, and reach for the imaginary certitudes of the past to solve this problem for them.

That is, ultimately, a rather foolish illusion. It is no accident that the 60s counterculture followed on so quickly from national service in this country - and from the GI bill, which sent so many returning soldiers to college, in the United States. What was planned as a national character-building process in fact imported the ambiguous feelings of these men into society at large - not always, but sometimes, in politically oppositional forms; the *culturally* oppositional forms were likewise numerous.

## Interesting

It is these two sides of the problem that make Sunak's doomed proposal *interesting*. The anomie to which it aims to respond is, after all, quite real. As an example: we have written before about the strange influence of Andrew Tate among young men and teenage boys.<sup>1</sup> We wrote at the time that his popularity betokened an alarming gullibility, that had its roots in the atomisation of contemporary society. All morally serious people ought to be worried by this spiritual rot, and national service is - if nothing else - a ready-to-hand Tory 'solution' to this problem. Time spent at a real task ought to cure young minds of the poison on offer from such grifters.

As such, it is difficult to object. It is precisely the unreality of life in these little internet cults that both concerns 'right-thinking people' and, paradoxically, makes it difficult for the direct victims to make a break for freedom. Freedom seems to be right there in front of them, in the form of the grifter's pitch, while it does



Our sort of army: Red Guards unit of the Vulkan factory in 1917 Russia

not appear to be so if they grow up playing by the rules of our idiotically dysfunctional societies.

National service is, therefore, a plausible rightwing response to the deleterious effects of rightwing political practice. We have noted David Cameron's former enthusiasm for the idea. Sunak's version seems to owe a lot to that of Adrian Pabst's proposal for a "national civic service":

the recovery from 40 years of liberal economics will also require a new civilian service: people, especially the young and the old, either building or using their skills to make a contribution to society. This could take the form of helping elderly people at home, in hospitals or in care homes, mentoring children in schools or extra-curricular activities and helping new residents integrate into the communities by teaching them English and civic education.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, Pabst - a 'post-liberal' pseudo-leftist (basically a 'blue Labour' type) - offers both a more ambitious version and one more clearly purged of militarism. The Sunakite variant perhaps draws from the ideas of a Tory think tank called 'Onward', which proposed its own cunning plan, but it too shies away from the *military* aspect.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps to his credit, Sunak understands that the question of war is essential to the role national service plays in the reactionary psyche.

One party *not* so enthusiastic about the military component of the plan is ... the military. Not two days before Sunak's big announcement, under-secretary for defence Andrew Murrison told the *Financial Times* in no uncertain terms that the plan was insane: "We have to involve all our people with training other people and looking after them [rather than] divert us from the task in hand"<sup>4</sup> ... And, further:

If potentially unwilling national service recruits were to be obliged to serve alongside the professional men and women of our armed forces, it could damage morale,

recruitment and retention and would consume professional military and naval resources.<sup>5</sup>

But at least making the national service call does play a useful role in banging the drums of war and persuading, at least a portion of the electorate, that it is right to prioritise guns over butter. Note both the Tories and Labour support Nato's proxy war in Ukraine and increased 'defence' spending.

So far as the civilian aspect of all this goes, things are in their own way quite as ropery. It amounts to attempting to nudge youngsters into doing jobs for free that they could just as well do as paid labour. They will, after all, presumably be dispatched into activities for which there is some demand in the labour market. The result will likely be the same as with Cameron's National Citizen Service, which never had a wide uptake and had its funding finally slashed in 2022, under the watchful eye of the chancellor of the day: a certain Rishi Sunak.

It seems, then, that this flagship policy is all of a piece with the launch of Sunak's campaign as a whole - a damp (or rather a sodden) squib. The army does not want 'recruits' of this sort - resentful youngsters cajoled into a year of misery before release into the wild. It is not clear who *does* want it. A respectable plurality of Britons support its reintroduction, according to issue polling over the years, but there is no evidence that it preys on their minds with any great urgency, compared to economic health, public services, immigration numbers and crime. It gives the rightwing press something to run with, but nothing terribly useful.

## Militia

For our purposes, of course, the policy has some additional interest. We are - like the boomer reactionaries presumably to be enticed by national service - advocates of universal military training. This policy has fallen out of favour to a large extent in the contemporary left, but a hundred years ago was extremely common. Standing volunteer armies had never been popular on the left, and still less

standing police forces. Our forebears were all too aware of the uses to which such regiments were put, suppressing revolt domestically and abroad, and posing the danger of all out warfare. As Friedrich Engels put it in *Can Europe disarm?* back in 1893,

The system of standing armies has been carried to such extremes throughout Europe that it must either bring economic ruin to the peoples on account of the military burden, or else degenerate into a general war of extermination, unless the standing armies are transformed in good time into a militia based on the universal arming of the people.<sup>6</sup>

Given the disasters of 1914-18 and 1939-45, to say nothing of endless other slaughters in the colonial world, Engels has been handily proven right by history.

Our policy is, naturally, quite different from that of the Tory government and the broader national service lobby. We propose the militia not as a peculiar appendage of the permanent armed forces, but as an *alternative* to them. Militias are extremely useful as *defensive* formations, and not so useful as tools of aggression and dominance in global politics - more to the good. We support the democratic organisation of such bodies, with the election of officers by the rank and file. The monopoly of the state on armed force would thus be qualified, at least, even if these remained state bodies so long as the state continued to exist. A democratically organised militia would be one more check on tyranny.

The use of conscription for civilian purposes is not quite so storied in the tradition, but has occurred to some. Vladimir Lenin, in his third 'Letter from afar' following the February revolution of 1917, which focused on the militia question, hints at the possibilities when he notes that:

... in the severe crisis that all the belligerent countries are experiencing, it would make it possible to combat this crisis in a really democratic way, ... rapidly

to distribute grain and other supplies, introduce 'universal labour service' ...

Has the proletariat of Russia shed its blood only in order to receive fine promises of political democratic reforms and nothing more? Can it be that it will not demand, and secure, that *every* toiler should *forthwith* see and feel some improvement in his life? That every family should have bread? That every child should have a bottle of good milk and that not a single adult in a rich family should dare take extra milk until children are provided for? That the palaces and rich apartments abandoned by the tsar and the aristocracy should not remain vacant, but provide shelter for the homeless and the destitute? Who can carry out these measures except a people's militia?<sup>7</sup>

The context for such proposals is important - a revolutionary situation opened by military disaster, and the consequent economic dislocation. Yet it gets to something important. The militia is the true "arsenal of democracy". It could only work with true mass participation. Bored youths on the world's worst gap year would not cut it. The tradition here is the Parisian national guardsmen who formed the Commune of 1871, and further back the *levée en masse* that got the men needed to defend the French Revolution from invasion by aristocratic Europe.

## Britain's youth

Indeed, that is perhaps the ultimate stupidity of Sunak's policy. It is motivated as a way of toughening up Britain's youth, who have been made 'soft' by ... (insert your favourite moral panic here). Yet that is truly to put the cart before the horse. National service of the Tory sort *might* have some real utility to the British state *if* the youth were already on board; if young people could be expected to throw themselves into it, to dedicate some meaningful portion of their lives to the armed forces, and most of all to shame their wavering peers into participating, as the revolutionary youth of 1789 and 1917 might have been expected to do, but also (for that matter), as my own peers, coming of age in a garrison town after 9/11, did, as they enthusiastically signed up in what they wrongly took to be their country's hour of need.

Yet it is offered merely as a cheap voting incentive to atomised, paedophobic and possibly fictional Herbert Gussett types in the shires, whose real problem with the young is their crude graffiti and the terrible, terrifying rap music they play on their phones in the local park.

Sunak's government rightly had no interest in such a policy until a week ago. Can anyone take it seriously? ●

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## Notes

1. 'School for scoundrels', February 9 2023 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1429/school-for-scoundrels).
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## MIGRATION

# Alice in Wonderland

Record numbers have come over in small boats so far this year, while the Rwanda scheme seems like a dead duck. But, asks **Eddie Ford**, should the left support immigration controls, even if they are sugared as ‘non-racist’ immigration controls?

Even a Rishi Sunak fan (if you could find such a thing) would have to admit that his election campaign did not get off to a great start - whether standing outside No10 Downing Street in the pouring rain accompanied by the New Labour theme tune of ‘Things can only get better’, or visiting the Titanic Museum in an unfortunate display of symbolism. Ruth Davidson, the former Tory leader in Scotland, joked about whether a “double agent” in the Conservative Party was doing the prime minister’s campaign planning.

But things are even worse when it comes to nuts-and-bolts policy. Remember Sunak’s five pledges? Someone should have told him never to promise the undeliverable, and this is profoundly the case, when it comes to his daft commitment to ‘stop the boats’ - which was obviously going to screw him. Firstly, much to the despair of the Tory right, Sunak had no choice but concede the obvious fact that deportation flights to Rwanda will not leave before the general election - making him look even more ridiculous than he did before. Of course, even if by some miracle Rishi Sunak found himself still sitting in No10 on July 5, the chances of anyone been sent to east Africa look fairly remote. For instance, the Asylum Aid charity and the FDA union have launched fresh legal action against the scheme - with a high court judge actually ordering the prime minister to reveal when the first planned Rwanda flight will take off, so he can work out when to hear the legal challenge.<sup>1</sup> Before the election announcement, government lawyers had said that the earliest possible date for flights was the week commencing June 24 - but that was always a fantasy anyway.

Unsurprisingly, many on the right are saying that if Rishi Sunak really believed in the plan, he would have done whatever it took to get a plane landing in Rwanda before making his election call. Why did it have to be July 4 - a date that took everybody by surprise and seemed to be giving up the fight before it had even started? Indeed, call it a conspiracy theory if you like, but some think that the prime minister never had any intention of implementing the policy, as he had no desire to take on the European Court of Human Rights if it attempted to stop the flights again - therefore calling an election was a good wheeze to prevent him from being rumbled.

The scheme is clearly a dead duck - even if home office staff are already on the ground in Kigali - especially as Labour have pledged to scrap it from day one, replacing it with a beefed-up border force working with the National Crime Agency and “counterterrorism” forces using £75 million from the existing budget for the Rwanda scheme. Therefore it will have to go down in history as a mad, Alice in Wonderland adventure that was absurd, inhumane and incredibly expensive to boot. The National Audit Office calculated that it would cost £1.8 million for each of the first 300 people sent there, taking the cost to at least £500 million - good value for money from a fiscally prudent government looking after the country’s finances.

Secondly, home office data at the end of last week revealed that a record 10,170 people have so far arrived in the UK via small-boat English Channel crossings this year - exposing the transparently false claim that the



One of his five pledges

threat of being deported to Rwanda acts as a deterrent. This provisional figure is significantly higher than during the same period last year, when 7,395 people crossed, and in 2022, when the figure was 9,326 for the first five months. In fact, in 2022 it was the highest on record for the whole year, with 45,755 people making the journey - about a third more than landed the following year. Hence the current figure is higher than the first five months of any year since recent records began in 2018, with Sunak’s pledge blown to pieces (along perhaps with his hopes of staying in No10).

### Statistics

It is worthwhile digging a bit deeper into the statistics. Small-boat arrivals accounted for just over a third of the total number of people claiming asylum in the UK in the year ending March 2024. According to the statistics, since 2018 nearly three quarters (72%) of asylum claims have been approved, meaning they were found to be ‘legitimate’ after home office investigations - although some were later withdrawn, dropping the overall proportion of asylum grants to 56%.

This means, breaking records again, that 68,564 people were granted refugee status or other types of leave to remain in the year to March - the highest level in 40 years and the highest number for any 12-month period since records began in 1984. However, last year the government introduced the Illegal Migration Act, which stipulates that anyone who arrived in the UK by small boat after July 20 that year would not be eligible to claim asylum - trapping them in a hellish limbo land.

Then we come to the wider question of net migration - almost certainly a key issue during the election, particularly in seats where the Tories are facing stiff competition from Reform UK, which is currently standing at around 14% in the polls.

As the election date draws closer though, you would expect numbers to drain away, as Reform UK’s potential voters opt instead for the Conservative Party, in order to ‘make a difference’ - though still a sizeable enough number to split the rightwing vote and reduce Tory chances on July 4.

Anyhow, revised official estimates show that net migration to the UK dipped by 10% last year after rising to a record 764,000 in 2022; that after David Cameron promised to reduce the overall figure to the tens of thousands in 2010. For its part, the Office for National Statistics said it was “too early to say if this is the start of a new downward trend”. In response, the government said the figures did not take into account the recent tightening of visa rules imposed last month, such as increasing the minimum salary needed for skilled overseas workers - which they hope will cut arrivals by 300,000 a year. Meanwhile, the Labour Party predictably droned on about how they represented “total Tory chaos and failure” on immigration.

Interestingly, the ONS figures show the number of people coming to the UK for humanitarian reasons - such as from Ukraine and Hong Kong - fell by more than 100,000 last year. Migration’s biggest driver last year was work, of course. Also not surprising, there was also an increase in the number of people arriving from outside the European Union on work visas. Non-EU immigration for work reasons went up from 277,000 in 2022 to 423,000 in 2023. More than four out of 10 people moving to the UK for work-related reasons last year came from India or Nigeria, most commonly in the health and social care sector. Despite this, data from the home office published last week - but not included in the ONS estimates - showed a big fall in visas issued to health and care workers in the first part of 2024.

Non-EU nationals arriving as

dependants of those on long-term work visas rose slightly in 2023 to 219,000 (from 204,000 in 2022). The ONS says the fall in net migration is also driven by non-EU foreign students who flocked to UK universities after Covid, but have now finished their courses and returned home. As always, the reasons for migration are complex, but the likes of Reform UK and the Tory right will never stop peddling paranoid fantasies about an “invasion” - Nigel Farage saying recently that the numbers were like a “slow motion D-Day in reverse”. The nation is in peril!

### Lost bet

Anyway, returning to Rwanda, the deputy Labour leader, Angela Rayner - now exonerated of all charges of wrongdoing over the sale of her former house in Stockport - thought she would celebrate by having some fun and challenging Rishi Sunak to pay up on his £1,000 bet back in February made with Piers Morgan that he “won’t get anybody on those planes before the election”.<sup>2</sup> An obvious slam-dunk winner for the TalkTV host, proving yet again to Sunak’s critics that he is a natural born loser.

Given that he has admitted that no asylum-seekers would be sent to Rwanda before the election, you would have thought that Morgan’s prediction would obviously be accurate. Rayner certainly thought so and, as the prime minister is “richer than the king now apparently”, she thought he should pay up. In fact, why not give the money to a charity like the Red Cross? It’s “probably about three seconds of interest” for him. But Sunak, like a cheating cad, has refused to do that, with Tory sources ludicrously claiming that he was actually right, because *one* unnamed migrant *voluntarily* moved to Rwanda last month after being paid £3,000 to agree to the scheme - therefore, presumably, it is actually Piers Morgan who has to pay up!

Naturally, Downing Street could not resist saying that, if you want “an amnesty to let illegal migrants in”, that is what Labour are offering - but “to stop the boats” then you have to vote Conservative. This almost the very definition of ‘desperate’.

### Principles

Communists, of course, support the free movement of people. People should have the right to live in whatever country they choose. In general we recognise that people move from their home country because of persecution, lack of opportunities and the wish for a better life. The biggest driver is almost certainly war, economic collapse and state breakdown: Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Sudan, etc.

There are those on the left who support ‘non-racist’ immigration laws: Workers Party, SPEW, the *Morning Star*’s CPB come to mind. What ‘non-racist’ immigration laws actually look like in practice is somewhat of a mystery. Back in the day, in the Socialist Labour Party, one of Arthur Scargill’s Trotskyite doorkeepers, Brian Heron, claimed that they would keep white South African racists out of Britain. Apologetic nonsense of the worst sort. In reality ‘non-racist’ immigration laws are just sugar coated immigration laws of the kind supported by the Tories, Labour, the Lib Dems and Reform.

Tougher immigration laws and keeping migrants out does have a certain appeal to the most backward - often the most desperate - sections of the working class. They rightly believe migrants increase competition for jobs, housing and services. Employers, naturally, including Rishi Sunak’s government, support migration in practice because it tends to depress wage levels. Unfilled job vacancies in care, health and leisure are explained by lazy British workers, especially lazy young British workers, who won’t get out of bed or off their backsides. In fact it is lousy pay and lousy hours that cause unfilled vacancies.

But the idea that competition is lessened by immigration laws is entirely illusory. If people cannot move legally, they will move illegally. And illegal workers will *radically* intensify, not reduce competition. They will accept even lower lousy pay and even longer lousy hours. Employers also have a wonderful weapon available to them if illegal migrants organise together to improve their conditions: threaten to report an immigration crime and get the police to cart them off to a detention centre.

The left has no interest whatsoever in supporting immigration controls of any kind. They only increase competition and further divide the working class. Meanwhile, our task is to organise all workers, whether they are legal or illegal, whether they were born in the UK or abroad, whether they are UK subjects or not. Every worker needs to be in a trade union, every worker needs to be won to join the struggle against capitalism and for socialism, which, if it is anything, is international ●

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## USA

# Playing word games

'It's only genocide when we say so' - Daniel Lazare contrasts US grandstanding over Serbia and Xinjiang with its complicity in Israel's war crimes in Gaza

**B**enjamin Netanyahu may be a mass murderer, as far as growing portions of the globe are concerned, but he is still a swell guy in Washington. Hence, Mike Johnson, the ultra-conservative speaker of the House of Representatives, is inviting him to address a joint session of Congress and daring the opposition to disagree.

Democrats, deeply split over the Gaza war, are writhing in agony. Charges of hyper-partisanship are flying, along with complaints that Republicans are trying to make them look bad, put them on the spot, take advantage of their internal differences, etc, etc.

But, once the hand-wringing is over, it is a safe bet that Democrats will go along with it, because that is what Democrats do: ie, vacillate and temporise before ultimately caving in. They are afraid to embrace Netanyahu, because important Democratic constituencies, such as blacks, Arab-Americans and a growing number of Jews, are appalled by what he is doing in Gaza and threatening to stay home in November. But they are also afraid *not* to embrace him, because failing to support a war criminal might make them look like wimps in the middle of a fierce political campaign, in which they are desperate to project an image of strength.

So, while Bernie Sanders says he will boycott in the Senate and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, and a few other left-leaning Dems may follow suit in the House, there is little question that the rest of the party will fall into line. After all, how can they not invite Netanyahu after lionising him for decades on end?

Chuck Schumer is a case in point. A born-and-bred New Yorker, he is the top Democrat in the Senate and a prime example of the kind of American neocon for whom Israel can do no wrong. In 2010, he told an orthodox Jewish gathering that "the Palestinian people ... don't believe in the *Torah*, they don't believe in king David, so they don't think it's our land". Consequently, "you have to force them to say Israel is here to stay". Because Gazans had committed a cardinal sin by voting for Hamas, he went on, "to strangle them economically until they see that's not the way to go makes sense".<sup>1</sup>

He cheered on a seven-week Hamas-Israel war in 2014 that resulted in more than 2,000 Palestinian deaths, he co-sponsored a 2017 bill making it a federal crime to boycott Israel, and he assured AIPAC (the American Israel Public Affairs Committee - the powerful, pro-Israel lobbying group) in 2018 that Zionist land grabs on the occupied West Bank were no problem as far as peace negotiations were concerned.<sup>2</sup>

He even praised Donald Trump for transferring America's Israel embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. "I sponsored legislation to do this two decades ago, and I applaud president Trump for doing it," Schumer said the same year.<sup>3</sup> Dems have repeatedly labelled Trump a Russian dupe. But being a Zionist dupe is apparently A-OK.

Which is why Washington was astonished just two or three months ago, when Schumer did an about-face and declared that Netanyahu was an "obstacle to peace" after all, by virtue of being "too willing to tolerate the civilian toll in Gaza, which is pushing support for Israel worldwide to historic lows". For that reason, he called for



Death from US bombs, planes and missiles

new elections on the grounds that it was "the only way to allow for a healthy and open decision-making process about the future of Israel".

It was a call for regime change that left the political establishment reeling, which is why Schumer issued a clarification a week later, explaining that he had "called only for there to be an election after the hostilities had declined, after Hamas was defeated".<sup>4</sup> Netanyahu was wrong for killing too many Palestinians now. But he was free to go on killing them until the job, in his opinion, was done.

Which suggests that, if Netanyahu accepts Mike Johnson's invitation, the ever-slippery Schumer will come up with some excuse or other to welcome a man he had previously condemned. Netanyahu is used to standing ovations. He got dozens the last three times he addressed Congress, so he will undoubtedly expect the same if he makes it a fourth. Schumer will no doubt hop up and down just like all the rest.

## Key support

But why roll out a red carpet for someone who may soon face an arrest warrant for genocide, courtesy of the International Criminal Court? One reason is that, genocide or no genocide, Israel serves as a key support for US policy in the Middle East, where control of Persian Gulf energy resources has been a top Washington priority since the 1980s.

Another reason is the politics of genocide. One of the nice things about being a global hegemon is that you get to decide what is genocide and what is not.

The slaughter of six million Jews obviously falls into the 'yes' category, which is why Ronald Reagan supported the construction of a vast US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington that now draws a million-plus visits per year. (Winning Zionist approval for the sale of advanced flying radar detectors to Saudi Arabia was another reason, but that is rarely discussed.)

But Gaza falls into the 'no' category, even though Israeli forces have killed some 36,000 people and wounded 80,600 more - roughly five percent of the population, according to the latest tally - and are making conditions unlivable for the remainder. Why? Because invoking the g-word would not only alienate a major ally, but would create legal complications

for the US, since it is providing weaponry that enables Israel to carry out the slaughter to begin with.

Xinjiang, on the other hand, is a 'yes', because charging China with genocide leads to legal difficulties that the United States is delighted to exploit. The process of tarring and feathering the People's Republic began during the 2020 presidential campaign, when the Biden team announced that "the unspeakable oppression that Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities have suffered at the hands of China's authoritarian government is genocide". After much dithering, Mike Pompeo, Trump's secretary of state, confirmed that genocide was underway just before leaving office the following January. Then Anthony Blinken reconfirmed that the PRC was guilty as charged shortly after being sworn in as Joe Biden's secretary of state a few days later. Since Republicans and Democrats were now on the same page as far as genocide was concerned, it had to be true.

Except that it was not. The charges were yet another example of egregious political manipulation based on the flimsiest of evidence - as anyone who carefully examined the data could tell. Much of the evidence about concentration camps, political persecution and the destruction of mosques, for example, came from a far-right German anthropologist named Adrian Zenz - a Christian fundamentalist, turned anti-communist zealot, who said he was "led by god" to take charge of an anti-China crusade.

In 2018, Zenz published an article charging that the Chinese were holding more than a million Uyghurs in government detention centres - a number he subsequently bumped up to 1.5 million and then 1.8. Yet his only source was an article in the Japanese edition of *Newsweek*, which had picked up the story from a Turkish-based Uyghur media outlet with strong Islamist ties. One far-right source thus passed along a rumour to another far-right source, which passed it on to reporters who eagerly lapped it up. Zenz also accused Beijing of forcibly suppressing Uyghur birth rates, even though his own data showed Uyghur population growth outstripping that of Han Chinese between 2005 and 2015 by a factor of two and a half to one. A more respectable China scholar named Perry Link put out a report

stating that 12.8% of the Xinjiang population had disappeared inside Chinese detention centres - a figure that would be shocking if true. Yet Link's data - based on interviews with just eight people scattered in separate villages across the vast Xinjiang countryside - was disturbingly thin.<sup>5</sup>

While no-one will accuse Stalinist China of using kid gloves to put down a bloody Islamist terror offensive that began in the 1990s, the charge of genocide is ludicrously overdrawn. Yet it was used to mobilise liberal opinion on behalf of a growing anti-China campaign. If references to Xinjiang have fallen by more than 90% in *The New York Times* since the peak year of 2021, it is because the campaign has done its work and it is now time to move on to other things, such as China's supposed 'overcapacity' in terms of electric-vehicle production.

## Light bulb

Then there is Serbia. While Republicans and Democrats shadow-boxed in Washington, the United States eagerly backed a UN resolution in New York designating July 11 as an international day of commemoration for the 1995 Srebrenica massacre. The resolution "condemn[ed] without reservation any denial of the Srebrenica genocide as a historical event" and said that the purpose of an annual commemoration was to prevent "denial and distortion and occurrence of genocides in the future".<sup>6</sup>

How high-minded! Except that the resolution, introduced on May 20, created a furore in the General Assembly because it was obviously one-sided and because the events in Srebrenica, in which 8,372 Bosniak Muslims died just a few miles from the Serbian border, are still murky and disputed.

Serbian president Aleksandar

Vučić, who said he had "already bowed my head and laid a flower" at a memorial for the victims, nonetheless urged "everyone in this room to vote against this resolution" on the grounds that it is "highly politicised". With Serbia high up on the US 'enemies list' because of its refusal to go along with anti-Russian sanctions - *The New York Times* refers to Vucic as "little Putin" - the Serbian president said the US and Germany were pushing it, because "someone needed it politically", even though it "will just open an old wound and will create a complete political havoc".

China agreed. So did Namibia, where German colonists killed as many as 110,000 Herero and Nama people between 1904 and 1908. Namibia's delegate complained that selective amnesia "is fast becoming the norm", since "what our designated foes do is genocide, but when we or our allies do the same, it's not genocide". Iran deplored the obvious double standard with regard to Palestine, while Indonesia declared that "before our eyes a genocide is unfolding in Gaza".

"If there is one thing that we must learn from Srebrenica," it added, "it is that inaction is not an option."<sup>7</sup>

In the end, the resolution passed with 84 votes in favour - although a majority (87 states in all) either voted no or abstained. As Vučić noted, it was the first time a UN genocide resolution had passed less than unanimously. Needless to say, Nato members voted yes, as did Australia and New Zealand, while Nato *targets* - ie, Russia, China, Cuba, Syria and Belarus - voted no. Most of Latin America and Africa abstained, as did India and the Philippines.

It was an example of how America and its allies think they can switch genocide charges on or off like a light bulb in order to advance their international agenda, how China and Russia are leading the charge against such practices, and how US hypocrisy fills growing portions of the neo-colonial world with disgust. Mass murder is genocide only when Washington says it is. Otherwise, it is one of those unfortunate incidents that happen when anonymous third world masses get in the way of the imperial steamroller ●

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2. www.timesofisrael.com/schumer-settlements-not-an-obstacle-to-peace.
3. thehill.com/homenews/senate/387566-schumer-applauds-trump-on-moving-us-embassy-to-jerusalem.
4. www.usatoday.com/videos/news/world/israel-hamas/2024/03/21/leader-chuck-schumer-clarifies-israel-netanyahu-rebuke/73050886007.
5. See 'Uyghurs: why now?' *Weekly Worker* March 18 2021: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1339/uyghurs-why-now.
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7. press.un.org/en/2024/ga12601.doc.htm.

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AWL

# Sir Keir's little helpers

Behind the kitsch leftwing decoration there is anti-anti-imperialism, defence of Zionism and the aiding and abetting of the 'anti-Semitism' witch-hunt. Mike Macnair looks at one of those confessional sects calling for a blanket Labour vote

**N**ailing its colours firmly to the mast the Alliance for Workers' Liberty (better called, Atlanticist Witch-hunting Loyalists) has decided to call for a Labour vote in every constituency. The front page of this week's *Solidarity* (better called, *Western Solidarity*) carries the main headline "July 4th: Vote Labour, but fight for a workers' government" (May 29). One of the secondary items on the front page is "No to Yakoob and Galloway. Anti-Labour 'independents' are not a way forward". The leader on page 2 argues:

*Solidarity* backs a Labour vote in the July 4 general election. Labour is still the party linked to the labour movement. We continue the battle to transform the labour movement even in its adverse times, of which this is surely one.

Even Labour's wretched offer means some improvements, and there is a base in the unions and the Labour Party to push a Labour government to concessions. We also fight for a workers' government.

The second article on page 2, by Rhodri Evans, is headlined "Why we say vote Labour everywhere". It begins with denouncing the Labour Party's refusal to allow Jeremy Corbyn or Diane Abbott to stand as Labour, and admitting that "We do not let our disputations stop us seeing the good side a Corbyn victory in Islington North would have in rebuking Starmer" - but then goes on to argue: "But, for us, politics is about building a movement, not about pushing this or that good person into parliament." And:

If Corbyn's campaign does anything to build a 'movement', it can only be either that network or the Communist Party of Britain (the party behind the *Morning Star*). Although the Feinstein network includes people with a genuine Labour left past, we believe both that and the CPB are political dead ends.

Galloway, and Akhmed Yakoob in Birmingham Ladywood - the two figures in the network most likely to win in their constituencies - are in our view demagogues and *de facto* rightwingers.

On page 4 Jim Denham denounces the *Morning Star* for failing to have the courage of its convictions by not calling for all trade unions to support Corbyn: the article is bizarre, because it is half about why in Denham's view Corbyn's candidacy is not supportable. On page 8 Satya Pine denounces "Yakoob, Galloway and the 'independents'": "On some level the candidacies show an appetite for left-of-Labour electoral options, but they cannot really be ranked above the Green Party, which at least is a party and is broadly leftist."

## Weasel words

All these arguments are, essentially, weasel words. Galloway's political ideas are those of the old 'official' Communist Party before the Eurocommunists of *Marxism Today* took over (with the end result of liquidating it in 1991). They are, as



AWL supports Zionist Israel ... and, alongside it, a Palestinian Bantustan

a result, political ideas commonplace on the Labour and ex-Labour and trade union left. The AWL's claim, then, is that the severely disorganised state of the left wing of the labour movement, and its weak politics, mean that the Labour Party, even though controlled by the *right* - which means, in turn, controlled by the capitalist state through the securocrat, Sir Keir Starmer, and by the capitalist media - is to be *preferred* to the disorganised left.

It is worth noticing that there is no mention at all of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. "Vote Labour everywhere" on the ground of the disorganised state of the left providing an *excuse*, and the AWL's preference for Atlanticist Labour rightism over 'official communist' politics as the real motivation - but no account of why there should be no votes for Tusc.

The Atlanticism is fundamental. The AWL began to be anti-anti-imperialists in the 1980s, when it was still using the name *Socialist Organiser*; it was the ground of its break with Alan Thornett and others. Since then, it has elaborated and theorised its anti-anti-imperialism, and deepened its identification with the politics of Max Shachtman, who moved from the 'third camp' in the 1940s to the 'first camp' (support for US imperialism) with refusal to condemn the Bay of Pigs attempted invasion of Cuba in 1961, and opposition to the anti-Vietnam war

movement in the later 1960s. Indeed, already by 1949 the Shachtmanites were supporting Walter Reuther's purge of the communists from the US Congress of Industrial Organisations trade union confederation.<sup>1</sup>

## Last days

The AWL's anti-anti-imperialism had a *sort* of plausibility in the last days of the USSR and the period of US and capitalist triumphalism in the 1990s. As the practical consequences of the fall of the USSR (mass unemployment and impoverishment and falling life expectancy) played themselves out, that plausibility was reduced. With 9/11 and the opening of the 'war on terror' from 2001, and the choice of the Bush administration to take the focus off Afghanistan and target Iraq - a French, German and Russian trade partner and *not* a sponsor of al-Qa'eda - the theory became utterly implausible.

The AWL now owes the workers' movement an accounting for its claim over the Iraq war in 2003-04 that the US and its 'coalition of the willing' were bringing the possibility of trade unions and workers' parties to Iraq by bombing the country, flattening Fallujah (with the number of deaths still unknown) and shutting down most of Iraqi industry, and so on. It owes an accounting for its support for the Anglo-French and US air campaign against Libya in 2011, which the AWL still defends in spite of the transparent result of

producing state failure and endless civil war: Martin Thomas claims that this is the result of the "failure of the Arab Spring" in spite of this sort of outcome being the *routine* result of US military and covert interventions since the middle 1970s.<sup>2</sup>

And it owes an accounting - now more than ever - for its positive role in promoting the smear that 'anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism'. The AWL may have been the actual inventor of the claim that the slogan, "Palestine will be free, from the river to the sea", which promotes the idea of a single, democratic and non-sectarian state in Palestine, is an anti-Semitic code for genocide; if not, it was certainly a very early adopter. The AWL has been campaigning against 'boycott, divestment and sanctions' again since the 1980s - twisting valid arguments about the *limitations* of this policy into excuses for a campaign which has *prepared the ground* for the witch-hunting operations of the US state and its allies, which have emerged more recently.

Today *Western Solidarity* weeps crocodile tears for the tens of thousands of Palestinians dead in Gaza, but will *still* not call the Israeli state's operation genocidal, and *still* campaigns against any sort of actions which could promote (however indirectly) working class action to stop US support for the state of Israel. The AWL will *still* not call out the supposed 'two state solution'

of the 'Oslo accords' of 1993-95 as a proposal for 'Arab reservations' under Israeli military control (and, even at that, one which no Israeli government has accepted).

## Apologetics

*Western Solidarity* for May 15 (two weeks ago) carries an article by Martin Thomas on the anniversary of the 1948 Nakba, headlined "15 May: no, nations do not have hereditary guilt". But actually, the continuing expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank - which is the context for the unexpected success of the Gaza prison breakout and the Israeli collective punishment operation which has followed it - shows that there is no issue of "hereditary guilt": the ethnic cleansing policy of the Nakba is the *continuing* policy of the Israeli state, and it is a policy which the USA has been willing to criticise in words - but never ever to stop US resupply of arms to Israel.

The same issue carries an even more pro-Israeli response to the Nakba anniversary from Eric Lee of LaborStart (who remarked in 2021 that "Joe Biden is part of our family"<sup>3</sup>). And it carried an article by Rhodri Evans, headlined 'Don't reject the IHRA definition' - which has been from the beginning the basis of the witch-hunting of all forms of opposition to US policy in the Middle East as 'anti-Semitic'.

This week's issue carries a full-page article by Caro Ambrose, 'Open up debate in student camps!' complaining of Bristol student occupiers' unwillingness to "debate Hamas" with her and her eventual ejection from the camp. But Ms Ambrose, and the AWL in general, should accept that pro-Palestinian (and pro-Corbyn) protest has for the last nine years in this country been met by witch-hunting operations accusing protestors of anti-Semitism, using 'journalist' finger-men to promote confrontations, which will then be used for prosecutions, sackings, vilification in the daily press, and so on and so on. The AWL has drawn no self-critical balance-sheet of its own (secondary) involvement in this witch-hunting operation. It has, in consequence, made *itself* into the finger-men and finger-women for the new McCarthyism, just as Shachtman fingered communists for the rightwing trade unionism of George Meany and Walter Reuther in the 1950s-60s USA.

The AWL continues to *pretend* to be part of the left - unlike 'Spiked'. This pretence is visible, for example, in its ongoing series for the centenary of Lenin's death, on the early history of Russian Marxism. It has, however, decisively broken with the fundamentals which separated the communists from the social-democrats: opposition to our own countries' wars and their imperialist operations.

It would be more honest for the AWL to memorialise not Lenin, but Eduard Bernstein, Friedrich Ebert, Arthur Henderson, Jimmy Thomas and such-like characters ●

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## Notes

1. www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspaper/laboraction-ny/1949/v13n46/split.htm.
2. www.workersliberty.org/story/2021-08-25/libya-2011-yes-we-were-right.
3. en.davar1.co.il/283234.

## ISRAEL-PALESTINE

# Not a zero-sum game

Capitalist solutions are no solution. Moshé Machover argues that only a regional socialist ferment can win Jewish-Israeli workers away from Zionism and the politics of national privilege

This is a response to articles by two comrades: Steve Freeman's 'Marching towards what solution?' and Tony Greenstein's 'They are all Palestinians'.<sup>1</sup> These two articles, in turn, responded to my recent article 'One-state, two-state illusions'.<sup>2</sup>

Their proposed solutions to the conflict caused by the Zionist colonisation of Palestine are quite different, but they have one important thing in common: they could be - and indeed have been - supported by people who are not socialists and to whom the class struggle is an alien concept.

## Utopia

Steve's blueprint, a "federal republic of Israel-Palestine", is ideologically bourgeois-liberal. This, in itself, is not a sufficient argument against it: it clearly ticks some of the boxes essential for a benign resolution of the conflict, which I listed in my recent article: equal rights for all, including equal personal rights, and - secondly and importantly - equal national rights for both groups involved: namely Palestinian Arabs and Hebrews (aka Israeli Jews).

An additional condition, which Steve fails to mention (due to an oversight?), is the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland. With this necessary addition, the blueprint could, if implemented, go a long way to resolving the conflict. *If implemented.* What makes Steve's bourgeois-liberal position politically utopian is his insistence that his blueprint does not require a regional socialist transformation, but can be implemented under capitalism.

I have written at length explaining why an equitable resolution of the conflict would only become possible in the context of a regional socialist transformation.<sup>3</sup> Here I shall summarise the argument. It starts from the observation that an equitable resolution of this colonial conflict requires decolonisation of Israel-Palestine, which means, concretely, deZionisation of Israel - the overthrow of its Zionist regime. I have argued in detail that this cannot be achieved purely by external forces, though external factors may create conditions favourable to it. Internal action is essential.

An indispensable condition for the overthrow of Zionism is the support and participation of the Hebrew working class. But under present conditions, under capitalism, this support cannot be achieved, because it would demand that the Hebrew working class exchange its present position of an exploited class with national privileges for a position of a class still subject to capitalist exploitation, but stripped of its national privileges. This is a losing deal.

However, given a socialist ferment in the region, in countries such as Egypt and Iraq, class instincts may well lead Hebrew workers to solidarity with the working classes of these countries. There were clear expressions of such feelings of solidarity during the Arab Spring of 2011 and the concurrent mass demonstrations in Israel. In this context, an internationalist socialist, working class movement in the region could offer the Hebrew working class an attractive deal: give up your national privileges in exchange for sharing as an equal partner in a regional rule of the working class.

I am not saying that this kind



IDF soldier praying: hardly part of the Palestinian nation

of scenario is certain; there is no such certainty. But it is a possibility; and there is no alternative situation that can be predicted with any greater probability for winning over the Hebrew working class. Steve's bourgeois-liberal blueprint is politically utopian, because it is packaged with acceptance of a capitalist context that makes it unfeasible.

## Nationalism

Tony likewise rejects the idea of a socialist resolution of the conflict. Indeed he seems to have no use for any project that cannot be implemented under capitalism, because capitalism will go on forever: "The fact is that capitalism has not been abolished anywhere in the world. Are we saying that the liberation of the Palestinians has to wait until the end of time?"

His blueprint for Palestinian liberation is, in all essential elements, identical with that of Fatah circa 1969, when it advocated a "secular, democratic Palestine".<sup>4</sup> Fatah, the dominant faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, was then a militant, petty-bourgeois, nationalist

resistance movement committed to armed struggle. From 1974, following a series of defeats, the PLO/Fatah began to shift its position and by the 1980s succumbed to the 'two-state' illusion. But Tony has stuck to the old "secular, democratic state" blueprint, which he has been advocating for decades.

It is quite common for nationalists to deny the very nationhood of their rival nation; the latter does not really exist, it is a fake. This was indeed the position held by Fatah: it is what the word, 'secular', was intended to signal in the formula, "secular, democratic state". On the face of it, this word seems otiose: a democratic state cannot possibly be theocratic - it *must* be secular. But in the full text of the old Fatah programme it is made clear that 'secular' is intended to negate 'binational'. The Israeli Jews do not constitute a nation, but a faith community. Following the liberation of Palestine, this community would be granted equal religious and cultural freedoms with other religious communities. The state itself will be secular. Only one nation does and will exist in Palestine: a Palestinian nation,

which is an Arab nation.

Tony has long been advocating basically the same position. Flying in the face of reality, he denies the very existence of a Hebrew nation - a settler nation formed by Zionist colonisation, as in other colonised countries whose political economy did not depend on indigenous labour. According to Tony, it is not a nation, but an inherently reactionary formation with a super-reactionary working class. And, he confidently asserts, it will forever remain so, irrespective of circumstances. As such it will not deserve any national rights following the overthrow of Zionism. Liberation of Palestine will subject it to national subordination.

Clearly, this kind of thinking has nothing in common with socialism, let alone Marxism or the dialectic.

Equality of national rights is not just a sacrosanct socialist principle: it is also a political imperative. Contrary to the caricature drawn by Tony, the Israeli Jews are not a reactionary Zionist monolith; nor are the Hebrew workers uniformly extreme-right racists. In addition to a small minority of committed

Hebrew genuine socialists (and *ipso facto* anti-Zionists), there is quite a sizable floating minority whose commitment to Zionist colonialism is far from firm - they can be won over to internationalism, given the right circumstances.

Also, not all Hebrew workers support the racist ultra-right; there are many manifestations of cross-national class solidarity and mutual support, particularly in workplaces where Palestinian and Hebrew workers rub shoulders. Class consciousness and common interests can sometimes surmount colonial-national, supremacist ideology.<sup>5</sup>

The size of these political minorities is fluctuating, depending on circumstances and, importantly, on the ideas they encounter. It is self-defeating for socialists to tell them that following the overthrow of Zionism they will be denied equal national rights and will have to endure national subordination. Preaching such a position is a recruiting call, inviting the hesitating minority to fight tooth and nail for the Zionist state.

## Conclusion

I will not follow Tony in speculating about possible adverse conditions for Zionism that may arise regionally, or internally within Israeli society. Let me just make a couple of points. First, contrary to a widespread impression, which Tony apparently endorses, Israel is not losing the war on Gaza. A war's success or failure can only be measured in comparison with its aim. Measured by the war's *official* aims - eradication of Hamas and freeing of the Israeli hostages - the war is going quite badly for Israel. But, as I have pointed out on several occasions, Israel's *real* aim in this war is *ethnic cleansing*,<sup>6</sup> and it is evidently making steady progress towards achieving this.

Second, in the coming period the Middle East may well face major turbulence that will be extremely damaging to Israel. Also, Israeli society is likely to enter a deep internal conflict between the pseudo-liberal bourgeoisie and the rising messianic populists. But it is facile to assume that any detriment to the Zionist regime is necessarily good for Palestinian liberation.

This is not a zero-sum game. An Israeli explosion or implosion can be a destructive lose-lose for both colonisers and colonised - and the latter are far more vulnerable. Only a socialist resolution would be a working class win ●

## Notes

1. *Weekly Worker* May 16 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1491/marching-towards-what-solution) and May 23 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1492/they-are-all-palestinians).
2. *Weekly Worker* May 2 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1489/one-state-two-state-illusions).
3. See 'Belling the cat' *Weekly Worker* December 12 2013 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/990/palestineisrael-belling-the-cat); also 'The decolonisation of Palestine' *Weekly Worker* June 23 2016 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1112/the-decolonisation-of-palestine).
4. See 'Towards the democratic Palestine' in *Fatah* (Lebanon, January 1970); Mohammad Rasheed *Towards a democratic state in Palestine* PLO Research Centre, Beirut 1970. I have criticised this programme on several occasions - see my book *Israelis and Palestinians: conflict and resolution* Chicago 2012, chapter 17.
5. Important achievements in this regard are due to the internationalist trade union organisation, Koach LaOvdim ('Power to the workers'); see workers.org.il/?lang=en.
6. See 'Zionist drives and divisions' *Weekly Worker* December 7 2023 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1470/zionist-drives-and-divisions).

DEBATE

# Muddleheaded Labourism

Vincent David of the Spartacist League central committee says any Labour vote is “crossing the class line” - even in the absence of an alternative left candidate. Instead he urges everyone to join Tusc’s dead-end Labour Party mark two project

Oehlerites, ultra-lefts and sectarians - this is how the CPGB described the Spartacist League during and after the May 5 debate over the general election. Why? Because of our basic assertion that voting Labour in the coming election is against the interests of the working class. Throughout the debate, the CPGB argued that a split with Starmer’s Labour was not what was posed in this election and that a vote for it remained necessary in the absence of a better choice.

What appeared like the CPGB’s strongest argument against us is that Labour has always been pro-imperialist, that Starmer does not represent a qualitative change on this matter, and thus our insistence that the task is a break from Starmer fuels the illusion that Labour without him would be a step forward. The CPGB also claimed that we were rejecting Lenin, the early Comintern and the policy of the united front. The CPGB’s logic is that, since Labour remains a workers’ party, there is a class line between Labour on one side and the bourgeois parties (Tories, Lib Dems, Greens, etc) on the other. Therefore, a vote for Labour, despite its rotten leadership, still represents a vote for the working class.

We do not deny that Labour remains a bourgeois workers’ party or that it has always been pro-imperialist. But this does not mean that communists always support Labour - a thoroughly Labourite conclusion. The class character of a party cannot be the sole criterion for defining the task of communists. Rather, what is decisive - and what the CPGB completely ignores - is the role that such a party plays in the conflict of classes in a particular context and whether support for it strengthens the proletariat’s position at a particular stage of its struggle.

## Lenin and Labour

If we look at Lenin in 1920, he arrived at the conclusion that communists should support Labour and even seek affiliation to it not merely by looking at the party’s character, but centrally by looking at the political dynamics of British politics at the time. Back then, Labour had never been in power. Its membership encompassed millions of workers galvanised by the 1917 October revolution, who (mistakenly) saw the Labour Party as the way forward to socialism. In turn, the British bourgeoisie viewed Labour as a threat to their interests. In *Leftwing communism: an infantile disorder*, Lenin quotes at length Lloyd George, who advocated the unity of Liberals and Conservatives against Labour, which Lloyd George equated with Bolshevism.

As Labour was facing a united front of the bourgeoisie, Lenin argued that the best way for communists to shatter the mass illusions in Labour and win workers to the communist banner was to support Labour “in the same way as the rope supports a hanged man”, as he famously wrote. He explained:

If we are the party of the revolutionary class, and not merely a revolutionary group, and if we want the masses to follow us (and unless we achieve that, we stand the risk of remaining mere windbags), we must, first, help [Labour leaders] Henderson or Snowden to beat Lloyd George and Churchill (or, rather, compel the former to



Dump the politics of purity

beat the latter, because the former are afraid of their victory!); second, we must help the majority of the working class to be convinced by their own experience that we are right: ie, that the Hendersons and Snowdens are absolutely good for nothing, that they are petty-bourgeois and treacherous by nature, and that their bankruptcy is inevitable; third, we must bring nearer the moment when, on the basis of the disappointment of most of the workers in the Hendersons, it will be possible, with serious chances of success, to overthrow the government of the Hendersons at once (*Leftwing communism: an infantile disorder* (1920)).

Lenin’s tactic sought to exploit the contradiction between the socialist aspirations of the workers and their pro-imperialist leaders, who were going to betray, so as to advance a split with the MacDonalds, the Hendersons and the Snowdens (who, by the way, Lenin constantly made a point of naming).

More recently, while in a very different period, Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership of Labour produced a similar situation. Corbyn spoke to the pro-socialist aspirations of the working class and faced a united front of the bourgeoisie (at least in the first years of his tenure; things were different in 2019). What was needed for communists was to side with Corbyn against the bourgeoisie - not out of faith that he would advance socialism, but precisely to expose the bankruptcy of Corbynism in front of the masses.

## Communist tasks

Now, what is the situation today in Britain? Does the bourgeoisie view Starmer’s Labour as a threat to its interests? Of course not. The ruling class cannot wait to have Starmer at the helm, and a quick look at recent opinion pieces in the *Financial Times* can only confirm this. Far from facing opposition from the bourgeoisie, Starmer’s Labour, with the support of the trade union bureaucracy, is in an open alliance

with the British capitalist class against the working class.

What about the working class itself? Do workers believe that Starmer will advance socialism or even the interests of the working class? Of course not. Starmer’s whole project has been based on leading the ‘counterrevolution’ against Corbynism, striking at any pro-socialist pretences and driving out thousands of leftwing members. There is zero enthusiasm for Starmer among working class voters and, insofar as many will still vote for Labour, it is mainly out of hatred for the Tories and because of the lack of a pro-working class alternative.

So, yes, for communists in this context a call to vote Labour amounts to *crossing the class line*. In the current context, a vote for Labour is a vote directed explicitly against the aspirations of the working class and for an open alliance with the capitalists. This includes voting for left Labour candidates like Zarah Sultana, John McDonnell, etc. These left Labourites play a particularly deceitful and criminal role, because they speak for “peace” and “socialism”, while at the same time working for a Starmer-led government coming to power.

For so-called communists to lift Lenin’s tactic from 1920 and mechanically plop it into today is worse than shooting themselves in the foot. In practice, it means deceiving the workers in the same way as the left Labourites - offering a ‘communist’ veneer to scoundrels who openly promise to attack the working class. Instead, the task of communists consists of building a pro-working class opposition to Starmer’s Labour, and to all trade union bureaucrats and Labourites who support him. It is to advance this struggle that the Spartacist League joined the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition and urges other left organisations to do the same.

The point is not that Starmer is worse than previous Labour leaders or that Corbyn or MacDonald better represented the interests of the working class. All these Labour leaders defended variations of the

same liberal-Labourite and pro-imperialist programme. The difference lies in where these leaders stood in the class conflicts and polarisations of a particular period. MacDonald (in the early 1920s) or Corbyn (in the first few years) gave voice to the aspirations of the working class despite their pro-capitalist programme, and for that they faced staunch opposition from the bourgeoisie despite their best efforts at conciliation. Thus, there was a need for communists to give these leaders a certain amount of parliamentary support in order to expose them. But in the current context what is called for is the most irreconcilable opposition to Starmer’s Labour. Only in this way is it possible to fight for a break between the most advanced elements of the

working class, who are yearning for an alternative, and the current leadership of Labour.

The CPGB has often repeated that what is posed is not a break with Starmer, but a break with Labourism. To pose the question this way is to understand nothing of Labourism. Keir Starmer is the leader of the Labour Party. He is supported by the whole party, including the left Labourites (Sultana, McDonnell, etc) and the trade union bureaucracy (Sharon Graham, Mick Lynch, etc), who are in turn supported by the bulk of the “communist” left. This chain, which ties the workers’ movement all the way to Starmer and the imperialist bourgeoisie, is Labourism. You do not need to be a communist to oppose Starmer. But it is grotesque opportunism for so-called communists to speak of a break with Labourism, while rejecting a break with Starmer’s Labour!

## Veneer

Lenin’s goal was to advance a rupture of the working class against its Labourite misleaders, using tactics adapted to the particular circumstances. His point was *not* that Labour should always be supported because it is a bourgeois workers’ party. Rather, this is how most of the British far left, for almost a century, has completely distorted Lenin to justify maintaining unity with the Labourites - which explains why the British communist movement has always remained a weak appendage of Labourism. The CPGB’s insistence that a vote for Starmer’s Labour still represents somehow a vote for the working class directly flows from this wretched tradition and stands in contradiction to Lenin, who always emphasised that Labour was the party of the labour aristocracy and petty-bourgeois parasites sitting on top of the workers’ movement.

In a nutshell, the CPGB’s position is simply Labourite - with a thin ‘communist’ veneer ●

## Online Communist Forum



Sunday June 2 5pm  
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For further information, email Stan Keable at [Secretary@labourpartymarxists.org.uk](mailto:Secretary@labourpartymarxists.org.uk)

A selection of previous Online Communist Forum talks can be viewed at: [youtube.com/c/CommunistPartyofGreatBritain](https://youtube.com/c/CommunistPartyofGreatBritain)

## REPLY



# Continuing a conversation

'Bourgeois democracy' is democratic and also undemocratic. But the term correctly captures the class nature of a particular form of state, insists Steve Bloom

In response to Mike Macnair's letter (April 25), I would like to first deal with the question of my "sloppy method", then move on to more substantive matters.

I am 'guilty' (if that is the right word) of not being aware of Mike's collected works and, therefore, failing to check them for a relevant quote about Rosa Luxemburg before I submitted my original article to *Cosmonaut*. I note, however, that Mike has raised no objection to my understanding of his views regarding Luxemburg, which I deduced (apparently accurately) from a comment I noted down, even if not verbatim, during the Q and A following his presentation to the 2023 convention of the Marxist Unity Group in the USA. It does, therefore, seem reasonable to conclude that, since I got the substance of Mike's viewpoint right, my failure to locate a direct quote dealing with the question represents a relatively minor default.

Mike, for his part, is likewise 'guilty' of not being aware of my role in opposition to the "broad mass party" line, while I was part of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International leadership starting in the 1980s. Mike, too, could easily have discovered this. On my website I have posted three relevant items for public view: 'Report on February 2004 meeting of the international committee of the Fourth International', 'Letter to the International Committee of the Fourth International' (2009), 'Comment on *Italy: a failed refoundation* by Salvatore Cannavò' (2012).<sup>1</sup> All Mike needed to do was ask me before making an assumption - just as easy as a web search, since he had my email address.

And in this case, unlike with my comments regarding Mike's

appreciation of Rosa Luxemburg, his understanding of my viewpoint regarding the Fourth International and its campaign against 'schematism' is clearly inaccurate. Mike defends what he wrote nonetheless, noting that it remains a correct appreciation of the organising strategy pursued by the FI leadership. But that is hardly the point. As accurate as Mike's characterisation of the FI's trajectory may be, it is essentially irrelevant to his conversation with me.

Part of our difficulty may well be another inaccurate assumption Mike offers us: "comrade Bloom's argument for 'anti-schematism' was the common view of his and my own *youth* in the 1960s-70s USFI" (emphasis in original). Mike needs to remember that the trajectory of the US Socialist Workers Party during the 1960s and 70s, in which I got my training as a young activist, was not the same as what he lived through "in the 1960s-70s USFI".

The US SWP confronted the same theoretical difficulty as the rest of the FI in the wake of the Chinese and Cuban revolutions. But it did not come to the same conclusion. Rather than deciding that their entire previous theory had been a schema, the response of the SWP leadership was to cling more tightly to the Bolshevik experience as the one and only true model. Party theorists insisted that China and Cuba reflected exceptions, aberrations. The world revolution, they explained, would soon return to the "classical" pattern with the "working class at centre stage" after a "detour" through these alternative experiences.

Thus the approach I presently pursue regarding the problem of schematism does *not* flow from my youthful training. It is, rather, a sharp break with that training, reflecting instead conclusions I have reached

**Capitalist rule relies on the market, not democracy.**

**Capitalist companies practice the democracy of 'one share, one vote'**

**To the extent that there is democracy under capitalism, it is hobbled with all sorts of checks and balances**

**Rosa Luxemburg: a mass strike strategy relies on a mass working class party**



much later in life and as a result of some considerable theoretical struggle - grappling with ideas I once considered sacrosanct.

## Veiled polemic?

I ask Mike, in future correspondence, to keep in mind that his original article was based on another incorrect assumption: that my initial engagement with this conversation represented some kind of veiled polemic with his viewpoint, as expressed in *Revolutionary strategy*.

My engagement with this conversation represents a polemic with MUG, however, not directly with Mike Macnair. I would not say that any similarity between MUG's and Macnair's theories is purely coincidental, because I do not think that is true. But I will say that the substantive discussion of what I have written about MUG's approach needs to be rooted in the actual question I have raised: 'Is MUG's *specific* political orientation (as presented in the book titled *Fight the constitution - for a democratic socialist republic* and elsewhere) a schema or not?'

On this key problem Mike offers us not a single word. Instead of assessing MUG's specific theory, he attempts to prohibit any and all discussion related to the topic of schematism. Based on his understanding of "scientific method", he insists that "anti-schematism itself becomes an untestable or 'unfalsifiable' claim".

I admit that I am perplexed by this assertion. It may be true if we consider 'anti-schematism' as some kind of generalised methodology, abstracted from any specific case study. But in any specific instance the assertion that a schema is at work can certainly be interrogated rigorously. Was a majority of the Bolshevik Party, at the start of the April 1917 congress, stuck (for the moment, at least) in the schema

that the Russian Revolution must, inevitably, pass through the stage of a "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" (by which the Bolsheviks meant a bourgeois-democratic dictatorship), yes or no? Was the international Trotskyist movement, when confronted with the Chinese and Cuban revolutions, stuck in a schema of the Russian model (soviet power) as the one and only true road to the dictatorship of the proletariat, yes or no?

These questions can be tested and evidence given to support one answer or the other, precisely because they are not abstract and ahistorical. They are specific and concrete. Likewise with the question I have posed regarding MUG's orientation in the USA in the year 2024. It is reasonable for Mike and members of MUG to challenge my assessment, suggesting arguments that support a contrary conclusion. But to tell us that we are not even allowed to ask the question - in the name of following a "scientific method" - seems a bit strange. And, please keep in mind, we can answer 'yes' or 'no' to any and all such specific and concrete questions about schematism quite independently from whether we agree with a particular solution that may be proposed to alleged schematic thinking - such as the total overthrow of everything we ever knew about principled revolutionary politics by the USFI (probably not starting in the 1980s but certainly taking a qualitative leap at that point).

Mike continues:

Nor does [Steve's] letter offer an answer to my argument that the mass-strike strategy or 'strategy of dual power', for which he relies on Rosa Luxemburg, and the insistence that it is wrong to make the political revolution the first step in the social revolution, are versions

# 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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of Mikhail Bakunin's critique of the 'Marx party' in 1869-71, and that this approach has been tested repeatedly by left groups and failed over and over again.

A couple of corrections are needed in order for Mike's paraphrase to properly correspond with my viewpoint:

Firstly, my appreciation of the mass strike/dual power does not rely on Rosa Luxemburg. I do my best to base theoretical conclusions on the lived experience of working class and other mass movements rather than on previous theoretical expositions by historical figures. It is an approach that I will insist is, and must always remain, essential to the Marxist method (to the materialist method). Thus I would cite the Russian Revolution as living proof that the mass strike/dual power model is at least one viable historical development that can lead to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Luxemburg accurately theorises what life experience later tested and proved. It is that later test and proof which is decisive, not Luxemburg's theory. The theory is simply what helps us to understand the lived experience - and to prepare for similar experiences in the future.

I will also argue that the mass strike/dual power phenomenon has, in fact, generated the potential for socialist revolution multiple times during the history of the 20th and even the 21st century, but without effectively leading to the dictatorship of the proletariat because a revolutionary leadership for the mass strike was lacking. Thus the absence of widespread success cannot reasonably be attributed to a flaw in the theory that this is one possible road to the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Russian experience proves that, when both elements - mass strike/dual power and revolutionary leadership - are present, revolution is indeed possible.

Secondly, I do not believe "that it is wrong to make the political revolution the first step in the social revolution". It is certainly a possible first step, and it is probably the right first step when it is possible. What is wrong is to insist that this *must* be the first step, that no social revolution can take place if political revolution is not the first step. It is when the theory of a political revolution as the first step takes this turn - when we begin to treat it as an absolute requirement, without which nothing else is possible - that the theory of political revolution as the first step transforms itself into a

schema. This is no less disorienting in my view than the theory/schema that a mass strike and the creation of soviets is the absolutely necessary first step.

In my judgment these two numbered points are a sufficient response to Macnair's sentence quoted above. Whatever Bakunin's critique of Marx might have been, I once again reject the notion that a process of historical excavation - trying to parse what was said by different historical figures in decades or centuries past - is the key to understanding theoretical matters. A comparison of contemporary theory to the actual historical struggle for socialist revolution, most of which unfolded long after Marx and Bakunin passed from the scene, is far more relevant.

The parsing of historical debates can certainly help us to understand the relationship of those old debates to present disputes, thereby shedding light on present disputes. This is often useful and sometimes even essential. But it is the relationship of theory to the actual class struggle which must remain *decisive* in resolving any and all disputes, old or new.

## Democracy

In conclusion a word about this: "I think that the idea of 'bourgeois democracy' is deeply misleading and prettifies the character of the capitalist rule-of-law regime, which is necessarily plutocratic-oligarchical."

The problem is real enough and, I would say, parallel to the difficulty we have with the term, 'dictatorship of the proletariat' - at least as popular expressions used to describe specific forms of state power. Both terms are equally misleading in ways that can and have been used against us. And yet both also have elements that contain sufficient truth to make them useful - even essential as *scientific* descriptions.

'Bourgeois democracy' is, indeed, 'democratic', if we are making a comparison to other forms of bourgeois rule - fascism or military dictatorship. The difference between a capitalist class that rules by 'democratic' means and one that relies on brute force is not trivial. It is worth fighting for in the streets, because things like the right to free speech, to assemble in mass demonstrations, to run candidates in elections, to create labour unions and other mass organisations - genuine democratic rights that characterise 'bourgeois democracy' (and only 'bourgeois democracy' as a form of bourgeois class rule) - are important

for us, as we struggle to make the socialist revolution.

The term, 'bourgeois democracy', also correctly captures the class nature of this particular form of state - a reality that is essential, as we discuss issues related to making revolution against the capitalist state *per se*. This is especially important in our debate with those on the socialist left who fail to understand the 'bourgeois' aspects of 'bourgeois democracy', who emphasise the *relatively* democratic side of this duality, as compared to other forms of bourgeois rule to the point of making a fetish out of it.

This draws our attention to another problem that would arise if we, as a Marxist cadre, decide that the term, 'bourgeois democracy', should be discarded, reserving the word, 'democracy', henceforth strictly for the kind of political system we will usher in with the transition to a workers' republic. Should we start to use the term in this way, we will probably sow even more confusion in 99.9% of the population than we do at present by our use of the term, 'bourgeois democracy' - because that 99.9% has been indoctrinated to believe that 'democracy' is what was ushered in with the Magna Carta, the first American revolution of 1776, and the French Revolution.

Without a long explanation (that many will not stop and listen to) they will assume that we are using the term, 'democracy', to mean the same thing. By emphasising that this is *bourgeois* democracy, and by focusing on how undemocratic it really is in substance (ie, a 'democracy' only for those who have money), we can help to educate at least a layer of the public which shares the prevailing appreciation/misappreciation of what 'democracy' is and where it comes from. By denying that this form of state is 'democratic' at all, on the other hand, insisting that the 'bourgeois' side of the duality is the only side we will recognise, we automatically create an additional obstacle to communication with that layer of the population.

Finally there is still another reason to maintain our historical understanding of 'bourgeois democracy' - even while remaining acutely aware of its limitations, as accurately enumerated by Macnair. Without it no-one can properly comprehend the previous history of the Marxist movement. It is a concept/term that underlies a great many of the discussions and debates that have taken place over the last century and a half. In this, too, the term, 'bourgeois democracy', has much in common with the term, 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. Both have made themselves indispensable to future theorising, as formulations with a previously established and precise scientific meaning. If we want to properly integrate the theorising we are doing today with the theorising that has been done in previous decades, we will be adding a considerable layer of difficulty, if we begin to introduce a brand new terminology, which actively denies the validity of the terminology that has been used up until this moment.

So my approach is to continue talking about 'bourgeois democracy', using these words in their scientific sense, while remaining aware (and working hard to educate others with regard to the fact) that 'bourgeois democracy' is a form of class dictatorship at least as much as it is a form of democracy. As dialecticians we ought to be able to keep that contradiction in mind without confusing ourselves. It is, after all, a contradiction that is present in our terminology precisely because it is also inherent in this specific form of class rule ●

## Notes

1. All three are available at [stevebloompoetry.net](http://stevebloompoetry.net).

## Fighting fund

# £300 needed!

With just two days of May left as I write, we are quite a bit short of that £2,250 monthly target for the *Weekly Worker* fighting fund.

Over the last seven days £306 came our way, taking the running total up to £1,946 - which means we still need £304 by Friday May 31. In other words, urgent action is required, so please help us out if you can, as soon as you read this! Can we raise in just two days what was donated over the last week?

We are, of course, more than grateful to all those readers and supporters who did contribute last week. Thanks in particular to comrade LM, who came up with her usual £80 standing order, and to comrades TB (£60) and DB (£50), who made their usual PayPal contributions.

Also helping us out via PayPal was EG (£5), while GT (£35), JT (£25), AB and DG (£20 each),

TT (£6) and AR (£5) all chipped in by either bank transfer or standing order. But all that still leaves us quite a bit short - and I can't stress enough how much we rely on our readers to come up with the necessary.

But there's still time! You can help us out by the May 31 deadline either by bank transfer or PayPal - the details for both are below. But there's no time to waste! Please play your part to help out the only paper that tirelessly campaigns for the single Marxist party the working class so desperately needs! ●

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](http://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/donate)

# weekly worker

Making money  
from weapons  
Israel uses

## University tops call cops

Inspiring and impressive. Yassamine Mather reports on the student protest camps in Oxford and the support they are getting from the staff and the town

**S**tudents in the protest camps at Oxford University are angry and extremely frustrated by the authorities' response to them.

This is understandable in an institution where undergraduates and postgraduates are supposedly encouraged to take a critical view of the history of colonialism, slavery, racism, etc. What did university authorities expect when the same students see a real time genocide in Gaza carried out by the colonial-settler state of Israel? A genocide aided and abetted by the United States and its allies, including Britain, of course.

Did we expect them to forget everything they had learnt for the sake of future careers? Did we want them to be as dishonest and superficial as the Oxford alumni sitting on the Tory and Labour front benches? Did we wish that they had blamed Hamas for fighting back against 75 years of Israel apartheid and state oppression and the 17-year siege of Gaza?

I certainly hope we did not and how inspiring it is to see students in Oxford, Cambridge, London, York, Warwick, Newcastle, Edinburgh and in so many other places taking up a just cause.

### Well disciplined

Oxford students have now set up a second camp, in Radcliffe Square - what they call Radcamp. Many of these students have lived in tents for more than two weeks now, often under pouring rain - and some of them combine protests with preparation for exams! They are on the whole well disciplined. I am always impressed by how mature they are in dealing with fascists, drunks and Zionists who try and intimidate them and create confrontation. They know how to de-escalate a tense situation and I must admit I have learned a lot from them.

Faculty and staff support for the students is also impressive - especially on May 24, when the students escalated their actions by staging a peaceful sit-in at the vice-chancellor's office. Inevitably there was a range of views on this tactic, both among staff and students, but the fact that the university officers decided to call the police to arrest a group of unarmed young students protesting against genocide in Gaza was excessive and spectacularly backfired.

The police not only arrested students, they also violently pushed and injured other protestors as well as observers. The entire incident was filmed on mobile devices and by now has been seen by millions worldwide, damaging the university's reputation. Many in Gaza have added their comments on social media platforms, showing appreciation for the support given by Oxford University students.

In various emails and social media posts, staff commented that calling the police contradicted Oxford's professed commitment to the right to



Police: heavy-handed and widely condemned

protest and its duty of care towards its students. In addition to the growing number of students in both camps, over 2,400 in the university as a whole, more than 620 faculty and staff members and 200 university healthcare workers have supported the protests - not to mention 14 local trade union branches,

While admitting that the protests have been "largely peaceful", official administration statements also claim the protests create an "intimidating environment" for Jewish students and staff. This is totally false - it refuses to recognise the numerous Jewish students actually involved in the protests. The administration's emails have also suggested that the protests make some in the Oxford community feel not just "uncomfortable", but "unsafe".

The best response to this has come in the form of an open letter from the Concerned Jewish Faculty at the university:

According to the university's statement issued on Thursday evening, Oxford's Palestine Solidarity Encampment has created a deeply intimidating environment for many members of our community, including our Jewish students and staff, and members of the local Jewish community. This is not our experience. It is also not

our experience that the Oxford administration has been open to dialogue with members of the Jewish community who are supportive of the encampment: when some of us reached out to you recently to propose a conversation, you ignored our offer. We therefore object to the university's reductive and misleading claims to speak on our behalf. The characterisation of Jews as a uniform mass with a single viewpoint is itself a common and insidious anti-Semitic trope.

We implore you to listen to - and learn from - our students who have been urging the university to reckon with its complicity in the catastrophe unfolding in Gaza. In accordance with the university's commitments to academic freedom and democratic governance, we encourage you to follow the lead of colleagues at the University of Cambridge, Trinity College Dublin, the University of York and elsewhere, who have chosen to engage in meaningful, good-faith dialogue with protesting students.

### Solidarity

We have also seen impressive public statements by college authorities, such as this one by the acting warden in

Palestinians and those affected by the war on Gaza" that expressed a commitment to "the right of people to self-determination and freedom from oppression and genocide ..."

On May 26, Balliol College's Junior Common Room passed a motion condemning the university for responding to the protests with violence and intimidation. They expressed "deep disappointment" with Helen Ghosh, master of Balliol College, criticising her signing of the university's statement as an "attempt to ignore the college's spirit".

In an open letter, Hertford students expressed concern for those who experienced "police violence first-hand", which they attributed to the university's decision to involve the police, while hundreds of students have signed open letters directed at their college heads. (Interestingly, Thames Valley Police described what happened on May 24 as "a small peaceful protest in the city" in a statement that has since been updated.)

### Common rooms

St Anne's College Junior Common Room and Middle Common Room passed motions supporting Palestine and the "liberated zone" represented by the encampment, organised by Oxford Action for Palestine (OA4P) with a majority of more than 80%.

Overall, the mood among the majority of staff and students is very clear and senior administrators who spend all day looking at Excel spreadsheets have not woken up to this.

University protests are important not only because they express the views of a growing majority of the population against Israel's genocidal policies, but also because in the long term they can harm the Zionist regime's economy. In this respect the warning by the International Centre of Justice for Palestinians regarding any "investments held in both arms companies and Israeli settlements" is significant. Universities have been informed that making money from investment in companies that supply weapons to a state committing war crimes might be illegal. They have also been warned that university officers could face legal action in the UK and elsewhere as a result.

In official statements put out by the university, a lot of attention has been given to the claim that the student protest last week disrupted a telephone call the Oxford University vice-chancellor was making! In decades to come, when we look back at the genocide of Gazans, it is unlikely that anyone will be concerned about the vice-chancellor's phone call being interrupted by a peaceful protest. What will be remembered is that Oxford students and staff were on the right side of history, while the administrators were either complicit in war crimes - or else they had no idea of what they were doing and where they stood on the appalling events unfolding in Gaza ●

St Anthony's, addressed to students:

I write with grave worry about the events in the university today and in particular about the involvement of the police in dealing with protestors. I have written to the vice-chancellor to express my concern about the deployment of the police and the damage to the relationship between the university and our student community.

We recognise our students' right to lawful protest and for their voices to be heard... Our paramount concern at present is for the safety and wellbeing of those of our students who were present at the protest and may have been hurt or caught up in police action. I also appreciate that today's events, as well as the ongoing Gaza war, have caused serious upset and trauma to many of our students... The college would like to offer every support to ensure the safety and welfare of all of you. Please know that we are here to support you and we urge you to contact us if you need any help.

Our students' political courage and commitment to peace and against untold violence through peaceful action are admirable. I would like to take this opportunity to say that our governing body noted the Graduate Common Room recent "motion in solidarity with