

weekly **worker**



Supplement: navigating a way out of the hell created by Zionism and its US imperial sponsor

- Letters and debate
- Iran's election
- DSA and Labour
- US complicity

No 1498 July 4 2024

Towards a mass Communist Party

£1/£1.10 Free for July 7 Palestine marchers

LIKE FLIES TO SHIT, REFORM UK ATTRACTS BIGOTS



LETTERS



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

Third-campist

In his article last week, Mike Macnair, a former Trotskyist, is determined to spread as much confusion as possible about Trotskyism, and the transitional programme and method, to justify his own conversion to the third-campism of the CPGB ('Minimum programme again', June 27).

He does acknowledge that that programme originated in the Comintern, in its 1921 Third Congress and the discussions in Germany on the disaster that was the 'March action' misadventure in 1921. The transitional programme (TP) was codified in the Fourth Congress of 1922, it was not a 1938 invention of Trotsky: he merely updated it for the new circumstance of the approaching World War II, which he correctly foresaw would bring revolutionary situations which genuine revolutionary socialists must prepare to lead.

It was wrong of the Comintern to expel Paul Levi for correctly criticising this 'Bakuninist-influenced' (anarchist) action in public, and neither Lenin nor Trotsky were then prepared to take on Béla Kun, Grigory Zinoviev and Karl Radek, the main targets of his criticisms. Levi wrote an introduction to Leon Trotsky's *Lessons of October* in 1924 which now began to openly criticise the trio following the death of Lenin in January 1924.

The central motivation of the TP is there must be an organic connection between what demands we popularise in the working class and where we want to go: the socialist revolution to overthrow the capitalist state, take power and initiate a workers' state. The minimum/maximum programme of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) put forward reformist, minimum demands to achieve advancements for the workers and envisaged the revolution as an event that would objectively unfold in its own good time without the need to politically prepare the vanguard of the masses to lead it by advanced propaganda, and the masses themselves by agitational demands. Macnair and all centrists and third-campists essentially follow this lead, guided by apologists for the SPD's 'pope of Marxism' (Lenin's mocking term), Karl Kautsky, and Grigory Zinoviev, like Lars T Lih and Ben Lewis.

I have more respect for what Andrew Northall says about what's wrong with the CPGB's take on min/max demands than on Steve Freeman's three-stage revolutionary theory, which lacks entirely any orientation to a socialist revolution apart from one which might come in its own good time irrespective of human agency. This is not to excuse Northall's blind spot on the crimes of Joe Stalin; we would suggest if he had lived in the USSR under Stalin and made the arguments he is now making he would have been rewarded with a swift bullet in the back of the head because he had become a "Trotskyite-fascist".

But it really is beyond the beyond for the third-campist, Macnair, to accuse me of ... third campism: "I flag comrade Downing's 'anti-Pabloism' both because he does so himself and because his account of why the Fourth International of 1938 failed rests - *implicitly, if not openly* - on the 'anti-Pabloite' mantra that 'Stalinism is counterrevolutionary through and through'" (my emphasis).

I have never had such a position. This was Joe Hansen's incorrect line against those who later became third-

campists and then outright supporters of US imperialism over the Bay of Pigs and Vietnam: Max Shachtman and his followers. Stalinism is a counterrevolutionary political current, like Labourism and social democracy internationally, but they remain currents within the working class, so the "through and through" bit is false. Therefore, like the trade union bureaucracy (Trotsky compared Stalinism to a trade union bureaucracy which had taken state power), they are forced to carry out some progressive acts, *in defence of the source of their own corrupt power and privileges*. Hansen was later to switch this ultra-left characterisation to a rightist designation of Cuba's leader, Fidel Castro, as "an unconscious Marxist" - an obvious contradiction in terms. This was also mainly the line also of the Pabloites in Europe, thus facilitating the unprincipled 1963 fusion.

That 1953 debate in the US SWP was over how to characterise the 'buffer zone states' in eastern Europe, which were under the control of Stalin via the Red Army. Initially these states remained capitalist ('people's states') until late 1948, when some showed willingness to accept Marshall aid from the US. Then it was necessary to entirely expropriate the capitalist character of these states to block US intervention. Stalin founded deformed workers' states (with a few problems in Yugoslavia and Albania) to directly control them to protect the USSR, as the cold war developed.

As another example we might take Cuba's transformation into a deformed workers' state after the defeat of the Jack Kennedy/CIA-organised Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961. In the 1966 International Committee Third World conference in London Gerry Healy's Socialist Labour League continued to designate Cuba as a capitalist state "with a weak bourgeoisie" and Pierre Lambert of the French section of the International Communist Opposition had the line that it had a "shadow of the bourgeoisie". James Robertson, the future leader of the Spartacist League, wittily observed that, "While the nationalisation in Algeria now amounts to some 15% of the economy, the Cuban economy is, in essence, entirely nationalised; China probably has more vestiges of its bourgeoisie. If the Cuban bourgeoisie is indeed 'weak' ... one can only observe that it must be tired from its long swim to Miami, Florida." An outraged Healy had him expelled from the conference for this spot-on piss-take.

But the real problem with Macnair's line of attack on Trotskyism is to downplay and effectively dismiss the counterrevolutionary popular front alliances Stalin made with US/western imperialism and the 'unpopular front' with Nazi Germany from 1939 to 1941, primarily dedicated to murdering wholesale the revolutionary socialists, Trotskyists, in the USSR from 1934, and those members of the communists parties who genuinely sought 'a new October' in Germany, France, Italy, Greece, Vietnam and Algeria. In Greece, between October and December 1944, the National Civil Guard mounted a campaign of extermination against the Trotskyists. Throughout the country, its agents abducted, tortured and murdered militants. Dockers, metalworkers and teachers all suffered alike. "We killed more than 800 Trotskyists," a member of its political bureau said.

Trotsky makes the point that if the Provisional Government had succeeded in assassinating Lenin before the October revolution in 1917 then that revolution would almost certainly have failed, as he himself did not have the authority that Lenin had in the central committee because of his

previous anti-Bolshevism. Imperialist secret state forces assassinate working class leaders directly themselves and via their agents in rival political groups because they are acutely aware of the importance of certain figures in the political struggle. I would mention their role in the recent 'troubles' in Ireland and the assassination of figures like Seamus Costello and the Irish civil war assassinations of Republican leaders like Liam Mellows, doubtlessly on the guidance of the British state.

"How this bears on the present question is that comrade Downing explains the failure of the Trotskyists in 1939-48 merely 'because the Stalinists and the imperialists had formed their popular fronts to defeat the revolution and assassinate the revolutionaries,'" Macnair writes. Don't you like the contemptuous word, 'merely'. It wouldn't have made any difference if they had not been assassinated, because where they were, like in Britain, they still did not lead a revolution, he asserts, as if the global picture did not exist. This is also ignored in his debunking of Andrew Northall's line.

Macnair writes, "What the communists in fact did at the second congress of Comintern in 1920 was the opposite. It was, in the *Theses on the role of the communist party in the proletarian revolution*, to theorise minority rule, on the basis that the working class as a class was necessarily represented by its 'advanced part', the party: so that the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' means the dictatorship of the party."

This is also ignoring the international situation, the defeat of the revolution in Germany in October 1923 and the withering away of the soviets as democratic organs of workers' power due to great mass disappointment that no help was coming from revolutions in the advanced countries and famine in 1921-22. Imperialist academics and Stalinists agree that Leninism inevitably led to Stalinism and equate the revolutionary action taken by the young Soviet state in its own defence, Kronstadt is most often cited, with the counterrevolutionary violence of the Stalinist bureaucracy, from 1929, escalating after Stalin's murder of Sergei Kirov in 1934, because he had got a bigger standing ovation and more votes for the central committee at the 17th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) that year. Stalin murdered the majority of the delegates and central committee members during the great purges in revenge.

In footnote 18, Macnair asserts: "There was, in fact, some 'religious cleansing' of 26-county Protestants after partition: see R Bury *Buried lives: the Protestants of southern Ireland* Dublin 2017". It is true that many Church of Ireland Protestants did emigrate to England and elsewhere, but the reason for that was that many were informers for the Black and Tans and auxiliaries, who immediately murdered the IRA men on the "information shared with the crown forces" - as a recent book coyly described their role. Tom Barry's IRA in West Cork executed these informers and that, amazingly, enormously reduced the death rate of the IRA freedom fighters.

Finally, Macnair avoids many of my central arguments in my letter because he has no answers and hopes no-one will question him on it.

Gerry Downing
Socialist Fight

Good old SPGB

How eye-opening was Robin Cox's letter in your last edition in response to Mike Macnair's criticisms of

the Socialist Party of Great Britain (June 27).

He was spot on in writing that "nothing more is required to institute full communism, once a significant majority of workers come to want and understand it". He was quite right in stating that "those who bang on endlessly about the alleged need for some mythical transitional period are really only looking for an excuse to hang onto capitalism in the hopeful pretence that this might make them seem more pragmatic and plausible in the rough and tumble of capitalist politics". As he wrote too, "you can't have an alternative to capitalism unless the idea of such an alternative becomes widely circulated - unless you throw yourself into the whole business of 'making socialists', as William Morris put it".

Apart from the SPGB, the only group seeming to want to put their energies into doing this are the newly emerged 'Communist Future' in Manchester, even though amongst them some residual attachment to the idea of 'transitional' reforms is still identifiable.

Howard Moss
Swansea

Unconscious

John Smithee is a notorious extreme liberal posing as a communist - he wants us communists to legalise drug taking! (Letters, June 27).

It's obvious that he is on dope himself. And it's also obvious that we can expect communism to reflect, in some individual cases like Smithee, the degenerate aspects of bourgeois society. The truth is that, while drug taking may not harm some people, in other cases it may have disastrous, psychotic effects.

In a previous letter, Smithee argued that calling for a vote for Labour will serve to discredit communists. But he is the only one in Britain I see bringing discredit to the communists - similar to the extreme liberals posing as communists on the other side of the Atlantic, the American Spartacists. I have disagreements with Leninism on certain issues,

but Lenin was correct to argue that the working class are spontaneously social democratic. In other words, a vote for the Labour Party, even when led by a rightwing leadership, is an unconscious vote for socialism.

Tony Clark

For Democratic Socialism

Well done, Carla

Excuse my irony, but surely I'm not alone in finding the output from Carla Roberts nothing short of *scandalous* - she routinely blends sardoniously accurate assessment with purposefully targeted light-heartedness: to add insult to injury, all in language that's readily understandable by any reader, whatever happens to be their particular level of revolutionary 'development'.

So can nobody from anywhere within the political-intellectual complex that is the *Weekly Worker*/CPGB get this person under control, where articles such as those risk leading the British working class to think for themselves rather than be allowed to continue unmolested in their utter horribleness? To be cunningly, thoroughly, heinously and extremely *dangerously* duped.

Something must be done to stop this nonsense, otherwise next thing we know the likes of Fiona Lali will jump ship from the Revolutionary Communist Party to join the ranks of the CPGB: and where can that all end, except with the surreal prospect of a consolidated Communist Party being developed as a *genuine* threat to our current super-exploitative, inevitably blood-drenched/rabidly warmongering global paradigm?

So, yes: prompt remedial action, please, aimed at Roberts and indeed all others of her dastardly type. Obviously not in any sense of applying Stalinist-modal 'dictatorial' control, but at least hopefully from those aware of how transcendence comes as part of all such precious new experience, in turn bringing *irreversibly* liberating growth.

Bruno Kretzschmar
email

Fighting fund

You did it!

A big thank you to all our readers and supporters who helped us get over the line in June and raise that much needed monthly total of £2,250 for the *Weekly Worker* fighting fund!

Still needing £370 in the last four days of the month, we are pleased to say that £399 came our way, taking our total for June up to £2,279. Well done, everyone!

Thanks in particular go to BK, who donated a very generous £100, LM, whose monthly standing order is for £80, plus other SOs/bank transfers from JT (£25), OG (£24), AB (£20) and MD (£10). Then there were last-minute PayPal contributions from DB and AC (£50 each), MS (£18), JB (£7) and EG (£5). Finally that well known stalwart, comrade Hassan, handed his usual £10 note to one of our team.

So in June we exceeded the target by £29, but what about July? First up is comrade AC, who came up with his usual tremendous monthly kick-off of £100. Other start-of-the-month standing orders and bank transfers came from MM (£31),

DL, BK, MW, SJ and II (£20 each), MD (£18), BG and MT (£15), TM (£13), MM (£11), DC, AN, CP, YM and DI (£10) and JS (£6).

Finally there was £60 via PayPal from comrade TB. This was intended as his annual subscription, but when it was pointed out that he had already paid his sub just a few months ago, he declined the offer of a refund and insisted we take it as a donation! Brilliant, comrade!

All this shows how much the *Weekly Worker* is appreciated. With just three days gone, our running total for July is already £419. Now we need to keep up the momentum and make sure we reach that £2,250 target once again.

For details of how to help us out, please use the link below. Keep up the good work, comrades! ●

Robbie Rix

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

IRAN

Don't expect much

Most voters did not vote. That might or might not change in the second round. But, says Yassamine Mather, whatever happens, the supreme leader will remain in charge

According to figures released by Iran's ministry of the interior, only 40% of the more than 61 million strong electorate voted in the first round of the presidential elections. Although this is a new low since 1979, it is still much higher than the last mid-term parliamentary elections, where only *eight percent* of the population voted in Tehran province, for example.

The apathy is understandable, given the overarching role of the supreme leader when it comes to major decisions - including any future agreement with the United States and the west regarding the country's nuclear programme, an issue that will have a direct effect on sanctions and the country's economy (currently inflation is over 40%).

It is also the failure of successive 'reformist' governments to bring about change. Although such administrations have more liberal attitudes on social issues, including the obligatory wearing of the hijab, they have repeatedly failed to defend even their supporters from repression. At the end of the day and at crucial historic times, even when their own freedom is challenged, as that of 'reformist' candidate Mir-Hossein Mousavi and his wife's freedom was in 2009-10, they remain faithful to the notion of an Islamic Republic and refuse to challenge the supreme leader - and, of course, the repetition of this scenario has rendered them ineffective and unpopular.

When it comes to economic policies, the 'reformist' unconditional support for the free market and neoliberal economic policies means they are as rightwing - if not further to the right in some respects - as the conservative factions. That is probably why the presence of a single 'reformist' candidate, Masoud Pezeshkian, in the first round of the presidential elections failed to attract larger numbers to vote.

In the second round, to be held on July 5, 'reformist' Masoud Pezeshkian, who won the most votes in the first round, will compete against the 'hardliner', Saeed Jalili. Out of a total of about 24.5 million votes, Pezeshkian got nearly 10.5 million and Jalili around 9.5 million.

Pezeshkian says he is Azeri (from Iran's Turkish minority), although many of the inhabitants of Mahabad, where he was born, are Kurdish - as was, according to some websites, Pezeshkian's mother. He was minister of health and medical education in the second 'reformist' government of president Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005).

After the disputed elections of 2009 he defended the protestors of the green movement, quoting the first Shi'ite imam, Ali ibn Abi Talib: "Do not treat people like wild animals." Regarding 2018's mass protests, he described state repression as "scientifically and intellectually wrong". Following the 2022 protests, Pezeshkian called for the formation of a team to assess and clarify the incidents. Although he initially criticised the handling of the protestors and their trials as unconstitutional and insisted that defendants should have legal representation, he later issued a statement condemning the protests. He argued that they had not been in the people's best interest. Pezeshkian is also very loyal to the supreme leader - as he keeps reminding everyone.

His supporters will, however, point out that he is one of the few non-corrupt politicians in the Islamic Republic and, as far as I can tell, no-one denies the fact that he and his family live a modest life. He is supported by the Reform Front.

As for Jalili, he is often referred to by his supporters as a 'living martyr' - he lost part of his leg in the Iran-Iraq war during the siege of Basra. During Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's presidency (2005-13) he held important positions, such as secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, and was a nuclear negotiator. In the current elections his opponents refer to him as the embodiment of Iranian 'Talebanism' (referring to the Afghan ultra conservatives). Jalili describes himself as a firm believer in the Islamic Republic's *velayat-e faqih* (rule by supreme jurisprudence) and claims he is 'anti-western' - his main slogan being 'No compromise, no surrender'.

Of course, this outlook has been responsible for some of the most severe sanctions against the Islamic Republic without achieving anything in return. But, as always with Iran's rulers, we should be aware of sloganeering often failing to match reality. Jalili claims to be a crusader against corruption, but some of the main beneficiaries of increased sanctions - those buying black-market goods and selling them at a much higher price - count amongst his most ardent supporters.

What next?

On July 1, Pezeshkian asked Jalili about the nuclear deal and the 'reformist' faction's plans for negotiation with the west. Jalili said that he would not accept any compromise: "Iran should not be kept down by the three world powers."

Israel's interest in all this is very clear. If Iran votes for a warmonger, isolationist president on July 5, the rightwing Israeli government will find more allies for its plans to turn the cold war against Iran's Islamic Republic into an actual one. This was confirmed by Deny Strionovich, former head of the Israel Defence Forces' strategy and research, speaking to BBC Persian.

In an attempt to gain the support of the regime's opponents - including the 60% who did not vote in the first round - Pezeshkian supported the right to protest: "When a teacher demonstrates, we hit him with a baton. We throw protesting pensioners into jail." You should not retain power through "oppression".

However, Pezeshkian's most controversial comment was this challenge to Jalili: "I declare in front of these people, I will withdraw from the election today on the condition that [Jalili] agrees that if he does not achieve the eight percent growth he promises, he must be hanged."

That comment caused Jalili to laugh, but the use of the word 'hanged' sparked a wide range of reactions among political figures and social media users, from serious comments and support for holding officials to account, to condemning the use of such language - not to mention the creation of a hashtag titled 'No to Jalili's Execution'!

However, a group of Pezeshkian's supporters are saying that his use of the term is a rhetorical expression of his firm stance against corrupt officials. They point to other

statements of his where, when he wants to assure his supporters that he will keep his promises, he uses the phrase, "I stake my neck on it"!

On the turnout in the first round, Pezeshkian pointed out that 60% of eligible voters did not participate. In other words, you may be elected by just 20% of those entitled to vote: "You can't rule a country with 20% of the population!"

The problem with Pezeshkian's argument is that even if he wins, he too will be in a similar situation - unless a miracle happens on Friday and a much larger section of the population votes.

Last week, as various Iranian consulates and embassies hosted 'elections' outside the country, some of Iran's royalists took it upon themselves to physically attack women wearing headscarves who were about to vote! These supporters of the former shah are also often keen supporters of Israel.

As Hamid Dabbashi wrote in *Middle East Eye*,

The ongoing genocide in Gaza is a game-changer, a transformative event in world and regional history ... If the leading figure of an expat opposition actively sides with Israeli genocide in Palestine, then that entire cause has forever lost its legitimacy ... Reactionary monarchists are not the only party that has lost our current history. Significant factions of the Iranian left are equally plagued by a chronic Islamophobia afflicting their perception of Palestinian national liberation ... There can never be any democratic uprising anywhere in the world without active, open and principled solidarity with the Palestinian cause and steadfast opposition to the settler-colony and its successive acts of genocide. The pathetic and disgraceful Iranian opposition, manufactured in the US and Europe, has forever failed that test of credibility.¹

In conclusion, irrespective of what happens on Friday, we should expect little change. Both Jalili and Pezeshkian confirm they will follow the supreme leader's 'guidance' on important issues, including the future of the country's nuclear programme. There are signs he might consider a compromise with the west - after all, he must have sanctioned the current talks between Iranian officials and representatives of the US state department in Oman.

When it comes to internal repression, a Pezeshkian presidency might bring some slight relaxation, especially when it comes to the hijab. However, the 'reformists' are unlikely to put forward any legislation accepting the right of women to choose how they dress. The 'morality' police may be advised to show more tolerance of 'unIslamic' behaviour, but Pezeshkian is part of the system that created these forces of repression. He will not disband them.

All in all, no-one expects much change, neither in internal nor foreign policy. No wonder there is such a widespread refusal to vote. The 'opposition' is just part of the regime ●

Notes

1. www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/iran-elections-gaza-genocide-expat-opposition-death-marked-how.

ACTION

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.

End the genocide - stop arming Israel

Saturday July 6, 12 noon: National demonstration. Assemble Russell Square, London WC1. Tell the new government to act for Palestine. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk/events.

Lenin 100 - the struggle for socialism

Sunday July 7, 3pm: Online meeting. Historian and author Paul Le Blanc introduces Lenin's revolutionary theory and practice and considers how these can transform activism today. Registration free. Organised by Lenin 100 in Britain: www.facebook.com/events/1183262372677982.

Support Barnet social worker strikers

Tuesday July 9, 6pm: Lobby of Barnet council, Hendon Town Hall, London NW4. This Labour-controlled council is using strike-breaking agency staff against mental health social workers who have been on all-out strike for two months for better pay and conditions. Organised by Barnet Unison: www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=752133953802231.

The racket

Tuesday July 9, 6.45pm: Book event, Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1. Declassified UK journalist Matt Kennard introduces the second edition of his book, *The racket: a rogue reporter vs the American empire*. Followed by Q and A. Tickets £3 (£1). Organised by Housmans Bookshop: housmans.com/event/book-launch-the-racket-by-matt-kennard.

How to win unions to oppose nuclear weapons

Wednesday July 10, 7pm: Online meeting. The Labour Party and TUC are committed to nuclear weapons. How can CND change that by building the case against nuclear weapons and war in the unions? Organised by CND Trade Union Advisory Group: cnduk.org/events.

Communist Culture Club

Thursday July 11, 7pm: Weekly online meeting. John Dunn (Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign) reviews the film *Strike: an uncivil war*. Bruno Leipold introduces his book *Citizen Marx*. Organised by Labour Left Alliance and Why Marx?: www.whymarx.com/sessions.

A good deal for working people?

Friday July 12, 6pm: Eve of gala rally, Elvet Methodist Church, 8 Old Elvet, Durham DH1. Workers' rights after the election. Speakers include Andy McDonald MP, Mick Lynch (RMT), Fran Heathcote (PCS), Matt Wrack (FBU) and Daniel Kebede (NEU). Organised by The Institute of Employment Rights: www.facebook.com/events/1381826255833486.

Durham Miners Gala

Saturday July 13, 8am to 5pm: Rally and labour movement festival, The Racecourse, Green Lane, Old Elvet, Durham DH1. With over 50 brass bands and more than 100 trade union banners. Organised by Durham Miners Association: www.facebook.com/events/343419915171132.

Disabled people against cuts

Thursday July 18, 12 noon: Protest, music, art, theatre and more. Parliament Square, London SW1. Disabled people demand a future. Organised by Disabled People Against Cuts: dpac.uk.net/blog.

Sheffield Transformed

Friday July 19 to Sunday July 21: Festival of leftwing politics, Sadacca, 48 Wicker, Sheffield S3. Talks, debates, workshops and culture. Tickets £15 (£8). Organised by Sheffield Transformed: www.facebook.com/sheftransformed.

Tolpuddle Martyrs festival

Friday July 19 to Sunday July 21: Annual commemoration festival, Tolpuddle Martyrs Museum, Dorchester Road, Tolpuddle DT2. Tickets £60. Organised by Tolpuddle Martyrs: www.tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk/festival.

Introduction to Living Rent

Saturday July 20, 12 noon: New member briefing, Living Rent Office, 5th Floor, 52 St Enoch Square, Glasgow G1. Living Rent is Scotland's tenant and community union. Learn about the history, vision, structure, campaigns and activities, which include securing home repairs, stopping evictions and preventing rent increases. Organised by Living Rent: www.livingrent.org/intro_to_lr_jul24.

Palestine, political crisis and resistance

Sunday July 21, 12 noon to 5.30pm: Post-election conference, SOAS University of London, 10 Thornhaugh Street, London WC1. Mainstream politics conceals popular anger at austerity, the cost of living and government support for Israel's genocide in Gaza. Where next for the left after the election? Speakers include Lindsey German and John Rees. Tickets £15 (£5). Organised by Counterfire: www.facebook.com/events/999365414976743.

Stop fascist Tommy Robinson in London

Saturday July 27: Counterdemonstration, central London. Details to follow. Oppose actions of far-right groups led by Tommy Robinson. Organised by Stand Up to Racism: www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=805776185000120.

CPGB wills

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

USA

Thoughts from afar

Which way for the DSA? There are those who hanker after a Labor Party based on the trade unions, like the Labour Party in Britain. Max Shanly offers some considered words of advice

As far as is possible from this side of the pond, I try to monitor the debates going on inside the Democratic Socialists of America. Its transformation in just under a decade from a small, soft-leftish caucus of the Democratic Party into the largest organisation on the American left - the spearhead of a multi-tendency revival of the socialist movement in that country - is something to marvel at.

Looking from the outside, the most important ongoing discussion currently taking place within the organisation is the debate around whether the DSA should reconstitute itself as a workers'/labour party, either institutionally or at least formally allied with the American labour movement. A motion in support of such a move is on the agenda at the forthcoming convention of the Young Democratic Socialists of America, its youth and student wing. The motion is the product of factionally unaligned members of the organisation.

The main thrust of the motion (titled 'Towards a workers party') is that

... socialist and labour parties around the world have built deep connections to the labour movement and created strong institutional ties to labour unions. In many such parties, unions are directly affiliated with parties and are thus entitled to send representatives to the decision-making bodies of the parties. These powerful institutional ties keep socialist and labour parties accountable directly to the working class, while uniting unions behind class struggle and a coherent policy programme.

Unionisation

Whilst this did not occur in the United States, the resulting lack of "ties to a working class party" means that "unions in the country have been vulnerable to attacks by employers, leaving the US with one of the lowest rates of unionisation among industrialised countries". The resolution goes on to highlight the links the YDSA has built with organised labour at an individual level on university campuses across the country, but that, as a result of the impermanence of studenthood and the individual nature of the relationships built, once YDSA members depart their respective academic institutions, these links quickly fall apart.

It continues by making reference in support of the goals of the DSA's 'Rank-and-file strategy', and the YDSA's support of it - prioritising in particular "rebuilding the labour movement through shop-floor organisation, advancing democracy and a class-struggle orientation in our unions, and challenging conservative union bureaucracies" - and, making reference to Kautsky's famous formula, seeks the "merging [of] socialism with this rank-and-file movement". Stating that "democratic socialism is built upon working class power, and the multiracial working class is the only agent that has the ability to create democratic socialism", it concludes that "direct accountability to and representation for unions will make



Easy route to mass base would be a fatal route

YDSA's connection to the working class stronger".

The motion then resolves for the YDSA to undertake measures to create a structure for "for direct, chapter-to-local institutional ties between YDSA and unions representing student workers", for the organisation's national coordinating committee to be tasked with "holding at least one public forum on creating institutional ties between YDSA and student worker unions per year" and creating "guidelines and provide direct support to chapters with student worker unions on their campus to encourage chapter-to-local affiliation" - with the aim of the national coordinating committee then writing:

a report detailing the successes and failures of the chapter-to-local affiliation process. Based on its findings, the national coordinating committee will draft a plan of action for making the process of chapter-to-local affiliation more effective. The national coordinating committee will also draft a plan for making national-to-national ties/affiliation possible between entire unions and YDSA, not only locals.

It is a laudable aim, but the logic of the motion, and its justification for a formal merger between the American socialist and labour movements, is extremely flawed in substance; based upon a misunderstanding of history, and a misreading of core political concepts. The debate thus far has been centred around the idea of founding a worker/labour party, as if a workers' party and a labour party are one and the same thing, and the motion follows that very line of thinking, but *there is a difference*. To understand that difference requires us to go back to basics.

Working class

As the *Weekly Worker's* Mike Macnair argued in his book *Revolutionary strategy*, the working class consists of the whole social class dependent on the wage fund, including the employed, the unemployed, youth, and pensioners,

irrespective of race, gender or sex (my emphasis, paraphrasing Marx). To this definition, we must also add the sick and permanently disabled, who are reliant on the welfare state for means of survival. The cash pot for this flows directly from the wage fund itself into state coffers to be redistributed to those unable to engage in productive, paid work due to incapacity.

In common parlance, the workers' movement and the labour/trade union movement are synonymous with one another. However, if they are not the same thing, then this creates a giant hole in the popular conception of the workers' movement, and specifically creates a problem, when it comes to the application by socialists of Karl Kautsky's merger formula.

This proposes that social democracy is the merger of the socialist movement and the workers' movement. Together, this combination makes the party. Historically, this has been conceived by many as a merger between socialist organisations and trade unions, as was the case in Britain, hence the creation of labour parties. But, since the working class does not consist solely of those who are or can be organised at the point of production into trade unions, the workers' movement and the labour/trade union movement *cannot* be synonymous with one another. And if they are not one and the same thing, then what exactly is the workers' movement, and how should we define it?

Be in no doubt: the labour/trade union movement forms the core constituent part of the workers' movement, and is a representation of the overwhelming mass of the organised working class in the workplace. The workers' movement is also made up of a wide range of auxiliary organisations - namely cooperatives, workers' mutual aid organisations, credit unions, workers education associations, etc. Additionally, it is also constituted by the working class fractions of other social movements (but not the movements themselves), and the otherwise unorganised section of society reliant upon the wage fund

that cannot be organised at the point of production. The 'working class fractions of other social movements' here refers to those members of the class who participate in social movements that are otherwise broad, cross-class collaborations, who may or may not be unionised, with varying degrees of political consciousness.

It is through this definition where a line in the sand begins to develop between a *socialist workers' party* - a party built upon the fusion of socialism and the movement of the whole working class, as a class, in and for itself - and an *inevitably bourgeois labour/trade union party*.

Bourgeois

Why is a labour/trade union party inevitably bourgeois? The unions are made up of the proletariat - what can be bourgeois about that? Well, dear reader, we must have a full and frank discussion about the *real* role trade unions play within the present society, not the highly idealised version we have in our heads.

The trade union movement is the primary expression of worker opposition to exploitation at the point of production. It is rooted in workplace organisation in the form of trade unions. Trade unions, in the industrial sense, are nominally *organs of class struggle*, but in practice are *bodies for class negotiation*. They struggle and negotiate for *transient* concessions and ameliorative measures from and within the capitalist system.

They are organised on a sectoral basis, not as a whole class. Unions compete with one another for members and the pursuit of their respective industrial interests. The resulting expression of this as a political tendency, *trade unionism*, is one characterised by the pursuit of social reform *within* the existing socioeconomic and legal framework - the capitalist state - so, whilst it has *proletarian characteristics*, and originates in proletarian organisation, trade unionism as a political tendency is *fundamentally bourgeois in nature*. It cannot see beyond the present state of things, in fact, it is loyal to it and to its institutions - it is, after all, one of them itself.

These factors, when combined, constitute the limits and horizons of what is known as *trade union consciousness*. It is a reformist tendency, both in the industrial and political sense, and will find it difficult to be anything more if solely left to its own devices.

It follows from this that, by sheer weight of numbers alone, any party formed upon the basis of an institutional merger between socialist organisations and trade unions would, particularly at the present state of development within organised labour in the United States, fundamentally make trade unionism as a political tendency, and trade unionist consciousness in general, the dominant factor in such a party. Everything the party does would be shaped by it. And, since as a political tendency trade unionism is bourgeois in nature, so would be the party.

What does the merger between socialist organisations and the trade union movement really mean in party terms?

Reduced

Firstly, it means that the Democratic Socialists of America *would no longer exist* in its present form. It would, at best, be reduced to a socialist faction within a *bourgeois* labour party and, since the DSA is already a multi-tendency organisation, the likelihood is of it remaining as such. Socialists in the United States would be a minority within the party, based upon the institutionalised union of an organisation of thousands with a movement of millions. In effect, it would be no different to the DSA's current position as a faction in the Democratic Party - except by providing the DSA with an *artificial* mass character.

Furthermore, in practical terms, such an alliance would not be with the union members themselves. It might be that at a local-chapter level, if you are lucky, there exists a democratic culture and strong tradition of autonomy, but at a national level you will find yourself in alliance with the workers' permanent representatives - the trade union bureaucracy. This limits the scope of action socialists can take within the trade union movement itself.

How do you propose that a DSA labour/trade union party based upon direct affiliation would intervene in union affairs? It would not be able to. How can you intervene from without in something you are formally within? What about intervening in unions that are not part of the party? Can you even do that without risking strained relations between individual unions? Of course not, nor would you ever be able to. You could potentially as a socialist faction, but, if that is the case, then what is the point of merging at all? Your hands would be tied. It takes grand delusions to believe the union bureaucracy would not bring pressure to bear upon anyone who steps out of line in the name of party unity.

You would be giving up your independence in return for greater resources, but what is the point of greater resources if you cannot use them effectively? By committing to control by the trade union bureaucracy, the DSA would in fact be risking a repeat of the mistakes of the US Labor Party of the mid-90s

to early 2000s. Trade union officials within that body argued against electoral work in favour of “base-building activity” - in reality, a move to preserve trade union officialdom’s relationships with the Democrats. You would not be taking a short cut along the road to socialism, but a march down a path that does *not* end up with a decisive break with the party of American liberalism.

Trade unionism and its logic would infect the independence of socialist politics. It would cripple any attempt to go beyond social reformism and the present state of consciousness within the labour/trade union movement. The language of priorities would be based on that of trade unionism: transient concessions expressed as social reform, the primacy of relations with ‘friendly’ elected representatives within the existing state and legislature, and the formation of local, state and federal administrations to leverage the state as a vehicle for amelioration.

Permanent class

And, since a permanent class of representatives has arisen within the trade unions itself, it would only be natural for a trade union party to develop a class of permanent representatives of its own. You will never convince, or even be allowed to discuss, the idea of term limits for, or the recallability of, political representatives inside the trade union party. The union bureaucracy simply would not have it, would organise both bureaucratically and seemingly democratically against it. I say ‘seemingly democratically’, because they would not be afraid to mobilise their members from on high in defence of trade union politics, and would not for one second be unwilling to use union discipline to enforce it. If that does not work, they would not be afraid to shut down all debate by force if necessary.

It might seem here as though I am being pedantic or pessimistic, but the above is entirely based on the experiences of the Labour left in Britain. Its leading organisation during the Corbyn years was Momentum. Aping the structures of the Labour Party, and in dire need of access to financial and practical resources, it opened itself up to direct affiliation with trade unions at a national level. Not with the left groupings inside the unions affiliated to the party themselves, no: the unions as a whole. The cause and concerns of the trade union bureaucracy as a whole, not just its progressive elements, *vis-à-vis* the Labour Party became Momentum’s own and, whilst it provided great financial and practical resources to the organisation, it severely crippled its political development and ability to act.

The Labour left entered the Corbyn era with ambitious aims for party reform, and left it having achieved none of them, although it did successfully tinker around the edges - only for Keir Starmer to get elected leader and roll all those minor changes back (and more).

In the name of party unity Momentum gave up its role as a vehicle for socialist transformation - change enforced in part by its clientele-like relationship with the unions and the party leadership. Its alliance with the unions was in fact a negative step in its development, not a positive one. It could not advance a programme or strategy to achieve party democratisation, because to do so would require intervening in union affairs directly to win concrete support for the left’s agenda, and if union members start thinking about democratising the party, then you can guarantee they are going to start thinking about democratising their own unions too, and that weakens the

union bureaucracy. So why would the bureaucracy ever agree to that? Everything Momentum did became centred around getting Labour elected, even if it meant giving up the fight for socialism, in the name of unity with opportunists.

Political independence for socialist organisations is important because it prefigures the political independence of the working class. Whilst merging the socialist movement with the labour/trade union movement might result in a trade union-based party orientated towards socialist principles, the reality of the forces at play and the effects of trade union consciousness upon the party would prevent this from being anything more than a token gesture.

For decades the Labour Party *nominaly* pursued a socialist course, Clause four of the constitution declared that the party would “secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service”. A Lassallean formulation designed to head off the potential of mass Marxist organisation in the wake of the October revolution and the impending repatriation of millions of armed workers from the frontiers of war.

Despite numerous periods in office, sometimes with large parliamentary majorities, the reforms Labour has brought about have proved to be nothing more than transient concessions to be whittled away by successive governments (some of them even bearing the Labour brand), while Britain remains a capitalist country *par excellence*.

Every worker knows that every victory against the bosses is not a permanent one. It might last for a long time, but it is still temporary - nothing more than a plaster on an open wound incapable of healing. Every attempt at advance quickly transforms into one of defence: you end up having to give something up to gain something else. Trade unionism and social reform go hand in hand, because they are the same thing: one from below, the other from above. A *bourgeois* labour/trade union party sits in the middle, managing expectations and achieving little. A party of acceptance of the existing social order, not of extreme opposition towards it.

As socialists, we believe in the necessity for mass organisation. Not because we want to be the most popular kid in school, but because we believe that the emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class itself. A *socialist* workers’ party engages in a permanent tripartite exercise, referred to as education, agitation and organisation.

Education

It *educates* the working class - not telling it what to think, but helping it learn how to think: to position itself within the world and to understand its historic role as the great liberator of humanity as a whole. It does not look down on the workers: it recognises their own agency and aids and abets them in achieving it to the full.

It *agitates*, or propagandises, to raise consciousness amongst the great mass of people, giving them the confidence to fight back against the indignity of capitalist life. It exposes the world for what it is, why it is, and that it can be more - and not only that it *can* be more, but that it *must* be more.

And it *organises*, both for the struggle in the here and now, but also for those at a destination not

yet sighted. It does not consider the workers a mere appendage, to be mobilised from on high as and when beneficial to the party, but moves along with their struggles, fighting side by side, walking the long road to freedom hand in hand, pointing towards the signposts along the side of the road which help to chart the correct route to the destination.

And it does so organically, because it knows the struggle for freedom is not an easy task, that these things take time. The party builds relationships with workers individually, and with the working class collectively. It merges with it: it both *leads* the class and *subordinates* itself to it. It does so democratically, because it believes that only through a democratic party can the movement of the class advance. It becomes the working class’s own best friend. Its champion. It seeks serious electoral representation, just as the parties of the Second International, including the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, did. But it does so to represent the working class as its tribunes - a form of representation wholly unlike that which is practised by parties based upon trade unionism, one of class negotiation. Instead it elects representatives to the institutions of bourgeois democracy to help further the advance of the class struggle.

Forgive me for the rhetorical flourish, even we materialists must sound romantic now and then, but there is a point to what I have just said. The *socialist* workers’ party does not aim to be the most popular kid in school. Since a *bourgeois* labour party is by its very nature primarily an electoral party, it tries to be the most popular kid in school (you might like him, but you know deep down *you cannot rely on him*). Its links to the masses are superficial at best, artificial at worst. Such a party, like the popular kid, thinks that by inviting everyone over to their place they will have loads of friends. The kid might have hundreds of friends on Facebook, while dozens liked his last post on Instagram. He only knows about five of them in real life, but that does not really matter: it’s appearances that count.

This is what the debate around *direct affiliation* is really all about. It is a short-term substitute for long-term mass work and organisation. It is taking the easy route - a short cut through the bushes - rather than the long trek down the road. It is a mechanistic application of the merger formula, based on a partial misreading of the equation. You might be able to come up with an answer, but it is the wrong one. The numbers do not add up.

So what makes a socialist workers’ party so different from a bourgeois labour party?

The *socialist* workers’ party represents the working class as a whole - the entirety of the *social class dependent on the wage fund*, including the employed, the unemployed, youth, the permanently disabled, and pensioners, *irrespective of race, gender or sex*. It does not put one element of the workers’ movement on a pedestal and forget about the rest. It organises the class - as a class in and for itself.

The *socialist* workers’ party is not short-sighted. It knows the unlikelihood of turning the world upside-down in a single electoral cycle. Like the *bourgeois* labour party, the *socialist* workers’ party stands in elections, but it does not centre its life around them. It is united around a long-term programme, not an ever-changing electoral platform. The *socialist* workers’ party fights for reforms, but it is not reformist. It knows concessions by capital are transient. It thinks clever, the reforms it fights for are designed to create

space for the movement to advance, not to spend its life on the defence. It is the *party of extreme opposition* to the status quo.

Its elected representatives use their positions as platforms for the education, agitation and organisation of the great mass of the working class. They are the people’s tribunes. The party refuses to take power without winning an outright majority share of the popular vote - not because it mistrusts the organs of elected representation, but because it stands one hundred percent behind the concept of absolute democracy and has no illusions of the limitations that would be imposed on it taking power on the basis of the prevailing liberal-constitutional order.

Organisation

The *socialist* workers’ party fights to be the very centre of working class life. It organises on the basis of territorial locality - the places where people really live, not artificial electoral districts. It organises the unorganised, and fights injustice in the here and now. It builds a state within the state, not as a substitute for the one that already exists, but as an example of the one soon to be born. The workers’ party gives the workers’ confidence, and the workers give confidence to it - confidence to throw off their chains and achieve freedom. The workers’ party is both patient and ready for action at a moment’s notice. It is both old and young, at the same time, wise beyond its years and full of life. When you need it, the workers’ party is there for you. It serves the working class and has no other master. It struggles against the old world and fights for the new. It is a party of revolution, not because it wants to tear the world apart for the sake of it, but because it is honest enough to admit freedom cannot come without doing so.

The *bourgeois* labour party, on the other hand, does none of that. It is an electoral vehicle and an electoral vehicle alone. It is based on the politics of compromise, of negotiation. It tries to convince people that their best interests can be served within the framework prescribed by the present mode of production. It does not intentionally aim to delude workers into thinking things cannot change: it just genuinely *believes* they cannot. It is beholden to all the trappings of the present state of things, because it is a by-product of it. Deep down it does not want to turn the world on its head: it will benefit from the present one, so long as some minor changes are made to make things a little bit more equal. It had big ambitions in its youth, but, now it has got older and had more experience inside the institutions of the state, it has become a bit more conservative in its aims. Some say it has been coopted, and that the basis for its organisation and politics made cooption an inevitability. Everyone *but* the party can see it, and they hold it in contempt for failing to do so.

Conclusion

Fundamentally what all of this is about is whether the Democratic Socialists of America wants to be a

mass party or not, and what price it is willing to pay to get there. The calls for a party based on direct affiliation with the trade union movement are an attempt to achieve a mass character and diplomatic unity with a certain, fairly well organised, section of the workers’ movement - or rather their permanent representatives. It is not an attempt to merge with the workers’ movement as a whole, because its conception of such a movement is flawed by its understanding of what that movement actually is. Rather than seeking to transform the existing consciousness of the working class, its present aim would result in it being overwhelmed by it.

The motion on the agenda at the forthcoming convention of the YDSA would, if passed unamended, and if its proposals were adopted in similar form by its parent organisation, represent a real tragedy for the socialist movement in the United States. The struggle for socialism/communism in America would be subsumed into the politics of trade unionism and all the associated baggage that comes alongside it. The DSA would no longer be an organ of class struggle, but one aiming to negotiate with the oppressor rather than seek its abolition. Its mass character would be imaginative, and the role of the masses within it limited.

I am reliably informed that several caucuses have filed amendments to the proposed motion. However, at the time of writing the only one I have been able to get hold of is that of the Marxist Unity Group. It is a pro-party amendment, but it strips the original motion of its assumptions about a worker/labour party and clarifies the role a real *socialist* workers’ party has to play in the world - not the idealised version based on a flawed premise of artificial unity.

The amendment recognises the need to organise within trade unions to transform them from bodies of class negotiation with capital into organs of struggle against it and for socialism. That the union movement in the United States can only become stronger through a prolonged campaign of education, agitation and organisation to build a socialist presence and a socialist majority within it.

A mass DSA is a must, and the merger between the American socialist and workers’ movements a necessity. But patience is a virtue: there can be no short cuts on the road to working class emancipation. You need to think long and hard about how you are going to achieve this, and think every move you intend to make through to both its logical and illogical conclusions. As far as is humanly possible, you have to attempt to gain foresight by using hindsight as a guide.

The motion on the agenda at the forthcoming YDSA convention lacks this, as does much of the debate on the issue within the Democratic Socialists of America as a whole. A corrective course is needed, and I hope I have helped spell out what form that should take.

Don’t get ahead of yourselves, comrades! You’ll only live to regret it ●

Communist University

Saturday August 3 to Saturday August 10 (inclusive)

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

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

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

Make payments to account ‘Weekly Worker’. Account number: 00744310.

Sort code: 30-99-64. Please quote payment reference ‘CU2024’

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

REFORM

Nigel's me too moment

Reform UK attracts bigots like flies to shit. Meanwhile, the mainstream parties parade their anti-racist credentials and compete over who can be most beastly to migrants. The irony is not lost on **Eddie Ford**

Would you believe it? Reform UK attracts racists, homophobes, misogynists and followers of lunatic conspiracy theories. We all know this now because Channel 4 News did us all a big favour and secretly filmed the bigoted views of a couple of its canvassers.

As a quick aside, this writer will not be using the strange habit of obscuring 'offending words' with asterisks - as if swear words have a magic property to them - something done by both the mainstream media and many on the left. So *Socialist Worker*, when it is trying to be really outrageous, will say, 'F**k off!' BBC news simply uses bleeps.

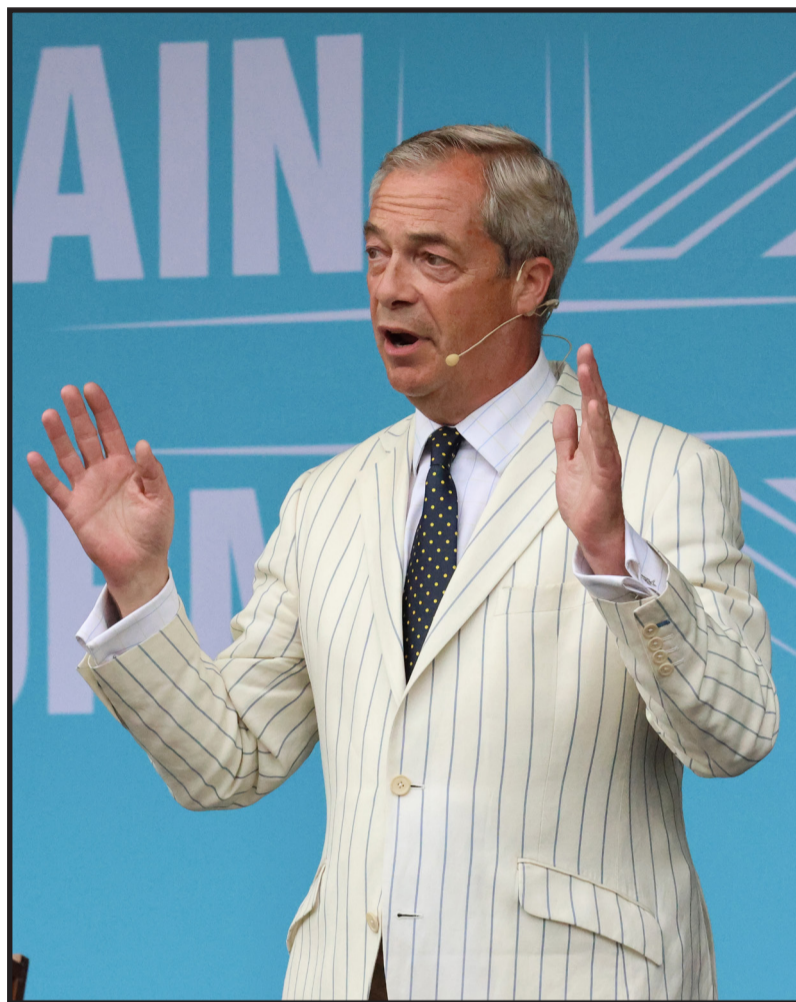
Anyway, regarding Clacton, where Nigel Farage is standing, we have the story of Reform activist Andrew Parker. As we all know by now, Parker called Rishi Sunak a "fucking Paki", before going on to tell the undercover journalist: "We're fucking kicking all the Muslims out of the mosques and turning them into Wetherspoons" - not to mention getting young army recruits to use incoming migrants as "target practice". Another canvasser said that a Pride flag on a passing police car was "fucking degenerate", as LGBTQ people are "nonces". As for London, it makes him feel like "a foreigner in your own country" (no marks for originality, it has to be said).

Alf Garnett

Nigel Farage is claiming in Trumpian fashion that it was "the biggest smear stitch-up" in UK broadcasting history - saying that Parker was an actor - a "plant" used by Channel 4 to discredit Reform, whether paid or unpaid. In reality, or so we are told, Parker is a "well-spoken" middle class individual, but from the moment he arrived in Clacton he was doing what Nigel Farage called "rough speaking" that involved playing "an Alf Garnett type" (for younger readers - a TV comic character who was the embodiment of pure bigotry, no matter how absurd, invented by Johnny Speight). Of course, there is absolutely no evidence for this allegation, but Reform has written a letter to the Electoral Commission complaining that the Channel 4 story "cannot be described as anything short of election interference".

Indeed, Farage and other leading Reform figures are seeing conspiracies everywhere. After appearing on the BBC's *Question time* election special, he protested that the audience was "rigged", as they had "hand-picked a prominent pro-Palestine activist and even a BBC TV director to attack me". He then refused to go on the flagship *Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg* show, as he was "boycotting" the BBC unless it apologises. He promised that his party would be "campaigning vigorously" to abolish the TV licence fee, as "our state broadcaster has behaved like a political actor throughout this election".

Then after two Reform candidates defected to the Conservative Party, saying that the majority of those standing for it were "racist, misogynistic and bigoted" - fancy that - Reform chairman Richard Tice described them as "Trojan horse" candidates placed ahead of the election with the intention of blackening Reform. "Note same press release language coordinated by dirty tricks central, CCHQ," he



Denouncing one Reform candidate after another

fulminated on X/Twitter - "What jobs & safe seats have toxic Tories offered this candidate?"

Now, no serious socialist would claim for a minute that the BBC is politically neutral, committed to nothing other than objective reporting, as supposedly proved - so the old argument goes - by the fact that it is held in equal disdain by both the radical right and left, so it must be telling you the truth! No, its instinctive pro-establishment/pro-system bias is obvious to anyone who has a brain. Countless studies confirm it. Historically, a quick look at the BBC's origins under Lord Reith in 1922 should be enough to tell you about its political physiognomy - although, of course, it has evolved like any other institution. But it does not require a conspiracy by the BBC or anyone else to tell us that Reform UK attracts bigots like flies to shit.

Enoch!

That is only to be expected. In general, these people are refugees from the Tory Party - those who admired not just Margaret Thatcher, but, say, Enoch Powell. Until relatively recently, local Tory offices would have pictures of both on their wall. Powell is infamously associated with his 'rivers of blood' speech basically saying that Britain is going to the dogs because of migrants, a patrician giving plebian racists the green light to express their views. Hence the horrible phenomenon in 1968 of London dockers marching to Westminster chanting, "Enoch! Enoch! Enoch!" Maybe Nigel Farage fantasises about a similar scenario, though this time it would be a budget version with more elderly people in a decaying seaside town murmuring, "Nigel ... Nigel ... Nigel!"

What is most interesting about the Andrew Parker story is that it underlines the existence of official anti-racism, which some on the left still deny for whatever reason - it

is as though they have not noticed who the outgoing prime minister is, not to mention other dark-skinned members of recent Conservative cabinets. Naturally, Rishi Sunak denounced Reform, saying that, while the "Paki" slur left him "hurt and angry", he will always "call out blatant racism." Well, unless racists come bearing thousands of pounds, like Frank Hester.

Naturally, Labour, the Lib Dems and just about everyone else piled in to denounce Reform and the evils of racism. There followed a steady stream of prominent Reform politicians appearing on the media to also disassociate themselves from anything that smacked of open bigotry - one actually claimed that half of the Reform office is gay.

No less to the point, Nigel Farage himself has said he wanted "nothing to do" with racists, actually disowning three of his own candidates live on air during *Question time* when their bigoted or racist remarks were put to him - though, of course, they will still appear on the ballot paper as official Reform candidates, as it is too late for them to be removed. However, quite understandably from his own point of view, Farage said people should still vote for them if they wished to "register support" for Reform.

Another Reform candidate, Raymond Saint in Basingstoke, was also dropped because he features as a member of the British National Party in a list that was published by WikiLeaks in 2009. According to Reform rules, every potential candidate is asked to declare their past or present political affiliations - specifically whether they have ever been a member of the BNP. This is reminiscent of The House UnAmerican Activities Committee asking people: "Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?" If you give the wrong answer, you are out - a sinner cannot repent in Nigel Farage's party.

Tellingly, when Farage was asked why his party "attracts racists and extremists", he countered by saying he had "done more to drive the far right out of British politics than anybody else alive" - even claiming credit for "destroying the BNP". In reality the destruction of the BNP was almost solely down to an episode of *Question time* on October 22 2009 when the then leader of the party, Nick Griffin, was a guest.¹ He was relentlessly exposed by his fellow panellists, especially by playwright Bonnie Greer, as a buffoon and a charlatan - an emperor with no clothes - and when the BBC audience actually started to boo Griffin, you knew the game was up for him. The BNP as a project was finished. Now that was a true 'set-up', but in a very positive sense. Let's have more like that!

Idiotically, Unite Against Fascism - then the SWP's favoured front organisation - held a noisy little protest outside the television centre against Griffin appearing. In fact it was the 'oxygen of publicity' that did over the BNP leader. A valuable lesson that the left should have learned, but no such luck, as it keeps repeating the same mistakes over and over again.

Unacceptable

So official anti-racism exists - Nigel Farage subscribes to it after all - as does racism. But, expressed in its old way, it is not socially acceptable. As everybody knows from real-life experience, the expression of particular views or phrases puts offenders beyond polite society. They become pariahs.

But at the same time, we get the Tory Party and Labour basically competing with Reform UK, when it comes to who can be the nastiest towards migrants. True, shooting them, or using them for "target practice", is not recommended. But for the Tories and large sections of the press, sending people thousands of miles to Rwanda *is* acceptable. Even

though it is utterly foul. Meanwhile, George Galloway's Workers Party of Britain wants the royal navy diverted from the Red Sea to the English Channel, so it can force the boats back. Of course, no-one would drown, would they, George?

If asylum-seekers do get to Britain, is the Labour Party proposing anything essentially different to the Tories - a "faster processing" of people maybe? But the reality is that mass migration will keep happening, not because Britain is such a heaven, but where people come from is such a hell - Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Kurdistan, etc. It is wars, oppression, state collapse and IMF structural adjustment programmes which are driving people. Here is the real cause of illegal migration. Not people smugglers. Though, of course, such people are quite prepared to make a small fortune (just like narco criminals, who profit handsomely from the 'war on drugs').

Migrants will not stop coming and the working class needs to be clear about that. Of course, this adds to competition when it comes to that commodity known as labour-power. Therefore, our answer is to *organise* people in trade unions and working class parties - not only in Britain, but internationally. It goes without saying that communists aim for a world where the working class is in control: a global ruling class.

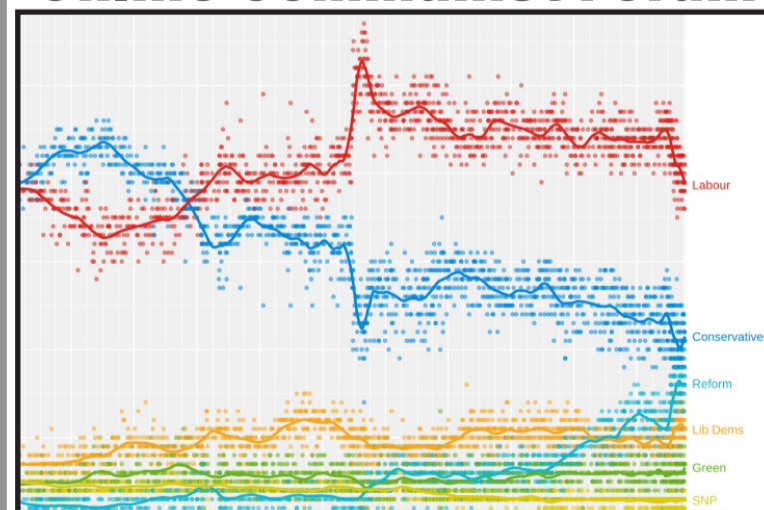
The CPGB is not against migration. But *mass* migration is clearly a sign of social stress and breakdown - not something to be welcomed. We would never turn people away, or treat them as if they are the reason for falling wages, the shortage of housing, long waiting lists, or a lack of doctors and school places. They are not to blame. It's the system, stupid ●

eddie.ford@weeklyworker.co.uk

Notes

1. youtube.com/watch?v=gwgFBFJ6xJc

Online Communist Forum



Sunday July 7 5pm
**UK politics after July 4: political report
 from CPGB's Provisional Central
 Committee and discussion**

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

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

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

REVIEW

Best hope for progress?

Ruchir Sharma *What went wrong with capitalism?* Allen Lane 2024, pp384, £10.99

Ruchir Sharma is an investor, author, fund manager and columnist for the *Financial Times*. He is the head of Rockefeller Capital Management's international business, and was an emerging markets investor at Morgan Stanley Investment Management.

With those credentials of being 'inside the beast' (or even 'one of the beasts'), he ought to know the answer to the question in the title of his book. In a review in the *Financial Times*,¹ Sharma outlines his argument. First, he tells us: "I worry about where the US is leading the world now. Faith in American capitalism, which was built on limited government that leaves room for individual freedom and initiative, has plummeted." He notes that now most Americans do not expect to be "better off in five years" - a record low since the Edelman Trust Barometer first asked this question more than two decades ago. Four in five doubt that life will be better for their children's generation than it has been for theirs - also a new low. And, according to the latest Pew polls, support for capitalism has fallen among all Americans, particularly Democrats and the young. In fact, among Democrats under 30, 58% now have a "positive impression" of socialism - only 29% say the same thing of capitalism.

This is bad news for Sharma as a strong supporter of capitalism. What has gone wrong? Sharma says that it is the rise of big government, monopoly power and easy money to bail out the big boys. This has led to stagnation, low productivity growth and rising inequality.

Sharma argues that the so-called neoliberal revolution of the 1980s, which supposedly replaced Keynesian-style macro-management, reduced the size of the state and deregulated markets, was really a myth: "the era of small government never happened," he says. Sharma points out that in the US, government spending has risen eight-fold since 1930 from under 4% to 24% of gross domestic product - and 36%, if you include state and local spending. Alongside tax cuts, government deficits have risen and public debt rocketed.

When it came to deregulation, the result was actually "more complex and costly rules, which the rich and powerful were best equipped to navigate" - regulatory rules actually increased. As for easy money,

... fearful that mounting debts could end in another 1930s-style depression, central banks started working alongside governments to prop up big corporations, banks, even foreign countries, every time the financial markets wobbled.

So there was no neoliberal transformation freeing up capitalism to expand - on the contrary.

Spending rise

But is Sharma's economic history of the period after the 1980s really right? He tries to portray the post-1980s period as one of bailouts for banks and companies during crises - in contrast to the 1930s, when central banks and governments followed the policy of 'liquidation' of those in trouble.

Actually, this is not correct: saving corporate capital and the banks was the driving force of the Roosevelt new deal; liquidation was never adopted as government policy. Moreover, the 1980s were mostly a decade of high interest rates

and tight monetary policy imposed by central bankers like Volcker, seeking to drive down the inflation of the 1970s. Indeed, Sharma has nothing to say about the 'stagflation' of the 1970s - a decade, according to him, where capitalism had small government and low regulation.

He makes much of the rise in government spending, including on 'welfare', in the last 40 years. But he does not really explain why. After the rise in both spending and debt during the war, much of the increased spending since has been due to a rise in population, particularly the elderly, leading to an increase in (unproductive for capitalism) spending on social security and pensions. But the rise in government spending was also a response to the weakening of economic growth and investment in productive capital from the 1970s. As GDP grew more slowly and welfare spending grew faster, then government spending to GDP rose.

Privatisation

Sharma says nothing about other aspects of the neoliberal period. For example, privatisation was a key policy of the Reagan and Thatcher years. State assets were sold off to boost profitability in the private sector. In this sense, there was a reduction in the 'big state', contrary to Sharma's argument. Indeed, starting as early as the mid-1970s, public-sector capital stock was sold off. In the US, it has been halved as a share of GDP. Similarly, following the 1980s, public-sector investment as a share of GDP has been nearly halved, while the private-sector share has risen 70%.

It is not the 'big state' that is in control of investment and output decisions: it is the capitalist sector. This hints at the reason for reducing the role of the public sector. The problem for capitalism in the late 1960s and 1970s was the drastic fall in the profitability of capital in the major advanced capitalist economies. That fall had to be reversed. One policy was privatisation. Another was the crushing of the trade unions through laws and regulations designed to make it difficult, if not impossible, to set up unions or take industrial action. Then there was the move of manufacturing capacity out of the 'global north' to the cheap labour regions of the global south - so-called 'globalisation'. Combined with weakening trade unions at home, the result was a sharp drop in the share of GDP going to labour,² along with cheap labour abroad and a (modest) rise in the profitability of capital.

Sharma admits that "globalisation brought more competition, keeping a lid on inflation in consumer prices" against his thesis of monopoly stagnation - but then argues that globalisation and low imported goods prices "solidified a conviction that government deficits and debt don't matter". Really? Throughout the 1990s onwards, governments tried to impose 'austerity' in the name of balancing budgets and reducing

government debt. They failed, not because they thought that "deficits and debt don't matter", but because economic growth and productive investment slowed. Public-sector spending cuts were significant, but the ratio to GDP did not fall.

Sharma reckons that "recessions were fewer and farther between" in the post-1980s period. Hmm. Leaving out the huge double slump of the early 1980s (another key factor in driving down labour-power), there were recessions in 1990-91, 2001 and then the great recession of 2008-09, culminating in the pandemic slump of 2020 - the worst slump in the history of capitalism. Maybe "fewer and farther between", but increasingly damaging.

He notes that after each slump since the 1980s, economic expansion has been weaker and weaker. This appears as a mystery for proponents of capitalism:

Behind the slowing recoveries was the central mystery of modern capitalism: a collapse in the rate of growth in productivity, or output per worker. By the outset of the pandemic, it had fallen by more than half since the 1960s.

Sharma presents his explanation:

... a growing body of evidence points the finger of blame at a business environment thick with government regulation and debt, in which mega-companies thrive and more corporate deadwood survives each crisis.

The bailouts of the big monopolies ("three of every four US industries have ossified into oligopolies") and 'easy money' have kept a stagnating capitalism crawling along, breeding 'zombie' companies that only survive by borrowing.

Sharma puts the cart before the horse here. Productivity growth slowed across the board because productive investment growth dropped. And in capitalist economies, productive investment is driven by profitability. The neoliberal attempt to raise profitability after the profitability crisis of the 1970s was only partially successful and came to an end as the new century began. The stagnation and 'long depression' of the 21st century is exhibited in rising private and public debt, as governments and corporations try to overcome stagnant and low profitability by increasing borrowing.

Sharma proclaims that social "immobility is stifling the American dream" - whereas, in the rosy past of 'competitive capitalism', through dint of hard work and entrepreneurial drive, you could go from rags to riches, now that is not possible. But the 'American dream' was always a myth.

The majority of billionaires and rich people in the US and elsewhere inherited their wealth³ and those that did become billionaires in their lifetime did not do so without sizeable start-up funds from parents, etc.

And, let me add, Sharma's thesis is entirely based on the advanced capitalist

economies of the global north. He has little to say about the rest of the world, where most people live. Has social mobility been stymied or never existed? Is there a big state with massive welfare spending in these countries? Is there easy money for companies to borrow? Are there domestic monopolies squeezing out competition? Are there bailouts galore?

Playing field

That brings us to Sharma's main message about what is wrong with capitalism. You see, capitalism as he envisages it no longer exists. Instead, competitive capitalism has morphed into monopolies, bolstered by a big state: "Capitalism's premise, that limited government is a necessary condition for individual liberty and opportunity, has not been put into practice for decades."

The myth of a competitive capitalism that Sharma projects sounds similar to the thesis of Grace Blakeley in her recent book, *Vulture capitalism*, where she argues that capitalism has never really been a brutal battle between competing capitalists for a share of the profits extracted from labour, but instead a nicely agreed and planned economy controlled by big monopolies and backed by the state.

In effect, both Sharma and Blakeley agree on the rise of 'state monopoly capitalism' (SMC) as the reason for what went wrong. Of course, they differ on the solution. Blakeley, being a socialist, wants to replace SMC with democratic planning and workers' co-ops. Sharma, being 'one of the beasts', wants to end monopolies, reduce the state and restore "competitive capitalism" to follow its "natural path" to provide prosperity for all. He states: "Capitalism needs a playing field on which the small and new have a chance to challenge - creatively destroy - old concentrations of wealth and power."

You see, capitalists, if left alone to exploit the labour force, and freed of the burden of regulations and having to pay for welfare spending, will naturally flourish:

The real sciences explain life as a cycle of transformation, ashes to ashes, yet political leaders still listen to advisors claiming they know how to generate constant growth. Their overconfidence needs to be contained before it does more damage.

So, according to Sharma, capitalism will be fine again, if we let the capitalist cycles of boom and slump play out naturally and do not try to manage them: "Capitalism is still the best hope for human progress, but only if it has enough room to work."

Well, capitalism has had plenty of room to work for over 250 years - with its booms and slumps, its rising inequalities globally; and now its environmental threat to the planet, and the increasing risk of geopolitical conflict. No wonder 58% of young Democrats in the US would prefer socialism ●

Michael Roberts

Michael Roberts blogs at thenextrecession.wordpress.com

Notes

1. www.ft.com/content/7650d057-be19-45ce-9a4e-b5ac0418d5c4.
2. thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2024/05/16/a-new-spring-for-labour.
3. cepr.org/voxeu/columns/whats-your-sumame-intergenerational-mobility-over-six-centuries.

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.

The *Weekly Worker* is licensed by November Publications under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International Licence: creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode. ISSN 1351-0150.

Subscriptions: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/subscribe

Ruchir Sharma: inside the beast



Denialism in the circles of hell

America has armed, financed and diplomatically supported Israel throughout the Gaza war. That makes it complicit in genocide, argues Paul Demarty. Yet, as the death toll remorselessly rises, the House of Representatives votes to deny the evidence

American politics is currently rather taken over by Joe Biden's increasingly obvious dementia, which has led to one of its more discreditable episodes being wiped from present consciousness.

All followers of American politics in recent years will be aware of the strange gridlock in the houses of Congress. It is perhaps not that surprising - after all, the Republicans hold the House of Representatives (and are themselves held hostage by their least sane members, who at least know how to play hardball, unlike the handful of leftwingers in the chamber), while the Democrats - just about - hold the Senate. The only way anything resembling policy sneaks through, most of the time, is in omnibus appropriations bills, which make money available for various executive functions.

On June 27, such a bill - concerning money for the state department - was on the floor of the house. An amendment passed denying money for using the Gaza health ministry's figures for calculating the death toll from Israel's onslaught on that beleaguered territory. And it passed handsomely - near unanimously among Republicans, and taking 62 Democrats along for the ride.

I do not, as it happens, believe in the doctrine of eternal punishment in hell. At times like this, however, I see the appeal. The health ministry figures have been tested many times over the years, in massacre after massacre, and have generally been found to be accurate. The vote reflects not any plausible concerns about their accuracy, but a naked desire for bloodshed, combined with a refusal of responsibility. Dante, one thinks, would have a stanza or two to spare on that.

Blindness

So far as the ongoing violence is concerned, the Gaza health ministry's current running death total of 38,000-ish is extremely likely a lowball figure. Something like 500,000 Gazans are facing acute food insecurity, of the sort that, not long ago, might have occasioned a grand charity concert in some western stadium. Many thousands are likely buried in rubble. Israel has demolished the strip's entire health infrastructure.

The refusal to fund this activity is likely inoperative (how much money does it cost to visit the Gaza health ministry website, exactly?), but indicates a certain mindset: that these deaths are inconvenient, and thus should be made to, somehow, *go away*. It has to pass the Senate, but it is hard to see it failing to get through that house.

The refusal to see - the strange magical thinking at work - brings to mind certain other episodes in American history. Dred Scott - though a judicial decision of the Supreme Court rather than a legislative one - jumps out: a last-ditch attempt to assert that slavery is



Follower of Hieronymus Bosch 'The harrowing of hell' c1500

inviolable, whose effect was merely to galvanise slavery's righteous enemies. But the Gaza amendment is slightly different, since it involves the legislature not in some fatuous redescription of the constitution, but in denying a plain matter of fact. The immediate comparator, though its moral import is trivial, is the infamous bill put before the Indiana General Assembly in 1897, in which the value of pi was to be fixed at 3.2. (In fairness to the Indians of that day, the bill failed. We cannot expect so much of the 2024 house, it seems.)

This amendment is only the latest outrage on this front. The left, and the wider movement in solidarity with Palestine, has lost no time in affixing the word 'genocide' to what is going on. They will find no demurrals in this paper, however many come from the halls of American power. Israel may or may not *succeed* in its aims, but those aims are comically obvious. The Palestinians are often portrayed by well-meaning liberals as ancestral enemies to Israeli Jews - when will we escape the 'cycle of violence'?

The greatest expression of this worldview is not a book or a polemic, but John Adams' beautiful and chilling opera, *The death of Klinghoffer*. For all its artistic excellence, it is off the point. The Palestinians are not, exactly, the *enemies* of the Israeli Jews. They

are merely in the way - not of those Jews *per se*, but the ideology that has gathered them there: the settler-colonial ideology of Zionism.

Here we must dispense with a foolish objection from certain Zionists, and also certain people who consider themselves above this dispute. That goes something like this: 'We have heard it all before. Doesn't the left constantly go on about colonialism? Isn't it the case that trivial disputes in academia are given absurd weight by reference to colonialism and decolonisation?' This is all true enough. Yet much of the world really did labour under the yoke of colonialism, of different sorts, for at least four centuries, and indeed some of it still does. We go on about it, in part, because it is quite real.

A very great deal has gone on under the name of 'decolonisation' that is nothing of the sort, but rather mere office politics in universities. Insofar as the left has taken all this at face value, it has played the 'boy who cried wolf'. Readers of that fable, however, will recall that it ends with the appearance of an *actual* wolf. In the same way, it matters not that the term has been overused: Israel is a state founded on the idea that the world's Jews form a nation, that they should congregate in the 'Holy Land', and 'make the desert bloom'. It is thus the paradigmatic case of

a work colony. The evidence of previous work colonies - Australia, or those that formed the USA - is that the indigenous population is massacred and its remnants progressively marginalised.

Victor's justice

A similar story could be told about the word, 'genocide', itself. It was coined by the conservative Polish-Jewish lawyer, Raphael Lemkin, during the late stages of World War II, with the 'final solution' in full flow. It would be difficult to deny that some concept was called for to describe that crime and others like it, with the physical extermination of an entire people - indeed, more than one people, in the Nazi case - attempted. In its wider application, however, it has clearly become a weapon of 'victors' justice' - mysteriously, it is always the losing side in some war, or the side more at odds with the global hegemon, that has the charge laid at its door.

We have a striking recent example in the form of the so-called Uyghur 'genocide', which in reality amounts to a repressive state policy of the Chinese government against a restive Muslim national minority in its south-western province of Xinjiang. Pro-Chinese ideologues in the west have tended to assert that *nothing* untoward is going on,

which is plainly untrue. Yet it is clear that no meaningful attempt to wipe this population out is in progress. The Chinese leadership is instead subordinating the religious leadership to party diktat, and packing off dissenters to prison camps for 're-education'. Some reference is made to restrictions on births - preventing a population from reproducing is one of the five canonical acts of genocide, according to the United Nations convention of 1948 - but the reality is that this is an upper limit, and a higher one than that faced by Han Chinese under the one-child policy. Perhaps they were guilty of genocide against themselves?

Colonisation

So we face the question - which of these descriptions better fits the Israeli state in the present context? The *ongoing* activity of colonisation before October 7 - slowly stripping Arabs of their land and their rights in the West Bank, restricting the Gazan food supply to just above subsistence, and so forth - has a Xinjiang feel to it (although probably *worse*). Since that date, in Gaza, we are clearly dealing with the intentional massacre of a meaningful portion of the Palestinian population, by direct violence in the form of indiscriminate bombing, the deliberate destruction of health infrastructure, and restriction of the necessities of life. Lawyers were able to assemble vast dossiers of quotations from Israeli politicians proving intent to the International Criminal Court and International Court of Justice. It is pretty cut and dried, even if we want a more restricted definition than that of the UN.

The US Congress, then, has made its stand in this domain. For all it has exploited the charge of genocide over the years, there is a whiff here of something even more chilling. It is something that grew in the years after the September 11 attacks (otherwise known as 9/11): a spirit of vengeance impatient with the very ideology that allowed American power to flourish after the defeat of the USSR.

Campaigns of extermination were not novel to the 1940s; the novelty was the duty to avoid them, even if it has been honoured, more or less, in the breach. The grand gestures of human rights, of which the genocide convention is surely the most morally compelling, supported a world order in which the contestants for global power, in their different ways, were obliged to place themselves on the right side of history.

As American power declines - a decline dramatically illustrated by Joe Biden's catastrophic outing in Atlanta - we move decisively away from that. We back our imperial proxies because we can, and what are *you* going to do about it? Congress proposes an entirely useless method of hiding the evidence, but in doing so merely furnishes fresh evidence of the drive towards all-out war ●

paul.demarty@weeklyworker.co.uk



Searching for solutions

One-state, two-state, federal one-state ‘solutions’ - all constitute a danger when it comes to navigating the way out of the hell that imperialism and Zionist settler-colonialism has created. **Jack Conrad** presents the communist alternative to economistic Zionism, PLO capitulation and the dead-end of Hamas tailism

Predictably, Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement, has not been destroyed by Israel - that despite a nine-month-long military onslaught on the Gaza Strip. Though well over 38,000 Palestinians have been killed - doubtless including many Hamas leaders, cadre and rank-and-file militants - its standing is probably higher than ever. Recruits are flocking to join and not only in Gaza, but on the West Bank too ... and, revealingly, skirmishes keep erupting in the supposedly Hamas-free ‘bubble zones’ of Gaza.

Does that mean Israel is losing its war, as claimed by various opposition MPs in the Knesset? Or that Israel is bogged down in a war it “cannot win”? Or that Hamas is conducting such a “clever and tenacious guerrilla” war³ that it has taken the Zionist project to the point where the “collapse of Israel

has become foreseeable”?⁴

All that might be true, if the war aims of Benjamin Netanyahu and his coalition government were really about, as they continue to claim, destroying the military and governing capabilities of Hamas and freeing all the war hostages it holds.

Netanyahu is many things, but he is no fool. His war aims were never really about destroying Hamas, not even militarily. Revealingly, this has led to a war of words between Netanyahu and the Israel Defence Forces. Its chosen spokesperson, rear admiral Daniel Hagari, talking on Israel’s Channel 13 News, on June 19, told the truth when he said the “business of destroying Hamas, making Hamas disappear - it’s simply throwing sand in the eye of the public”. “Hamas”, he went on to explain, is a “party.” It is “rooted in the hearts of the people - anyone

We all want to see a free Palestine.

But how to achieve it? That is the question

Banking on Jewish-Arab trade union unity, hoping for a Hamas military victory, waiting for Zionism to implode ... this is the stuff that illusions are made of

who thinks we can eliminate Hamas” - ie, Netanyahu - “is wrong”. A bog-standard military assessment. Nonetheless, the prime minister’s office doggedly insists on the ‘Hamas must be eliminated’ narrative and this has forced a tactical IDF retreat. In a subsequent statement the IDF loyally trots out the “destroying Hamas’s governing and military abilities” formula.⁵ There can be no denying, however, that Hamas has deep social roots and cannot, therefore, be eradicated “as an ideology and an idea” ... definitely not by the IDF’s bullets, bombs and missiles. Exactly what Hagari was saying.

Certainly the war captives are little more than a nuisance as far as Netanyahu is concerned, when it comes to Israel’s domestic politics. He knows it and so do their tens of thousands of relatives, friends and supporters who repeatedly

take to the streets of Tel Aviv. If you really want the war captives back from the tunnels, tents and cellars of Gaza, then negotiations with Hamas would be an absolute priority. And destroying Hamas’s “governing and military abilities” and negotiating a war-captive deal with Hamas are, to put it mildly, mutually incompatible. Frankly, destroying Hamas’s “governing and military abilities” via air attacks, artillery bombardments and sending in tanks will have killed many, if not most, of the war captives - that, despite undoubted Hamas efforts to keep these valuable ‘human assets’ alive.

No, the *immediate* war aims of Netanyahu, are twofold.

Firstly, he wants to avoid jail. Note, the recent statement from his lawyers saying he cannot possibly testify in his corruption trial till March 2025 ... because he is busy

SUPPLEMENT

directing the war against Hamas.⁶ Netanyahu's case has been ongoing since 2019 and he faces a possible 10-year sentence if found guilty.

Secondly, Netanyahu wants to keep the war going till at least November-January. Especially after CNN's US presidential debate on June 27 and the Supreme Court's immunity ruling on July 1, a second-term Donald Trump presidency seems less like an even-odds possibility nowadays - more a low-odds likelihood. Replying to a demented, ghostly Biden, Trump stressed that he would not have "stropped Israel". We should, I think, take that as meaning that he would have urged Netanyahu to "finish the problem".⁷ That is, driving out the majority - perhaps all - Palestinians from Gaza and into the Sinai. If that does not work, the Netanyahu government - not least its Bezalel Smotrich (National Religious Party) and Itamar Ben-Gvir (Otzma Yehudit) components - are certainly more than willing to preside over a genocide by omission: denying food, water, medicines and basic sanitation facilities.

Third reason

There is too a third reason for Netanyahu wanting "endless wars"⁸: taking further ghastly steps towards realising the Zionist dream of a Greater Israel; an Israel that incorporates the whole of mandate Palestine (and, for the sake of 'security', beyond that into Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon). A dream that, of course, dates back to Theodor Herzl, and remains common coin for all strands of Zionism - Labor, Liberal, Revisionist and Religious.

That means, whenever the opportunity arises, expelling as many Palestinians as possible. As a result, there are today some 5.9 million UN-registered Palestinian refugees - in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.⁹ There is also a Palestinian diaspora living in Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, the US, Britain, Germany, Chile, Argentina and many more countries besides. A second Nakba in 2024 could easily see millions more driven out. Israel now, of course, controls the Philadelphi Corridor in southern Gaza and, therefore, could easily engineer a situation where desperate, starving Palestinians flee, or are simply pushed, over the border into Egypt. Meanwhile, Israel's remaining 2.08 million Palestinian Arabs are second-class citizens in what is widely regarded as an apartheid state. Officially, after all, Israel was founded as and continues to be a Jewish state for Jewish people.

Seen in that context, it is clear that, while Israel has not achieved its *real* war aims, it has taken them forward - and to some considerable extent at that. However, what holds Israel back from 'finishing the problem' and pressing home its overwhelming military advantage is less that Hamas is fighting a "clever and tenacious guerrilla" war: more geostrategic considerations, including public opinion in the Arab world, in the United States and globally.

A second Nakba certainly risks the destabilisation of regimes such as in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan. Biden's advisors are also more than aware that a second Nakba could easily see millions of Arab-Americans and progressive Americans alike staying at home on Tuesday November 5. Hence, unveiling Biden's Gaza peace plan in May had, surely, more to do with the possible outcome of the presidential race than delivering a workable solution to the Israel-Gaza war.

And, despite Netanyahu's occasional bluster, the entire spectrum of Zionist opinion in Israel is acutely aware that US support is vital: it could easily, at a stroke, stop the IDF by withholding the delivery of artillery shells, bombs, missiles and the stream of replacement parts needed to keep tanks moving and fighter aircraft flying. Of course, the US will not do that. Biden fervently supports Israel, not out of sentiment, but because of US state interests in having a reliable attack dog in the Middle East. But he does not want Israel 'going too far' at the moment and creating total chaos, including unleashing an unplanned war with Iran, which would undoubtedly have all sorts of unintended consequences.

Trump is another matter. Not only does he want Israel to "finish the problem" in Gaza. He wants more annexations on the West Bank too. He also wants Iran much reduced - preferably shattered into national fragments ... and denuclearised. Of course, Israeli hawks, including Netanyahu himself, noisily clamour for a 'pre-emptive' strike on Iran. But, while Netanyahu undoubtedly fervently prays on his knees every night for a Trump victory, today he still has to deal with the reality of the Biden administration ... and its restraints.

It appears to be true that the part desperate, part audacious October 7 attack caught Israel completely unawares. An intelligence failure of monumental proportions ... unsurprisingly leading to speculation that Netanyahu and his cronies were in some way complicit in allowing the whole thing to happen. It was, after all, a year in preparation. Yet warnings were consistently ignored. Hamas military commanders were themselves certainly astonished by the ability of their fighters to go way beyond what had been originally planned as something approaching a suicide mission. Expectations were of an 80% casualty rate. Military targets, IDF outposts, police stations thereby gave way to a random, totally pointless, killing of innocent civilians ... and baseless stories of beheading babies and mass rapes.

October 7 did, though, provide the political cover needed to excuse an onslaught on Gaza (and upping settler and IDF violence in the West Bank). True, Israeli public opinion has subsequently become deeply divided between what we might call the 'peace party' and the 'war party'. Nonetheless, the 'war party' commands a Knesset majority and, as already argued, Netanyahu himself has every reason to keep the war going on all the way up to the US presidential election and beyond. So, far from seeing the beginning of the end of Zionism, the 'war party' sees the *end of the beginning* of Zionism ... the realisation of their Greater Israel is within sight at last.

Zionists typically claim that Jews have a right to the whole of mandate Palestine (either because of the approval of the Balfour declaration by the League of Nations in July 1922 or Yahweh's promise to Abraham in *Genesis*). True, there are profound differences over the constitutional set-up in this Greater Israel. Liberal, or General, Zionism says it is committed to market capitalism, secularism, democratic values and the rule of law (which can, of course, see unelected judges overrule Knesset votes). Their Greater Israel would, though, continue to treat the indigenous Palestinian population as second-class citizens - that and squeezing them into ever smaller Arab reservations.

However, there are those - ie, the Religious Zionists - who envisage Greater Israel as a theocracy. Fringe elements even want the al-Aqsa mosque demolished and replaced by a Third Temple - the prelude for the second coming of Jesus for messianic Christians. While secular Jews are viewed as heretics, there is a call for non-Jews, the Children of Noah (*Bnei Noah*), to observe god's laws and support his chosen people - perhaps a future source for urgently needed new settlers.¹⁰ Some Religious Zionists even hanker after a *greater* Greater Israel - based on various biblical passages: *Genesis*, *Numbers*, *Ezekiel*. At its largest extent their Eretz Israel stretches from the Nile to the Euphrates.¹¹ Of course, any such an Israel would come with a poisoned chalice: an oppressed Arab *majority*. The Zionist conquistadors would have to permanently deny them elementary rights. That or the newly acquired Arab population would have to be driven out in their many millions.

Present-day Israel results from and is predicated on expansion. The *aliyah* (in Hebrew 'ascent' - or migration to Israel) constitutes a fundamental part of the Zionist project and is enshrined in Israel's 'law of return' (enacted by the Knesset in July 1950). Any Jew, no matter where they live, no matter how dubious their Jewish antecedence, has the legal right to assisted settlement in Israel, as well as automatic citizenship.

A heterogeneous mixture of the genuinely desperate, the cruelly duped, secular dreamers, religious fanatics and cheap chancers have come to the promised land over the years. Between 1948 and 1992 Israel took in 2,242,500 Jewish migrants. The bulk were from eastern Europe - displaced by World War II, the centres of Jewry in the Arab world and the Soviet Union. Nowadays, however, the flow of migrants has reduced to a mere trickle: mainly they come from the former Soviet Union, North America and Ethiopia.¹² Interestingly, some 85% of Ethiopia's Jewish population, the Falasha or Habashim, have gone to Israel under the law of return. Today there are 160,000 Israelis of Ethiopian origin. Though many bitterly complain of discrimination and that amongst Jews they occupy the lowest economic position, there can be no doubt that since 1985 and Operation Moses the Israeli state has gone to extraordinary lengths to facilitate their migration and subsequent assimilation.

Israel needs people. Or, put more accurately, Israel needs *Jewish* people. That is why the exodus of some 470,000 Jews after October 7 is the cause of such concern for the authorities in Jerusalem.¹³ Even a little Israel relies on long-term net Jewish immigration ... net long-term Jewish *emigration* is a disaster, which, if it happened, if it were sustained, would indeed risk the beginning of the end of the Zionist project in Palestine.

Nation-in-arms

Following the 1967 Six Day War, Israel's main arms supplier has been the US (before that it was France). Not that there was an instant love affair between the two countries. George Marshall, president Harry S Truman's secretary of state, was more than cool about recognising Israel in May 1948. Nor was John Foster Dulles, Dwight Eisenhower's secretary of state, pro-Israel. It was the rise of Arab nationalism, and the turn towards the Soviet Union instigated by Egypt's Gamal Abdul Nasser, that led to a US shift. From

1958 the US-Israel alliance slowly expanded in scope and took its present form after the Yom Kippur War of 1973.¹⁴ Noam Chomsky, it should be noted, dates US support for the Greater Israel position to 1970, when Henry Kissinger succeeded in "taking over Middle East affairs".¹⁵

Either way, US economic and military aid to Israel has been considerable. In the 1946-2024 period it amounted to well over \$310 billion (in constant 2022 dollars). Today Washington's largesse mainly goes to support Israel's already potent military machine: Israel is on a short list of "major non-Nato allies" and has privileged access to the most advanced US military platforms and technologies. There is an agreement to supply it with a military package worth some \$3.8 billion annually till 2028.¹⁶ In return for imperial sponsorship, Israel acts as a US "strategic asset" in the Middle East (a region which, it just so happens, possesses something like 50% of the world's readily accessible oil reserves).¹⁷

There were those on the left who foolishly welcomed the election of Barack Obama in 2008 - the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain, George Galloway, Stop the War Coalition - because they hoped he would chart a fundamentally different, peaceful, more even-handed course in the Middle East. As we predicted at the time, they were bound to be "sadly disappointed".¹⁸ Whatever the skin colour of the president, America is in relative decline and that means that national antagonisms become ever more acute. Indeed, Obama and his secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, undertook the "pivot to Asia" in 2016: the main aim clearly being to block the rise of China - a policy seamlessly continued by the Trump and then the Biden administrations.¹⁹

As for Israel, there has, of course, been no change: unwavering US support is combined with a prolonged economic and diplomatic campaign to reduce, to hem in, Iran and stop it acquiring nuclear weapons. This makes Israel the regional superpower in the Middle East. Even without the 'special relationship' with the USA, Israel has repeatedly fought, invaded and defeated its Arab neighbours: 1948, 1956 and 1967. After that there followed the 1973 war with Egypt and Syria, the two wars in Lebanon (1982 and 2006) and now, of course, Gaza.

Israel's armed forces are vastly superior, compared with any Arab country or any conceivable combination of them. It is not a matter of total numbers under arms or the percentage of GDP spent on arms. Israel's IDF is better led, better trained and better equipped, that is for sure. Moreover, culturally Israel is a highly militarised society. It is a "nation-in-arms" (Ben-Gurion). Military service - for both sexes - starts in the late teenage years and goes on, in the reserves, well into adulthood (40 for regular soldiers, 45 for officers). That now includes those from the million-strong Haredi community - after a supreme court decision revoking their exemption. Even before being conscripted, there is, from the age of 14, the Gadia (youth brigades). This prepares young people not only in the handling of weapons, but psychologically too ... for wars of aggression.

Haim Bresheeth-Zabner calls the IDF "an army like no other".²⁰ The IDF constitutes the spinal cord of Israel's national identity. Not country of origin, not religious sect, not political affiliation.

The IDF forged the "new Jew" envisaged by Theodor Herzl from the "base elements" coming from middle Europe, the Soviet Union, the Arab countries, Ethiopia and America. Israel has thereby become a modern-day Sparta. Not surprisingly, armchair generals rank the country as militarily amongst the most powerful states on the face of the planet. Underlining the point, Israel reportedly possesses between 90 and 400 nuclear warheads ... and certainly has the means of launching them from land, sea and sky.

Divide and rule

Territorially, economically and politically Palestine is cleaved between Hamas in Gaza and Fatah on the West Bank - two statelets for one people. Uncompromisingly, the 1988 Hamas charter demands an end to the Zionist state of Israel and its replacement by a single Islamic state of Palestine. True, though Hamas doggedly refuses to recognise Israel, it has offered a "long-term truce" in return for Israel withdrawing from all territories it has occupied since 1967: in effect an Israel-Palestine two-state 'solution'.

Though Israel encouraged the formation and growth of Hamas from the mid-1980s onwards in order to weaken Fatah, after its landslide victory in the January 2006 elections and the Fatah June coup in the West Bank, Israel imposed its asphyxiating blockade on Gaza. That said, since 2018 Netanyahu's government allowed Hamas to receive "infusions" of Qatari cash and granted tens of thousands of work permits to Gazan residents. The idea was to keep the Palestinians divided and thereby render any Israel-Palestine two-state 'solution' practically inoperable. Hence the Palestinian Authority on the West Bank was treated as a "burden", while Hamas in Gaza was treated as an "asset".²¹ That is, until October 7 2023 and Operation al-Aqsa Flood - what has been called Israel's Pearl Harbour.

Leaders of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation - dominated by Fatah - preside over a series of disconnected Arab reservations on the West Bank euphemistically called the Palestinian Authority. Its president, Mahmoud Abbas, pleads for an Israel-Palestine two-state 'solution' and roundly condemns Israel's invasion of Gaza. He is, however, to all intents and purposes a creature of Israel, a collaborator, a quisling. To put it mildly, he is widely hated.

The PLO's present line dates back to 1988, when the demand for a return to the *status quo ante* 1948 was formally abandoned. Fatah had been steadily moving in this direction since the mid-70s; however, the final turning point was the US-brokered Oslo accord, signed in August 1993 by PLO chair Yasser Arafat and Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin. The PLO effectively conceded Israeli hegemony over the whole of mandate Palestine in return for local self-government in Gaza and the West Bank. Abject surrender. The vital questions of Jewish settlements on the West Bank and the right of Palestinians to return to their lands were put aside. A diplomatic triumph for the US and Israel.

Fragmented

As for Israeli politics, they are notoriously fragmented. At least a dozen blocs - many with multiple components - are represented in the Knesset. But virtually the entire Israeli-Jewish political

spectrum unitedly opposes any kind of *democratic* settlement with the Palestinians. The nationalist and religious hard right, including Likud, has absolutely no truck with Palestinian statehood. General Zionists merely talk the talk. Only the left, which relies on Israeli-Arab votes, seems serious about an Israel-Palestine two-state 'solution': and that means Palestinians settling for the West Bank and Gaza, and nothing more.

Working class politics in Israel - that is, Israeli-Jewish working class politics - hardly exists, at least at this moment in time, as an effective collectivity. Historically there has been a remorseless shift from voting for the Labor Party to parties of the right in an attempt to preserve national privileges. The Jewish-Israeli working class being a labour aristocracy that has seen its social power substantially eroded by years of neoliberalism.²² In 1983 membership of the trade union federation, Histadrut, stood at 1.6 million; today it is around 570,000. Histadrut, note, once the spearhead of Zionist colonisation, has also been shorn of its role in health, banking and as a very substantial employer in its own right.

Histadrut needs to be put into the context of colonisation. Marxists have distinguished between various types of colonies: plantation colonies, exploitation colonies, colonies properly so-called, etc. Broadly the colonisation of the India, Congo, South Africa type saw the exploiters enslave people, gaining a fat profit from the native workforce, including peasant farmers, through all manner of barely concealed forms of robbery, cheating and double dealing. That went hand-in-hand with staffing an army officer corps, running a bureaucracy and managing railroads, docks, etc. The colonisers therefore constituted a relatively narrow caste who often maintained close ties with the imperial homeland (to which they often returned, having made their fortunes).

Nonetheless, it must be understood that in terms of political economy Israel is what Karl Kautsky called a "work colony"²³ or what Moshé Machover prefers to call an "exclusion colony".²⁴ Instead of the colonisers constituting themselves as a narrow, often highly privileged, caste, the colonisers make up the full spectrum of classes: bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, small farmers, workers, unemployed reserve workers, etc. Instead of relying on the labour of the indigenous population, it is either replaced, marginalised or driven to the point of extinction. Examples: USA, Canada, Australia.

Israel is most certainly an exclusion colony. Despite present-day claims, Zionism was never a national liberation movement. It was always, as it first presented itself - crucially in Theodor Herzl's foundational *Der Judenstaat* (1896) - a colonial-settler project that would rely on Jewish labour playing a vanguard role: "The poorest will go first to cultivate the soil. In accordance with a preconceived plan, they will construct roads, bridges, railways and telegraph installations; regulate rivers; and build their own dwellings; their labour will create trade, trade will create markets and markets will attract new settlers."²⁵ Hence, whatever the socialistic pretensions of Labor Zionism, from the beginning, Israel owed far more to the blood and soil ideology of late 19th century European reaction than anything genuinely socialist.

What marked out Israel, however, was not that to begin with the settler-colonists were a minority of the population in Ottoman and then mandate Palestine. No, the Zionist project relied on propertyless migrants coming from all manner of different countries, while exercising "no coercive power over the indigenous population".²⁶ That began to change with the formation of the Haganah militia, but it was poorly armed and could only manage defensive operations till the 1940s. At first the Zionists were substantially dependent on external sources of capital, had to purchase land from wealthy native owners and most certainly relied on the good will of an imperial sponsor (to begin with Britain, which agreed the Balfour declaration in November 1917 in the expectation of carving out for itself a "Jewish Ulster" in the midst of a hostile Middle East).

Histadrut played a determining role. It organised Jewish workers and forced the Jewish capitalist class to grant all manner of concessions - not least barring indigenous, cheaper, Arab labour from whole sectors of the economy (relaxed somewhat after statehood). Histadrut also provided Labor Zionism with the money, the votes and the organisation needed to make it the dominant force politically from the mid-1930s till the late 1970s. So it was far removed from being a trade union federation of the type normally seen in the so-called west.

British left

Historically, mainstream Labourism held a sympathetic attitude towards Zionism. Poale Zion - now the Jewish Labour Movement - affiliated to the Labour Party in 1920. Successive Labour conferences voted in favour of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. Labour considered the Israeli Labor Party a fraternal organisation and maintained close contacts throughout the 1967 war. From the early 1960s the TUC was giving Histadrut financial aid for its Afro-Asian Institute - a wonderful means for Israel to spread its diplomatic influence. Trade union tops regularly spoke out against Arab feudalism, backwardness and Nazi ideas.

As for the 'official' CPGB in the 1940s, it temporarily abandoned its historic hostility to Zionism. The CPGB formed a National Jewish Committee, which supported Jewish migration into Palestine and land purchases. Stalin rightly saw Zionism as a way to weaken British influence in the Middle East. Hence, in 1948, the 'official' CPGB wholeheartedly welcomed the establishment of Israel, greeting the state's foundation as "a big step toward fulfilment of self-determination of the peoples of Palestine" and "a great sign of the times".²⁷ After 2,000 years of supposed *uninterrupted* persecution the Jewish people had liberated themselves at last. In parliament its MPs, Willie Gallacher and Phil Piratin, sponsored an early day motion condemning the Arab states for their 1948 intervention in Palestine, urging the Labour government to recognise Israel and demanding an immediate end to military aid to Arab states.

On the Labour left Edward Short, Jennie Lee and Tony Benn were proud to be counted amongst the Labour Friends of Israel. They routinely cited the kibbutz as a brave socialist experiment. Eric Heffer even defended Israel's continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza on the grounds that Israel was "the only genuine

democratic and socialist-oriented state in the Middle East".²⁸

Next to nothing of that now remains on the left. Today Israel counts amongst those countries dominated by the hard right and is therefore regarded as a monstrosity by those who regard themselves in the least bit progressive. True, there is still a pro-Zionist 'left'. But it is, thankfully, marginal and widely despised: the Alliance for Workers' Liberty comes to mind, so does the CPB's resident Zionist, Mary Davis, and her ghastly 'Anti-Semitism awareness courses' (as if the *Morning Star*'s CPB has an anti-Semitism problem, when, in actual fact, it has a pro-Zionism problem).

Does this mean that the left has lighted upon a correct programmatic orientation? Hardly - instead we are presented with a range of positions, all of which are far from adequate.

We have already mentioned the AWL and the *Morning Star*'s Communist Party of Britain. Essentially their two-state 'solution' echoes the PLO, Fatah, the Israeli Labor Party ... and the international bourgeois consensus. It amounts to economic Zionism.

A little Israel - an Israel returned to its pre-1967 borders - is expected to live peacefully alongside a West Bank and Gaza Strip Palestine. Except, of course, it will not. For the sake of appearances, the Biden administration pays lip service to this touching picture of the wolf lying down with the lamb. But, as we have seen, US imperialism is committed to a Greater Israel (though not quite yet). The same goes for its allies, such as the UK, Germany and Italy. So there is no serious international force that can impose a two-state 'solution' on the Israeli government (with or without Netanyahu). There will not, therefore, be a repetition of the early 1990s, when apartheid in South Africa was negotiated away in a US-sponsored deal, which gave black citizens the vote in return for the African National Congress leaving capitalist big business intact.

In Israel-Palestine there is no overwhelming oppressed national majority. There is no threat of a revolutionary explosion. The odds are completely stacked in Israel's favour. That is why Hamas resorts to desperate suicide missions and the PLO and Fatah are reduced to impotent verbal gestures and pathetic diplomatic pleading (meantime the Palestine Authority is dependent on international largesse and collaborates with the Israeli occupiers). Recognising this, the likes of the AWL, CPB ... and various Labour left odds and sods clutch at protests, such as the anti-judicial reform movement and common economic struggles in Israel, which are envisaged as uniting Hebrews and Arabs into a lever for social change.

The "secular federal republic" advocated by Steve Freeman - a former SWPer and now a little England republican socialist - is no more than a variation on the theme. The claim is that the "one state, two nations" formula is opposed to both Zionist/Jewish and Palestinian nationalism. Instead, what is offered is a "minimum programme" of "achievable reforms" within the socio-economic framework of capitalism that will purportedly unite the working class.²⁹ Deludedly, we are told that already Zionism is "building up its own gravedigger in the Israeli-Palestinian working class" ... in fact Zionism remains committed to keeping workers inside Israel structurally divided.

That means legal, political and material privileges for Israeli-Jewish workers, privileges they will hang onto for dear life ... unless there is something much better on offer (Israeli-Jewish workers, especially those at the bottom end of the labour market have no wish to compete with Arab-Israeli/Palestinian worst paid labour as *equals*, that is for sure).

Incidentally, the claim is made that inspiration comes from the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. A strange reading, not least given that its 1903 programme, written by Georgi Plekhanov and substantially amended by Vladimir Lenin, committed Marxists in Russia to the "most immediate political task": namely the "overthrow of the tsarist autocracy" and its replacement by a democratic republic, which would then bring about the "universal arming of the people", "unrestricted freedom of conscience, speech, publication and assembly", etc, etc. For the RSDLP, in other words, *revolution* would bring about reforms.³⁰

Stagism

As a justification for the two-state/federal-state 'solution' we are assured that an Israel-Palestine rapprochement would provide the solid, democratic foundations, from where alone the struggle for socialism can begin. In other words, their two-state/federal-state 'solution' is based on a combination of a naive wishful thinking and mechanical, stagist, reasoning. Note too, Israel's January-October 2023 anti-judicial reform movement was pro-supreme court, not pro-Palestinian, nor pro-democracy. Equally to the point, trade union politics - ie, struggles over wages and conditions - always find themselves cut short by the high politics of war, security, national privilege, etc. There have been no Histadrut strikes demanding equal civil rights for Palestinians, ending the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and calling for the right of return. Nor should any such development be expected within the narrow confines of today's circumstances.

The Socialist Party in England and Wales offers a 'socialist' version of the two-state 'solution'. It calls for a 'socialist' Israel alongside a 'socialist' West Bank-Gaza Strip Palestine. Israel, it should be noted, is treated as a 'normal' country: the idea of it remaining a "settler state" is dismissed out of hand.³¹ That despite the ongoing ethnic cleansing in Gaza, the recent announcement by Bezalel Smotrich of the legalisation of five more previously illegal Jewish settler 'outposts' on the West Bank and the 720,000 settlers already planted there (including east Jerusalem).

Anyway, why on earth two such states would remain separate, especially given the substantial population crossover, is something of a mystery. More to the point, the means of achieving such an outcome once again relies almost entirely on trade union politics, which by its very nature is sectional and confined to the relationship between sellers and buyers of the labour-power commodity. Hence trade union politics as trade union politics do little more than reproduce the *division* of the working class. On the one side, nationally privileged labour aristocrats and, on the other, a nationally oppressed underclass.

Then there is the left version of the *old* PLO single-Palestine 'solution': the Socialist Workers Party being the quintessential example. Ignoring the history, power, connections and wishes of the Israeli-Jewish population,

there is the call for the abolition, the dismantling of Israel and in its place "one secular, democratic [capitalist - JC] state built on the principle of equal rights for all citizens, including Israeli Jews".³²

Probably, the SWP leadership has long ago given up trying to think through what is and what is not a viable strategy in Israel-Palestine. Certainly, what it is interested in nowadays - especially post-October 7 - is posturing. It wants to present the SWP to the mass demonstrations, not least its Muslim contingents, as the most militant, most implacable opponents of everything Israeli - and thereby sell a few more papers and gain a few more recruits. Politically, though, the result amounts to tailing Hamas.

Needless to say then, the Israeli-Jewish working class is deemed to be entirely incapable of playing any positive role. Israeli Jews, most of whom consider themselves secular, will paradoxically be allowed individual religious freedom, but not collective national rights under the SWP's single-Palestine 'solution'. Israeli Jews are often defined away as a non-nation, but even when it is admitted that they do constitute a nation, they are classified as an oppressive, counterrevolutionary one, which should thereby be denied the right to self-determination presumably in perpetuity.

That this would transform the Israeli-Jewish population into an oppressed nationality never seems to occur to left advocates of a single capitalist Palestine. So, for example, the vicarious Palestinian nationalist, Tony Greenstein, writes that in his secular, capitalist Palestine, Israeli-Jews would have "language rights, freedom of worship and the right to their own culture, but political rights? No."³³ Of course, a nation threatened with a denial of political and national rights is likely to fight tooth and claw against any such outcome.

Of course, comrade Greenstein has long given up on working class politics. If he still believes in socialism, he knows it will not come from the Israeli working class ... or for that matter the working class in America, Europe or Australasia. The human agency he has in mind when it comes to overthrowing capitalism, therefore, relies on a social nothing, or must come from the outside (third world left nationalism, extraterrestrial little green men?).

But leave socialism aside for the moment. The objective balance of forces are violently against a single-capitalist-state 'solution'. There are some 7.2 million Israeli-Jews (settlements included). About 10-11 million Palestinians worldwide; but only 6-7 million of them live in Israel, the occupied territories, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. It is fair to say, then, that any projected single Palestinian state would include roughly equivalent numbers of Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs. Assuming, that is, no forcible movement of peoples. No attempt to drive the Israeli Jews into the sea. No closure of refugee camps and dumping of Palestinians over the other side of the Jordan river. No round-up and expulsion of Palestinian workers in Saudi Arabia, etc. Therefore what is being proposed is unity where one half of the population gets no say in the matter - impractical and, in strategic terms, really dumb.

After all, the Israeli-Jewish working class has everything to lose and nothing to gain from such a single-capitalist-state 'solution' that is more or less guaranteed to be neither secular nor democratic.

SUPPLEMENT

They are, therefore, more than likely to resist any such outcome with all their strength. The whole of the 20th century since 1933, but especially the 1943-45 holocaust, tells us that. Without military conquest - a highly unlikely and in and of itself an unwelcome outcome - the immediate demand for a single-state 'solution' is entirely illusory. Translated into the 'Palestine shall be free from the river to the sea' slogan, it goes down well on street demonstrations, but offers zilch in terms of bringing about a rapprochement between the two peoples in Israel-Palestine and advancing common working class interests.

The call for a single Palestinian state "may seem completely utopian", owns up the SWP's Alex Callinicos. He also correctly states: "For over 30 years the Palestinian movement, supported by much of the left and progressive opinion worldwide, has had an official policy" for two states. He rightly claims, however, that there is "very clear evidence that the two-state solution cannot work". Crucially, there exists, he says, the "massive imbalance of power between the two sides. Israel is one of the greatest military powers in the world, backed and subsidised by the US".³⁴ Right again.

Axis of Resistance

Hence it is pertinent to ask exactly who is going to establish the single Palestinian state. After all, according to comrade Callinicos himself, the Palestinians are incapable of achieving any kind of viable state alongside Israel by their efforts alone. How then can we expect them to establish a single state against the wishes of the global US hegemon and the vast mass of 7.2 million Israeli-Jews? Perhaps what the SWP therefore envisages as its agent of change is the Axis of Resistance - what is today a largely symbolic combination of Iran, Lebanon's Hezbollah, Hamas and Yemen's Houthis. In the imagination the Axis could be joined by Muslim Brotherhood governments in Egypt, Syria and Jordan.

An anti-working class agency, if ever there was one. However, such a pan-Islamic alliance (leave aside the Shia and Sunni divisions) could, conceivably, defeat Israel, as Saladin's forces defeated the outremer, crusader, kingdom of Jerusalem in 1187. But that would, though, hardly produce a *secular* Palestinian state. Nor would it produce a *democratic* Palestinian state. True, if such an unlikely combination were to come together - and, just as unlikely, achieve military victory over Israel - it might lead to a mass exodus of Jews (to who knows where). But if that did not happen, the Jewish-Israeli population would have to be subject to extraordinarily harsh measures to crush the inevitable resistance. The poles of national oppression would, yes, thereby be reversed. But, we are told, what does that matter? It would, *Insha'Allah*, be "national liberation" via the destruction of a settler-colony ... and from the (nuclear?) ashes, hopefully would arise some kind of "communism". Not something any genuine Marxist would care to countenance.

But, yes, there are those crazies on the 'left' who positively relish such an unlikely prospect. Settler-colonialism has to be "destroyed militarily" because the assessment is, rightly, that "Zionists will never allow Zionism to end peacefully". So in the absence of any other agency we have an expanded, a centrally coordinated, militarily beefed-up Axis of Resistance invading and overseeing the

"complete destruction of Israel".³⁵ Those who object that this would be a theocratic nightmare are dismissed as wanting to impose their secular and democratic values on the Palestinians ... as if the Palestinian masses cannot be won to the values of secularism, democracy and socialism.

Though it might be an inconvenient truth, no *democratic* solution can be won without the consent of Israeli Jews - that is, a clearly expressed majority of them. Those Humpty Dumpties who claim otherwise are coining a contronym, whereby words become their opposite. Democracy is divorced from basic democratic rights. - it becomes a *denial* of basic democratic rights.

Yet the fact is, despite the warnings, pained outrage and courage of Israeli-Jewish socialists, anti-Zionists and pacifists, the Israeli-Jewish population at large consistently, often overwhelmingly, supports the wars of their elected politicians, generals and capitalist masters, irrespective of the hatred of Israel that this inevitably engenders. Why? Israel is a colonial-settler state and all such states face a fundamental problem. What to do with the people whose land has been stolen? During the wars of 1947-49 and 1967 well over a million Palestinians fled or were forcibly driven out. Palestinians in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank are therefore 'unfinished business'.

Both the Palestinian enemy within and the Palestinian enemy without engender a permanent state of insecurity. Israeli Jews know they are resented, know they are hated. When it comes to worst-paid labour, the Palestinians willingly undercut them. Then there are the Hamas rockets, suicide bombers and the October 7 spectacular. Understandably, the Israeli-Jewish population feels under constant threat and therefore - frightened, vengeful, maddened - willingly supports, urges on Israeli aggression, oppression and even genocide. The hope is to crush or finally remove the Palestinians - an oppressor's peace.

Does it follow that Israelis cannot make peace with Palestinians? That any Israeli settlement with the Palestinians is bound to be a sham? There can certainly be no *democratic* settlement with Israel as a *Zionist* state - any more than there can be with an *Islamic* Palestine.

Zionism is, arguably, a nationalism *sui generis*. While it now boasts a homeland, Zionism claims purchase over the loyalty of all Jews, even though the majority of the people-religion are not Israeli and do not speak Hebrew (around 40% of the world's Jewish population lives in the US, roughly the same as in Israel). No less to the point, the Zionist state is committed to expansion and denying elementary rights to a good portion of the population it rules over (ie, the Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories).

Nevertheless, the Israeli-Jewish people, the Hebrew nation, is a real, living entity and cannot be dismissed or discounted just because Israel began and continues as a settler-colonial state. Israel emerged out of the last phase of the British empire, in the midst of a terroristic civil war and unforgivable crimes that no-one should forget. That said, there is no reason for refusing to recognise the definite, historically constituted Hebrew nation which took state form with the May 14 1948 declaration of Israeli independence.

And since then millions of Jews have migrated to Israel, learnt

Hebrew, intermarried, had children, assimilated, and made and remade the Israeli-Jewish nation. Today some 75% are sabras - Israeli born - and mostly second or third generation. Hence, the Israeli-Jewish nation not only inhabits a common territory and shares a common language: it is historically constituted.

Of course, most, if not all, the world's states came into existence by way of terrible oppression. But, while fully taking into account history, any consistently democratic programme must be squarely based on contemporary realities - crucially human facts on the ground. Abolition of *Zionist* Israel, legal equality for all, secularism, halting expansionism and withdrawing from the occupied territories are basic (minimal) programmatic demands. None of that, however, should be taken as synonymous with an eviscerating reconstruction of the pre-1948 situation. One might just as well call for the abolition of the US, Canada, Australia, etc, and a return of lands to the enfeebled remnants of the aboriginal populations.

The only realistic, progressive and humane programme must be based on a mutual recognition by both Palestinians and Israeli Jews of each other's national rights. Needless to say, it would be an excellent thing if both nations *chose* to happily live side by side or, even better, to slowly merge together into a single nation. No rational human being would want to oppose either such outcome. The question is, though, how to arrive at such a happy outcome? Given where we are situated today, our discussion must necessarily return to the question of agency.

Arab nation

No democratic solution for the Israel/Palestine conflict can be achieved in isolation. Objective circumstances simply do not permit it. That is as certain as anything can be certain in this uncertain world.

By themselves the Palestinians - debilitatingly split between Hamas and Fatah - palpably lack the ability to achieve anything beyond abject surrender or hopeless resistance. Certainly not a single Palestinian state, where Israeli Jews have "full" religious rights, but no national rights. There is, however, a way to cut through the Gordian knot. Widen the strategic front. There are nearly 300 million Arabs in a contiguous territory that stretches from the Atlantic Ocean, across north Africa, down the Nile to north Sudan, and all the way to the Persian Gulf and up to the Caspian Sea.

Though studded here and there with national minorities - Kurds, Assyrians, Turks, Armenians, Berbers, etc - there is a definite Arab or Arabised community. Despite being separated into 25 different states and divided by religion and religious sect - Sunni, Shi'ite, Alaouite, Ismaili, Druze, Orthodox Christian, Catholic Christian, Maronite, Nestorian, etc - they share a living bond of pan-Arab consciousness, born not only of a common language, but of a closely related history.

Arabs are binational. There are Moroccans, Yemenis, Egyptians, Jordanians, etc. But there is also a wider Arab identity, which has its origins going back to the Muslim conquests of the 7th and 8th centuries. The most well-known candidate for Arab unifier was Nasser. This uncrowned Bonaparte led the Free Officers' revolution in 1952, which overthrew the pro-British monarchy of Farouk I. Nasser then oversaw a radical

agrarian reform programme, nationalised the Suez canal, allied Egypt with the Soviet Union and put his country on the course of state-capitalist development. This went hand-in-hand with crushing both the Muslim Brotherhood and the working class movement.

Nasser called it 'Arab socialism'. Especially with his success in the 1956 crisis - an Israeli invasion followed by a pre-planned joint French and British intervention and then an unexpected American veto - Nasser's popularity soared throughout the Arab world. Pro-Nasser Arab socialist parties, groups and conspiracies were sponsored or established themselves. His name became almost synonymous with pan-Arabism.

Nasser demanded that natural resources be used for the benefit of all Arabs - hugely popular with those below. Everyone knew he meant oil. Of course, the house of Saud instantly became an implacable enemy. Yet because of mass pressure the Ba'athist authorities in Syria sought a merger. Despite the repression suffered by their co-thinkers in Egypt, the 'official communists' and the Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood likewise favoured unity.

The United Arab Republic was formed on February 1 1958. Nasser was appointed president and Cairo became the capital. Yet the UAR proved fleeting. Syrian capitalists did not gain access to the Egyptian market and Egyptian administrative personnel were painted by Syrian officers, bureaucrats and top politicians as acting like colonial officials. The union ignominiously collapsed in 1961. Opposition came from the Damascus street. However, from then onwards the UAR became a hollow pretence. It united no other country apart from Egypt.

The 1967 Six Day War with Israel proved to be the final straw for Nasserism. Israel's blitzkrieg destroyed the airforces of Egypt, Syria and Jordan on the ground and by the end of the short-lived hostilities Israel occupied the Sinai, the West Bank and the Golan Heights. Nasser was humiliated and died soon afterwards a broken man.

Evidently, Arab reunification remains a burning, but unfulfilled, task. The fact that Nasser's short-lived UAR saw the light of day is testimony to mass support for Arab unity. What was a potent sentiment in the 1950s and well into the 1970s needs to be revived in the 21st century and given a new democratic and class content.

So we are not talking about reviving Nasserism. Nor are we talking about something akin to the pan-Slavism of Ludovít Štúr which excused so many of the wars, crimes and intrigues of the late Russian empire. No, communists need to take the lead in the fight for pan-Arab unity - as Marx and Engels and their comrades in the Communist League did in the fight for German unity.

Such a fight, conducted by communists, is, of course, inseparable from the task of building a mass Communist Party - first in each Arab country and then throughout the Arab world. A Communist Party of Arabia.

What of reconciliation between Israeli Jews and the Palestinians? This can only happen in the context of sweeping away the House of Saud, the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan and the petty Gulf sheikhdoms, ending the military dictatorship in Egypt and the establishment of working class rule and a socialist republic of Arabia.

Only from such a wide salient, even if it is in the process of realisation, can the Israeli-Jewish working class be prised away from the clutches of Zionism and formed into a positivity. Even if it is confined to the Mashriq, an Arab socialist republic, could offer Israel federal status, with the confident expectation that such an invitation would receive a positive response from below. Instead of being an oppressed class subject to capitalist exploitation - that today has to content itself with the much diminished crumbs that come with being a labour aristocracy - Israeli-Jewish workers would have everything to gain from a deZionised, socialist Israel, federated in a socialist Arabia.

They would be part of the *ruling* class. Now that is something to be ●

Notes

1. Eg, Ofer Cassif of the 'official communist' Hadash party and Ram Ben-Barak of the 'centrist' Yesh Atid.
2. See S Squire, 'Six months of slaughter, six months of resistance' *Socialist Worker* April 3 2024.
3. T Greenstein, *Letters Weekly Worker* June 27 2024.
4. I Pappé, 'The collapse of Zionism' *New Left Review* June 21 2024.
5. theconversation.com/gaza-war-israeli-military-admits-it-cant-win-but-benjamin-netanyahu-isnt-listening-233309.
6. www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-lawyer-tells-court-pm-can-only-testify-in-corruption-trial-in-march-2025.
7. www.middleeastmonitor.com/20240306-trump-calls-on-israel-to-finish-the-problem-in-gaza-suggesting-intensification-of-genocide.
8. www.aljazeera.com/program/upfront/2024/3/8/former-israeli-security-agency-chief-netanyahu-wants-an-endless-war.
9. www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees.
10. See R Feldman *Messianic Zionism in the digital age: Jews, Noahides and the Third Temple imaginary* New Brunswick NJ 2024.
11. "On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, the Adonites, the Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaims, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and the Jebusites'" (*Genesis* xv, 18-21).
12. www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/total-immigration-to-israel-by-country-per-year.
13. www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/nearly-half-a-million-people-depart-israel-amid-gaza-war-report/3076116.
14. See A Ben-Zvi *Decade of transition: Eisenhower, Kennedy and the origins of the American-Israeli alliance* New York NY 1998.
15. N Chomsky *The fateful triangle: the United States, Israel and the Palestinians* London 1983, p43.
16. www.cfr.org/article/us-aid-israel-four-charts.
17. www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/israel-strategic-asset-united-states-0.
18. J Conrad, 'Zionist imperatives and the Arab solution' *Weekly Worker* January 22 2009: [weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/753/zionist-imperatives-and-the-arab-solution](https://www.weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/753/zionist-imperatives-and-the-arab-solution).
19. H Clinton, 'America's Pacific century' *Foreign Policy* November 2011.
20. H Bresheeth-Zabner *An army like no other: how the Israeli Defence Force made a nation* London 2020, p13.
21. *The Times of Israel* October 8 2023.
22. The thesis of the Jewish-Israel working class being a labour aristocracy is closely associated with Maxime Rodinson. See his *Israel: a colonial settler state?* New York NY 1973.
23. See M Macnair (intro) *Karl Kautsky: on colonialism* London 2013.
24. M Machover, 'Colonialism and the natives' *Weekly Worker* December 17 2015: [weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1087/colonialism-and-the-natives](https://www.weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1087/colonialism-and-the-natives).
25. www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/25282/pg25282-images.html.
26. M Shalev *The labour movement in Israel: ideology and political economy* Westview CO 1996, p1.
27. *Daily Worker* May 15 1948.
28. E Heffer, 'Why Labour should support Israel' *Labour looks at Israel: 1967-1971* London 1971, p31.
29. S Freeman, 'Marching towards what solution?' *Weekly Worker* May 16 2024: [weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1491/marching-towards-what-solution](https://www.weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1491/marching-towards-what-solution).
30. B Pearce (trans) *1903: second congress of the RSDLP* London 1978, p6.
31. J Horton *Socialism Today* February 2 2024.
32. SWP pamphlet *Palestine, resistance, revolution and the struggle for freedom* London 2023, p28.
33. *Letters Weekly Worker* June 27 2024.
34. *Socialist Worker* August 5 2006.
35. Haoyu Tai, *Letters Weekly Worker* June 13 2024.