

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity

weekly **worker**



Strategic bankruptcy, not strategic reorientation: Andrew Murray and the CPB's ditching of auto-Labourism

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Towards a mass Communist Party

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**ISRAEL'S OPERATION
RISING LION:
'DEVOURING THE PREY
AND DRINKING THE
BLOOD OF THE SLAIN'**

LETTERS



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

Democracy

Martin Greenfield's June 12 letter in a sense usefully corrects some of my points in the previous issue of the paper, which might be one-sided. But I am not *fully* in agreement with his arguments.

In the first place, my assessment of present political dynamics is not pessimistic, but merely realistic - like those 'pessimists' who insisted in 1900-14 that great-power war was coming, against those who argued that international economic interconnections and the sheer destructive power of weapons made great-power war impossible.

Accelerating climate change is, I agree, also a threat. However, since the early 2000s US actors have been arguing that the primary responsibility for carbon emissions lies with China. It is clearly US policy - continuous across Obama, Trump, Biden and Trump II - to impose regime-change, followed by break-up and descent into warlordism, successively on Russia and China. If the USA succeeds in this policy without triggering nuclear war, there will result a significant reduction in global carbon emissions. Of course, the dynamics of US decline would then demand de-industrialisation of continental Europe as the next threat ...

The point in my article is that the need for proletarian revolution is right now *mainly* posed by the present tendency of capitalism towards barbarism, rather than being *mainly* posed by the present growing strength of the workers' movement (as was the case around 1900, and around 1970). And this has negative implications for the claim of Talking About Socialism comrades that the strength of communism as a political movement will lead the petty bourgeoisie to be willing to accept immediate expropriation as part of a communist programme.

How to "organise and inspire", in order to turn "a global alternative driven by an internationalist proletarian communist movement" into a more likely outcome? The answer is that even a *partial* break with the left's anti-factionalism can be temporarily inspiring, leading to a rapid snowball effect: witness the Brazilian Workers' Party, Rifondazione Comunista, and on a smaller scale the Scottish Socialist Party, among other examples. Of course, all these were more or less rapidly derailed by the left's nationalism and governmentalism. But, if we could break through the outer line of fortifications, which is the anti-factionalist and 'national road' commitments of the far left, such a snowball effect on the *far* left could rapidly open the way to a struggle to de-managerialise the mass organisations of the workers' movement. And that, in turn, could rapidly pose a *political* alternative which could reach into the state apparatus as well as into the petty bourgeoisie.

But the precondition is overcoming the anti-factionalism: *both* in the form of refusal to tolerate minorities and refusal to work as minorities, *and* in the forms of insistence on diplomatic agreements, 'civility' and so on. Without this all that we will get is another diplomatic lash-up, leading *at best* to a brief episode of hope, followed by rapid demoralisation.

As to comrade Greenfield's second point, yes, of course, "to the extent a communist party becomes large and mass, its members will inevitably

have to 'manage and coordinate' communities, unions, workplaces, strikes and other struggles".

It is, however, a mistake to suppose that the *primary purpose* of the party is to manage and coordinate struggles. What this idea of primary purpose leads to is silencing the work the party needs to do at the level of the *political*, for the sake of 'connecting with' struggles that at present - quite understandably - seek to *avoid* the political for the sake of the broadest possible mobilisation round the single issue on which they are fighting. It also inherently leads to managerialism, as the party *leadership* seeks to (micro-) manage and coordinate the struggles.

In this connection, I do not in the least retract the point that the purpose of adopting theses on trans liberation is not to attract trans rights activists, but to try to arm the workers' movement with political instruments to escape the workers' movement being used as a plaything in the hands of the liberals (the 'gender recognition' line) or of the conservatives ('gender-critical feminism'). That is, in my view, a great deal more important than the possibility that any far-left group might attract trans rights activists.

Equally, it is certainly true that the CPGB's *Draft programme* calls for workplace committees, organising beyond union membership, and generalised workers' control. The problem with calling this "extending democracy into the workplace" is that this slogan supposes that we *have already got* democracy outside the workplace, and we don't.

What we have is rule-of-law *mixed constitutions* in the capitalist states, with elements of monarchy in the form of elected presidents and so on, and of aristocracy in the form primarily of the judicial power, as well as very limited elements of democracy (the vote, trial by jury, limited freedoms of speech and association).

What we have in the workers' movement is managerialist-bureaucratic rule with similarly limited forms of democracy (and often even less). To propose to "extend" this sort of "democracy" into the workplace (as opposed to fighting for its overthrow in the first place in the workers' movement and in the state) is to lend political support to the existing regime of managerialist control.

Comrade Greenfield's third point is just a misunderstanding of my historical analogy. The revolutionary bourgeoisie did not destroy the city communes (English boroughs) and replace them with wholly new entities, but *forcibly overthrew their monarchist leaderships*, thereby turning them back into instruments for the overthrow of the state regimes. The analogy, then, proposes that what is necessary is to overthrow first the managerialist leaderships of the far-left groups in order to create a party. That will create an instrument to overthrow the managerialist leaderships of the trade unions and other mass workers' organisations in order to turn them into instruments for the overthrow of the state regimes: that is, instruments through which the working class as a class can develop self-government and an inspiring alternative to the regime of capitalist managerialism.

Mike Macnair
Oxford

Humpty Dumpty

Mike Macnair dismisses my suggestion that a party seeking to lead the working class requires an answer to the question, 'Does it matter what a woman is?', as "Aristotelian" (Letters, June 12). Comrade Macnair will have to explain to me his issues with Aristotle, but as far as I know

he was a more useful thinker than Humpty Dumpty, with whom Macnair appears to agree, at least regarding the word, 'woman' - "It means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less". Comrades can decide for themselves if that is adequate, or if whether someone is fertile or not has any relevance to the question of which biological sex they are.

The second part of Macnair's reply asserts that I have swallowed Republican Party propaganda and that I consider trans people a threat to women in general. This is nonsense and wild stuff, considering I simply suggested a party seeking to lead the working class should have an answer to the question, 'Should anyone who wants to do so be able to access spaces reserved for women?' To which, naturally, answer came there none.

Sean Carter
email

Evidence?

Paul Demarty writes that Alasdair MacIntyre was "a Catholic who routinely ridiculed the church's inability to see any political issue as pertinent except the legality of abortion (though he agreed that it should be illegal)" ('Philosophy in the ordinary world', June 5).

I'd like to know the evidence for this claim - either part of it. I am a student of Alasdair's who has read widely in his work. I know of no evidence that MacIntyre thought the church only focused on abortion (it obviously focuses on immigration, education, capital punishment and many others issues), and I also know of nowhere in print where MacIntyre says abortion should be illegal (though I suspect he did think this).

Dr Christopher Kaczor
Los Angeles

New party

In Australia, over the weekend of June 14-15, 430 members of the Victorian Socialists registered attendance at the national conference to ratify a plan for national expansion, debate constitutional amendments and vote upon an executive council (composed of nine ordinary members and four directly elected party officer positions). This conference marked the first attended by the newly formed Communist Caucus of VS, which brought forth a swathe of motions and amendments predicated on a reply to the question, 'What kind of party do we need?' For comrades of the Communist Caucus, the answer was a revolutionary mass party, a communist party - this was the type of party that VS, through its national expansion, should aspire to be.

Communist Caucus urged the adoption of a minimum-maximum revolutionary programme, where our "minimum demands can form the basis for electoral campaigns and, if implemented in full, would bring the proletariat to power". This includes minimum demands for a democratic republic, the replacement of the standing army with a popular militia, withdrawal from all imperialist alliances and a universal minimum living income.

We also pushed for democratic changes to the rules, the establishment of a Socialist Party newspaper and recognition that the new Socialist Party is part of an international fight for socialism.

As anticipated, each and every one of the Communist Caucus' amendments and independent motions were voted down by an overwhelming majority - as was our ticket for the executive. What is notable about the conference is not this outcome, but what it implies for the party moving forward. The most significant decision made at

conference was approval of a federalist structure for national expansion (each state party of 'The Socialists' will have its own constitution 'in the vein of' VS), proposed by Socialist Alternative member Corey Oakley - the continuing secretary of VS since its inception. Such a structure was opposed by the Communist Caucus, on the grounds that it neither reflects the kind of party we want to build nor provides a strong foundation for party work. In adopting a federalist approach like that of the Australian Greens party, a (presumably) nationally elected leadership operates 'above the fray' of the state-based organisations, allowing a Bonapartist approach outside the direct control and accountability from the national membership. This means, in effect, the national membership is disempowered, with undemocratic independence given to state 'parties'.

The recommended ticket for the new executive composed by Socialist Alternative (SA), the post-Cliffite, hegemonic political organisation within VS, garnered support among those attending the conference - with 10 out of 13 executive positions occupied by Socialist Alternative members. Such a ticket was likely mobilised in response to our own ticket, given that the Communist Caucus was the only organised opposition to the Socialist Alternatives pinched perspectives on the future of the organisation.

It's not surprising that Socialist Alternative has ensured its dominance on the new executive. This will be further reinforced when the new state-based 'parties' have representation on the executive in the form of appointed-from-above state secretaries, all of whom are expected to be Socialist Alternative members.

The Victorian Socialists have made much of its rapid recruitment after the federal election in its push to register the Socialist Party nationally. However, the conference showed much of that new membership is

paper and passive. With more than 1,900 new members claimed, there were 430 at the conference, the overwhelming majority of which were Socialist Alternative supporters (SA claims about 600 members, with about half in Melbourne). What it confirms is the ongoing hegemonic perspective put forth by SA within VS - that of, first and foremost, VS as an electoral front.

But to the extent that the new Socialist Party becomes successful, Socialist Alternative could increasingly become a minority. We won't be surprised to see bureaucratic manoeuvres to ensure Socialist Alternative retains control of its electoral front.

While not touted openly, and certainly not hegemonic among SA members by any means, the refusal to adopt a programme for the organisation, the approval of a federalist expansion model, and the contentment with sub-Menshevik policy positions - more akin to Green Party liberalism - are justified most simply through an appeal to the fact that VS is still not seen as more than an electoral front for a particular 'revolutionary' politics. Yet it is undoubtedly becoming more. The strong work and outreach of VS outside of election periods, the emergence of branches, the stirrings of faction work in unions and the last VS electoral campaign itself are indicative of this.

The choice, presented by the Communist Caucus, and to be reiterated at every conference of 'The Socialists' going forward, will be for the membership to choose between party and front. The Communist Caucus is not alone in presenting this choice, and we surely will not be the sole pro-party answer for long. With an approved federalist expansion, and an influx of independents who see The Socialists as a project beyond an electoral front, the potential for dilution, distortion and reformist broad-partyism will only grow.

Online Communist Forum



Sunday June 22 5pm
Why we defend the peoples of Iran - political report from CPGB's Provisional Central Committee and discussion

Use this link to register:
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

Should Marxists within VS want a party of their choosing - an aspiringly mass party, a party with a communist strategy - they would be wise to make this choice sooner rather than later.

Anthony Furia
Communist Caucus

Insights

In his book, *The colliers of the United Association of Durham and Northumberland*, David Douglass provides us with a rigorous and riveting account of events south of the River Tyne during what is described as the Great Northern Coalfield Insurrection of the 1830s.

Douglass takes us on a tour through the lives of miners and their families, the environment in which they lived and the conditions in which they worked. He describes in detail the nature of their employment, unpacking many of the unfamiliar terms used solely within the industry. Here we see an examination of the ‘bond’ - a hated condition of their employment, signed annually and very much at the root of the strike in 1831.

The work provides well researched and referenced insights into workers’ lives at a period of significant industrial strife - focusing on a period in the immediate aftermath of the repeal of the Combination Acts that made trade union membership illegal - and we hear of the callous nature of the establishment in its response to workers’ newly won rights. Douglass discusses well known characters such as Thomas Hepburn, the leader of the first miners’ union, from which the book’s title is derived, and William Jobling, the last man gibbeted in England for his role in the events discussed.

But he also reveals more about others - less well known, but no less significant - in the history of the labour movement. The “seven lads of Jarrow”, as they were described by Ellen Wilkinson in her book, *The town that was murdered*, are studied in some detail - we learn of their lives here in Tyneside, and of what became of them after transportation to the penal colonies in Australia.

This book, with illustrations throughout, makes an important contribution to the understanding of the struggles experienced by the founders of this great movement and the harshness with which the

establishment fought back against the claiming of even the most basic of rights. The events - commemorated in Jarrow each year through the Rebel Town Festival (this year on Saturday June 21) - have for too long been overlooked.

This book goes a long way toward righting that wrong.

Vin Wynne
Tyneside

Omission

I read with interest Frankie Murden’s article titled ‘People’s question time in north London debates how to resist Starmer’ (*Socialist Worker* June 12). It claimed an attendance of 120 people - rather mediocre for a London meeting IMO. But it was rather revealing for what it didn’t say, as opposed to what it did.

The report of the meeting (organised by SWP front group We Demand Change) consisted of soundbites from various luminaries along the lines of ‘Struggle, struggle, struggle’, ‘Gaza, Gaza, Gaza!’. Even my beloved ‘City of Quartz’ (Los Angeles) gets a mention. It could have been from any *SW* article of the past quarter century or so.

What the article did not propose was any kind of electoral alternative to Labour. Have the SWP given up flogging that particular horse after their resounding rejection from people close to Jeremy Corbyn? Given the SWP’s recent obsession with pushing voting, the omission was glaring.

Even *de facto* SWP leader Lewis Nielsen (a young man rumoured to still be close to a certain Martin Smith, who now writes for *Searchlight* magazine) was quoted and failed to mention electoralism. Nielsen is now labelled as WDC and not Stand Up To Racism (certainly never SWP!).

Curiouser and curiouser.

Paul O’Keeffe
email

Apolitical!

I’ve recently become involved in *The invaders’ fear of memories* by Ben Rivers - a theatre piece based on the life and diaries of Yosef Nachmani - a Russian Jew who migrated from tsarist Russia to Ottoman Palestine in 1907. Nachmani became director of the Jewish National Fund in Galilee and subsequently played a central role in the ethnic cleansing of Palestine’s indigenous people. The play offers

a perspective into the origins of settler-colonialism and apartheid in modern-day Israel, exploring themes of loyalty, violence, ideology and grief.

Ben Rivers - the great grandson of Nachmani - over the course of the play himself performs 12 characters and sings in Arabic, Hebrew, Ukrainian and Yiddish. The production is directed by Linda Wise, an original member of the iconic Roy Hart Theatre Company. Since August 2023 *The invaders’ fear of memories* has been performed to diverse audiences in Australia, Africa, Europe and North America.

Some activists from a Palestine solidarity group in Hastings had been trying to find a venue to present the play this September. One of the places they contacted was White Rock Theatre, which initially agreed to present the play. They then rescinded the offer, stating that, as a charity, they must remain apolitical. This excuse is all the more ludicrous, when we see the number of Zionist organisations in Britain involved in ethnic cleansing who also claim charitable status. For example, the very Jewish National Fund that features in the play raises funds to buy up Palestinian homes and land!

The performance organiser communicating with White Rock was given no further information as to why they changed their mind. Nor did White Rock respond to the organiser’s queries on this matter. It is possible that pro-Israel members of White Rock board expressed opposition to staging the play - or that White Rock pre-emptively anticipated a Zionist backlash and chose to self-censor in advance. Either way, their decision shows a complete lack of moral backbone.

Ben Rivers has posted all about this on social media and many people have responded, expressing their outrage and asking how they could help. He asked them to phone or contact White Rock via their website. We don’t think White Rock will change their mind, of course, but it’s good for them to know that their cowardly and complicit position in the midst of a genocide is being noted and does have consequences.

The irony is that their upcoming events include a show called *Five mistakes that changed history* - “a hilarious historical storytelling show, performed by historian and comedian Paul Coulter, about five people and how their mistakes (big and small!) changed the world”. As someone who has seen *The invaders’ fear of memories* said, “One can argue that your show is exactly about that (minus the ‘hilarious’ part). The impact of these terrible mistakes that changed so much and continue to haunt us.”

I am also in touch with my trade union, Equity, about this, as they are increasingly taking up such cases - the number of which is growing. The Israel lobby are doing all they can to ethnically cleanse Palestine out of culture as well as their homeland.

See benjaminrivers.org for details of performances elsewhere.

Tam Dean Burn
Glasgow

Hamas support?

In your ‘CPGB perspectives for 2025’ (February 27) your micro-sect declared: “Following the audacious Hamas-led October 7 2023 Gaza prison break there has been a huge global movement in solidarity with the Palestinian masses.”

That seems to be an enthusiastic support of Hamas... Genuine Marxists don’t support genocidal, religious-inspired nationalists - neither Hamas nor the Israeli ultra-right - but Standing Together.

Nik Barstow
email

ACTION

Festival of the oppressed

Saturday June 21 to Sunday June 22: RS21 weekend school, Resource for London, 356 Holloway Road, London N7. 26 sessions, covering how oppression is defined and remade by capitalism, and how to resist and transcend this oppressive social world. Registration £36.50 (£21.00, £11.00). Organised by RS21: revsoc21.uk/festival2025.

Jarrow rebel town festival

Saturday June 21, 11am: Parade. Assemble pedestrian tunnel, Tyne Street, Jarrow NE32. Led by Felling Silver Band. Speakers include Mick Whelan (Aslef), Kate Osborne MP and David Douglass. Followed by social at The Crown and Anchor, Chapel Road, Jarrow NE32. Organised by Jarrow Rebel Town Festival and Seven Lads of Jarrow: www.facebook.com/events/742060295054790.

National march for Palestine

Saturday June 21, 12 noon: National demonstration. Assemble Russell Square, march to Whitehall. End the genocide. Stop arming Israel. Stop starving Gaza. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk/events/national-march-for-palestine.

We demand change

Sunday June 22, 12 noon to 5pm: Bristol event, Malcolm X Centre, 141 City Road, Bristol BS2. Panels, workshops and discussions for activists building campaigns against the far right and climate change, for welfare not warfare. Registration £9.38 (£3.96). Organised by We Demand Change: wedemandchange.uk.

Marx’s programme for the Parti Ouvrier

Thursday June 26, 6.30pm: Online discussion in the series, ‘Building a Communist Party: past attempts and future prospects’. A minimum/maximum programme? Speaker: Ian Spencer. Organised by Why Marx?: www.whymarx.com/sessions.

AL Morton and the radical tradition

Thursday June 26, 7pm: Book launch, Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1 and online. Author James Crossley introduces his biography of communist intellectual AL Morton, who pioneered studies of English radical history. Registration free. Organised by Marx Memorial Library: www.marx-memorial-library.org.uk/event/504.

Swift blaze of fire

Thursday June 26, 7pm: Book event, Working Class Movement Library, 51 Crescent, Salford M5. Author Lin Rose Clark introduces this new book about her grandfather, *Robert Hilliard: Olympian, cleric and international brigadista*. Registration free. Organised by North West International Brigade Memorial Group: www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=4115723915338863.

Women chainmakers festival

Saturday June 28, 11am to 4pm: Family festival, Mary McArthur Gardens, Cradley Heath B64. Celebrate the 1910 women chainmakers’ victorious 10-week strike against starvation wages. Entrance free. Organised by TUC Midlands: wolvestuc.org.uk/women-chainmakers-festival.

Barclays funds death

Saturday June 28, 12 noon: Demonstration. Assemble Islington Green, London N1. Barclays continues to finance the fossil fuels industry despite the climate emergency. It provides investment, loans and underwriting to arms companies supplying the Israeli military. Organised by Islington Palestine Solidarity Campaign: palestinecampaign.org/events/islington-barclays-funds-death.

Stop the far right

Saturday June 28, 12 noon: Counter-protest, Downing Street, London SW1. Oppose the far right seizing the ‘grooming gangs’ issue to stir up Islamophobia and racism. Organised by Stand Up to Racism: x.com/AntiRacismDay/status/1934281377744294090.

Unions East community festival

Sunday June 29, 1pm to 5pm: Free festival, Coronation Gardens (next to Leyton Orient), London E10. Celebrating solidarity in our community and our workplaces with music, debates and stalls. Organised by trade union branches in Hackney, Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest: unions-east.live.

Protest at Wimbledon - drop Barclays!

Monday June 30, 10am: Protest outside the tennis complex (opposite centre court), Church Road, London SW19. Demand the tournament sponsor, Barclays, stops bankrolling Palestinian genocide. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: palestinecampaign.org/events/protest-at-wimbledon-drop-barclays-2.

Stop the disability benefit cuts bill

Monday June 30, 4.30pm: Rally, Parliament Square, London SW1. If this bill passes, 70,000 people will lose disability benefits and hundreds of thousands will face benefit cuts of over £4,500 a year. Organised by Disabled People Against Cuts: www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1141305801364316.

Marxism 2025

Thursday July 3 to Sunday July 6: SWP annual school and festival of socialist ideas, Protein Studios, Shoreditch, London EC2. Over 100 sessions, including debates, workshops and a culture tent. Tickets: day £22.38 (£11.55), full event £49.46 (£33.22). Organised by Socialist Workers Party: socialistworker.co.uk/marxismfestival.

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.

Fighting fund

Make up leeway

Unfortunately we are still quite a way behind with the *Weekly Worker* fighting fund for June. The target is, of course, £2,750 per month, but, as things stand, we’ve received just £1,123 - well under halfway there with almost two thirds of the month gone.

True, we are now approaching that part of the month where a few regular three-figure donations come our way, but we really do need more readers to contribute something as soon as they can.

Why not follow the example of comrade JP, who mistakenly paid his annual subscription at the old rate of £60? When we reminded him that we have unfortunately had to increase the annual charge to £96 (up from £5 to £8 a month), he replied that we should use his payment to extend his subscription by just six months (£48) and take the extra £12 he paid as a contribution to the fighting fund. Good stuff, comrade!

Like JP, three other supporters contributed via PayPal - thanks to

PM and KS (£50 each) and RD (£5), while rather more helped us out via standing order or bank transfer. These were PB (£80), MM (£75), PO (£60), TR (£40), TW and GB (£25), OG (£24), SA (£12) and JL (£10).

So now we really need to up the ante - there are, as I write, just 12 days left to raise that extra £1,573 we still need. That’s an awful lot of leeway we need to make up, but it’s far from impossible! I know that many of our readers and supporters will now do their best to help us out in what remains of June.

Are you among them? I hope so! If you are, go to the web address below to see how you can do just that. Please help us out however you can! ●

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

USA

Cheap pageantry for birthday boy

‘No Kings’ vs ‘Big beautiful parade’. America is not in imminent danger of one-man dictatorship, but the authoritarianism of Trump’s regime is all too evident, argues **Paul Demarty**

On June 14, two distinct contingents of Americans faced off in a kind of war-dance.

The most obviously warlike was Donald Trump’s “big beautiful parade” - a supposedly solemn occasion to mark the 250th anniversary of the US army (there’s a certain level of artificiality about the date, but the colonial forces did formally found what was then the Continental Army on June 14 1775). This happy day also happened to be the birthday of a certain Donald J Trump. Some 7,000 troops marched through Washington DC, accompanied by battle tanks, Chinook helicopters and various other military toys. The crowds were on the small side - partly a matter of poor weather, and partly, we expect, the fact that DC is a solidly Democratic city, having not returned a Republican mayor since 1956.

Various liberals, meanwhile, were busy organising protests in American cities under the slogan, ‘No kings’, reaching back in their own way to the same revolution of the 1770s. Numbers are hard to come by, but seem respectable. However, their efforts were rather overshadowed by a lone-wolf attack in Minnesota, in which two state representatives were shot - one, Melissa Hortman, fatally - by a man impersonating a police officer (‘No kings’ demonstrations were called off in the state by wary organisers - terrorism works, apparently!).

All this excitement, of course, followed on from a week of heightened tension, provoked by sweeping and terroristic ICE raids on suspected illegal migrants - the closest thing Trump has to a praetorian guard. Protests in major cities, especially Los Angeles, spilled over into near riots, with military forces deployed to ensure the ICE thugs could go about their grim business undisturbed.

King Trump

The question arises, inevitably - does this all add up to a radical break with American politics heretofore? That is the idea of ‘no kings’ - we got rid of them in 1776, and Trump, with his executive gamesmanship and his militarism and even his dime-store-Versailles interior decorations, is bringing them back. But perhaps there is nothing to see here - Trump, as his fans would have it, is merely bringing back the old America; or, as some more sceptical liberal and left voices might have it, America was like this all along. Monarchical counterrevolution or business as usual? The answer, of course, is ‘yes’.

There can be no doubt that Trump 2.0 so far represents a significant power-grab on the part of the executive branch. Though the bloated omnibus ‘big beautiful bill’ continues its course through congress, Trump has ruled largely by executive order. Though Elon Musk has left the government under a cloud, he did a serviceable job of purging the ranks of the federal government of career civil servants who may not have been on board with all this. Those who survived may well be cowed. Marxists have no particular illusions in the nobility of the permanent state bureaucracy, but it does matter what replaces the pseudo-independence enjoyed by such people.

The president’s success, moreover, in surrounding himself with craven sycophants is also notable - both



US pomp and circumstance

in contrast to the chaotic personnel regime of his first term, and recent administrations. George W Bush was generally guided by neoconservative ideologues and party machine types like Dick Cheney and Karl Rove. Barack Obama was a stronger personality who clashed frequently with his senior staff. Joe Biden was, it is now clear, barely awake for most of his term, again ceding considerable initiative to his subordinates.

This time around, Sun King Trump enjoys the most pathetic displays of loyalty. His ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, personally messaged him to assure him that “God spared you in Butler, PA [where he was shot last year] to be the most consequential president in a century, maybe ever ... You have many voices speaking to you, Sir, but there is only *one* voice that matters: *his* voice.” We take it Huckabee is not referring to JD Vance there. He goes on for a few more paragraphs of bible-belt panegyric; and his doe-eyed pliability is a trait visible throughout the upper reaches of the government. It really is the stuff of the courts of later Roman emperors.

Trump’s militarised approach to immigration enforcement is, likewise, a significant step change. It is not unprecedented in American history, and indeed ICE itself is a product of the early ‘war on terror’. Its employment as an end-run around the judiciary nonetheless raises the temperature considerably. The targeted deportations of vulnerable pro-Palestine activists on campuses represent a serious threat to free speech - far more serious than the skulduggery of the Bush years or even the internet censorship efforts of the Biden administration. The government has begun mischievous

litigation against the third-worldist Party for Socialism and Liberation, and no doubt other organisations of the left are on the hit list.

While dire warnings of an imminent descent into dictatorship are overblown, it all adds up to a massively more hostile environment for the American left than it has become accustomed to in recent years. The political agenda in the coming period will involve a lot more rearguard action, organising solidarity with victimised individuals, defending against lawfare, and so forth.

If the Israeli government succeeds in dragging America into its war on Iran - and there are not many Republicans in Congress or the government who need all that much in the way of dragging (indeed not many Democrats either) - then things will get worse again. It is *probably* coincidence that this big military parade happened during the early stages of this war; but even so, we can expect much more in the way of aggression against those who dare to criticise the US war machine, and much more of the vulgar troopolatry that has so disfigured American culture since, particularly, the September 11 attacks.

Continuity

Yet that brings us to the partial truth on the ‘nothing to see here’ side. Trump did not invent the unitary executive theory of government that he uses as a bludgeon against his enemies, real and perceived. It is the operative theory of the conservative legal movement, represented by forces like the Heritage Foundation, which has had such stunning success in packing the Supreme Court with fanatically rightwing and

ostentatiously corrupt scoundrels. These people have been at it for many decades.

Trump inherits an effectively inoperable Congress, which has barely legislated outside vast, executive-led omnibus bills for many years. He inherits the bloated military and intelligence apparatus created to fight the war on terror, and promises to bloat it further still. The use of immigration controls as a political weapon against dissidents has recent precedent in the ‘war on terror’, and more distant ones in the red scares that followed both world wars. One could look even further back - the abrogation of *habeas corpus* by Abraham Lincoln as a military expediency in the civil war, say (a more honourable case, given the stakes); or Andrew Jackson’s gloating indifference to court judgments against his genocidal Indian clearances.

The history of the United States is, like the history of all bourgeois states, two-sided: it fights always under the banner of liberty, of freedom from arbitrary domination, and indeed realises *some* freedom from *some* forms of arbitrary domination for *some* people. At the same time, the state could only survive *by means* of such domination - whether in the massacres of native peoples, enslavement of Africans (decisive for the country’s economy in its formative centuries), low-level warfare against labour unions by Pinkerton mercenaries, colonialism or, more latterly, global military and economic dominance.

All of these mechanisms are costly, both in raw economic terms and in connection with the available bases of political support. Slavery

was ended by war, as - in another way - was the resistance of the native peoples. The Gilded Age robber barons gave way to various forms of class compromise, culminating in the military Keynesianism of the ‘new deal’. That in turn ground to a halt, giving rise to the neoliberal order, which has steadily frayed in the last two decades. The US has maintained control of the central levers of political and economic power in the global order, but at the cost of much of its industrial base and the reduction of once thriving communities to penury in the polluted ruins of their factory towns.

It is this discontent that has given us Trump, at a moment when the American state order is attempting some kind of geopolitical pivot towards great-power conflict in Asia. In principle, Trump is very much on board with this. Yet it has proven difficult to disengage from Europe and the Middle East; the Ukraine war is yet to be settled, which means Trump must keep shelling out to keep the Ukrainians fighting and, as I write, it seems almost certain that the US will openly involve itself in a calamitous war against Iran, with no clear endgame beyond fantasies of total victory, and which is already drawing forces away from the Pacific theatre to fight in the Gulf.

In this respect, Trump very much represents continuity - with the strategic paralysis attendant on US relative decline. Whatever the outcome of the Iran bloodbath, the winner will be China.

Bread and circuses

With such grim immediate prospects, we can expect Trump to rely on the old imperial playbook of bread and circuses - the sort of circuses where people get eaten. More mawkish militarism, more cheap grandstanding, more assaults on the hated enemies of “real America”. Moreover, this is hardly a mere question of Trump as an individual: if he is replaced in good order in 2028 - no guarantees there - can we really believe that his successor will give up the executive privileges Trump has won for the Oval Office by way of his brinksmanship?

In *After virtue*, the late Alasdair MacIntyre tells the story of King Kamehameha II of Hawaii, who in 1819 swept away his society’s elaborate system of taboos (the word ‘taboo’ is itself derived from Polynesian languages) in a matter of months. In MacIntyre’s view, this ancient system could only be dispatched so easily because it had already lost its connection to the fundamentals of social life, such that it survived only as a series of eccentric and basically meaningless prohibitions. Perhaps there is something of Kamehameha about Trump - the American constitutional order has already been reduced to a barely functional state, and all that remains is to strip away its superficial veneer of stability and good order. It took a prickly vulgarian to do the dirty job - but the job will stay done.

For this reason, the ‘no kings’ framing *as it is* - as a *defence* of that failed, tyrannical constitutional order - cannot satisfy us. The only way out is through a revolutionary, democratic refounding, and the task of the left remains to *delegitimise* the existing constitutional order.

In this, it must separate itself from the liberals for good ●

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CPB

Game, set and match

Ditching auto-Labourism results from strategic bankruptcy, not strategic reorientation. Eddie Ford turns his eyes onto the ‘official communists’ and their abrupt change of line

One group on the ‘official communist’ left that has always been distinguished by its opportunism is the *Morning Star*’s split, the Communist Party of Britain - its origins lying in the paper’s then editor, Tony Chater, and his unilateral declaration of independence from control by the ‘official’ CPGB, forming the Communist Campaign Group which ‘re-established’ itself as the CPB in 1988. Refusing to move with the times by sticking its head in the sand, it was actually based on defending all editions of the *British road to socialism* programme up to and including the fifth (1978) version against all attempts to ‘update’ it by the Eurocommunist mob with their *Manifesto for new times*, etc, etc.

Then it had a very slight brand change in 2000 by renaming it *Britain’s road to socialism*, leading to the 8th edition that was adopted by the executive committee in July 2011 - which “was updated after party-wide consultation” in January 2020”.¹ But the outlook was always the same from the very first draft: it envisaged a road to socialism relying on a series of left governments with increasing communist participation. This would involve a change of personnel in terms of some civil servants and generals, but, according to the *BRS*, fundamentally the British army, civil service, the legal system, would all be left intact and what you do is enact ever more progressive legislation and eventually - bingo! - you arrive at socialism. True, they talked now and again about awkward things like the House of Lords and the monarchy - which varies from edition to edition - but the essential approach never changed.

Meanwhile, the Labour leadership supports policies which “in general protect the economic and political power base of the capitalist class as a whole” and promotes “policies that are virtually indistinguishable from those of other parties”.² In other words, the Labour Party is a bourgeois workers’ party, its leadership acts as a second eleven for the capitalist class. Yet, in spite of that, the CPB has always automatically called for people to vote Labour, just as we have always been told that the “right wing have always dominated the Labour Party leadership”. This is simply incorrect, given that Ramsay MacDonald, George Lansbury, Michael Foot, Neil Kinnock, and, yes, most recently, Jeremy Corbyn were all elected leaders of the Labour Party on the basis of their left credentials. The CPB does not want to admit this for the obvious reason that to do so would mean owning up to the fact that the Labour left is in the last analysis joined at the hip with the Labour right. Yin and yang.

Hence yesterday’s left Labourite easily becomes today’s right Labourite. The Labour left fosters the illusion that the next Labour government will be radically different from the last Labour government. It will organise conference resolutions, support chosen candidates, win committee seats and commit a whole layer of activists and militants to the ‘long haul’. As for the Labour right it reassures the capitalist media, the bourgeois establishment, the American cousins, that they can easily handle the left and deliver yet another ‘responsible’ Labour government.

But we open the pages of the



Andrew Murray: not without talent

Morning Star on June 11 and discover that the perspective has appeared to change in an article entitled ‘The times they are-a-changin’ written by Andrew Murray.³

Our Andy

First, who is Andrew Murray? Well, we are not talking about the tennis player. Apart from his role as Unite chief-of-staff and being one of the founders of Stop the War Coalition, our Andy served as an advisor to Corbyn during his brief time as Labour leader. Long before that comrade Murray was a member of the *Straight Left* faction in the ‘official’ CPGB led by one Fergus Nicholson (pen name: ‘Harry Steel’).

The *Straight Left* distinguished themselves by their servile loyalty to whoever was general secretary in Moscow. But in the pages of their semi-secret journal, *Communist*, it is clear that the comrades longed for the imagined certainties provided by Joseph Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili. This was combined, however, with opposition to standing CPGB election candidates. A sectarian diversion, not only because the votes were generally very low. No, the aim should have been securing affiliation to the Labour Party.

Gorbachev and the fall were, of course, profoundly disorientating. *Straight Left*, which presented itself as a left Labour publication, winked out of existence and produced a couple of splittles, including Communist Liaison, amongst whom there was a certain comrade Murray. It was more a lifebelt than a viable political project. So having attempted to stay with the Eurocommunist ‘official’ CPGB till the bitter end, they eventually made their way, humbled, defeated and untrusted, into the ranks of the *Morning Star*’s CPB.

However, comrade Murray is not untalented. He can actually think. Hence he was soon writing a regular

Morning Star parliamentary column. And after doing his Unite job and brief stint of Labour Party entry work, he is, of course, back in the *Morning Star*, this time with his ‘Eyes left’ column.

Back to his ‘The times they are-a-changin’ article. Here he tells us that “we have finally reached the end of Labour’s claim to be the political wing of the labour movement”, and rather “the diverse left forces challenging Starmer’s pro-austerity, pro-war government deserve our open support”. He then asks, “but what comes next?”

Mea culpa

In a sort of *mea culpa* - the comrade is honest enough to admit mistakes - Murray confesses that auto-Labourism - “vote Labour where no communist is standing” - has been “the default electoral policy of the Communist Party for the last 75 years”, but apparently “no more”! He then reports on a speech delivered to a recent meeting by general secretary Robert Griffiths, where he “indicates” that this long-standing position “no longer applies in the prevailing political situation”. As Murray himself points out, the CPB has not operated a *blanket* auto-Labourism, because it has had its own candidates and - for example - at the last election it urged anyone who bothered to listen to the CPB’s advice *not* to vote for members of the shadow cabinet in response to Keir Starmer’s purging of the left, the sharp turn to the right post-Jeremy Corbyn, and so on. OK, he writes, the party has yet to “elaborate on this change” in an article or document, but stresses that it is a significant development.

He then raises a number of issues about an opposition that “emerges from the recognition that today’s Labour Party is not a plausible vehicle for the attainment of socialism”, or “is not even a moderately decent government” (like the ones headed

by Harold Wilson?). This opposition “draws on immense movements of solidarity with the Palestinians, 15 years of capitalist crisis, the legacy of Corbynism and anti-austerity mobilisation” - that is, “broad politics” - but the “form and focus” of any challenge remain moot, “with no guarantee of any common conclusion emerging”. From this outlook, Murray conjectures that it is possible, “although not desirable”, that there will be a “diversity of left and independent challenges” to Labour at the next election, “sharing a broadly common agenda”, but not a “brand” or national leadership.

There are other issues raised in the article, such as “much of the left remains within the Labour Party, with roots, but presently no real strategy” - hence “how will they be appealed to and collaborated with?” Then there is the electoral strength of the Greens “parked on at least a slice of the left-of-Labour vote”, which raises the question - “can there” or “should there” be “some form of pact”? Without it electoral results “will be more meagre than otherwise”. And must an alternative be “explicitly socialist?” or “how sharply should Labour be attacked?” and “how centralised should it be, given the successful pre-existing locally rooted initiatives?”

A lot of questions, admits Murray, and “some of them painful to address” if you are a CPB member or fellow traveller. Having made “the leap in principle”, as Murray puts it, the CPB’s “strategic capacity” will surely be helpful in “securing productive resolutions” and almost poetically concludes in a homage to Bob Dylan that “if ever there were a moment for shaking windows and rattling walls”, it is now.

Well, it is rather hard to imagine Robert Griffiths or other leading CPBers shaking windows and

rattling walls. But what we really have represents the complete defeat of the *BRS* strategy. The whole pro-Soviet, Labourite, gradualist, peaceful, parliamentary, national road to a ‘socialism’ went down to comprehensive defeat in 1989-91. Tested by life itself it lost game, set and match, with perhaps its last gasp being the outside possibility of a Labour government under Jeremy Corbyn (he had three *Straight Left* advisors, besides comrade Murray, there was Seumas Milne and Steve Howell).

Remote chance

Even with the remote chance of a Labour left government under Jeremy Corbyn, things did not even reach the stage of a parliamentary majority - there was, of course, pushback, with 172 of his own MPs stabbing him in the back.⁴ We even had Stockholm Syndrome on display, as Corbyn and his allies took upon themselves the task of witch-hunting their own friends in the name of rooting out ‘anti-Semitism’.

Of course, here you could ask about what comrade Murray was advising at the time? Maybe he thought the whole attempt to appease the Zionists, the Labour right and the bourgeois establishment was a disaster. If so why did he not rebel? Why did he keep his counsel private?

No less to the point. What was the result of Corbynism? Keir Starmer and an actual cabinet which comrades Murray, Griffiths and the CPB executive are now recoiling from in horror. But is it that different from previous Labour governments? The first Labour government happily ran the British empire, the second, again headed by Ramsay MacDonald, wanted to introduce a programme of austerity that was so savage that it split the cabinet. MacDonald and his National Labour Party joined the Tories and Liberals in a coalition that lasted throughout the 1930s.

Or how about 1945 and that ‘progressive’ Clement Attlee government with its pay freezes, bans on May Day marches, joining Nato, nuclear bombs, colonial adventures, racist treatment of Windrush arrivals, and so on?⁵

The thing that comrade Murray gets fundamentally wrong is that it is not a case of the Labour government being insupportably rightwing, but that the left is so *weak* - here is the rub, not that Keir Starmer has gone from Pabloism, to securocrat, to trusted statesman (a not uncommon journey). Therefore what we are seeing is a confused response to a very rightwing Labour government - true, the most rightwing in history. But why would anyone expect anything different? Global conditions play a role here, undoubtedly. But so too do the marginalised and disorientated forces of what passes for the left ●

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Notes

1. communistparty.org.uk/publications/britains-road-to-socialism.
2. All CPB quotes from Jack Conrad’s *Which road?* London 1991.
3. morningstaronline.co.uk/article/times-they-are-changin-labour-no-longer-default-left-option.
4. bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-36647458.
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JUNE 13

Peering into the darkness

Yassamine Mather questions the western nuclear bomb narrative, discounts the chances of managed regime change and insists that Israel's war is not only against the regime. Millions of ordinary Iranians are in danger and must be defended

In its compliance with the US agenda, the media keep telling us that Israel's current attack on Iran is a preventive war. There is, of course, a distinction between 'preventive' and 'pre-emptive' - those of us who have debated the Iran-Iraq war *ad infinitum* have argued that maybe Saddam Hussein's attack on Iran was pre-emptive. He knew Iran was going to attack Iraq.

You could say that pre-emptive war is legitimate then - but 'preventive war' is not. That is when it is claimed that, at some undetermined time in the future, we will be at risk because a particular state might attack us. In this case, Israel and its allies, including G7 leaders, are arguing that at an indeterminate time in the future, Iran might have a nuclear bomb and will be able to launch a devastating attack. It is unbelievable that such nonsense is peddled by western governments and accepted by their subservient press and media. When I am interviewed by reporters about the existential threat posed by Iran, I ask, "Well, where exactly is this atomic bomb?"

Let us start with last week's meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Even the compliant, pro-US mass media cannot deny the fact that this meeting, which apparently - at least, according to Benjamin Netanyahu - is the reason this attack took place, did *not* conclude that Iran has achieved nuclear weapons capability.

Non-compliance

The report is clear, Iran has 408.6 kg of 60% enriched uranium, while the uranium used in a nuclear weapon needs 90% enrichment. Yet this was presented as non-compliance with the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty, which many European countries had signed up to. On the other hand, Israel, which has always refused to join the NPT, has some 140 nuclear warheads, and it possesses fissile material (mainly plutonium) for up to 200-300 more. It has the delivery system for these weapons too, with the Jericho II/III ballistic missiles, as well as Dolphin-class submarines capable of launching nuclear-armed cruise missiles.

There was another bizarre thing about this meeting. IAEA claims that Iran had stolen some of its secret documents. It is difficult to see how this could have happened, but all we know is that Iran hacked an Israeli nuclear document file. Some commentators have pointed out that IAEA is saving its nuclear documents that were stolen during the hacking of Israeli papers. In other words, no-one should have any trust in IAEA. There seems no end to the hypocrisy shown by global capitalism and its international institutions.

The current Israeli onslaught has multiple components and is very well-programmed and rehearsed. Stage one was the IDF attack on Iran's top leaders. Then nuclear installations were targeted, while the latest stage is the attack on oil and gas reserves.

The Iranian government now claims this resulted in a victory for itself. Even by the standards of Iranian propaganda, this is ridiculous. They were taken by surprise, fooled by the nuclear negotiations in Oman. The reason I say this is that reliable information indicates that the reformist faction set to lead the negotiations on June 15 were under the impression that a deal with the US was possible - they told others that a final deal was



Rallying to the flag

imminent. That was total nonsense. However, if there was progress in the US-Iran talks, this could explain Netanyahu's timing. He was keen to scupper the talks at all costs.

The question remains: how far did the US support the initial attack? Trump gave the green light, as he admitted on June 13. His post on Truth Social read, "Israel is likely to attack shortly", and added: "I still think we should carry on with negotiations." The real issue is whether Trump knew the full extent of the attack. Probably. Some argue he believed a limited strike would give the US and its Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, leverage in Oman. Trump has repeatedly said that Iran is a difficult negotiator, but he has also insisted that applying pressure can yield progress.

If the US now joins Israel in attacking nuclear plants, the consequences will be severe. Mohamed El Baradei - former IAEA head - has stated clearly that attacking nuclear facilities is irresponsible due to the risk of radiation. His comments referred to Israel's previous strikes on above-ground support structures. However, an assault on the underground enrichment sections would be an entirely different matter.

Bunker-busting bombs are believed to be the only conventional weapons capable of penetrating up to 60 metres of reinforced concrete. These munitions can only be delivered by the B-2 stealth bomber. The United States has recently stationed a squadron of them on Diego Garcia, an island some 2,400 miles from Iran's southern coast - well within operational range.

In the last few days, members of my family have frequently asked me, "Are we going to be poisoned by nuclear radiation?" The answer, at this stage, is probably not. The reasoning is simple: although the facilities have sustained damage, it appears to be superficial or at a low level. Most uranium enrichment takes place deep underground. If those inner sections had been hit, we would know. IAEA chief Rafael Grossi was quoted as saying on June 17 that they are monitoring the situation and have observed "no damage to the basics."

However, this could all change if the 30 warplanes sent by the United States to the region on June 16-17 - reportedly including bunker-buster-equipped bombers - are used.

Regime change

Netanyahu, for his part, appears eager for the war to escalate and is seeking active involvement from the US and possibly European states. If such an attack occurs and radioactive material is released at the scale experts

anticipate, it could be far worse than Chernobyl, where a catastrophic nuclear accident occurred in 1986. As the Qataris and other Gulf Arab states have warned, it would place millions of civilians at grave risk. That is an extremely serious issue - and, to be honest, I do not have a clear answer.

We also have the concept of 'regime change'. Netanyahu has recently appealed to the Iranian people on what I call 'Mossad Persian TV' (Iran International TV), saying, "Fight your regime and join our war against the Islamic Republic." Of course, he also said that there was the possibility that "We'll burn the capital flat to the earth" - hardly a good tactic. If you are trying to turn a population against their government, telling them you could well destroy their homes if they do not "join our war" does not help. In addition the US president has told Tehran's population of ten million to leave town!

Having said that, I think regime change is more in the imagination of the Iranian rightwing opposition: the Iran Zionists, royalists or the Mojahedin-e-Khalq. Most ordinary Iranians, even non-political ones, hate MEK more than the regime. They remain Islamist, and they stand no chance, despite financial support from Arab countries and political support from prominent US Republicans, as well as Liz Truss! Meanwhile, the royalists have some supporters, gained by relentless pro-Zionist western media propaganda portraying Israel as a 'poor little democracy surrounded by barbarians'.

However, they are hardly a serious option. The regime will not collapse in the next few days, unless we see a major escalation, with the direct involvement of the USA or the assassination of Khamenei, as Trump threatens. However, none of this will be 'regime change', because there is no viable alternative. While sustained attacks could eventually lead to chaos or even civil war, supporters of the royalists, including those groomed by Israel, have been notably absent from major cities since the bombings started. This may be because the level of support for the royalists had been grossly exaggerated by propaganda outlets like Iran International TV. Alternatively, it could be that their leaders are simply too afraid to go public.

One thing is clear: the wave of bombing has fuelled nationalism. While most ordinary people dislike the regime, they are unlikely to support Netanyahu, Trump or anyone associated with them, when they are under aerial attack and forced to abandon their homes.

That said, the regime's infrastructure is clearly under pressure. Those who can afford to are fleeing the major cities, and many shops are running out of basic supplies. If the current level of attacks continues, the regime will likely lose its grip on power. However, in the absence of any alternative, one can envisage chaos and eventual civil war.

If the US fails to broker a deal, Israel's goal of destroying Iran's nuclear facilities can only be achieved via direct American intervention. Only the US has the necessary military capability for such a strike. In that scenario, Iran might attempt to block the Strait of Hormuz - through which 20% of the world's oil supply passes. However, I assume the US would respond with overwhelming force, destroying any Iranian naval or military units attempting to do so.

I think Netanyahu has given a gift to the Islamic Republic. Anti-Israel demonstrations (probably originally organised by the government) are now huge in Tehran and other major cities. The overwhelming sentiment in Iran is nationalism - a deep-seated pride in Iran's 3,000-year (or, according to some, 7,000-year) history. Nationalism trumps everything else: underestimating it is a serious mistake.

Options

What are Iran's options? None look good, especially as Iran has lost its allies. When recent attacks were launched against Hezbollah and Syria, we said that this was not really about them - the main enemy is Iran. Hamas is weak (and its relationship with Iran is tumultuous - allies during some periods, enemies during others, like the Syrian civil war). Hamas recently complained publicly about the lack of support from Iran as well as Hezbollah after October 2023.

Iran and Syria have been allies, but with contradictions. The Assad regime was useless, but Iran had Revolutionary Guard bases in Syria - not because they loved Assad, but in order to be closer to Israel if Tehran was attacked by the Zionist state. As for Hezbollah, it is very much weaker now: Lebanon's new government restricts it, and the assassination of its leader, Hassan Nasrallah, combined with heavy losses (like the Beirut port explosion, which terrified ordinary Lebanese citizens), limits its capability. Iran has the Houthis - on June 13, videos showed large crowds in Yemen supporting Palestine and clapping during Iran's attack on Tel Aviv. But that is strategically insignificant. There can be no Iranian victory in this conflict, given the total imbalance.

As Moshé Machover has pointed out, Netanyahu has focused on this for years. He claimed Iran's nuclear bomb was "years away" 30 years ago, "months away" five years ago, and now "days away". The reality is, Iran is far from full nuclear capability - it is not just a question of nuclear enrichment, but weapons delivery, which remains problematic. Comparing military capabilities, Iran has just over 90 million people, as opposed to Israel's 10 million, so, yes, Iran has more soldiers, but this war will be fought with drones, missiles and air power - areas where Israel is far better equipped. Some Iranian ballistic missiles have penetrated the Iron Dome, but most are destroyed before they get there.

Iran's options are limited:

■ Close the Strait of Hormuz: Oil prices have risen due to war and this would cause another dramatic spike. But China most likely would not want this and might strongly advise against it.

■ Attack US/European citizens or military in neighbouring countries: This would prompt harsher retaliation against Iran. Attacking civilians in particular would backfire.

■ Secret negotiations: Despite the cancellation of the Oman talks, secret negotiations might still be going on. The Islamic Republic survives by being ruthlessly pragmatic (eg, the Iran-Contra affair in the 1980s).

The mistakes we should not make include the following. First, separating the war from the Iranian people: an Iranian 'left' group recently declared: "This is a war between Israel and Iran. Nothing to do with the Iranian people." How stupid! Iranian people are dying; their houses are being destroyed. Israel (an extreme rightwing state) is attacking another country. If this war continues, many thousands will die.

An IDF leaflet reads: "Iran is now priority one; Gaza second" - yes, because in Gaza they are not fighting: they are starving people and forcing them to move and move again. For Netanyahu, this is yet another benefit of the war headlines having shifted from Gaza to Iran, while Gaza's suffering has not stopped.

This war is with the Iranian people. The first victims will be Iran's working class. One Israeli target on June 15 was Tabriz with its factories - places where workers have held strikes and demonstrations against the Islamic Republic in recent months. Will they now take Netanyahu's flag and support the royalists? No. The Tabriz Tractor Company and Asaluyeh factory have historically been left strongholds. Stupid leaflets separating the people from the war will not help the Iranian left.

I also object to the kind of mislabelling of Iran by groups like the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, which calls Iran a "sub-imperialist" or "regional imperialist" power. Of course, that might have been true under the shah. Today, however, Iran's Islamic Republic is barely surviving. It cannot defend its capital or even feed its people. Decades of western sanctions have wrecked the economy and profoundly weakened the working class. Moreover, the Iranian left is fragmented, confused and in many ways compromised. Globally there will be solidarity with Iranian people - not the regime. Apart from saying that, what happens in the short to medium term is impossible to predict at this moment in time ●



Imperial sponsor: vital

Zionism's dual war aims

Netanyahu has been wanting to attack Iran for years. Now that the war with Iran has begun, he can finish the job in Gaza and the West Bank, warns **Moshé Machover**

Israel's war of aggression against Iran is anything but surprising. In fact, I predicted all this back in 2012, when I explained why Israel, specifically under the Netanyahu government, is drawn towards attacking Iran.¹ Since then it has been a recurring theme in Netanyahu's call on the United States to allow Israel to do the job. He has repeatedly made 'weapons of mass destruction' speeches, alleging that Iran is preparing to launch a nuclear attack on Israel.

Long time

The reason why this war has taken so long to come about is that previous US administrations were wary of allowing Israel to start a conflict that may end up in a larger war involving the US itself. America still recalls the bitter experience of previous conflicts in which it got entangled, and which ended not too happily for America - although much less happily for the people attacked (in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and so forth). However, the current president is less inhibited. Donald Trump had the reputation of being 'peace-loving', preferring economic warfare to the armed kind; but he is notoriously volatile. There is no doubt that he personally gave the green light to Israel's latest unsurprising attack.

I think it is useful to explain the background to this, because it is not just a coincidental act on Israel's part; so let us look at the motivation and the reasoning behind it. It is a consequence - an offshoot - of Israel's overriding strategic aim: to complete the Zionist project of colonisation over the whole Land of Israel, which

includes, of course, the area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River at the very least.

In fact, the actual coveted area is ill-defined, but is ultimately rooted in the divine promise of Jehovah to Abraham in the book of Genesis.² Completing the Zionist project of colonisation implies, entails and necessitates territorial expansion (that is to say, annexing added bits of the 'promised land') and ethnic cleansing over the whole of this territory. The Zionist project aims to establish a Jewish nation-state in that land, which means that it must be inhabited by a stable, large majority of Jews, whereas the Palestinian, or non-Jewish, inhabitants are surplus to requirements, and must be got rid of one way or another.

Another precondition for completing the Zionist project is securing regional hegemony. Israel must be a regional superpower, an absolute nuclear monopolist. Israel must not only be the only regional state in possession of nuclear weapons: it must be the only state in the region that has the *potential* to develop nuclear bombs. That is to say, Israel aims at becoming a monopolist of not only nuclear weapons, but nuclear *capability*, which is not the same thing at all, because there are several states in the world that have nuclear capability, but are, for one reason or another, not actually in possession of nuclear weapons. These aims - territorial expansion, ethnic cleansing and securing regional hegemony - are interconnected. One follows from the other and, in fact, one *entails* the other.

One reason why the completion of the Zionist project requires Israel to be a local hegemon on the most

elementary level is that colonisation provokes opposition by other states. There is obviously regional opposition to the expansion of the state of Israel. Therefore, because colonisation and the completion of the Zionist project entails territorial expansion, it provokes opposition by the neighbouring states, at whose expense Israel is expanding, or who regard Israel's expansion as a potential danger to themselves. It also provokes opposition and solidarity by the people in the surrounding region - that is to say, most of the population in the Arab east, who are motivated by solidarity with the Palestinian people and who are therefore pushing their governments, despite themselves, to show some opposition. So, on this very elementary level, Israel needs to be militarily superior to the surrounding states.

Natural mother

On a more profound historical level, the Zionist project has always been in need of imperialist sponsorship. It did not have a natural mother country, and therefore it needed a surrogate. Compare this to a local mafioso who needs to sell himself to a global mafia boss, for whom Israel is the best choice for regional deputy. So Israel needs the protection of the dominant hegemonic imperialist state - currently the United States - granting it the position of 'sheriff' or deputy in the Middle East region. There is a mutual interest, therefore, in promoting Israel as a powerful local ally and *enforcer*: that is to say, Israel has a particular value for imperialism. While the USA is an extremely powerful state, in order to secure its interests in the region, it must rely on a *local* powerful state - so Israel has an inbuilt need to show itself as the most powerful and most ruthless.

The local wars provoked by Israel are an excellent opportunity for expansion and ethnic cleansing in order to further the strategic aim of the completion of the Zionist project of colonisation. To illustrate this: *The Guardian* of June 14 has the headline, "Strikes on Iran ease pressure on Israel to end starvation in Gaza".³ In other words, in the weeks before Israel's assault on Iran, there had been an increasing acceptance (albeit too little, too late) by western governments of the pressure from below to 'do something' about the ethnic cleansing and genocide in Gaza. In the UK, France and even

Germany there was mounting pressure to demand that Israel call a halt to the genocide.

But now that Israel has attacked Iran on behalf of the western imperialist 'community', the pressure has been eased. Its strikes on Iran ease the pressure on it to end the starvation of Gazans. This is an illustration of how a regional war - in this case quite openly initiated by Israel - helps to further the Zionist project of ethnic cleansing.

Here is another headline, this time from *Haaretz*: "Gaza residents say IDF escalated attacks in the Strip since Israel launched war on Iran." Israel's genocidal stranglehold on Gaza has not abated, now that it is concentrating on its war with Iran. Not at all - actually quite the contrary. Since Israel's attack on Iran is condoned by western imperialist states, the pressure on it has been eased, at least for the moment, and this enables it to perpetrate ethnic cleansing in the Gaza Strip - and no doubt very soon in the West Bank too - without incurring diplomatic pressure on the part of the western powers.

So Israel's war on Iran serves two of its aims: asserting regional hegemony; and serving as a smokescreen, behind which ethnic cleansing can proceed all the more ruthlessly. But then, of course, as Keir Starmer keeps reminding us, "Israel has the right to defend itself" ●

Articles by Yassamine Mather and Moshé Machover are edited versions of their June 15 Online Communist Forum talk: www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXVv89iUnoU

Notes

1. See 'Netanyahu's war wish' *Weekly Worker* February 9 2012: [weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/900/netanyahus-war-wish](https://www.weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/900/netanyahus-war-wish).
2. See 'Promise myth as template' *Weekly Worker* July 25 2024: [weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1501/promise-myth-as-template](https://www.weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1501/promise-myth-as-template).
3. www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/14/israel-attack-on-iran-slows-diplomatic-momentum-to-halt-gaza-war.

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What we fight for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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weekly Worker

Factories, docks and airports

Build working class resistance

Arms shipments to and from Israel are being blocked in many countries - an example that trade unions in Britain can be won to follow. There is no time to lose, says **Ian Spencer**

Dock workers in Fos-sur-Mer, near Marseille, blocked the shipment of military equipment bound for Israel on June 5 in protest at the genocide in Gaza. According to the Confédération Générale du Travail, stevedores refused to load crates of metal links used to enable rapid machine gun fire.

The ship, owned by the Israeli shipping company, Zim, left France without its murderous cargo. "We are very proud of this action led by our comrades, and which is part of the CGT's long, internationalist tradition for peace," said Sophie Binet, secretary general of the union. "It is unacceptable that CGT dockers should be the ones forced to uphold the principles of international law and French values. The government must immediately block all arms deliveries to the state of Israel", she added.

The ship was bound for Genoa, but the CGT had tipped off workers at the Italian port. Workers in the Unione Sindacale di Base immediately acted to prevent the ship from docking. USB members are using the action to build for wider struggle and are supporting a general strike on June 20. They are drawing attention to how the war policies of Giorgia Meloni's government do nothing but impoverish an Italian population already burdened by inflation and low wages. The USB said: "We strongly reiterate that we do not want to be complicit in the genocide in Gaza and that we firmly oppose all wars."¹

The 24-hour national general strike is set to affect air, rail and local public transport services across the country. The strike, will involve both the public and private sector, while Italy's airline industry is also set to be affected due to a walkout by airport workers, including baggage handlers and ground staff, as well as external companies.²

The strike has been called by several trade unions, who are demanding less military spending and more investment in health, education, transport and safety in the workplace. The protest also focuses on the demand for wage increases, contract renewal, reduction of working hours and opposition to privatisation and job precariousness.³

Solidarity

In Sweden, last February, shipping company DFDS dismissed one of its workers, Erik Helgeson, who worked at the port of Gothenburg. Helgeson is national deputy chair and spokesperson for the Swedish Dockworkers Union, which voted last December to block the handling of military equipment destined for or originating in Israel.

Helgeson said: "People in Sweden have an impression that we only sell to neutral countries, or countries that are not engaged in war. People didn't know what was going on." While Sweden does export arms to Israel, they are outnumbered by its



Union bureaucrats can only see jobs ... and dues

imports of Israeli arms, including from Elbit and Rafael, which is Israel's largest arms firm, and has seen its profits soar since the start of the current genocide in Gaza.⁴ While Helgeson is waiting to have his dismissal contested in Sweden's labour courts, dock workers have voted in favour of strike action and, because of Helgeson's case, one of the key demands is protection for union officials from politically motivated dismissals, like that of DFDS.

The company put out a press release stating that Helgeson's dismissal was "with reference to national security". Sweden joined Nato in 2024, after many decades of neutrality, even while the Nazis occupied neighbouring Norway. Now, it seems dock workers have been given enhanced responsibilities for 'security'. The blockade of shipments of military materiel has been used as the pretext for getting rid of a highly effective union official, but, as Helgeson said,

Solidarity is a source of power. It's not only a kind act or a transactional thing. If you don't have a culture of solidarity that expands outside of just narrow bread-and-butter issues in your immediate national area, then you're kind of bound to be isolated when it's your turn. We've never worked like that,

and I don't want to either.

Dock workers in many countries, including Sweden, the United States, Morocco, South Africa and Italy, have taken solidarity actions since 2010. The Palestinian Youth Movement has launched a campaign (Mask off Maersk) against the Danish shipping container giant, alleging that it has shipped military cargo to Israel during the genocide.⁵ In April, dock workers - members of the two largest Moroccan unions, the UMT and CDT - boycotted a Maersk ship suspected of transporting F-35 parts to Israel. Moroccan authorities responded by blocking dozens of pro-Palestine activists from reaching the port of Casablanca.

In Britain, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign has called for action against the arms factories making weapons for Israel. The UK is an active participant in genocide and ethnic cleansing in Palestine through its arms trade and military collaboration with Israel. One example is Britain's contribution to the F-35 jet fighter. The PSC aimed to disrupt production at Lockheed Martin UK in Havant, Hampshire. One of the protestors, PSC director Ben Jamal, said:

We are protesting outside factories that are supplying the parts for the F-35 jets that Israel

is using to reign devastation and havoc upon the people of Gaza. We know the Lockheed Martin factory has sent seven shipments of supplies of parts of the F-35s, which has enabled Israel to continue with its genocide since October 2023.⁶

There were similar protests in Rochester, Kent, at BAE systems on Marconi Way, which manufactures the Active Interceptor System used by the pilot to control the jet. In Sheffield, South Yorkshire there was a protest at the Forged Solutions Group, on Meadowhall Road.⁷

Another group, Palestine Action, has carried out lots of direct action stunts against companies involved with Israeli arms companies, such as the Armstrong works in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where Israeli arms manufacturer Rafael makes engines for drones that have been used to kill civilians in Gaza. The protestors climbed onto the gatehouse, covered the Armstrong sign in red paint and unfurled a banner reading: "This factory kills kids". All five protestors were arrested on suspicion of 'conspiracy to cause a public nuisance'. There was an oppressively large police presence that quickly arrived to protect the arms factory.⁸ Northumbria Police has spent £209,755 policing protests at the Newcastle factory.

Palestine Action also carried out an action at the Permold Industries metal factory in County Durham, which makes ammunition containers for Elbit Systems - one of Israel's major arms manufacturers. It has several factories in the UK. The activists cut through the fence to damage machinery on June 14. They later made their way onto the roof to cut holes, before spraying the equipment below with red paint two days later.⁹ Four activists were arrested.

Union inaction

These actions stand in contrast to the supine stance taken by unions with an interest in the arms industry. The GMB union, for example, is "proudly a union for defence manufacturing workers". Moreover, it openly supports a 'two-state solution' and treats the breakout from the Gaza ghetto on October 7 2023 as somehow the equivalent of the subsequent response of the Zionist state - whilst, of course not mentioning at all the reasons why 2.3 million people are confined to the open-air prison in the first place.¹⁰ In fact, the same statement proudly declares that after October 7 it contacted Histadrut, Israel's union federation, to express its "solidarity", naturally ignoring the role played by labor Zionism in establishing the Zionist state and excluding Palestinians from the workforce.

While the GMB statement on 'Israel and Palestine', claims that its workers are mostly employed in shipbuilding and "do not work

on arms for export to Israel's military", it says nothing about how the weapons the workers so proudly make actually end up there. After all, the biggest supplier of weapons to Israel is the USA, but presumably the GMB does not have any qualms about supporting the US arms industry, despite the ultimate destination of what it produces.

Arms embargo

Calling for the state to institute an arms embargo on Israel, as Sophie Binet has, while welcome, is unlikely ever to be heeded, particularly in the UK, where the revocation of a few tens of arms export licences to Israel, while leaving hundreds intact, is consistent with British policy of providing intelligence and logistical support to the genocide via its base at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus. Similarly, recent revelations, following parliamentary questions, that the UK provides training for Israel Defence Forces personnel is really nothing new. Israeli pilots have attended RAF Cranwell and its soldiers have been welcomed at Sandhurst for decades.

The actions by Palestine Action in disrupting the Israeli arms supply chain are undeniably brave and effective - but only up to a point. We must support these activists when they appear in court and support the right of juries to reach a verdict guided by their conscience, which is supposedly a central tenet of English law. It is a principle that has seen some acquittals, even in the face of state intimidation and attempts to impose draconian sentences on political activists, such as members of Just Stop Oil, who are currently languishing in prison.

International solidarity of workers to impose a blockade of Israel is essential, in conjunction with the widest possible involvement in boycott, divestment and sanctions against the Zionist state. The failure of many British unions to prevent arms production is a shameful legacy of the British imperialist heritage - one which communists must do all they can to oppose.

As the bodies pile higher, there is no time to lose ●

Notes

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SUPPLEMENT

DEVOURING THE PREY AND DRINKING THE BLOOD OF THE SLAIN

Netanyahu is bent on death, destruction and gore. Donald Trump gave the green light - that much is obvious. Now he has approved attack plans and is demanding 'unconditional surrender'. **Jack Conrad** presents the communist alternative to capitalist barbarism and war



Refueling: Only the US with its GBU-57 bunker-busters and B-2s can destroy Iran's underground nuclear facilities

We long expected it. Now it has happened. Beginning in the early hours of Friday the 13th of June, Israel launched a full-scale assault on Iran. Operation Rising Lion should not be expected to stop "till it devours the prey and drinks the blood of the slain".¹

Benjamin Netanyahu justified his criminal action with the allegation that Iran lay just weeks away from making nine nuclear weapons - a widely derided lie.² Doubtless the International Atomic Energy Agency board declared Iran in breach of its obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty in what was a *highly political* 19 to 3 vote (there were 11 abstentions).³ But that hardly amounts to the imminent threat of Israel becoming a "victim of a nuclear holocaust". Indeed, Iranian negotiators seem to have been under the impression that a deal with the US was within reach in the next round of talks in Oman (due to have taken place on June 15). No less to the point, Rising Lion was "eight months in the making".⁴

So why did Israel attack when it did? Netanyahu saw a window of opportunity to achieve two long-held strategic objectives. First, knock out - or at the least thoroughly degrade - a regional rival. Second, use the cover of war to 'finish the job' with the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. Mass expulsions would be followed by annexations and the realisation of the Zionist dream of a Greater Israel.

Netanyahu, along with most Zionists, cynically paints Iran as being "singularly hellbent on Israel's annihilation".⁵ Naturally, the Tehran regime pays lip-service to opposing Israel and calls for "a single, democratic Palestinian state" through "holding a referendum of all the original inhabitants", including Muslims, Jews and Christians.⁶ Hardly practical - requiring, one presumes, the exodus, or expulsion, of all post-1948 migrants (them and their often mixed offspring and descendants). Anyway, as shown by June 13, Iran is in no position to do much about anything. Israel is militarily strong, Iran pathetically weak. Not that the ayatollahs actually want to help the Palestinians - well, apart, that is, from using them as pawns whenever possible.

If Iran had the technical wherewithal to build, launch and deliver a nuclear warhead that could destroy Tel Aviv or Haifa, it is highly unlikely to embark on any such *suicidal* course. After all, what would happen immediately afterwards? Total destruction. Israel has at least 140 nuclear warheads. And the Tehran regime is concerned with one thing above all else - survival. That is why, perhaps, it might have calculated on achieving a near-ready nuclear weapon capability, in order to act as a deterrent. It is not gripped by some Islamic death wish - that is for sure. A racist commonplace peddled in the Israeli media.

Of course, what began on June 13 is not a war of conquest. Israel simply lacks the military capacity to do that.⁷ Iran has a population of around 90 million. An invading Israeli, or American, army, will not be greeted

as liberators by the mass of the population. No, on the contrary, they would face determined resistance of the kind seen in Iraq - except on a far bigger and more deadly scale.

Nor can Israel destroy Iran's nuclear facilities that lie buried deep underground at Natanz and Fordow. It possesses neither the heavy bombers nor the heavy ordnance needed for such a task. Though it would perhaps take several days, the US with its B-2s and 30,000lb GBU-57 bunker busters, might conceivably be able to wreak the necessary destruction. But with what results? Huge amounts of radioactive material possibly released into the atmosphere.

Israel can, however, pound, assassinate and sabotage to the point of triggering economic collapse. Likewise it can decapitate Iran politically and militarily, to the point where Tehran loses effective control over national minority areas such as Kurdistan and Baluchistan and thereby facilitates the country's break-up. Israel, if it manages to provoke Iran sufficiently - that is, in terms of triggering retaliatory overreach - can also realistically hope get the United States directly involved in the war. Clearly that is Netanyahu's plan. Whether or not he succeeds is, though, entirely another matter.

Netanyahu claims to be committed to regime change in Iran, yet the very next day he promised that "Tehran will burn". Leaving that contradictory narrative aside, for regime change to happen there needs to be an alternative regime waiting in the wings. You cannot bring about regime change with bombs and missiles launched from F-14s, F-16s and F-35s. There

is certainly no credible 'great leader' about to be parachuted in by the US-Israel who will galvanise the Iranian population behind them. Maryam Rajavi and her Mujahadeen-e-Khalq are almost universally regarded as a crazy, weird cult ... and it certainly has no mass base in Iran itself. As for the royalists and Reza Pahlavi, though he is heavily financed and promoted by the US and Israel, few serious commentators rate his chances. Some upper class exiles like to imagine his father, Mohammad Reza, as an enlightened despot, but within Iran itself few want to swap the theocracy they know and hate for a return to a monarchy that their parents hated and overthrew.

A Revolutionary Guard or army coup, national breakaways, warlordism and the Somalification of Iran is another matter. They are realistic possibilities and would bring with them all kinds of potentially dreadful unknowns.

In desperation the ayatollah's regime could conceivably launch waves of drones and missiles against Saudi oil facilities or US bases in the region. Just what Netanyahu is banking on. The same goes with withdrawing from the NPT and going for a nuclear bomb or closing the Strait of Hormuz - the world's most important "oil transit chokepoint".⁸

US involvement would see Iran either suing for peace or reduced to rubble - for America sweet revenge. The overthrow of the shah in 1979 and the ensuing 444 days hostage crisis still rankles with the US state apparatus. Already, however, there are reports of Iran signalling Israel and the US that it wants to de-escalate, agree a ceasefire and resume

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talks on its nuclear programme. However, Netanyahu is not in listening mode. Nor is Trump. Indeed, while he says he has no plans to kill supreme leader Ali Khamenei “for now”, he is demanding Iran’s “unconditional surrender”.⁹ To further spread panic he advises the entire ten million population of Tehran to evacuate the city.

What can be done?

Here in Britain we should certainly keep marching. Solidarity with Palestinians, especially, of course, those in Gaza, is rightly joined with ‘Hands off Iran’ calls. More must be done. Workers at airports and ports can be won to refuse to handle goods, especially arms, headed for Israel. Such agitation would be more than timely. Expecting workers at Rolls Royce, BAE Systems or Leonardo to strike and maybe put themselves out of a much needed job is an altogether bigger ask. Moralistic attacks on ordinary workers should, though, be avoided at all cost. However, despite remaining in the realms of the symbolic, it is quite right to demand that the UK government rescind all export licences for military-related goods going to Israel.

David Lammy sheds crocodile tears and calls for restraint, but will, for example, do nothing to block the delivery of UK-made spares for Israel’s F-35s. He dares not upset Trump and the US. Keeping the recent trade deal with the US matters infinitely more than the lives of countless Palestinians and Iranians.

We must openly declare for the defeat of our ‘own’ side: that is, Israel, its US sponsor and its UK and other such enablers. What that poses is going beyond the ‘strike and street’ politics of protest doggedly pursued by the Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Party in England and Wales, Revolutionary Communist Party and the other confessional sects. We need to embrace the politics of power.

Jeremy Corbyn’s much touted new outfit is worse than useless here. The same goes for George Galloway’s Workers Party of Britain and the Green Party, even if led by the soft left’s latest messiah, the born again Zack Polanski. Such organisations are verbally committed to doing little more than tinkering with the system. They accept the existing constitution, the existing state and the existing capitalist socio-economic order. None of them even so much as question wage slavery. They claim to want a peaceful, just and democratic capitalism. But capitalism is unpeaceful, unjust and undemocratic. So their effective role is to reinforce ideological illusions ... and thereby ultimately serve capitalism. No, what is needed is a principled, mass Communist Party. Only such a party, organised on an international scale, can lead the working class to state power and put an end to the global capitalist system of greed, imperialist exploitation ... and war.

What about Iran? We have no corresponding wish to see Iran defeated. The Iranian left - within the country and without - must, of course, facilitate, encourage and take full advantage of any loosening of the ayatollah’s grip, through an immediate programme designed to defend the lives and interests of the broad mass of the population.

Demands should certainly be raised for a rigorous and comprehensive rationing system. Everyone must receive according to their needs. The huge black-market rackets run by regime insiders are widely known and there ought to be demands that these criminals suffer confiscation of all ill-gotten gains and receive suitable punishment. Basic necessities must be strictly price-capped. Abandoned apartments allocated to homeless individuals and families. Elected popular committees would ensure everything is fair and above board. Privatized industries such as telecommunications, steel, water and power generation must be brought back under direct state control. Those companies withholding the payment of wages should face confiscation. Banks and insurance companies must be nationalized and the country’s \$6.3 billion foreign debt repudiated. A system of sirens needs to be established to provide early warning of air attacks. Clearly marked bomb shelters must be established throughout Tehran’s underground metro system, road tunnels and basements and made available to the general population as a matter of urgency.

Above all, the left needs to organise around a programme of how to make the country *worth defending* from Israeli (and US) aggression. That can only be done by demanding freedom of speech and assembly, the separation of

mosque and state, secularism in all spheres of public life, annulling oppressive laws against women, releasing political prisoners, allowing unrestricted workers’ self-organisation, arming the whole population, abolishing the standing army, the Revolutionary Guards and the basij. Crucially, theocratic rule must be ended.

Elections to a constituent assembly, working class state power and the fullest democracy then become realisable. But more still is needed. Proletarian internationalism is vital. A revolution in Iran must spread to Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt and come to the rescue of Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza.

Expansionism

Israel is not only determined to destroy Iran: it is set on territorial expansion on four fronts: Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza. In Lebanon and Syria the pattern follows the classic ‘defensive imperialism’ of ‘buffer zones’. In the case of southern Syria the new ‘buffer zone’ is there to defend the already annexed Golan Heights ‘buffer zone’ (seized in 1967).

However, when it comes to the West Bank and Gaza, the main drive is ideological, not military. Zionism as a settler-colonial project is at the very least committed to incorporating, in its entirety, mandate Palestine. On the West Bank, Israel has already displaced around 40,000 and killed around 1,000 Palestinians since October 7 2023. Meanwhile, Gaza stands on the edge of starvation, ethnic cleansing and genocide - facilitated by the so-called Gaza Humanitarian Foundation. A second nakba is being readied.

Bezalel Smotrich, finance minister and leader of the far-right Religious Zionism Party, triumphantly describes the situation in Gaza as being on the “threshold of the gates of hell”.¹⁰ He clearly approves and supports a policy of genocide. No wonder there have been moves by the International Criminal Court to issue an arrest warrant on him too ... along with the one already in place on Benjamin Netanyahu.

Strangely, given the huge death toll and the comprehensive devastation of Gaza, there are those panglossians who claimed that Israel “cannot win” in Gaza, that Israel is “unequivocally losing” its war in Gaza, or that the Israel has already “lost in Gaza”.¹¹ All true ... if Israel’s war aims were ever about totally destroying Hamas and bringing home all war captives (dead and alive). However, that was never Netanyahu’s intention.

Netanyahu is many things, but he is no fool. His war aims were never about destroying Hamas. Its social roots are far too deep for that. Certainly the war captives are little more than a nuisance for him, when it comes to Israeli domestic politics. He knows it and so do the tens of thousands of relatives, friends and supporters who have time and again demonstrated in Tel Aviv’s Hostage Square.

If you really wanted the war captives back from the tunnels, tents and bomb shelters of Gaza, then direct negotiations with Hamas would have been an absolute priority. And destroying Hamas and negotiating with Hamas are, to put it mildly, mutually incompatible.

No, the *real* war aim of Netanyahu and his cabinet is to uproot the indigenous population within mandate Palestine in order to realise their greater Israel: from Gaza they will be driven into Egypt’s Sinai, from the West Bank over into Jordan. And, of course, Trump is gung-ho.

October 7

The part desperate, part audacious Operation al-Aqsa Flood prison break on October 7 2023, carried out by Hamas, along with other sections of the Joint Room resistance movement, caught the Israeli high command altogether unprepared - a “complete failure” now openly acknowledged by its military.¹²

Not surprisingly, there has been speculation that Netanyahu and his cronies were in some way “deliberately” complicit in allowing the whole thing to happen.¹³ It was, after all, a year in the preparation. Warnings were consistently ignored. Hamas military commanders were themselves certainly surprised by the ability of their al-Qassam fighters to go way beyond what had been originally planned as a suicide mission. Expectations were of something like an 80% casualty rate. Military targets, IDF outposts, police stations thereby gave way to what Hamas itself calls “some faults” in the operation: the totally pointless killing of innocent civilians ... and baseless stories of beheading babies and mass rapes.¹⁴

October 7 did, though, provide Netanyahu with the political excuse needed for the Israel Defence Forces to pulverise its way into Gaza

(and the upping of settler terrorism in the West Bank). True, Israeli public opinion subsequently became deeply divided between what we might call the ‘peace party’ and the ‘war party’. Nonetheless, the war party commands a Knesset majority and has grown into a clear public opinion poll majority with the attack on Iran (83% of Jewish Israeli’s support, only 16% oppose¹⁵). Netanyahu himself has every reason to keep the wars in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and now Iran going on and on ... after all, not only does he want to keep his coalition together and stay out of jail: he wants a Greater Israel.

Let us revisit this *defining* background. 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). However, there are those - ie, the religious Zionists - who envisage a Greater Israel as a Jewish theocracy. Fringe elements even want Jerusalem’s 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 Noach*), to observe god’s laws and support his chosen people - perhaps a future source for urgently needed new settlers.¹⁶

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.¹⁷ Of course, any such Israel would come with a poisoned chalice: an oppressed Arab *majority*. The Zionist conquistadors would have to permanently deny them elementary rights. The newly acquired Arab population would be far too big to do much else with.

Either way, Israel, as a project, is predicated on expansionism. The *aliyah* (Hebrew for ‘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 antecedents, 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 adventurers have come to the promised land over the years. Between 1948 and 1992 Israel took in 2,242,500 Jewish migrants. The bulk from eastern Europe - displaced by World War II - and the centres of Jewry in the Arab world and the Soviet Union. Some 85% of Ethiopia’s 170,000 Jewish population, the Falasha, or Habashim, have gone to Israel under the law of return too. Before October 7, however, the flow of migrants had been reduced to a mere trickle. With October 7 that inward trickle became a 470,000 outward flood ... but, predictably, all but a few soon returned to what is their national home.¹⁸

Israel needs people. Or, put more accurately, Israel needs *Jewish* people. Even a little Israel relies on long-term net Jewish immigration ... net Jewish *emigration*, if it were sustained, would indeed mean that the “collapse of Israel has become foreseeable”.¹⁹

Today Israel has a record population of just over 10 million.²⁰ However, some 20% of them are Palestinian Arabs. They are, of course, treated as second-class citizens in what is rightly regarded as an apartheid state. Officially, after all, Israel was founded as and continues to be a Jewish state for Jewish people. Meanwhile, there are some 5.9 million UN-registered Palestinian refugees - in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.²¹ There is also a Palestinian diaspora living in Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, the US, Britain, Germany, Chile, Argentina and many other countries besides.

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 1973.²² 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”.²³

By any measure, 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” that gives it privileged access to the most advanced US military platforms and technologies. There is an agreement to supply Israel with a military package worth some \$3.8 billion annually till 2028.²⁴ In return for imperial sponsorship, the country 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).²⁵

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”.²⁶ Whatever the skin colour of the president, America is determined to reverse its decline and that means that big-power 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 Biden and Trump administrations.²⁷

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 US, 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 and the four wars in Lebanon (1978, 1982, 2006 and 2023).

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).

Haim Bresheeth-Zabner calls the IDF “an army like no other”.²⁸ In fact, 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, military experts rank the country amongst the world’s most powerful states. We have already mentioned the nuclear warheads ... and Israel certainly has the means of delivering them from land, sea and sky.

Divide and rule

Territorially, economically and politically Palestine is, of course, cleaved between Hamas in a pulverised Gaza and Fatah in the diced and sliced 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, Hamas leaders living in the relative safety of Qatar intransigently refuse to recognise Israel. Nonetheless, Hamas has offered a “long-term truce” in return for Israel withdrawing from all territories it has occupied since 1967: in effect a 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”.²⁹ That is, until October 7 2023 - 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 a 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 despised.

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

What about Israel itself? Its politics 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 Netanyahu’s Likud, has absolutely no truck with any notion of Palestinian statehood. In general Zionists merely talk the talk. Only the left, which relies on Israeli-Arab votes, is serious about a 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.³⁰ 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”³¹ or what Moshé Machover prefers to call an “exclusion colony”.³² Instead of 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 definitely 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 the 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.”³³ Hence, whatever the socialistic pretensions of Labor Zionism, from the beginning, Israel owed far more to the *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil) ideology of late 19th century European reaction, than anything remotely progressive. Lenni Brenner makes the point:

Enthusiasm for *Blut und Boden* were part of Zionism before the first modern Zionist ever left Europe. Race Zionism was a curious offshoot of racial anti-Semitism. True, these Zionists argued, the Jews were a pure race - certainly purer than, say, the Germans who, as even the pan-Germanics conceded, had a huge admixture of Slavic blood. But to these Zionists even their racial purity could not overcome the one flaw in Jewish existence: they did not have their own Jewish *Boden*. If the Teutonic racists could see themselves as *Übermenschen* (supermen), these Hebrew racists did not see the Jews in that light; rather, it was the reverse. They believed that because they lacked their own *Boden* the Jews were *Untermenschen* and therefore, for their ‘hosts’, little more than leeches: the world pest.³⁴

To get themselves the soil necessary for national salvation, the Zionists, for good ideological reasons, latched upon Palestine. What marked them out, when they went there, was not that to begin with they 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”.³⁵

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 too. After all, they 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). This in the expectation of “forming for England ‘a little loyal Jewish Ulster’ in a sea of potentially hostile Arabism”.³⁶ The Ottoman empire was about to be carved-up by Anglo-French imperialism and that necessitated finding, or creating, willing collaborators. France promoted the historically established Maronite Christians in mandate Lebanon, the British turned to the incoming Zionist Jews in mandate Palestine.

Histadrut played a determining role in what was to become the political economy of Israel. 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

Obediently reflecting British imperial interests, mainstream Labourism has traditionally maintained 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. 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 the influence of Nazi ideas.

As for the ‘official’ CPGB, in the late 1940s it temporarily abandoned its historic hostility to Zionism. It formed a National Jewish Committee, which supported Jewish migration into Palestine and land purchases. Stalin, myopically, saw nothing more than a chance to weaken British influence in the Middle East

by supporting Zionism ... including with the supply of Czech arms.

Hence, toadyingly, 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”.³⁷ 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 for 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 after 1967 on the grounds that Israel was “the only genuine democratic and socialist-oriented state in the Middle East”.³⁸

Next to nothing of that left now remains. Today Israel counts amongst those countries dominated by the hard right and is therefore regarded as an abomination by those who regard themselves as being 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 grotesque ‘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 CPB. Essentially their two-state ‘solution’ echoes the PLO, Fatah, the Israeli Labor Party ... and the international liberal 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 appearances sake, till Trump, US administrations promoted this touching picture of the wolf lying down with the lamb. But, in practice, the US has backed Israeli aggression to the hilt. The same goes for its allies, such as the UK, Germany and Italy. So there was no 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 resorted to desperate suicide missions and the PLO and Fatah are reduced to impotent verbal gestures, pathetic diplomatic pleading and effective collaboration with the Israeli occupiers. Recognising this, the likes of the AWL, CPB ... and various Labour left odds and sods clutch at anti-democratic liberal protests and peaceniks such as Standing Together - that and common economic struggles in Israel, which are supposed to weld together Hebrew and Arab workers into a lever for social change.

In fact, Zionism acts to keep 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).

As a justification for the two-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 ‘solution’ is based on a combination of naive wishful thinking and mechanical, stageist, reasoning. Note, 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/or calling for the end of the war with Iran. Nor should any such development be expected within the narrow confines of today’s circumstances.

SPEW 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.³⁹ That despite the starvation imposed on Gaza, the second-class status of Israeli Arabs and the remorseless announcements of yet more Jewish settler ‘outposts’ on the West Bank - there are already 720,000 settlers in the occupied territories (including east Jerusalem).

Anyway, why on earth two such *socialist* states would remain separate, especially given the substantial population crossover, is a complete mystery. No less to the point, the means of achieving such an outcome 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 does 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 SWP 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”.⁴⁰

The SWP has long ago given up trying to seriously think through what is and what is not a viable strategy in Israel-Palestine.⁴¹ What it is primarily interested in nowadays - especially post-October 7 - is posturing. The SWP strives might and main to present itself to the mass pro-Palestine 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 fleeting 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 by the economic left, 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 economic advocates of a single capitalist Palestine. So, for example, in a secular, *capitalist* Palestine, Israeli-Jews would have “language rights, freedom of worship and the right to their own culture, but political rights? No.”⁴² Of course, a nation threatened with a denial of political and national rights is likely to fight tooth and claw against any such outcome.

Objectively, though, the 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 the dumping of Palestinians over to the west side of the Jordan river. No round-up and expulsion of Palestinian workers in Saudi Arabia, etc. Therefore what is being proposed is a ‘unity’ where one half of the population gets no say in matters - 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. They are, therefore, more than likely to resist any such outcome with all their strength. The whole of the 20th century since

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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”, the SWP’s Alex Callinicos once owned up. He also correctly stated 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.”⁴³ Right again.

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 envisaged as its agent of change was the Axis of Resistance - which is today a busted flush combination of Lebanon’s Hezbollah, Hamas, Yemen’s Houthis ... and the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the SWP imagination the Axis could, not unreasonably, 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, be ‘national liberation’ via the destruction of the settler-colony ... and from the (nuclear?) ashes, hopefully some kind of ‘socialism’ would arise. Not something any genuine Marxist would care to countenance.

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 contranym, 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 robbed. 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 Knesset votes of ‘official communists’ and Islamists, the Hamas October 7 prisons breakout, the Hezbollah rockets and Iran’s “race” to acquire nuclear bombs. Understandably, the Israeli-Jewish population feels under constant threat and therefore - insecure, frightened, vengeful, maddened - willingly supports, urges on Israeli aggression, oppression and even genocide. The vain hope is to crush or finally remove all such threats and dangers - an oppressor’s peace.

Does it follow that Israelis cannot make a *democratic* peace with Palestinians? That any Israeli settlement with the Palestinians is bound to be a sham? There can certainly be no *democratic* peace 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 everyday 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-speaking nation, is a real, living entity and cannot be dismissed or discounted just because Israel began and continues to be 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 80% are ‘sabras’ - Israeli born - and mostly second or third generation.⁴⁴ 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 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 studied 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 - his 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 momentary. Syrian capitalists did not gain access to the Egyptian market and Egyptian administrative personnel were viewed 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 hostilities Israel occupied the Gaza Strip, Sinai, the West Bank and the Golan Heights. Nasser was humiliated and died soon afterwards, a broken man.

Evidently, however, 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. No less to the point, 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 L’udovít Štúr, which excused so many of the wars 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, 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 Hebrews and the Palestinians? That can only happen in the context of sweeping away Iran’s theocracy, the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan, Lebanon’s sectarian warlord plutocracy, Egypt’s military bureaucratic regime, the House of Saud, the petty Gulf sheikdoms - and the establishment of working class rule throughout the Middle East. Israel could be offered federal status, with the confident expectation that such an invitation would receive a positive response from below.⁴⁵

Hence, the road to a united working class in Palestine passes through Amman, it passes through Tehran, it passes through Beirut, it passes through Cairo and it passes through Riyadh⁴⁶ ●

Notes

1. Israel’s military operation takes its name from Numbers xxiii,24. A typically gory passage in what Christians call the Old Testament. In full the verse reads: “Behold, a people! As a lioness it rises up and as a lion it lifts itself; till it devours the prey and drinks the blood of the slain.”
2. “As recently as 25 March, Tulsi Gabbard, the US director of national intelligence, told the Senate intelligence committee that the American intelligence community had assessed that Iran was not actively pursuing a nuclear weapon” (*The Guardian* June 13 2025). See also A England ‘Was Iran really developing

nuclear weapons?’ *Financial Times* June 16 2025; ‘Was Iran really racing for nukes?’ *The Economist* June 13 2025.
3. It should be pointed out that Isreal is a non-signatory to the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty, which requires existing “nuclear weapon states” to disarm and commit themselves to the exclusive use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes (see disarmament.unoda.org/wmd/nuclear/npt). So the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China are definitely in breach of the NPT.
4. www.axios.com/2025/06/13/how-israel-executed-strike-iran-nuclear.
5. *Jewish News* June 16 2025.
6. www.presstv.ir/Detail/2025/05/24/748493/Iran-Israel-two-state-solution-Palestine-genocide-United-States-talks.
7. Special forces operations are a different matter and seem already to have happened on June 13 with Mossad’s drone attacks on air defences launched from within Iran.
8. About 25% of the world’s oil trade and a third of liquified natural gas passes through the strait - see en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strait_of_Hormuz.
9. *The Independent* June 17 2025.
10. www.middleeastmonitor.com/20250302-israels-smotrich-calls-for-opening-gates-of-hell-on-gaza-after-halt-of-humanitarian-aid.
11. In order: Sophie Squire ‘Six months of slaughter, six months of resistance’ *Socialist Worker* April 3 2024; Ofer Cassif of the ‘official communist’ Hadash party in Israel; and US ‘realist’ John Mearsheimer *Al Jazeera* January 24 2025.
12. www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/2/28/what-has-the-report-into-israeli-military-failures-on-october-7-said.
13. www.eurasiareview.com/15022024-did-israel-deliberately-ignore-warnings-of-an-attack-by-hamas-to-enable-them-to-destroy-gaza-oped.
14. Hamas *Our narrative ... Operation al-Aqsa Flood* p8.
15. *The Jerusalem Post* June 17 2025.
16. See R Feldman *Messianic Zionism in the digital age: Jews, Noahides and the Third Temple imaginary* New Brunswick NJ 2024.
17. “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 Kadomites, the Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaims, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and the Jebusites’” (*Genesis* xv, 18-1).
18. www.jpr.org.uk/insights/israels-jewish-demography-changing-and-it-so-diasporas.
19. I Pappé, ‘The collapse of Zionism’ *New Left Review* June 21 2024.
20. *The Jewish Chronicle* January 6 2025.
21. www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees.
22. See A Ben-Zvi *Decade of transition: Eisenhower, Kennedy and the origins of the American-Israeli alliance* New York NY 1998.
23. N Chomsky *The fateful triangle: the United States, Israel and the Palestinians* London 1983, p43.
24. www.cfr.org/article/us-aid-israel-four-charts.
25. www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/israel-strategic-asset-united-states-0.
26. J Conrad, ‘Zionist imperatives and the Arab solution’ *Weekly Worker* January 22 2009: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/753/zionist-imperatives-and-the-arab-solution.
27. H Clinton, ‘America’s Pacific century’ *Foreign Policy* November 2011.
28. H Bresheeth-Žabner *An army like no other: how the Israeli Defence Force made a nation* London 2020, p13.
29. *The Times of Israel* October 8 2023.
30. 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.
31. See M Macnair (intro) *Karl Kautsky: on colonialism* London 2013.
32. M Machover, ‘Colonialism and the natives’ *Weekly Worker* December 17 2015: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1087/colonialism-and-the-natives.
33. www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/25282/pg25282-images.html.
34. www.marxists.org/history/etol/document/mideast/agedict/ch02.htm.
35. M Shalev *The labour movement in Israel: ideology and political economy* Westview CO 1996, p1.
36. R Storrs *Orientalisms* London 1937, p405. Sir Ronald Storrs served as British military governor of Jerusalem in 1917.
37. *Daily Worker* May 15 1948.
38. E Heffer, ‘Why Labour should support Israel’ *Labour looks at Israel: 1967-1971* London 1971, p31.
39. J Horton *Socialism Today* February 2 2024.
40. SWP pamphlet *Palestine, resistance, revolution and the struggle for freedom* London 2023, p28.
41. Eg, the SWP’s co-thinker in Germany, Ramsis Kilani, comes out with the bog-standard “strikes and mass mobilisations” and “workers developing their own capability for revolutionary self-governance” catch phrases. But, though he denounces “Stalinist conceptions of a revolution by ‘stages’”, that is actually what he advocates (R Kilani ‘Strategies for liberation: old and new arguments in the Palestinian left’ *International Socialism* No183, Summer 2024). Incidentally, Die Linke, Germany’s so-called ‘left’ party, disgracefully expelled the comrade on entirely bogus charges of “anti-Semitism” in December 2024. Anne Alexander, the SWP’s Middle East expert, confirms the stagism when she writes of her perspectives for Palestine having “two aspects”: “The first would be a [altogether improbable - JC] revolution inside Palestine, led by Palestinians, for a single democratic and secular state, achieved through the dismantling of the whole social and political system of apartheid by a movement from below.” The second aspect being “a revolutionary process outside Palestine” (A Alexander ‘Palestine: between permanent war and permanent revolution’ *International Socialism* No181, Winter 2023). Nowhere does she mention ‘socialism’, ‘working class state power’ or ‘social revolution’ ... or even words to that effect.
42. Tony Greenstein, Letters *Weekly Worker* June 27 2024.
43. *Socialist Worker* August 5 2006.
44. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabra_(person).
45. A perspective advanced by Jabra Nicola and Moshé Machover in June 1969. See M Machover *Israelis and Palestinians: conflict and resolution* Chicago IL 2012, pp15-25.
46. To paraphrase George Habash, first general PFLP secretary, and before him Ahmad Shukeiri, first PLO chair (see JT Buck *The decline of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine* Hampshire College MA, 2013, p4).